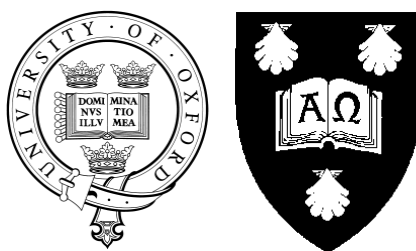


Quixotic Exceptionalism

British and US Co-Narratives, 1713-1823



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ABSTRACT

Scholars have long since identified a quixotic mode in fiction, acknowledging the widespread influence of Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605-15) on subsequent texts. In most cases, “quixotic” signifies a preponderance of allusions to Don Quixote in a given text, such that most studies of “quixotic fictions” or “quixotic influence” are primarily taxonomic in purpose and in outcome: they name and catalogue a text or group of texts as “quixotic,” then argue that, by virtue of the vast and protean influence of *Don Quixote*, the quixotic mode in fiction is always divided, lacking any semblance of ideological consistency. I argue, however, that the very characteristics of Don Quixote that make him such an attractive literary model for such a broad range of narratives—his bookish idealism, his fixation on the upper-classed grandiosity of the lives of noble knights—also form the consistent, ideological groundwork of quixotism: the exceptionalist substitution of fictive idealism for material reality. By tracing the ways in which quixotes become mouthpieces for various exceptionalist arguments in eighteenth-century British and American texts, like Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742), Tobias Smollett's *Launcelot Greaves* (1760), Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752), Hugh Henry Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry* (1792-1815), and Royall Tyler's *The Algerine Captive* (1797), among others, I demonstrate the link between quixotism and exceptionalism, or between fictive idealism and the belief that one (or one's worldview) is an exception to the scrutiny of the surrounding world.

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When the knight of La Mancha gravely recounts to his companion the adventures by which he is to signalize himself in such a manner that he shall be summoned to the support of empires, solicited to accept the heiress of the crown which he has preserved, have honours and riches to scatter about him, and an island to bestow on his worthy squire, very few readers, amidst their mirth or pity, can deny that they have admitted visions of the same kind; though they have not, perhaps, expected events equally strange, or by means equally inadequate. When we pity him, we reflect on our own disappointments; and when we laugh, our hearts inform us that he is not more ridiculous than ourselves, except that he tells what we have only thought.

Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler*, no. 2, 24 March 1749/50

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INTRODUCTION

Recovering the Quixotic as Exceptionalist

The title of this study, “Quixotic Exceptionalism,” contains two terms that require explication. While this introduction addresses each of these terms in great detail, they both merit discussion from the outset. Apart from the colloquial usage of “quixotic” as a descriptor for that which is dreamy, imprudent, idealistic, or unrealistic, “quixotic” is most frequently used in literary studies to signal an intertextual relationship with Miguel de Cervantes' vastly influential *Don Quixote* (1605-15). The predominant usage of “quixotic” in literary studies is, then, relatively value-neutral: it mainly functions taxonomically, to link surface-level characteristics and allusions in a text like Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752) to its seventeenth-century Spanish textual progenitor. Accordingly, as John Skinner rightly points out, “modern critical interest in *Don Quixote* has tended to concentrate on structural matters, finding the novel a prototype of the self-conscious narrator, a playful subversion of the authority of the text or a profusion of metafictional wizardry” (45). As I will argue, however, “quixotic” connotes much more than a value-neutral, structural relationship between the eighteenth-century British and American literatures discussed in this study, and Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. Just as eighteenth-century readers themselves are known to have “focused more readily on the actual character of Don Quixote,” I aim in this study to re-focus critical attention onto the character of quixotism, and onto quixotes as characters (Skinner 45).

“Exceptionalism” is the primary characteristic that I will link with the “quixotic,” and is anything but value-neutral. Most will have encountered the term with a national appendage, as “American exceptionalism” or, less common, “British exceptionalism.” In these contexts, “exceptionalism” indicates a belief that one's nation is qualitatively different from all others—exceptional—such that it should act and be treated as an exception to the rules or laws that govern all other countries. What I will call in this study the “exceptionalism” of quixotic figures has a comparable meaning: the quixotes I discuss

attempt to hold themselves separate, by and of their quixotism, from the rules, laws, and realities that govern everyone else. Accordingly, just as “American exceptionalism” is a mindset constructed to justify actions and positions that violate some common sense of order, “quixotic exceptionalism” is the mindset of quixotes, the justification for what this study explores in a series of texts as “quixotic” behavior.

0.1 Tilting at Windmills

What is the quixotic; or what does it mean to call a narrative “quixotic”? Critics have posed these questions many times before, to such an extent that the answers have largely diluted whatever graspable meaning could be said to exist in the descriptor. Even raising these questions might understandably be considered an exercise in “tilting at windmills.” Beyond the obvious and commonly understood point of origin of “quixotic,” Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, the layers and logics of association would seem to proliferate endlessly: that which is “quixotic” derives in some way or bears some resemblance to *Don Quixote* (the text) or Don Quixote (the figure). Kinds of resemblances may be direct allusions, like those that abound in Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67); or loose narratological frameworks containing themes similar to those of Cervantes’ novel, as in Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita* (1955) or Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick* (1851); or the comic arrangement of certain kinds of knights and Sancho-like squires or footmen, as in Tobias Smollett’s *Launcelot Greaves* (1762). “Quixotic” resemblances may be at least titular, as with Charlotte Lennox’s *The Female Quixote* (1752), Tabitha Gilman Tenney’s *Female Quixotism* (1801), and Kathy Acker’s *Don Quixote: Which Was a Dream* (1986), or metanarratological, as with Hugh Henry Brackenridge’s *Modern Chivalry* (1792). Of course, each of these texts, used crudely here as examples of particular kinds of “quixotic” association, certainly associates with the quixotic in more ways than one, and might stand as an example of a directly allusive quixotic text, a metanarratological quixotic text, and a thematic quixotic text all at once. Furthermore, these types of association vary and overlap

not just along or across axes of literary form and structure, but also of genre and character: *Modern Chivalry*'s Captain Farrago, for example, has recently been read as both a quixote and a picaresque, occupying either a "quixotic" or "picaresque" novel, resurrecting the old but still-germane question of whether certain narratives (like the one he inhabits) are better read or understood as quixotic or picaresque.¹

These problems of scope and taxonomy are only compounded by the unparalleled abundance of imitations, references, and reconfigurations of *Don Quixote* (or Don Quixote) that writers have produced (and continue to produce) throughout the centuries after which Cervantes' novel was published and translated (some of which I have listed above as representative of the "quixotic" fruits of several centuries). As critics like Walter L. Reed and Eve Tavor Bannet have noted, the quixotic is heavily invested in imitative or mimetic modes, as was the original Quixote. Such an investment in the mimetic lends the quixotic to perpetual quixotic imitation just as, for Reed, "the metaphorical or analogical inclusiveness in *Don Quixote*" produces a tendency of "other literary modes [to be] embedded in the story of Quixote's adventures" (74). Reed goes on to argue that *Don Quixote* was for "later writers...a precedent for the unprecedented, a locus classicus of the typographic dislocation of the literary work and a charter for the innovations of a type of literature that repeatedly declared its independence from the literary tradition," explaining one of several ways in which the quixotic is resistant to our attempts to position it within any particular lineage even as it remains a source of endless narrative reproduction (92). Diana de Armas Wilson observes in the quixotic a related resistance to definition on account of the "long and transnational history" of the term, which has evolved across nations as well as time (Novel 113).

Given the widespread influence of *Don Quixote*, and the sheer quantity of

¹In *Quixotic Fictions of the U.S.A. 1792-1815*, Sarah Wood calls Farrago an "old school Quixote" for his Greek and Roman outlook (91), though Cathy Davidson refers to *Modern Chivalry* continuously as a "picaresque novel" throughout the chapter "The Picaresque and the Margins of Political Discourse" in *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (this does not change from *Revolution*'s first edition in 1986 through to the most recent edition in 2004).

references, rewrites, and imitations that Cervantes' novel engendered, the question "what is the quixotic," along with its corollary "what does it mean to call a narrative 'quixotic,'" is in many ways a reiteration of broader questions about intertextuality, or how various intertextual relationships might be fruitfully described and categorized without imposing the same category limitations on disparate but related types of narratives. It would be easy enough to argue, for example, that the South African J.M. Coetzee's novel *Foe* (1986) bears an intertextual relationship to the Englishman Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), in light of *Foe*'s direct allusions to *Robinson Crusoe* and Daniel Defoe, and the historical evidence that Coetzee, our contemporary, has read, written, and lectured on *Robinson Crusoe*. But how do we describe or structure the differences between that intertextual relationship and the relationship between *Don Quixote* and *Moby Dick*, a relationship seemingly less direct and yet no less striking? Apart from its discouragingly vast literary, cross/cultural, and transhistorical influence, all of which make *Don Quixote* and its variously conceived "offspring" worth studying, tackling the problem of *Don Quixote*'s rangy, instantiative place in the study of the novel also means tackling the problem of intertextuality. Thus, attributing to "quixotic" a wieldier meaning without straitjacketing a concept born of a knight who characteristically liked to roam about requires both a refinement of category boundaries and close attention to the ways in which categorization is bound by inevitable boundary-crossings, violations, and exceptions. My aim, then, is to produce through readings of literary texts a more robust understanding of the concept of the quixotic, and how it functions within discourses of exceptionalism, rather than to define or categorize a group of literary texts under an assumed notion of the concept.

To this point, major studies of the quixotic, from Ortega y Gasset's 1914 masterpiece, *Meditations on Quixote*, to the most recent book-length study of the eighteenth-century quixotic narrative, Sarah F. Wood's *Quixotic Fictions of the U.S.A.*,

1792-1815, quixotism has been discussed primarily as a kind of multi-purpose philosophical cloak, donned by a variety of writers commenting on a variety of political positions, attempting to carve out some semblance of a national character that is either positively, negatively, or ambivalently associated with the quixotic figure. Consequently, studies of the quixotic have tended to conclude with the very premise with which they have begun: the quixotic is thoroughly polyvalent, self-contradictory, and protean, and the ideological thrust of the quixotic narrative is virtually anything and everything, depending on the historical circumstances in which the narrative is deployed. While it is difficult to deny that the sheer range and variation of the quixotic narrative over time make finding any semblance of consistency in it a formidable challenge, the conclusion that the quixotic narrative is too unwieldy to distill into a fundamental mode of ideology (as opposed to a stand-in for a plethora of contradictory ideologies) remains somewhat unsatisfying.

As Thomas Scanlan wrote in 2008 in an otherwise glowing review of Wood's *Quixotic Fictions of the U.S.A., 1792-1815*, "Perhaps it seems insufficiently exciting to suggest that the American legacy of *Don Quixote* is always already a divided one" (237). This study departs from a long and rich history of quixote criticism preoccupied with the idea of quixotism as fundamentally incoherent and divided, a history that can be summed up rather succinctly in another of Scanlan's pronouncements in his review of Wood's book: that "*Don Quixote* fails to provide ideological or some other sort of intellectual consistency to the text in which it appears" (237). In this statement Scanlan pithily identifies the central problem of the study of the quixotic: the seeming impossibility of finding commonality across such a disparate range of rewrites and reconfigurations, and hence the tendency to conclude, as Wood and others have, with something of a surrendering to quixotic polyvalence. For Wood, "quixotic" is more of an organizational or genre-like category of American literatures influenced by British quixotic literatures—a "formative genre of the early republic" (viii). This most frequent conclusion of recent studies of the

quixotic—that the quixotic is promiscuous and polyvalent, taking on conflicting meanings from one text or nation to another to the point of eschewing coherent meaning beyond loose relationality from text to text—is essentially the *raison d'être* of this study. I begin with the polyvalence of the quixotic as a thoroughly argued and historicized given, and proceed with comparative readings of British and American texts that locate and magnify those instances in which the quixotic becomes not just a literary grouping term, but a mode of exceptionalism. Arguably, the coherent ideology of the quixotic text is that of exceptionalism, the roots of which emerge from the origins of quixotism itself.

Wendy Motooka's *The Age of Reasons: Quixotism, Sentimentalism, and Political Economy in Eighteenth-Century Britain* comes the closest of the major contemporary studies of quixotic narratives to offering a thorough and holistic analysis of the concept of quixotism itself, arguing that the combination of reliable sensory perception, uncommon (or inaccurate) interpretation, and the inability to self-scrutinise are the hallmarks of the quixote, who constitutes thereby a critique of the Lockean ideal of universal reason. For Motooka, what might be described as the exceptionalism of quixotes is the circuitous and unquestioning belief in the validity of the quixote's sensory perception or experience, despite that the quixote's interpretation of what s/he experiences is different from the common interpretations of others. As I will demonstrate, however, quixotes are often capable of more self-scrutiny than Motooka gives them credit for; and their exceptionalism is a result of not merely the circuitous self-assuredness of their reasoning, but of the fact that quixotes hold themselves to different standards of reasoning from the common standards of those around them.

0.2 The Quixotic is Not the Picaresque

The quixotic is not the picaresque, though texts may share aspects of each. In fact, it is often most useful to discuss, deploy, or define the two oppositionally. Between their Spanish origins, their common lineage, and their set of ostensibly shared structural and

thematic characteristics, the two terms can easily appear interchangeable, or at least to overlap more than their respective histories would corroborate. This has arguably caused many scholars to conflate aspects of the quixotic and the picaresque when reading a common group of texts through one lens or the other. Despite a rich and significant body of scholarship dedicated to exploring the relationship between these terms, we continue to use them quite frequently without precision, and scramble for heuristic definitions when pressed for clarification. Since Walter L. Reed's remarkable study *An Exemplary History of the Novel: The Quixotic versus the Picaresque*, scholars have largely differentiated between the two with piecemeal justifications or outright omissions.

Those researching the quixotic have nonetheless developed a useful map of quixotic characteristics. In *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye identified the "quixotic phase of satire," characterized by "the setting of ideas and generalizations and theories and dogmas over against the life they are supposed to explain" (230). Alexander Welsh's *Reflections on the Hero as Quixote* suggests in its preface that its central mission will be to discuss "two aspects of quixotic heroism that are related: the quest for justice and the endurance of practical jokes" (notably, in light of Frye's analysis, Welsh does not consider *Don Quixote* a satire) (3). Ruth Anthony El Saffar and Diana de Armas Wilson have gathered "psychoanalytic perspectives" on Cervantes in *Quixotic Desire* (El Saffar and Wilson 2). Gillian Brown has proposed in "The Quixotic Fallacy" that the "quixotic reader" is one "with mimetic expectations, who expects life to conform to literature," the "quixotic fallacy" being that which "leads readers to confuse not only literature with its effects—to take the literary artefact as a personal mirror—but to forget altogether the artificial status of a literary representation" (251). Ruth Mack employs a similar definition in "Quixotic Ethnography," arguing that Arabella's quixotism in *The Female Quixote* is predicated on Arabella's repeatedly "substituting the reality of French romances for that of eighteenth-century English society" (193). More recently, in "Quixotes, Imitations, and

Transatlantic Genres,” Bannet has picked up on the mimetic or “imitative” core of quixotism, as well as, echoing Reed, its considerable investment in notions of literary genre, or its literary inclusiveness. And most recently, Sarah Wood has defined a “quixotic fiction” as “quite simply a fictional work in which *Don Quixote* is a generative literary source, a significant (though not necessarily a sole) literary model” (vi).

Despite this valuable work, however, we are left to wonder whether the “quest for justice and the endurance of practical jokes,” as Welsh puts it, might also be a picaresque quality²; or whether crossdressing picaras and picaros are as mimetic as crossdressing quixotes; or whether texts that take *Don Quixote* as a “significant...literary model” are not also deeply invested, as was *Don Quixote* itself, in the picaresque literary tradition from which *Don Quixote* arose and diverged (and if so, what is the importance of this differentiation). Beyond these questions, we are left to wonder in other cases, as with El Saffar and de Armas Wilson’s study, whether “quixotic” should mean “Cervantic” or “Cervantine,” and whether these, too, overlap with the picaresque.³ The history of the quixotic and the picaresque has proceeded somewhat like a wedge, from a concentrated point in the Spanish Golden Age during which Mateo Alemán wrote *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599), and Cervantes penned the picaresque-influenced first volume of *Don Quixote* shortly after in 1605.⁴ From common origins the quixotic and the picaresque bifurcated with the introduction of *Don Quixote*, whose protagonist was anything but a picaro.

²See note five below. For Alexander Parker, “serious social interest” and treatments of justice and social morality are very much part of the picaresque tradition as well, though quixotes are most often credited for being seekers of justice.

³Notably, Diana de Armas Wilson addresses the “quixotic” nicely in *Cervantes, the Novel, and the New World*, in which she describes briefly its historical connotations, its relation to mimesis (by way of René Girard), and its relationship to Golden Age Spanish imperialism and the conquistadores.

⁴Though the anonymously published *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554) came before *Guzmán de Alfarache*, and is widely considered the first picaresque novel, whether *Lazarillo* is properly picaresque is a subject of debate. Alexander Parker argues in *Literature and the Delinquent* that “although *Lazarillo de Tormes* should be kept historically and thematically distinct from the picaresque *genre* proper, it must be given its due as the precursor” (28). Parker contends that the only way in which *Lazarillo* “bears on the treatment of delinquency in literature,” delinquency being for Parker the picaro’s definitive quality, is “the way it demonstrated that a work could be amusing and witty and yet show a serious social interest” (28). For Parker, *Lazarillo de Tormes* is the picaresque’s “precursor,” the “prototype” being *Guzmán de Alfarache* (6).

To begin with, Cervantes' knight is decidedly *hidalgo*, a noble without wealth, but in no way a member of the dregs of society. As Alexander Parker tells us, early documentation of the term "pícaro" indicates that it referred to a "kitchen boy," though "twenty years later it already meant 'evil living.'" By the eighteenth century, "pícaro" was defined as "low, vicious, deceitful, dishonourable and shameless" (4). Alluding to the first landmark study of the picaresque, Frank W. Chandler's *Literature of Roguery*, Parker explains that "'picaroon' and 'picaresque' have been traditionally defined as 'rogue' and 'roguish,' and the picaresque novels have generally been called romances of roguery" (3). Yet Parker finds cause to locate a more precise term to characterize the picaresque, as pícaros tend to be connivers and "light offenders" rather than rogues or serious criminals. For Parker, "the distinguishing feature of the [picaresque] genre is the atmosphere of *delinquency* [emphasis added]," which "begins in a setting of low life but generally ascends the social scale; the origins of the protagonist are usually disreputable" (6). The distinction between the "low," "delinquent" life of the pícaro and the nobility of the quixote leads Parker to rightful skepticism over the historically frequent classification of *Don Quixote* as a picaresque novel:

Since nowadays the word 'picaresque' is in fact commonly stretched 'to mean any novel in which the hero takes a journey whose course plunges him into all sorts, conditions, and classes of men,' we need not wonder at *Don Quixote's* being classified as a picaresque novel...though we may still wonder what purpose is supposedly served by lumping so many disparate works together. But even more surprising than what we nowadays find included in the category is what we find excluded (3).⁵

Parker's concerns with the use of the picaresque as a catch-all to include the quixotic, expressed in 1967, still resonate today. While it is inevitable and in many ways advantageous that we find intertextual and historical connections between often disparate groups of literatures, even when they lead to genre disputes, the ambiguous treatment of at once related and radically different concepts like the quixotic and the picaresque can lead to various kinds of misprision. Anthony Close's contribution to *The Cambridge Companion to the Spanish Novel: From 1600 to the Present*, "The Legacy of *Don Quijote*

⁵Here Parker cites Walter Allen in *The English Novel* (New York: Penguin 1958).

and the Picaresque Novel,” suggests from the beginning that “although modern criticism has continued to treat the *Quijote* and the picaresque novel as virtually opposed fictional worlds, they are much more closely related”; yet it is precisely this closeness that contributes most to our continued difficulty with the terms, rather than our alleged facility in holding them separately (15). Cathy Davidson, for example, includes a chapter on “The Picaresque and the Margins of Political Discourse” in *Revolution and the Word* that discusses, among others, *Female Quixotism*, *Modern Chivalry*, and Royall Tyler’s *The Algerine Captive* (1797) as representations of the American picaresque; yet despite Davidson’s adept readings, none of the protagonists in these novels is a picaro, a lowlife struggling to the top. Quite oppositely, these protagonists are the educated, privileged targets of picaro-like characters who make brief and sporadic appearances in the narratives without being featured in-depth.⁶ Contemporary critics like Bannet, Mack, Wood, and Gillian Brown each read as “quixotic” a number of the same texts that Davidson has so influentially discussed as “picaresque,” while others, like El Saffar and de Armas Wilson, have employed the term “quixotic” seemingly to mean anything related to the work of Cervantes, who himself dabbled in the picaresque with texts like *Rinconete and Cortadillo*.

The issue here is not that there are different and conflicting readings of these texts—this is if anything both unavoidable and beneficial— but rather that these different readings, frequently unconcerned with fleshing out the concept of quixotism, get us no closer in and of themselves to an understanding of the relationship between the quixotic and the picaresque, and concomitantly a fuller understanding of the quixotic. It would seem that, because more than a few common texts have coalesced somewhat organically into a studied group of roughly “quixotic” or “picaresque” narratives, many critics have accordingly taken either the “quixoticness” or “picaresqueness” of these texts as given, and produced readings that rely to varying extents on such assumptions. Both British and

⁶In *Modern Chivalry*, Farrago’s footman Teague might be an exception if we read him as a picaro to Farrago’s quixote, despite the fact that he is also a footman to Farrago’s quixote.

American texts affiliated with *Don Quixote* in some demonstrable way—those mentioned above, as well as Fielding’s *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* (1749), Charles Dickens’ *The Pickwick Papers* (1836), Smollett’s various “adventures” novels, Washington Irving’s *A History of New York* (1809), and Charles Brockden Brown’s *Arthur Mervyn* (1799), to name just a few—populate discussions of “quixotic fictions” or “the quixotic novel,” “American quixotes,” “quixotes in England,” “the American picaresque,” and so on; yet “quixotic” and “picaresque” remain merely grouping or relational terms in the majority of these studies, rather than terms to be studied in and of themselves for their import. Distinguishing between the two terms, however, remains important well beyond considerations of literary classification and genre, as the concept of the quixotic, as differentiated from the picaresque, extends and operates beyond the realm of literary taxonomy. Quixotes were a subject of intense interest and literary inspiration for a set of influential statesmen, magistrates, and literary figures in eighteenth-century Atlantic cultures, allowing various modes of quixotism to permeate discussions of political policy and identity during this time.

0.3 A Quixotic Point of Departure

While it is the goal of this study to achieve a fuller understanding of the quixotic narrative as an exceptionalist narrative, and not to develop a hard law of the quixotic-as-genre, one must begin somewhere with a set of crude limitations that will either sharpen to a focus or become delimited. Beyond generalizations that apply to both the quixotic and the picaresque *as genres*, and are then stretched further to include the intertextual relations of these—travelers with attendants, burlesque entanglements, contact with a multitude of social types, among others—we can apply a few immediately discernible conditions of the quixotic as a starting point, conditions that abide both the literary and historical origins of the quixotic as a concept (from *Don Quixote*) and the functioning of the quixotic in literary texts and beyond. Rather than constituting a set of hard-and-fast laws, these characteristics

are best applied as guidelines for determining the quixotic elements of a text (or a character), and applied on a case-by-case basis, rather as a court test is applied by judges to rule on matters for which the law-as-written demands interpretation.

First, “quixotic” is not only a genre term, given to means of classification of literary objects, but also a concept. In the sense of the first *OED* definition of “concept,” it is a conceit, an idea or conception, a disposition or frame of mind, a type of imagination or fancy (“Quixotic” def. 1). The fanciful or imaginative, and particularly the idealistic, are endemic to the realm of the quixotic, but not to the picaresque. For the picaro, who starts from the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder and moves his way up by his wiles, survival under harsh circumstances, rather than idealism, is the imperative. The picaresque, as Parker points out, “does not arise as an anti-romance in the sense of an implicit parody of idealistic fiction,” but rather from a kind of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish religious allegory that addresses the “question of moral discipline” embedded in the circumstances of one who engages in delinquency to survive or to free himself from social constraints (19). The quixotic, on the other hand, concerns primarily the imagination, or the imaginative state of mind, as a response to idealistic fiction; and the quixote is an idealist.

Secondly, the imaginative or idealistic quixote is, unlike the picaro, of a noble and educated class. The quixotic comports with a sort of literary high-mindedness, and the attendant musings of the leisured classes who would be both educated and privileged enough to read. Though many quixotes, including the original, actually lack material wealth (in fact, this lack of wealth is often part of the impetus for quixotic adventure), the quixotic suggests a fixation on the upper-classed grandiosity of the lifestyles of fictional heroes and heroines. The quixotic is thus a particularly class-invested concept, evoking close connections between social class and character or moral virtue, as well as social class, literacy, and literariness. Yet, unlike the picaresque, the fulcrum of the quixotic is bourgeois-to-upper-class idealism, rather than lower-class tricksterism or delinquency. The

quixote engages in social and political discourse as one might in the bourgeois salons of eighteenth-century London, holding ideas and political philosophies above immediate and practical concerns.

Thirdly, as a function of its investment in imaginative and bourgeois-to-upper-class idealism, the quixotic produces both exceptions and exceptionalisms. Quixotes constitute themselves imaginatively and literarily beyond the scope of material reality. What Davidson describes as the marginality of picares and picares might better be considered the exceptionalism of quixotes, whose quixotism renders them frequently aloof and above the prattle of changing and developing societies and their attendant social problems. In this sense, quixotes stand in opposition to picares or picares, who, as lower-class delinquents, are both materially and psychologically enmeshed in the social problems that they struggle to traverse or transcend. Even as quixotes are mocked and punished, quixotic idealism serves as a buffer between the quixote's self-image and his or her "marginal" position with respect to the societal mainstream. "The margin" is often conceptualized as a space of paradoxical doubleness, as the realm of the subaltern and the realm of unlikely political potential. Quixotes occupy a similarly liminal position as ridiculed and relegated figures who nonetheless fail to internalize the way others view them. Thus, quixotes proceed in their own minds not as marginal figures, but as shining exceptions against societies marred by change, iniquity, and disunity. The difference here is crucial, as exceptionalism is more appropriately the result of lofty, quixotic idealism (rather than low, picaresque tricksterism or marginality) and the driving force of the quixote's self-delusion: the belief in a grander purpose.

Lastly, as a number of critics have rightly noted, from Erich Auerbach to René Girard to Bannet and Gillian Brown, the quixotic is closely associated with the mimetic.⁷

⁷Erich Auerbach includes a reading of *Don Quixote* in *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. René Girard reads Don Quixote as a mad imitator in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure* (Auerbach 120; Girard 84).

Quixotes inspire several layers of “literary” mimesis, from the transhistorical and continual reproduction of quixotic narratives—a kind of quixotic-literary meme—to the quixote’s own imitation of literary figures, to the quixote’s remarkable ability to draw others into his or her imitative fantasies. Quixotic mimesis also calls attention to understandings of lineage, insofar as mimesis or imitation creates a chain of association when, for example, one imitated narrative inspires another, which in turn inspires others, and so on. For this reason, as Bannet has pointed out, the quixotic often prompts investigations into issues of genre and textual relatedness. The picaresque, of course, has its own literary lineage or genre which, as I have said, includes *Don Quixote* in some ways as the *Quixote*’s inspiration; however, the picaresque narrative is without the layers of mimetic behavior that figure so prominently in and drive the quixotic narrative.

There would appear to be some glaring omissions in this starting list. How, for example, could one discuss the quixotic without considerations of humor, doing battle, the burlesque, roaming and traveling, the sidekick, and so on? While all of these themes figure prominently in this study, and contribute significantly toward a richer understanding of the quixotic, they are not *immediately* differentiating factors with respect to the picaresque. This is to say that they do not productively separate from the outset the quixotic as a concept from the picaresque as a genre (or something resembling a genre), or from other sub-genre considerations within the study of the novel. Totalizing the concept of the quixotic by attaching such generalizable conditions to it is problematic because of, echoing Parker, at the same time all it would allow to be included and what it would exclude. As Reed notes, developing a poetics of the novel based on strict notions of genre is problematic largely for the same reason: “the term ‘genre’...is misleading...It implies a more stable set of rules than in fact ever pertained, and a greater commitment to the idea of such rules than can be discerned from the texts” (56). In attempting to illuminate the quixotic as a concept, it is important to resist the categorization pull, or the tendency to

distill one's readings of the quixotic into mere formulations of genre or literary taxonomy. Here again the quixotic way of producing exceptions is important, as exceptions are precisely what make genre studies so difficult and in some ways untenable. We might be hard-pressed, for example, to think of quixotic narratives for which traveling is not an essential concern, until we consider the narratives of female quixotes in the eighteenth century, who are largely bound to their estates and only "venture" in their minds. These kinds of exceptions can become rules in themselves, making the construction of exhaustive lists of in-group/out-group characteristics a self-defeating exercise. While such studies can be tremendously useful in other ways, as is Claudio Guillén's influential essay "Toward a Definition of the Picaresque," they often, quixotically, transgress the definitional boundaries they labor to construct in the first place.

0.4 The Quixotic as Transnational

The quixotic, for which traveling and sojourning are not necessary but important themes, is also an historically transnational and particularly transatlantic concept. The history of *Don Quixote*'s translation and distribution necessitates a transnational scope or approach to notions of the quixotic. From Thomas Shelton's first translation of Part I of Cervantes' novel into English in 1612 to Tobias Smollett's prominent 1755 translation and beyond, the quixotic grew into a captivating concept that eventually made its way via Britain to the nascent American republic. But even before the anglicized quixotic was written into literatures in English, Cervantes was arguably looking ahead to America. Diana de Armas Wilson makes a strong case for "The Americanist Cervantes," who, though denied passage, "tried several times to emigrate to the new world," and whose frequent cataloguing and referencing of possibilities (by location) for "Iberian colonial expansion" would seem to indicate a serious interest in the Americas (Novel 20). As de Armas Wilson suggests, sixteenth-century Spanish debates over "just warfare," slave-trading, and colonization in the Americas recurrently find their way into *Don Quixote*'s

discourses and encounters (Novel 22-23).

By the time the US region became a British colony, then eventually its own sovereign state, however, its inhabitants were predominantly reading *Don Quixote* and its many derivatives in English translation. As Wood tells us, “the *Don Quixote* they [eighteenth-century Americans] came to know was mediated through the eyes and minds of the English translators whose works were sold in American bookshops, the English novelists whose narratives rolled off American presses, and the English critics whose articles were reprinted in American journals and magazines,” noting also that forty-five editions of *Don Quixote* were published in English throughout the eighteenth century, compared to just thirty-three published in Spanish over this period (Wood 6-8). The eighteenth-century English preoccupation with the quixotic narrative, recognizable in Swift, Fielding, Smollett, Lennox, Sterne, Richard Graves, Charles Lucas, and more, would become an eighteenth-century US preoccupation as well for writers like Brackenridge, Tyler, Tenney, Brockden Brown, and Irving, as well as political leaders like George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin. Though the quixotic of course originated in Spain before gaining traction in broader Europe, it is the translated and often reconfigured British quixotic that finds its way most influentially to the post-Revolution US. Wood dubs Don Quixote “the celebrated Spaniard who transcends national boundaries to become an international icon of cultural and literary Enlightenment” (AE 113). Yet the concept of the quixotic for early-American readers and writers was not necessarily stable or agreed upon, at least no more so than early-American concepts of governance and democracy. As Paul Giles contends, “In the second half of the eighteenth century...the Atlantic becomes a contested discursive space where novelists and other writers take up different, often deliberately antagonistic, positions on the meaning of the Quixote legend and other iconic aspects of Western culture” (Transatlantic Currents 6). This transatlantic dialogue largely informs

Enlightenment-era British and US notions and appropriations of the quixotic.

In addition to *Don Quixote*'s translation and readership histories, a stark connectedness with the imitative gives the quixotic particular transnational or transatlantic importance. Bannet's suggestion that "transatlantic writers," "spurred by Cervantes' ridicule of mechanical imitations of classical and scriptural models in his preface" to *Don Quixote*, "used their own imitations of Cervantes to address the crises of individuation and of 'national character'" is especially apt in light of early-American adaptations of British-Spanish quixotes (554). Davidson's readings of a number of oft-treated "quixotic" or "picaresque" early-American texts give considerable attention to the ways in which issues of national character and national identity are reflected in the narratives. For Bannet, quixotic narratives develop transatlantically to test the "cultural fit" of various British behaviors and positions in early America. Given the markedly interrelated histories of colonial endeavors and revolution in the Americas, from Spanish occupancy through British occupancy to US independence, it comes as little surprise that the quixote's "crossdressing" in the garb of other nations has become a suitable metonym for these transnational histories.

0.5 The Quixotic Over Time

Understandings of the quixotic have changed not only as the concept has moved across nations and oceans but also across time. Welsh tells us that in the eighteenth century *Don Quixote* and its knight were generally treated satirically, though he acknowledges that the second half of the century witnessed a sympathetic turn among readers and critics in England toward a more problematized view of Cervantes' hero (9). Ronald Paulson argues that the end of the last Jacobite rebellion of 1745 marked the sympathetic turn, though Wood sees eighteenth-century quixote criticism as more "fluid" (Paulson xv; Wood 13). Nonetheless, this turn has since been characterized as "Romantic," and as indicative of an epistemic shift. "For eighteenth-century Britain,

engaged in the intellectual debates of European Enlightenment,” Wood explains, “*Don Quixote* was a foundational text, and changing responses toward the narrative and its knight can be used as a literary touchstone for measuring the broader cultural shift from Enlightenment to Romanticism” (AE 113). Whereas Don Quixote was considered at the beginning of the eighteenth century the mad object of Cervantes’ satire, “by the end of the century, he was more frequently seen as a Romantic hero in a narrative that exalted the powers of his imagination and lamented the passing of heroic chivalric ideals,” as well as a vehicle for conflicting commentaries on the outcomes of the French Revolution (AE 113).⁸ As *Don Quixote* was read less straightforwardly as a satire of romantic idealism, or as a satire at all, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, the narrative was also read and rewritten to align with a variegated set of political positions in Britain and early America.⁹

0.6 Exceptionalist Landscapes: British and American

The idea of exceptionalism has occupied a central role within the field of American studies since the emergence of the New Americanists in the 1980s, whose collective oeuvre challenged what they viewed as a revisionist orientation and an “end of ideology consensus” among some of the twentieth century’s most influential scholars of American literature (New Americanists 2). As Donald Pease tells us, the term “New Americanists” was inaugurated by Frederick Crews in an essay in the October 27, 1988 issue of the *New York Review of Books* (New Americanists 1). Pease, something of a “New Americanist” himself, summarises Crews’ accurate summary of the New Americanist critique as follows: “an American literary imagination was in fact an ideological construct that developed out of the consensus politics of liberal anti-communism of the postwar era” (New Americanists 4).

⁸Both Welsh and Wood draw on Stuart Tave’s readings of *Don Quixote* in *The Amiable Humorist* to demonstrate the shift in attitudes toward Cervantes’ knight in the eighteenth century.

⁹Wood cites the use of Don Quixote as a celebration of “unbridled imagination” by the Tories and “outmoded chivalric assumptions” by the Whigs in eighteenth-century England, as well as “the obsolescence of outmoded Federalist assumptions” and “the extravagance of Republican democratizing tendencies” in early America in *Quixotic Fictions of the U.S.A. 1792-1815* (13).

The postwar era to which Pease refers here is the period of the Cold War after World War II, though the transhistorical force of this New Americanist critique is compelling. Centuries earlier, in the wake of the Revolutionary War with Britain that effectively brought the modern US state into being, anxieties over the “new” American identity gave rise to a Federalist politics of centralization and assimilation, culminating in the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798. As Pease has suggested more recently in a reflective essay on the bearing of the globalization of American studies on emerging manifestations of American exceptionalism, the assimilationist aim of the now-obsolete US Cold War state has been reconfigured for the twenty-first-century demands of globalized “America” and the post-9/11 security state.¹⁰ These historically interspersed periods—the Revolution era, the Cold War era, and the War on Terrorism era—each prompted large-scale state reactions, often through the promulgation of discourses of exceptionalism, to what could be considered crises of national identity. The Federalist governments of the late Revolution era, engaged in the undeclared Franco-American War, articulated an imperative to formulate a cohesive national identity against those of the European powers, creating grounds for exception to the early-American discourse of liberty in the passing of the illiberal Alien and Sedition Acts; the Cold War era US governments used comparable rhetoric to render constitutionally protected critiques of the state exceptional, as seditious “communist” gestures; and the post-9/11 US governments have continued in this vein, using the rhetoric of the “homeland” and the “rogue state” to produce an exceptionalist, manichean framework for military conflict that supplants the jurisdiction of international law.

As part of a call to investigate some of the ways in which exceptionalism operates through and above the New Americanist challenge to exceptionalist and regionalist approaches to American literatures, histories, and cultures, Pease proposes a model of

¹⁰“Re-thinking ‘American Studies after US Exceptionalism.’” *American Literary History*. 21.1 (2009): 19-27.

“historical comparative analysis”—a mode of *comparative* American studies—which “would bring back into visibility the wars and the laws through which disparate European empires contested with the emergent US imperial state over control of the New World” (Re-thinking 25). In response to this call, this study undertakes a comparative analysis of a developmental mode of quixotic exceptionalism in America during the post-(Revolutionary) war era of westward expansion as a co-narrative of quixotic exceptionalism in Britain during Britain’s pre-(Revolutionary) war rise to Atlantic and global dominance. Such a study is a necessary step toward understanding this mode of exceptionalism not merely as an organic “American” theme—an exceptionalist notion itself—but as a product of Atlantic political, economic, and literary cultures during a period in which England and the US emerged as competing Atlantic powers.

0.7 Quixotic Exceptionalism

Returning to Pease’s summary of the New Americanist critique—that “an American literary imagination was in fact an ideological construct,” despite an “end of ideology consensus”—we can observe some initial indicators of the potential importance of the quixotic for the study of exceptionalism. The *literary imagination* as an ideological construct is among the central concerns of the quixotic narrative, whose heroic (or mock-heroic, or anti-heroic) protagonist constantly provides writers and readers with occasion to interrogate relationships between prevailing and marginal ideologies and “rational” and “irrational” types of discourse. It is precisely the bourgeois-to-upper-class literary imagination of quixotes that produces their exceptionalism—a mindset in which quixotes conceive of themselves as exceptions to the rules that govern their surrounding societies, and, indeed, material reality itself (as opposed to fiction or fantasy)—just as it is the literary imagination of readers of quixotic narratives that identifies a quixote either as a transcendent hero or heroine—truly exceptional—or a buffoon over-influenced by literary propaganda. These elements of the quixotic narrative reflect its attractiveness among

bourgeois writers in Britain and early America, who connected with a bookish, exceptionalist figure in Don Quixote who famously bucked the tides of change. As Motooka argues, “Don Quixote threatens both universal reason and the public peace; he is a madman...whose delusions make him act upon an authority that others refuse to credit...” (4). The quixote is, in other words, a figure who views himself or herself as an exception wider public authority.

Quixotic exceptionalism has not only been a vehicle for the furthering of bourgeois interests and dominant discourses in the long eighteenth century; it has also been reinscribed by critics in quixote criticism, in readings of quixotes as transcendently romantic heroes and heroines. After the mid-eighteenth-century “Romantic turn” in Anglo-American readings of quixotes—the shift from quixotes as the imprudent objects of satire to quixotes as imaginative and visionary paladins—many contemporary critics have ratified the exceptionalism of quixotes through their readings. For Ruth Mack, for example, Charlotte Lennox’s *Arabella* becomes a seer of “the better reality”; for Alexander Welsh, “justice is more quixotic than we think” (Mack 193; Welsh 4). While quixotes can certainly be heroes and heroines, their quixotism can just as readily make them exceptionalist stand-ins for widespread, dominant ideologies, despite the oft-cited notion that quixotes, or quixotic narratives, frequently deployed with contradictory messages, are by definition resistant to totalization. The following chapters explore in a series of quixotic narratives the numerous ways in which quixotes take up the lance of exceptionalism to guard against class anxiety, posture before dynamic Atlantic economies, and protect bourgeois investments in grand narratives of geopolitical advancement.

NOTES ON METHODOLOGY

Because this comparative study covers a range of British and early-American texts published decades apart and consumed by readerships on opposite sides of the Atlantic, this brief addendum to the introduction provides a detailed explanation of text selection, historical and geographical scope, and the importance of economic and geopolitical contexts for comparative work that challenges “nationalist” readings of eighteenth-century texts.

0.8 Text Selection and Chronology

As I have suggested, a central problem for the study of the quixotic is the range of quixotic narratives, which proliferate along and across thematic, national, linguistic, and temporal axes. While it would be impossible, of course, to take account of all quixotic narratives across these categories in a single study, focusing on a comparative cross-section of quixotic narratives can indeed enable a greater understanding of the quixotic by bringing into conversation a series of such narratives that address common themes. This study focuses on quixotic narratives in English and their function in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world, with the aim of drawing comparisons between the literatures and cultures of early-to-mid-century Britain (through 1760) and the late-century US (1790 through the turn of the century), periods during which, respectively, the novel emerged in each country. Accordingly, the quixotic narratives I have chosen to discuss include both British and American texts from these periods.

Furthermore, among the range of eighteenth-century quixotic narratives in English, I have chosen eight texts for their thematic import. The reasons for a thematic basis for text selection are threefold. Firstly, thematic text selection enables the transhistorical comparison of British and American texts during disparate periods in which Britain and early America had similar literary interests at different times. By this method, in other words, one can more readily discuss apt similarities and differences between British texts,

written much earlier on account of the novel's early rise in Britain, and American texts written several decades later, when America eventually developed a novelistic tradition. Secondly, this method discourages dated assumptions about national and authorial influence from one nation or “national” group of literatures to the other. While such influences certainly exist between some texts I have chosen to discuss, the focus of this study is not the one-way influence of British texts on American texts, but rather, as I have suggested, a synchronic and comparative account of two literary traditions. Thirdly, thematic text selection allows for coverage of a number of wider socio-political issues, germane to both British societies in the early-to-mid-century and American societies of the late century, to which quixotic narratives responded. The four thematic sections of this study cover quixotic encounters with otherness abroad, quixotic engagements in political discourse and the “public sphere,” intersections of gender and class concerns in narratives about female quixotes, and quixotic interactions and negotiations with the law.

This study considers texts specifically selected to address each of these salient themes in eighteenth-century studies, illustrating both the importance of these themes for writers of quixotic narratives, but also the importance of quixotic narratives for understanding these themes. Each thematic section, structured comparatively, includes two chapters, the first of which focuses on a British text, and the second of which focuses on a American text. The British texts guide the chronology of the sections (from earliest to latest), not to suggest, again, their influence on the American texts, but because of the different timeframes for the rise of the British and American novels, respectively. While the British novel emerged most prominently in the early-eighteenth century, but continued its emergence well into the 1760s before novel production waned, the first American novels appeared as something of a literary rupture within the decade of the 1790s before waning, only to re-emerge in the 1820s. Given the condensed period during which the American novel emerged, the chronology of such novels is arguably less important than

that of the early British novels, which spanned a greater timeframe in their emergence: American novels of the 1790s need not be sequenced chronologically for the purposes of this study, though British novels spanning more than a half-century must be chronologically sequenced in order to account for historical shifts that occurred over that greater period of time. Thus, the chronology of the thematic sections of this study tracks a sequence of British novels over a longer historical period than that of the American novels.

0.9 Interspersed Histories

A significant problem for comparative or transnational approaches to literary study is the paradoxical tendency to at once deny the nation or the region as meaningful categories of distinction and to rely on nation and region nonetheless as signposts or signifiers to be moved beyond. As such I will aim for a “mosaic” picture of quixotic exceptionalism in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world, reflecting both interrelation and the individual pieces of valid historical difference between nations that render *linear* historical interrelation not always most relevant. For much of the Revolution era, for example, Americans generally were not writing novels. Not until the 1790s did the novel—and with it the quixotic narrative—fully emerge in the US (Shapiro 2). While British writers were certainly producing both novels and quixotic narratives before then, subjects in the American colonies were reading British novels but not responding with their own. By the time the emerging and expanding post-Revolution US began to produce quixotic narratives in response to these changes, the comparable historical moment in Britain—its emergence as an Atlantic trading power approaching and through the Seven Years’ War—had long since passed. Further, as Shapiro writes, “late eighteenth-century American interests reinvigorated the novel precisely because it had run out of steam in the prior decades, having already served its occasional purpose [in Europe] around the mid-century’s hinge” (8). Thus, much of the “steam” that propelled the production of the novel in mid-century Britain was present in the late-century US, amid phases of post-

Revolutionary political and economic change. How could one conduct a comparative analysis of these relevant but time-separated histories?

Since the prevailing method of historicizing in literary studies is by linear chronology—placing texts within linear histories punctuated by distinct “period” breaks—comparative studies that observe interrelation between texts or histories beyond the categories of nation or region often remain attached to a continuous historical timeline (several chapters in Susan Manning and Francis Cogliano’s *The Atlantic Enlightenment*, as well as Sarah Wood’s *Quixotic Fictions of the U.S.A., 1792-1815*, Paul Giles’ *Transatlantic Insurrections: British Culture and the Formation of American Literature, 1730-1860*, and Leonard Tennenhouse’s *The Importance of Feeling English: American Literature and the British Diaspora, 1750-1850* are all examples of this). In other cases, as in Shapiro’s *The Culture and Commerce of the Early American Novel: Reading the Atlantic World-System*, world-systems analysis can be used to compare similar but separated economic cycles, rather than tracing a linear path continuously through a given historical period.

The comparative method of this study, aimed at bringing into conversation comparable histories along separated points on an historical timeline, takes geopolitical power cycles—rather than just economic cycles—as a justification for comparing British and American texts written in disparate periods, considering economic, cultural, and literary responses to like phases of states’ bids to ameliorate their geopolitical standing. Frequently these phases are defined not just by economic actions, but by military actions as well.

Fernand Braudel has suggested that Britain’s “developing supremacy” as a world economic power “could already be glimpsed” by 1713 and the Treaty of Utrecht, and was “clearly visible by the end of the Seven Years’ War” (352). Britain’s trading prowess among European nations grew in the first half of the eighteenth century as Britain emerged as a “coherent national market,” after which point it was also able to strengthen its

geopolitical position against France, its most formidable national competitor in the eighteenth century, through the Seven Years' War. Despite the result of the Revolutionary War, by the 1783 Treaty of Paris, Britain had established itself "beyond a shadow of doubt" as the dominant nation in the European economy, and the "beating heart of the world economy" (Braudel 352). Its position in this respect was achieved not only through vast increases in Atlantic exports from the turn of the eighteenth century to the mid-eighteenth century, but also through military success and naval prowess (Thomas 37). The emergence of a dominant British state from a struggle with France for control of the Atlantic world-system was thus the result of a gradual build-up in the first half of the eighteenth century, during which the first British empire—the Atlantic empire—was prepared to hit the peak of its crescendo just before the Revolutionary War and the rise of the US state. Amid this crescendo and its continual series of wars in 1702-13, 1718-21, 1739-48, 1756-63, and 1776-82, many of Britain's novels reflected nationalist sentiments placing Britain in opposition to its French rival (Thomas 41). Likewise, Britain's quixotic narratives dramatized internal (national) anxieties over the cost of incessant warfare and the rise of debt and financial economies to pay for this series of wars (Gilmore 184).

After the Revolutionary war and throughout the nineteenth century, Britain would maintain its status as the prevailing world power, shifting its imperial aspirations primarily eastward toward the Indian subcontinent and southward toward Africa. In the late eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century, however, the US would begin to expand westward across the North American continent, most famously through the Louisiana Purchase from France in 1803. But even before expansion, soon after it won independence, the early US state sought to centralize its governance, nationalize its debt, and develop itself as a viable geopolitical competitor. Europe's frequent wars produced shortages and created a need for US goods, implicating the US early as an important facet of the global economy (Shapiro 1). After France and Britain lifted bans in 1793 that

previously prevented US merchants from trading with the French Caribbean and British West Indies, enabling the US to acquire lucrative items like sugar, coffee, and tea from these colonies and re-export them to Europe for large profits, a formative US merchant middle class arose and drew influence away from an older, landed, nationalist bourgeoisie in New England and Virginia (Shapiro 5). In this way the early US was already behaving like an imperial power, drawing resources in trade from European colonies and profiting enormously from the exports. The attendant “rupture within the nation’s aggregated middle classes,” resulting in an Oppositionalist-like, landed, nationalist bourgeoisie deeply invested in national politics and a wealthy, merchant, “transnational” bourgeoisie, mirrored the scenario in the first half of eighteenth-century Britain, in which landed, nationalist Oppositionists viewed a new brand of traders and speculators as a threat to national values and economic stability (Shapiro 5).¹¹

In the cases of Britain from the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht to the end of the Seven Years’ War in 1763 and America from the 1790s to the 1820s, the Monroe Doctrine, and a revival period for the early-American novel, there existed comparable historical grounds for exceptionalist narratives. Military and economic maneuvering in these formative phases of nation-building—for Britain the rise to global dominance, for the US the rise to continental dominance and global relevance—coupled with the emergence of new kinds of bourgeoisie within each of these periods—engendered in both cases a writerly desire to respond to these developments and their disruption of preexisting class structures. The quixotic narrative, featuring a high-minded quixote who views the changed or changing world from an at once antiquated and imaginative standpoint, was an attractive medium for savvy writers looking to dramatize societal change, ridicule opposing positions, or reify their own worldviews. Consequently, the quixotic narrative made myriad appearances in eighteenth-century Britain and the post-Revolution US.

¹¹For more on this, see Michael T. Gilmore’s “Eighteenth-Century Oppositional Ideology and Hugh Henry Brackenridge’s *Modern Chivalry*.” *Early American Literature* 13.2 (1978 Fall) 181-192.

0.10 Re-Reading the “Nationalist Imaginary”

Though Stephen Shapiro’s inventive world-systems analysis in *The Culture and Commerce of the Early American Novel: Reading the Atlantic World-System* concerns itself primarily with the motivations—as opposed to the effects—of the early-American novel, it nonetheless offers a formidable and relevant challenge to dominant readings of long narratives of the Revolution era.¹² For Shapiro, readings of the early-American novel over-emphasize the “nationalist imaginary,” the idea that novels evince “a mythic national exceptionalism and transcendental spirit inaugurated by the act of political independence” (8). Whether through this earlier “national exceptionalist” focus or its more recent formulation as “the novel’s registration of concern about the fragility of the new nation,” Shapiro argues, these readings mistakenly “see the equation between the performance of concerns about national identity and literary imagination as commonsensical” (8).

Ultimately, then, for Shapiro:

The early American novel had little concern for allegorizing the nation state or enunciating patriotic themes...its motivations are overwhelmingly not those of either nationality or statehood, but the expression of concerns by a particular set of middle-class interests, a bourgeoisie, rising with the tides of change within the circumatlantic world-system. The early American novel arose as a local response to a global reconfiguration in the Atlantic political economy in the wake of the French Revolution, brought about as a result of the long confrontation between Great Britain and France for imperial control of global resources (4).

While this analysis is compelling as a contribution to theories of the rise of the American novel (particularly as Shapiro tracks fluctuations in the production of novels as they align with economic changes in the Atlantic world-system), it also risks losing sight of at least one particular undercurrent—the quixotic narrative—within the wider emergence of the American novel. Shapiro’s contention that “partisan disputes for authority between New England Federalists and Virginia-centred Democratic-Republicans,” as they concern

¹² World-systems analysis is a method advanced by sociologist and economic historian Immanuel Wallerstein, with roots in Marxian political economy and the historian Fernand Braudel’s three-volume study *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Centuries*. The method considers intersections of economic history and political geography as they affect long-wave shifts and displacements between “core” and “peripheral” powers vying for control of the means of production in a global capitalist system.

national identity and a nationalized political discourse, have overshadowed more subtle, economic reasons for early US novel production is important; however, it does not negate the causes and effects of political dramatization and identity concerns in the early American quixotic narrative (5). In fact, it actually helps to explain them. If the early-American novel arose as an expressive outlet for the anxiety of the bourgeoisie amid tides of economic change, the early-American quixotic narrative emerged as a manifestation of that bourgeois anxiety, as well as an attempt to enshrine the interests of the bourgeoisie in protonationalist narratives of exception. In a roundabout way, then, Shapiro's claim that the "nationalist imaginary" readings of the early-American novel are overdetermined actually helps to explain why the quixotic narratives of this era were so invested in a bourgeois nationalism and a *trans*-national mode of quixotic exceptionalism. The link between national identity and literary imagination is in fact, as Shapiro suggests, not commonsensical; rather, the link is established through the economically induced onset of class anxiety, driving bourgeois writers like Brackenridge and Tenney to use the literary imagination—the quixotic imagination—to project bourgeois identity as national identity, doing so frequently through overt discussions of contemporary political figures and events. As these writers understood the problems and concerns of the old-guard bourgeois classes—national unity, coping with expanding frontiers and emerging merchant classes with different political priorities—as the central problems of the nation, the quixotic narrative became an avenue for expressing these concerns. The quixote, an educated and noble idealist, became an apposite figure for educated, bourgeois writers to dispatch into American landscapes and mirror bourgeois concerns. Further, as Shapiro has shown, this move has effectively led scholars of early-American literature to misinterpret this bourgeois, quixotic identity preoccupation with a nationalist identity preoccupation. As this study will demonstrate, quixotism is by definition a mode of bourgeois ideology that transcends nationalist concerns, even where it is put forth in attempts to "nationalize"

bourgeois interests.

Further, Shapiro's reading of Atlantic cultures as interrelated within a unified world-system is important in its recognition that the production of novels, and of distinct themes in long narratives, accords with transatlantic developments like wars and trade cycles. Reconsidering this notion of the "nationalist imaginary" as more properly a "bourgeois imaginary" unhinges such narratives from the necessity of national context, opening up possibilities for reading the quixotic narrative not merely as an endlessly rewritable *tabula rasa* for the venting of national preoccupations, but as a common thread between nations in an interconnected Atlantic world. In *The Rise of the Novel*, Ian Watt's association of the British novel with middle-class individualism comports with an emergent British interest, beginning with *Joseph Andrews* (1742), in the quixotic narrative as a means of interrogating societal change and bourgeois social and economic concerns. Furthermore, writers like Fielding, Alexander Pope, and Jonathan Swift viewed the rise of financial economies in Britain from 1690-1740 as disruptive to British industry, values, and patriotism, positioning them similarly with American writers like Brackenridge, Tenney, and Tyler against the "crude" profiteering and opportunism of the rising merchant classes (Gilmore 183-4).

SECTION I: EXCEPTIONALISM AND OTHERNESS
In-Group/Out-Group Distinctions, Nationalisms, and the Quixotic Politics of Lineage

CHAPTER 1: *GULLIVER'S TRAVELS*

In 1726, the year in which *Gulliver's Travels* was published, *Craftsman* editor Nicholas Amhurst hinted at Gulliver's quixotic tendencies when he commented on "the same Manner that *Cervantes* exposes Books of *Chivalry*, or Captain *Gulliver* the Writings of *Travelers*" (Paulson 136). In contemporary readings of *Gulliver's Travels*, however, such comparisons between Gulliver and Don Quixote are largely overshadowed by historicist preoccupations with Swift's political life, and those instances in which one can assemble enough evidence to plausibly locate in Swift's writings certain direct analogues of historical figures and events in and around the life of Swift. Frequently lost amid this diligent historicizing are Swift's characters, who, it could be argued, often amount to more than mere stand-ins for the nonfictional victims of Swiftian political satire. This chapter aims to recover Gulliver as a character who is novelistic enough in his development throughout the narrative to be considered a quixote, and thus a figure whose idealism and naïveté are as important to the political thrust of Swift's narrative as are the historical persons and circumstances to which Gulliver's surrounding cast of characters is so often compared. The terms of this argument are fourfold: first, that a long tradition of rigorous historicism in Swift studies has directed us away from crucial novelistic elements of *Gulliver's Travels*; second, that Gulliver bears the characteristics of a quixote, and behaves like one; third, that, novelistically, Gulliver's quixotism evolves coherently throughout the narrative; and fourth, that Gulliver's quixotism functions as a kind of exceptionalism, whose import is central to the political tenor of *Gulliver's Travels*. Accordingly, this reading moves toward a theory of "quixotic exceptionalism," by which the bookish idealism and naïveté typical of the quixotic figure—a figure widely represented in eighteenth-century literatures in English—underwrite the quixote's ideological claims while shielding such claims from the scrutiny of the wider world. In its demonstration of

this fuller consideration of the political implications of quixotism, *Gulliver's Travels* is an especially apposite text for examining the decoupling of the quixotic from the allusive, or the development of the quixotic in eighteenth-century literatures in English as a political concept—a mode of exceptionalism—that transcends directly or immediately allusive ties to *Don Quixote*.

1.1 Reading *Gulliver's Travels* “Novelistically”

If one could point to a dominant consideration in the study of *Gulliver's Travels*, it would be its relation to politics, of both Swift's era and Swift himself.¹³ The seminal source linking occurrences in Swift's writings with specific persons and political events of his day, Sir Charles Firth's 1919 British Academy lecture on “The Political Significance of *Gulliver's Travels*,” has guided much of Swift studies to the present day, even where Firth's approach is treated critically. For example, Phillip Harth's critique of reading political allegory into Part I of *Gulliver's Travels*—based on the contention that “reading the voyage to Lilliput as a continued allegory or dark conceit...is a recently acquired habit,” as “readers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not read the story in this fashion”—disputed a particular political allegory, but not allegorical approaches to the text in general (Harth 40). F. P. Lock's inquiries into Swift's political life during the rise of party politics—his contention that Swift was “by temperament...a Tory, inclined to pessimism, to a distrust of innovation, and to a nostalgic attachment to the values (including the political values) of the past”—have been exceptionally influential in subsequent studies of *Gulliver's Travels*, prompting widely-cited reactions from the likes of Ian Higgins (“Swift's Politics: A Preface to *Gulliver's Travels*”) and J.A. Downie (whose essay on the subject takes the same name as Firth's initial British Academy address, but challenges “political

¹³For a comprehensive view of the history of the “political” mode of Swift scholarship during a heightened period of debate in the 1980s, see J.A. Downie's “The Political Significance of *Gulliver's Travels*” in *Swift and his Contexts* (Eds. John Irwin Fischer, Hermann J. Real, and James Woolley), New York: AMS Press, 1989.

allegory” readings) (Lock 127).¹⁴ Much of the work that Higgins and Downie address focuses on contexts and relationships between minute historical occurrences in the political and religious lives of Swift and his contemporaries, and fictional allusions or references in Swift's writings. This markedly (if not zealously) historicist tradition in Swift studies, frequently applied to sections of *Gulliver's Travels* (particularly Part I, what Downie calls the narrative's “traditional hunting ground for political allusions”), could be contrasted with more “thematic” readings by scholars like Michael McKeon (“Parables of the Younger Son: Swift and the Containment of Desire”) and Claude Rawson (*God, Gulliver, and Genocide: Barbarism and the European Imagination, 1492-1945*); however, Swift's political intervention in *Gulliver's Travels* has not been considered in relation to quixotism, nor has Gulliver been read, in contemporary criticism, as a quixote (Downie 2). Why is this the case?

If political allegory has been the primary focus of scholars writing about *Gulliver's Travels*, considerations of genre have not been far behind in frequency or importance. The question of whether Swift's narrative can be called a satire, a fantastic voyage, a picaresque travelogue, a novel, or a proto-novel has preoccupied Swift scholars for decades. Accordingly, the reasons for the lack of critical responses to *Gulliver's Travels* as a quixotic narrative are at once historical and methodological. Swift gives no overt indication in *Gulliver's Travels* that *Don Quixote* was a literary source for his narrative, either by title (as in Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*), front matter (as in Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*), or direct thematic allusion (as in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*), though, as Christine Rees suggests, he was certainly an admirer of Cervantes, “whose genius was for comic irony” (123). While we do know that Swift was very

¹⁴In addition to Lock's characterization of Swift as nostalgic for the values of the past, Frank Boyle notes in the preface to *Swift as Nemesis* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2007) that “the earliest citation for the term *modernism* in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is from a letter Jonathan Swift wrote to Alexander Pope in 1737. He used the term to refer pejoratively to the proliferating invention of words accompanying the rise of modernness as a positive intellectual value” (xi). Boyle notes the Swiftian irony in inventing a term as part of a critique of invented terms.

familiar with *Don Quixote*, so much so that he began a translation of *Don Quixote* in the 1730s, the influence of that narrative would not seem to have found its way into *Gulliver's Travels* in any of these traditional signals of authorial influence.¹⁵ Additionally, no statements or correspondences of Swift's tie *Gulliver's Travels* directly to *Don Quixote*. This lack of overt contextual and paratextual evidence—"overt" in such a way as to historically link the two texts in a chain of authorial influence—has led critics away from prominent elements of *Gulliver's Travels* that, wittingly or not for Swift, are strikingly quixotic.

The lack of direct historical cues for placing *Gulliver's Travels* within the quixotic narrative tradition is compounded by the dominant methodological practices among both those who study quixotic narratives and those who study Swift. As with Sarah Wood's *Quixotic Fictions of the USA, 1792-1815*, perhaps the most telling example of the former, critics tend to identify the quixotic narrative as a genre, or something like a genre, defined by the proof or perception of the direct influence of *Don Quixote* or Don Quixote. "Quixotic" is, by this methodology, a relational term used to describe a certain kind of intertextual relationship largely dependent on the demonstrable historical circumstances of authorial influence, as well as direct textual allusions to Cervantes or *Don Quixote*. The predominant, historicist approach to *Gulliver's Travels* as political allegory is, in other words, a species of the same methodological genus that predominantly informs the study of the quixotic narrative: its comparative focus is on direct historical allusion, a demonstrable historical chain of influence, that of political fact upon satirical fiction. Beyond this tendency, the larger question of whether *Gulliver's Travels* is a novel, or is novelistic enough to present a character who resembles Don Quixote, has precluded considerations of both *Gulliver's Travels* as a quixotic narrative and Gulliver as a quixote.

¹⁵Evidence that Swift began a translation of *Don Quixote*, and probably contributed to a preface for it, appears in an essay by A.C. Elias, "Swift's *Don Quixote*, Dunkin's *Virgil Travesty*, and Other New Intelligence: John Lyon's 'Materials for a Life of Dr. Swift,' 1765," *Swift Studies* 13 (1998): 27-104.

The problem with such an approach, which not only classes *Gulliver's Travels* outside the realm of the quixotic narrative, but also threatens to reduce it to mere political allegory, and to minimize its novelistic elements, is that it loses sight of important narrative themes and strategies that are not only expressly quixotic, but are in any case central to the development of Gulliver as a character and to the progression of the narrative itself. The primary impetus for a direct-allusion-based approach toward the quixotic narrative (or toward *Gulliver's Travels* as political allegory or satire) is taxonomic: to construct a list or a corpus of quixotic narratives (or to construct a list of correspondent points of political affiliation in the text of *Gulliver's Travels*). A divergent reading of Swift's narrative as a quixotic narrative picks up on its quixotic elements and on Gulliver's quixotism (naturally), but also calls attention to the process by which Gulliver's quixotic thinking becomes a key site of the narrative's political intervention, understanding quixotism as something more than a typographical marker, or a genre-signal.

It is curious that a writer as famously adept at satire and narrative misdirection as Swift has provoked such a large and rich body of scholarship focused on aligning his slippery fiction with allegedly corresponding historical figures and events, and, concomitantly, that this tendency has resulted in the minimising of *Gulliver's Travels'* novelistic aspects. Though there exists a reasonable critical consensus that *Gulliver's Travels* is not a novel, its novelistic elements cannot be denied. Notably, arguments aimed at strict definitions of genre are bound to find *Don Quixote* a difficult text as well, which is why a quixotic narrative may be a novel in many cases, but need not necessarily be a novel in all of the strictest senses of what J. Paul Hunter calls "that slippery term" (23). Jenny Mezcicms declared in 1977 that "fortunately the days are over when problems of misreading arose chiefly from mistaken assumptions that *Gulliver's Travels* was a novel and Gulliver a novel-character"; and by 1991, one year after Frederik N. Smith published *The Genres of Gulliver's Travels*, collecting essays on the very subject of the genre-

multiplicity of Swift's narrative, Douglas Lane Patey affirms, "readers by now generally agree not to identify Swift's book as a 'novel,' and so do not look to it for the kinds of consistency and progressive development of character and narrative that we expect in longer works by Fielding, Richardson, and even Defoe" (Mezciems 243; Patey 219). But as Maximillian Novak reminds us in a contribution to Smith's collection that argues for attention to the picaresque elements of *Gulliver's Travels*, "we have to recognize that during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, works of fiction, particularly those written in the first person, tended to mix all kinds of elements that we might prefer to believe ought not to be there" (27). Thus, straitjacketing *Gulliver's Travels* with readings that overdetermine the protean rules of genre, just as critics have periodically done with *Don Quixote*, is not only historically untenable, as Novak points out, but can also cause us to misfile as "misreadings" those readings that consider Gulliver seriously as a novelistic character. Though Novak alleges that "the reader could hardly be involved with Gulliver as a character in the same way he or she becomes involved with a Pip or a Dorothea Brooke," I will argue that Gulliver behaves more like a character than these critics have suggested (24). While Swift is the generator of irony in *Gulliver's Travels*, Gulliver is an absorber of it, a character who proceeds with the comic bewilderment of a quixote. Even if *Gulliver's Travels* is not a novel, it is, as Hunter suggests, "so conceptually dependent upon the novel that it is almost impossible to imagine the existence of the *Travels* outside the context of the developing novelistic tradition" (56).

More recently, David Fishelov compared *Don Quixote* and *Gulliver's Travels*, arguing that parody and satire are related to sympathy in these narratives.¹⁶ While Fishelov claims that the association between parody, satire, and sympathy in *Gulliver's Travels* is Cervantic (gesturing toward what could be understood, or misunderstood, as a quixotic element of the text), he does not go so far as to argue that Gulliver is a quixote. In fact,

¹⁶"Parody, Satire, and Sympathy in *Don Quixote* and *Gulliver's Travels*." *Connotations* 12.2-3 (2002-3): 126-38.

however, Gulliver exhibits a number of characteristics that place him squarely within the realm of the quixotic, and justify readings of Gulliver not just as a character (as opposed to a stand-in or an engine of satire), but as a quixote. As Novak claims, “*Gulliver's Travels* made possible a type of fiction based on artfully constructed systems of fantasy,” though readers can certainly find in the quixotic narrative, including Cervantes' seventeenth-century original, a framework for “artfully constructed systems of fantasy.” This association of Swift's narrative with the construction of fantasy, along with Gulliver's participation in such a project, further opens up *Gulliver's Travels* to readings attentive to its quixotic elements.

1.2 Gulliver as Quixote

At the outset of *Gulliver's Travels*, we learn that Gulliver is a character of noble-class origins, having been raised on his father's “small estate in Nottinghamshire,” and having also received an education at “Emanuel-College in Cambridge” (15).¹⁷ Like Don Quixote, who is an *hidalgo* rather than a picaro, Gulliver's nobility (his family estate) is not enough to provide for his needs, so he undergoes a practical education with a view to embarking on an itinerant lifestyle. As Frank Boyle notes, “when his father's land cannot support him through his university studies, he turns or is directed to the New Philosophy's most practical discipline, medicine, and to sea as a ship's surgeon,” a reflection of, for Boyle, “the cultural path by which the traditional aristocratic order is first altered and finally determined by a new and powerful commercial order” (29). Though not educated specifically in literature or in the Romance tradition, he does, after becoming an apprenticed surgeon, spend allowances sent from his father on “learning Navigation, and other Parts of the Mathematicks, useful to those who intend to travel, as [he] always believed it would be some time or another [his] Fortune to do” (15). Gulliver's quixotic idealism is best understood as a “quixotism of travel,” and this quixotic affinity with travel

¹⁷Swift, Jonathan. *Gulliver's Travels*. Eds. Claude Rawson and Ian Higgins. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. All references are to this edition.

is both reinforced and made literary by the fact that, in addition to writing a book of travel in *Gulliver's Travels*, he also delighted in reading them in his youth, before his traveling imbued him with a quixotic sense that his accounts of the lands he visits are the only true accounts, or that his vision is self-justifiably true:

I have perused several Books of Travel with great Delight in my younger Days; but, having since gone over most Parts of the Globe, and been able to contradict many fabulous Accounts of from my own Observation; it hath given me great Disgust against this Part of Reading, and some Indignation to see the Credulity of Mankind so impudently abused (272).

In addition to his travel reading in youth, we learn that Gulliver is also a bookish type more generally, passing his “hours of Leisure” amid his earlier travels (before landing in Lilliput) “in reading the best Authors, ancient and modern; being always provided with a good Number of Books” (16). Although Swift makes passing and comedic reference to the pitfalls of romance reading while describing the cause of the fire in the Lilliputian queen's apartment—“by the Carelessness of a Maid of Honour, who fell asleep while she was reading a Romance”—we receive no indication that Gulliver, as a quixote is wont to do, reads romances himself (49). However, Gulliver's continual tendency toward “service” and courtly manners—as when the Brobdingnagian queen takes interest in him, and he vows that “if [he] were at [his] own Disposal, [he] should be proud to devote [his] life to her Majesty's Service”—is not unlike Don Quixote's imitation of chivalric code (91).

Gulliver's “quixotism of travel” is also, beyond its literary manifestation in his travel narrations, highly romanticized. The belief that traveling is his “Fortune to do” is recapitulated each time he returns to England from a journey that, however fascinating and adventurous, proves also to be perilous and life-threatening. After voyaging to Lilliput, Part II of the narrative, which treats Gulliver's adventures in Brobdingnag, begins: “having been condemned by Nature and Fortune to an active and restless life; in two months after my return [to England], I again left my native country...” (75). Gulliver leaves for Brobdingnag on account of his “insatiable Desire of seeing foreign Countries” (71). After returning from Brobdingnag and before embarking on a trip to Laputa in Part III, Gulliver

ends Part II with an admission that “my Wife protested I should never go to Sea any more; although my evil Destiny so ordered, that she had not Power to hinder me; as the reader may know hereafter” (137). And, at last, after returning home for the third time after yet another long and dangerous journey, and finding his “Wife and Family in good health,” Gulliver remains home with his family “about five months in a very happy Condition” before leaving a final time for his most fateful journey to the Country of the Houyhnhnms, his wife “big with Child,” musing “if I could have learned the Lesson of Knowing when I was well” (203, 207). In each of these passages Gulliver behaves as if compelled by a force greater than his own will, such that travel becomes not just an itch in need of scratching, but a romantic call of duty. Against the rational understanding, at which Gulliver hints in the above passage before joining the Houyhnhnms and forever altering his orientation toward humankind, that his perpetual journeys could at some point estrange him from country and family, Gulliver proceeds quixotically, chasing a romantic ideal as if duty-bound to fate or destiny. Just as Don Quixote's romantic idealization of knight-errantry renders him duty-bound to its conventions, Gulliver's romantic idealization of the traveling life causes him to understand his recurrent journeys as pre-ordained duty, to be carried out above the needs and desires of his wife and children, and those who would advise him to remain at home after testing his “Fortune” so many times, each time narrowly escaping an unfortunate end.

Though travel is a quixotic ideal in itself for Gulliver, the broader ideal that Gulliver quixotically seeks is described concisely by Fischelov as a quest for utopia, one of the primary objects of Swift's satire, illustrated in Part IV in the Country of the Houyhnhnms. For Fischelov, Part IV “is mocking the genre of utopia, especially some of its underlying optimistic ideological assumptions concerning human nature” (130). Fischelov goes on to compare with “sympathetic satire” in *Don Quixote* the dynamic in *Gulliver's Travels* that allows for a sympathetic portrayal of the Houyhnhnms' utopia

alongside the satirical current running through this portrayal (131). This analysis stops short, however, of tracing the connection between the predispositions of mind and behavioral modes of the quixotic, illustrated in *Don Quixote*, and comparable qualities in Gulliver, which enable the same kind of quixotic duality in Swift's narrative that is present in *Don Quixote*: the quixote is at once a madman who does material wrong and a well-meaning, sympathetic character capable of drawing attention to the flaws of the people and societies around him. Gulliver's outward-oriented idealism, which precipitates his continual need to travel and to risk his life to explore the far ends of the globe, becomes gradually throughout the narrative a quixotic quest for a utopian ideal (which he eventually finds, though perhaps without the results he desires, in the land of the Houyhnhnms). As the narrative progresses, Gulliver develops a greater vocabulary (quite literally, as he learns the languages of foreign lands) and facility in his criticisms of the political systems and ways of life most familiar to him, this progression hitting its nationalist crescendo in Gulliver's conversation with the King of Brobdingnag, and its culmination in the outright rejection of his own nationality (less his own humanity, and his own wife and children) upon returning from the Country of the Houyhnhnms.

A case can thus be made for reading Gulliver as a quixote, and taking the quixotic as a framework for better understanding Gulliver's actions and Swift's satirical potency in *Gulliver's Travels*. Gulliver comes from a class background that allows for both education and quixotic idealism, and his education is inextricably connected with the obsession (or call to duty) that he develops (travel). As with Don Quixote, this obsession is both literary (insofar as it relates to the reading and writing of travel narratives) and romanticized (insofar as it is understood as a function of his destiny). The telos of this romanticized, outward-oriented obsession with travel is a utopian ideal, or the discovery of a land, culture, and political system capable of addressing the cumulative set of problems that Gulliver registers with the known world (Europe) throughout his journeys, and capable,

perhaps, of materially enriching him in the process (notably, Don Quixote pursues fame and riches as well as justice). Finally, in quixotic fashion, Gulliver also continually constructs and deconstructs exceptionalist arguments and justifications throughout his travels, culminating in a “quixotic conversion” at the end of the narrative—what Michael McKeon calls “a decisive island conversion”—that further demonstrates his quixotism (199).¹⁸ As McKeon posits, Gulliver is “able to disown responsibility and project his desire for a fortune onto Fortune” (199). While *Gulliver's Travels* is certainly, as Fischelov notes, Cervantic in its slippery, satirical narrative style and approach, its protagonist is also quixotic in his brand of exceptionalism, his tendency to continually separate himself from the reality of his (nationalist) worldview, or to simultaneously defend and expose his national identity.

1.3 Gulliver in Lilliput, or, The Anthropological Quixote

Having made a case for Gulliver's quixotism and its character, I will now trace this quixotism and its manifestations throughout the text, aiming to demonstrate how the quixotic idealism with which Gulliver begins his travels undergoes a number of important phase-changes. Gulliver travels with a removed, anthropological perspective on the world around him. He enters lands and engages with the foreign peoples who occupy them not with the imperialist air of Robinson Crusoe, but with a scholarly sense of wonder or bewilderment and a default sense of respect for the various creatures he apprehends. As many readers of *Gulliver's Travels* have observed, Gulliver frequently finds occasion to behave deferentially, to bow, prostrate himself, or find means otherwise to indicate courtly respect and even admiration for his foreign hosts. McKeon calls Gulliver an “obsequious sycophant who seems always in the act of 'prostrating' himself” (200). Even among the Lilliputians over whom he towers in size, Gulliver expresses his gratitude for being

¹⁸“Quixotic conversion” refers to the moment, typically occurring toward the end of a quixotic narrative, in which the quixote is compelled to alter or renounce altogether his or her quixotism, thereby choosing a side of the central conflict that quixotism was meant to illuminate or expose (as with, for example, Arabella in Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*).

released from his initial captivity in a graceful and deferential manner: “I made my Acknowledgements, by prostrating myself at his Majesty's Feet” (39). And as Neil Chudgar has recently pointed out, Gulliver proceeds mainly with gentleness, which is largely shared with, if not mimicked from, those around him. “Though the Lilliputians expect violence of Gulliver, and though he expects violence of himself,” writes Chudgar, “both are mercifully disappointed” (139). His “gentleness and good Behaviour” gain him favor with the Lilliputian king and court (Swift 33). And later, while Gulliver is rendered small and fragile among the Brobdingnagians, he finds he is made immediately sympathetic to the conditions of handling upon which he agreed with the Lilliputians, to “care not to trample upon the Bodies of any of our loving Subjects...nor take any of our said Subjects into his Hands, without their own Consent” (38). Gulliver's gentle and respectful handling of situations large and small while abroad marks his anthropological way of relating to foreign peoples, which is, from the outset of the narrative, a primary feature of his idealization of the other as a source of amusement, fascination, and sometimes terror.

Among the Lilliputians in Part I, England emerges as a reference point, rendered uncannily small by Swift's satirical approach. The Lilliputians build weapons of war (unlike the Houyhnhnms), are engaged in perpetual battles with a geopolitical rival, possess their share of conniving ministers, and are occasionally preoccupied with gossip and court scandals. As Rees notes, “the institutions of Lilliput represent [Gulliver's] own culture, shrunk in the negative mirror, but reproducing all the adverse effects of party politics and court life,” which Gulliver had not experienced first-hand in England (127). Having been raised in an England that would have looked much the same from Gulliver's removed, middle-class perspective—and this is no doubt why Part I of the *Travels* is so often fodder for political allegory readings—the enthralled Gulliver only realizes amid his travels in Lilliput “never more to put any Confidence in Princes or Ministers, where [he]

could possibly avoid it,” after finding himself in the middle of the latest squabble between the rulers of Lilliput and Blefuscu (69). Apart from this rare lesson learned, while in Lilliput, Gulliver tends to apprehend the political and foreign policy affairs of the locals as little more than a bizarre and unsettling version of what he might take to be common practice in England, distantly and anthropologically taking neither a strong position against Lilliputian society, nor showing an especially strong admiration for it. Part I of the *Travels* sets a descriptive tone for the narrative that will persist, though without the more salient tests of judgment that Gulliver later endures both in Brobdingnag and among the Houyhnhnms. The first phase of Gulliver's adventures could thus be described as the anthropological phase, a proto-quixotic introduction to his manner on the road. He is the pre-1745 image of the quixote, the naïve butt of the satirical joke.¹⁹ Swift demonstrates in Part I a mirror image of eighteenth-century England that is presented without strong value judgment from Gulliver, positioning Gulliver as a neutral figure who, in neutrality, is complicit with Swift's objects of satire.

In Lilliput, Gulliver is thrown into a strange world, pinned down, pricked with tiny arrows, freed, then roped into court scandal and geopolitical battle alike, all while remaining (despite his size advantages) deferential, respectful, and very much unaware that the joke is on him. Like Don Quixote before the innkeeper, preparing to stand night vigil over his shoddy arms, Gulliver's idealistic pursuit of travel and of foreign curiosities blind him to the absurdity of his newfound use in a strange land. It is this mode of rather innocent idealism in the absence of a credible threat to his person that renders Gulliver incapable of fully understanding in Part I what he does not fully acknowledge until terrified by his first sighting of the Brobdingnagians in Part II:

In this terrible Agitation of Mind I could not forbear thinking of Lilliput, whose Inhabitants looked

¹⁹In *Don Quixote in England: the Aesthetics of Laughter*, Ronald Paulson locates at the time of the Forty-Five the “Romantic turn” in how Don Quixote was perceived, marking the Forty-Five as the point at which readers and writers identified with Quixote as an imaginative, Romantic hero who exposes the societal problems around him, as opposed to a buffoon, an object of satire, thought to embody the problems Cervantes wanted to expose (184).

upon me as the greatest Prodigy that ever appeared in the World; where I was able to draw an Imperial Fleet in my Hand, and perform those other Actions which will be recorded for ever in the Chronicles of that Empire, while Posterity shall hardly believe them, although attested by Millions (78).

Gulliver is, in other words, a crucial participant in Swift's send-up of English society, despite his removed, anthropological description of what transpires in Lilliput. He is presented as a chivalric, idealistic, amiable quixote whose early-narrative temperament will become a referent for comparison with quixotic developments that intensify as the narrative progresses.

1.4 Gulliver in Brobdingnag: The Emergence of Quixotic Exceptionalism

As McKeon argues, “Gulliver's first travels are undertaken in default of a more settled and upward mobility at home. After the voyage to Lilliput, however, the idea of physical travel takes on more...financial and moral ambiguity” (199). Gulliver makes way to Brobdingnag with hopes of material gain, but also with quixotic zeal. Accompanying the continued emergence of Gulliver's quixotism of travel is the comparative emergence of his native England as a distinct referent for the new lands he occupies. By the time Gulliver makes it to Brobdingnag in Part II, a separate sense of England and English customs and politics begins to emerge more substantively in the narrative, forcing Gulliver to defend his Englishness while at the same time reckoning with its flaws. Part I is not without humorous comparisons to Gulliver's native land—the “peculiar” manner of Lilliputian writing is “aslant from one corner of the Paper to the other, like Ladies in *England*”—though Part II is the site of the much-discussed interactions with the Brobdingnagian king, in which Swift positions a fuller, comparative portrait of Gulliver's impression of England against Swift's rendering of Brobdingnagian ideals (51). Even before this exchange, however, Gulliver apprehends the Brobdingnagians with a heightened sense of otherness, compared to his early reactions to the Lilliputians. For example, upon first sighting, Gulliver describes the Lilliputian as “a *human* Creature not six Inches high,” whereas the Brobdingnagian giant is a “Monster” (emphasis added) (17,

77). The diminutive Lilliputians appear as nothing more than miniaturized humans, apprehended, after the initial moments of terror, captivity, and arrow-discharging, as sympathy-evoking creatures. On the other hand, the Brobdingnagians, on account of *their* size, appear foreign and distorted up-close, before Gulliver reflects on his experience with a Lilliputian gazing up-close at him. As Gulliver writes:

I remember when I was in Lilliput, the Complexions of those Diminutive People appeared to me the fairest in the World: and talking upon this Subject with a Person of Learning there, who was an intimate Friend of mine; he said, that my face appeared much fairer and smoother when he looked at me from the Ground, than it did upon a nearer View when I took him up in my Hand, and brought him close; which he confessed was at first a very shocking Sight. He said, that he could discover great Holes in my skin; that the Stumps in my Beard were ten Times stronger than the Bristles of a Boar; and my Complexion made up of several Colours altogether disagreeable...I could not forbear, lest the Reader might think those vast Creatures were actually deformed: For I must do them Justice to say they are a comely Race of People (83).

The shock of initial appearance and destructive potential that attends their relatively large size certainly contributes to the Brobdingnagians' intensified otherness for Gulliver. At the same time, Gulliver also, finding himself in a more precarious situation in Brobdingnag than in Lilliput, expresses a heightened yearning to return home to safety, a yearning he does not express so urgently while in the company of the Lilliputians. Fearing his destruction upon his first encounter with the scythe-wielding Brobdingnagian reapers, Gulliver writes “I lamented my own Folly and Wilfulness in attempting a second Voyage against the Advice of all my Friends and Relations,” seemingly aware of the idealistic impulse to travel that placed him in such life-threatening circumstances (78). “I slept about two Hours, and dreamed I was at home with my Wife and Children,” Gulliver later tells us while in the possession of the Brobdingnagian farmer, “which aggravated my Sorrows when I awakened and found my self alone in a vast Room” (83). We still get superficial, comedic references (often at the expense of women) to Gulliver's native England in Part II in Brobdingnag—the farmer's wife “screamed and ran back as women of *England* do at the Sight of a Toad or a Spider” when she sees Gulliver—yet, in Part II, Gulliver's own growing sense of foreignness and disquietude appears alongside a starker recognition of the Brobdingnagians as pleasant, though dangerously different creatures

from those of Gulliver's England (80). From their size and appearance to their politics, as we learn once the king engages Gulliver in conversation about the land from which he came, the Brobdingnagians magnify Gulliver's quixotism, just as the journey to Brobdingnag evinces Gulliver's early tendencies toward exceptionalist justifications for imprudent travel, fortune-seeking, and the political practices of his native country.

As I have suggested, Gulliver's quixotism is best characterized by his wanderlust, which is not only a desire to travel for its own sake, but an understanding of travel as his pre-ordained means toward amassing personal fortune and worldly knowledge, and ultimately locating a foreign utopia. Though he returns to England from Lilliput with souvenirs, he returns from Brobdingnag with a size complex, mimetically looking “down upon the Servants, and one or two Friends who were in the House, as if they had been Pigmies, and [Gulliver] a Giant” (137). Gulliver's perspective undergoes significant change in Brobdingnag, not just in terms of his relation to his fellow English, but also in relation to the wider world of political possibility. Though early interactions with the Brobdingnagian king depict Gulliver as a patriot, gushing “a little too copious[ly] in talking of [his] own beloved Country; of [English] Trade, and Wars by Sea and Land, of [English] Schisms in Religion, and Parties in the State,” the king's counter-perspective leaves Gulliver at a loss, compelling him to defend England and broader Europe with exceptionalist arguments (96).

When prompted by the king to give an account of his native England, Gulliver provides a list of superlative descriptions: “the Fertility of our Soil”; “an illustrious body called the House of Peers” (as well as “that extraordinary Care always taken of their Education,” and their “Valour, Conduct, and Fidelity”); the House of Commons “*freely* picked by the People themselves, for their great Abilities, and Love of their Country, to represent the Wisdom of the whole Nation,” among others, along with a summary of English history, military and otherwise. The king's series of questions and points of

contention—asking about the qualifications of new Lords, the potential for political corruption and conflicts of interest, the existence of national credit and national debt, among others—lead him to conclude, famously, “the Bulk of [English] Natives, to be the most pernicious Race of little odious Vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the Surface of the Earth” (116-21).

Confronted with such judgments, Gulliver finds himself “forced to rest with Patience, while [his] noble and most beloved Country was so injuriously treated” (122). Ashamed to admit his inability to offer a substantive counter-argument to the king, Gulliver, “heartily sorry as any of [his] readers can possibly be, that such an Occasion was given,” admits in this attempt to excuse himself, that he “artfully eluded” many of the king's questions, “and gave every Point a more favourable turn by many Degrees than the strictness of Truth would allow” (122). Hence, Gulliver begins to construct an exceptionalist argument against the accusations of the Brobdingnagian king in the absence of a substantive one, alleging that Brobdingnag, unlike Europe, is too isolated to have knowledge of such things as cannons (widely known and understood in Europe) or to have “reduced *Politicks* into a *Science*, as the more acute Wits of *Europe* have done” (124). Gulliver laments the possibility that “a confined Education” and a “certain narrowness of Thinking,” such as those which he ascribes to the king in the absence of a solid counterargument to the king's critiques of English society, “be offered as a Standard for all Mankind” (122). The anthropological quixote of Part I becomes a quixotic exceptionalist in Part II, paradoxically defending his own nation as a utopia only after departing from it to seek knowledge and better opportunity abroad. In the same vein, ironically, Gulliver extols that presumed characteristic of Europe—a broad range of knowledge, derived from intercultural experience and relations—that he seeks for himself through leaving Europe, indulging his quixotism of travel.

At the same time, Gulliver's admitted inability to defend his country before the

king—his arguments in this endeavor “failed of Success”—renders him vulnerable to the kinds of utopian notions that he will eventually embrace wholeheartedly among the Houyhnhnms in Part IV. Even before the Brobdingnagian king successfully makes his arguments against Gulliver's account of Englishness, his first encounters with the king produce in Gulliver a critical outlook on his own country, along with significant doubt over his previously unquestioned patriotism and English identity:

But, as I was not in a Condition to resent Injuries, so, upon mature Thoughts, I began to doubt whether I were injured or no. For, after having been accustomed several months to the Sight and Converse of this People, and observed every Object upon which I cast my Eyes, to be of proportionable Magnitude; the Horror I had first conceived from their Bulk and Aspect was so far worn off, that if I had then beheld a Company of *English* Lords and Ladies in their Finery and Birthday Cloaths, acting their several Parts in the most courtly Manner of Strutting, and Bowing and Prating; to say the Truth, I should have been strongly tempted to laugh as much at them as the King and his Grandees did at me (97).

Once thrust into the situation of having to think critically about both the practices of his native country and the ways in which his perspective, frequently changing amid his travels, can affect how he views England and his English identity, Gulliver quixotically doubles-down on the single-mindedness of English (and European) exceptionalism. Thereafter he is hurdled with fragile nationalist baggage and magnified force into his quixotism of travel, believing still that, despite his willingness to bend the truth and skirt the Brobdingnagian king's criticisms of England, his destiny is not an English utopia, but a utopia abroad. After his time in Brobdingnag, before setting sail yet again for Laputa, Gulliver writes: “I could not reject [Captain William Robinson's] Proposal; the Thirst I had of seeing the World, notwithstanding my past Misfortunes, continuing as violent as ever” (141).

The European exceptionalism that Gulliver puts forth to counter the Brobdingnagian king's critiques posits both the demonstrably false notion (falsified by the very presence and experience of Gulliver in a foreign land) that England “and the politer Countries of Europe are wholly exempted” from the prejudices of limited knowledge, as well as the ideal of universal knowledge through travel (122). Gulliver avails himself thereby of quixotic exceptionalism simultaneously to construct an ideal (universal

knowledge through travel), and to position himself (by and of his English heritage and his quixotism of travel) as an example of this ideal. This constitutes the second phase of Gulliver's quixotism of travel: the exceptionalist substitution of the European ideal of universal knowledge, counterintuitively, for the quixotic ideal of universal knowledge through travel. Gulliver's quixotism is thus characterized in Part II of the narrative by a more traditional Anglo-European idealism—for Gulliver, a form of quixotic exceptionalism stemming from his nationalism and naïveté—to which Gulliver holds fast, despite the skillful counterarguments of the Brobdingnagian king. By the end of Part II, we have witnessed Gulliver's transition from the first phase of his quixotism, a proto-quixotism marked by an aloof, anthropological approach to the foreign societies and peoples he apprehends, to the second phase, marked by his circuitous, nationalist defense of England and wider Europe as particularly enlightened nations.

1.5 Gulliver in the Land of the Houyhnhnms: Quixotic Exceptionalism, Full-Circle

After witnessing the Laputan dystopia in Part III and returning home to England once more as a quixote whose travel-idealism has not flagged, but become stronger, Gulliver sets out in Part IV and arrives in the Country of the Houyhnhnms, a utopian land that is ultimately responsible for Gulliver's final moments of quixotic conversion, not from mad quixote to rational English citizen, but from an apologist for England and Europe to an apologist for a foreign utopia. The merits or shortcomings of the Houyhnhnms aside, Gulliver is clearly impressed by the rational horses, their innovative child-distribution policies, their sophistic lightening of the burden of death, and the absence of words in their language to express “*the thing which is not,*” or “any thing that is *evil*, except what they borrow from the Deformities or ill Qualities of the *Yahoos*” (223, 257). Gulliver's utopian vision of the Houyhnhnms is further expressed in his description of his own life while among them: “I enjoyed perfect Health of Body, and Tranquility of Mind; I did not feel the Treachery or Inconstancy of a Friend, nor the Injuries of a secret or open Enemy” (258).

While in the land of rational horses, Gulliver also begins to speak more critically of his native country, explaining wars resulting from “the Corruption of Ministers,” and the soldier as “a *Yahoo* hired to kill in cold Blood as many of his own Species, who have never offended him, as he possibly can” (228-29). These impressions lead to Gulliver's final conversion in the land of the Houyhnhnms, at which point Gulliver admits that “those excellent *Quadrupeds* placed in opposite View to human Corruptions, had so far opened my Eyes, and enlarged my Understanding, that I began to view the Actions and Passions of man in a very different Light; and to think the Honour of my own Kind not worth managing,” resolving then “never to return to human Kind” (240).

Alas, Gulliver is forced by the Houyhnhnms, by edict, to return home anyway. When he does, he is repulsed by his wife and children and the rest of his own species; and he is, despite his conversion, still quixotically mad. He purchases two horses upon return, whose smells he finds comforting, and with whom he “converse[s] at least four Hours every Day,” never rides, and considers partners “in great Amity” with himself and each other (271). When he launches what appears to be a final exceptionalist apologia for England, its government and its occupants—a seemingly out-of-place hangover from his pre-conversion sentiments in Part II—we can comfortably read these notes with irony (Swift 275). In the mocking tone of Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, Gulliver writes of his previous denunciations of European colonialism: “this Description, I confess, doth by no means affect the *British* nation, who may be an Example to the whole World for their Wisdom, Care, and Justice in planting Colonies” (275). After this passage he goes on to affirm the psychological conditions of his utopian conversion, attempting to “apply those excellent Lessons of Virtue which [he] learned among the Houyhnhnms” in slowly conditioning himself to tolerate his family and, perhaps, “a neighbor *Yahoo*” (276).

In Gulliver's relation of his travels we can see, then, a progression of his quixotism and the ways in which this alters his quixotic exceptionalism. Gulliver embarks on his

travels under the inspiration of a romanticized, quixotic ideal—the ideal of the life of travel, understood as his absolute destiny—which is derived from a childhood fascination with books of travel, and the pursuit of a travel-oriented education. Despite early encounters with the Lilliputians and the Brobdingnagians—including an ability to appreciate some of the foreign things he witnesses—his quixotism of travel carries with it an idealistic belief in the supremacy and utopian potential of his native English culture: Gulliver encounters difference and is fascinated by it, yet his quixotism prevents him from dwelling on the wonders of Lilliput or Brobdingnag, or developing a critical outlook on his own country. After passing through Laputa and its neighboring lands intrigued but still unmoored from his default nationalism, he undergoes a form of quixotic conversion in the Country of the Houyhnhnms, through which his quixotism remains, but its focus shifts. After living among the rational horses, Gulliver holds quixotically fast to the cultural model of the Houyhnhnms, despite the fact that they evict him from their society, and despite the fact that his own family, still healthy and loyal, have long since awaited his return.

This progression of quixotism not only illuminates aspects of Gulliver's character—his anthropological aloofness, his failure to compromise his grand ideologies in favor of smaller bits and pieces of useful knowledge he picks up amid his travels, and his stubborn inability to learn the flaws in his worldview through experience—but also directs our attention to one of the most critically underdeveloped yet important implications of Swift's narrative. In Gulliver's meandering and sometimes self-contradictory quixotism, Swift illustrates the dual ways in which exceptionalism operates as apologia for both nationalist (Gulliver in Brobdingnag) and utopian (Gulliver among the Houyhnhnms) ideologies. In this sense, Gulliver is something of a prototype for an emergent notion of quixotism in eighteenth-century literatures in English: as with subsequent quixotes who have since been placed more firmly within the quixotic narrative tradition (Henry Fielding's Parson Adams,

Charlotte Lennox's *Arabella*, Royall Tyler's *Updike Underhill*, and Tabitha Gilman Tenney's *Dorcasina*, among others), Gulliver's quixotism is marked not merely by immediate allusions to Cervantes or to *Don Quixote*, but by the use of exceptionalist arguments to justify fantastic ideological conclusions in the face of demonstrable counter-evidence. Though quixotes were increasingly understood, through the middle of the eighteenth century, as heroic visionaries rather than foolish objects of satire, Gulliver's character progression preempts this shift in its foregrounding of Gulliver's exceptionalism, inviting our consideration of a third possibility for understanding quixotism. Whether Gulliver's quixotic naiveté, idealism, and stubbornness frame him as an admirably determined dreamer—a gentle and well-meaning hero—or, perhaps more likely, the misguided butt of the joke who continually fails to learn his lesson, Gulliver's quixotic characteristics underlie his exceptionalism, which is in either case central to the politics of *Gulliver's Travels*. For it is not only the allusions to persons and policy issues that Swift pillories that define his political intervention in *Gulliver's Travels*, but also the manner in which Gulliver-as-character frames these issues. Gulliver's quixotic exceptionalism leads him, most notably, to willfully ignore arguments that he acknowledges to be superior to his own, to prioritize tribalism over reason (whether identifying with the English or the Houyhnhnms), to estrange his family, and to jeopardize his life repeatedly. Gulliver's exceptionalist justifications for each of these decisions undoubtedly say as much about fractious, vitriolic party politics, political corruption, militant nationalism, utopian beliefs, and misplaced social and domestic priorities as do Swift's more minute political allusions.

CHAPTER 2: *THE ALGERINE CAPTIVE*

As we see in *Gulliver's Travels*, sending a quixote off to travel within the boundaries of his or her own nation is not the only way for authors to deploy quixotes as means of commenting on the places from which their quixotes originate. By sending Gulliver off to foreign lands, Swift engages in a simple but highly effective comparative strategy, taking up international difference as a critical mirror in much the same way that other authors of quixotic narratives engage their quixotes in more localized encounters with difference. Though the underlying strategy remains the same for quixotic narratives set primarily within national borders as those whose quixotes venture beyond them, the latter provides the eighteenth-century author with greater freedom, in many cases, to construct an imaginary other that local readers are likely to find especially aberrant, producing many of the same effects in the reader that Gulliver experiences himself: anxiety, shock, wonder, and delight. Swift clearly takes this liberty in *Gulliver's Travels*, in its depiction of a series of fantastic characters. Royall Tyler's *The Algerine Captive* (1797), on the other hand, constructs as other the inhabitants of the Barbary Coast, largely through Tyler's borrowing from other travel narratives and Barbary accounts of his time. Both Swift and Tyler employ strikingly similar narrative strategies as means of reflecting a projection of foreign cultures ironically back onto their own societies. Both writers avail themselves of a form of comic irony that situates their quixotes as absorbers of satire and its consequences, leading the reader through the narrative with the awareness that she is in on the joke with the author, but the quixote is not. We can witness this commonality, for example, in Tyler's Swiftian catalogues, which appear in moments of heightened irony, as when his narrator tells of the first American settlers, who “crossed a boisterous ocean, penetrated a savage wilderness, encountered famine, pestilence, and Indian warfare” (Tyler

18-19).²⁰ Also like Swift, Tyler draws on a market for curiosity about tales of overseas adventure, shipwreck narratives, and captivity narratives.

Though the Algerian figures that Tyler presents are drawn, of course, from an existing culture, the fact that most early-American readers would not have had any first-hand (or even, necessarily, second-hand) experience of the Barbary Coast enables Tyler to color his Algerines with a fantastic quality. In so doing, Tyler also brings in elements of *Don Quixote*, specifically from Cervantes' fictional account in *Don Quixote* of his actual enslavement in Algiers. As María Antonia Garcés has shown in *Cervantes in Algiers: A Captive's Tale*, Cervantes was himself an Algerine captive between 1575 and 1580, abducted, like Tyler's quixotic protagonist, Updike Underhill, by Barbary pirates during his service in Mediterranean military campaigns against the Turks (1). Cervantes retells parts of this experience in Algiers in Part I of *Don Quixote* in "the captive's tale." Tyler, who had previously reworked the Barrataria episode from Part II of *Don Quixote* into a three-act play featuring Sancho Panza, *The Island of Barrataria* (c. 1808-15), employs in *The Algerine Captive* several of Cervantes' themes and references from "the captive's tale" to form parts of Updike's account of enslavement in Algiers (Wood 107-8). Both Tyler's Updike and Cervantes' captive struggle to purchase their freedom with the aid of sympathetic Algerians and fellow slaves; both reference the gruesome punishment of impalement for those caught in escape attempts; and both treat religious difference between the Algerian Muslims and the Christian captives as a means of interrogating national (and religious) loyalties and identities. Though some of these similarities are circumstantial—common not only among *Don Quixote* and *The Algerine Captive*, but also among a wider range of captivity narratives—others provide more telling links between the two texts. The captivity tale pre-dates *Don Quixote* within the Spanish

²⁰Tyler, Royall. *The Algerine Captive*. Ed. Caleb Crain. New York: The Modern Library, 2002. All references are to this edition.

tradition and certainly flourishes in varying forms in eighteenth-century Anglo-American traditions (“Indian” captivity narratives, Barbary narratives); however, *The Algerine Captive*’s captivity-narrative elements arguably owe much to Cervantes in particular. Tyler, who had never traveled to Algiers, borrowed much of his fictional account of the Barbary Coast from contemporary captivity narratives in addition to Cervantes’ “captive’s tale” in *Don Quixote* (Davidson 300).

In terms of its influences, and much like *Gulliver's Travels*, *The Algerine Captive* is somewhat schizophrenic, a quality that invites a range of genre-informed critical approaches. Cathy Davidson has called it “broken-backed in its odd conjoining of apparently inconsistent parts,” noting that it “verges into a captivity tale...to register the full horror of slavery” by way of a “travelogue of the protagonist’s disconnected life” (Davidson 300). Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse have addressed the captivity-tale elements of *The Algerine Captive* more recently, arguing that the cosmopolitan inflection of the Barbary narrative best characterizes the early American novel, given the preoccupations of early-American writers with questions of, as Bruce Burgett has put it, “not...nationality, territoriality, and citizenship,” but “civility, commerce, travel, and ethnographic description” (Burgett 689). Sarah Wood has included *The Algerine Captive* in her book-length study of “quixotic fictions,” an indication that Tyler’s novel is among those for which Miguel de Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* (1605–15) is a “generative literary source, a significant (though not necessarily a sole) literary model” (Wood vi). Of these acknowledged influences, the last—the quixotic influence—is most crucial for our understanding of *The Algerine Captive*’s pivotal ending, the “conversion” of protagonist Updike Underhill from globetrotting American malcontent to “worthy FEDERAL citizen” (225). I wish to argue for a re-reading of *The Algerine Captive* that takes particular account of the bearing of Updike’s sustained quixotism on his final “conversion,” and thus the bearing of

reading Updike as a quixote on the political tenors of Tyler's text. In so doing, I aim in this chapter to demonstrate the role of quixotic exceptionalism in affirming the ideal of national superiority, and at the same time, as in *Gulliver's Travels*, calling our attention precisely to the process of creating such an exceptionalist outlook.

Updike behaves very much like a quixote throughout *both* of the novel's seemingly inconsistent volumes. Though Volume II of the *The Algerine Captive*—the volume that treats Updike's captivity in Algiers—was critically dismissed by Tyler's contemporaries as inferior to Volume I, recent critics have focused on Volume II as the primary site of “the political implications of the whole novel” (Davidson 300). However, it is Volume I, a chronicle of Updike's travels and travails throughout America, which introduces Updike as a quixote, and sets the stage for his oft-unacknowledged quixotic behavior as a captive in Volume II. As Updike's mother remarks in Volume I after the family minister attempts to recruit young Updike into the academy, “the boy loves books” (25). Updike's quixotic bookishness and comic fascination with Greek and Latin give rise to a string of social and professional blunders in America, leading Wood to dub him a “classical quixote” (Wood 109).

Exhibiting a marked genre-switch both formally and thematically, Volume II affords Tyler's captive much less freedom than Volume I to travel the countryside in quixotic fashion. Nonetheless, the quixotic episodes of Volume I are not wholly disconnected from the captivity saga of Volume II. Once in captivity, the still-quixotic Updike imagines that among his “grossly illiterate” lot of fellow slaves is “a Spanish Don with forty noble names” (119). His fantasy is a thorough recapitulation of the story of Cervantes' captive in *Don Quixote*, who absconds with the aid of his opulent master's beautiful Muslim daughter, Zoraida:

I fancied my future-master's head gardener, taking me one side, professing the warmest friendship, and telling me in confidence that he was a Spanish Don with forty noble names; that he had fallen in love with my master's fair daughter, whose mother was a christian slave; that the young lady was equally charmed with him; that she was to rob her father of a rich casket of jewels, there being no dishonour in stealing from an infidel; jump into his arms in boy's clothes that very night, and escape by a vessel,

already provided, to his native country. I saw in imagination all of this accomplished. I saw the lady descend the rope ladder; heard the old man and his servants pursue; saw the lady carried off breathless in the arms of her knight; arrive safe in Spain; was present at the lady's baptism into the catholic church, and at her marriage with her noble deliverer (119).

Just as Updike re-imagined the captive's escape from slavery in *Don Quixote*, Tyler re-imagined quixotism in Updike, a "classical quixote" whose fanciful thinking propels both his physical adventures in Volume I and his psychological adventures in captivity in Volume II. Critical tendencies to mark the end of the "quixotic" Volume I as the end of Updike's quixotism have obscured the extent to which Updike remains quixotic throughout the novel, and throughout its quixotic conversion scene. Though the fragmented, seemingly inconsistent structure of *The Algerine Captive* has given critics difficulty in assessing its parts as a unified whole, its quixote consistently defies the structural changes imposed upon him. Unlike Gulliver, Updike does not move through phases of quixotism as he moves through regions and nations.

To recover the importance of quixotic influence in *The Algerine Captive*, I will first explain in greater depth what is meant by "quixotic conversion" as it pertains to Updike's final sentiments in the novel. I will then demonstrate how a number of critics, without due attention to Updike's sustained quixotism throughout the novel, have interpreted Tyler's ending based on "nationalist imaginary" readings that rely on a number of untenable assumptions about the national, rather than global or transnational scope of concerns in Tyler's novel. After outlining some problems with this "nationalist imaginary" preoccupation and arguing that *The Algerine Captive* is indeed engaged transnationally, I will conclude with a re-reading of Tyler's ending as a quixotic conversion scene, and thus as a *critique* of nationalistic insularity, rather than a patriotic endorsement of it.

2.1 Reading Quixotic Conversion

The Algerine Captive features a quixotic conversion scene, a moment at the end of the text in which the quixote, Updike, is moved to renounce his quixotism as a mad and regrettable venture, thereby restoring or reinforcing the social order from which he initially deviated. The absence of quixotic conversion for Parson Adams and Captain Farrago in *Joseph Andrews* and *Modern Chivalry*, for example, has the effect of shifting the balance of quixotic critique onto the quixote's surrounding society: the quixote, though certainly ambivalently treated, is vindicated in some sense by the fact that his quixotism remains formally uncontested by the novel's end. In *The Female Quixote* and *Female Quixotism*, on the other hand, conversion scenes of the sort that Don Quixote undergoes at the end of Cervantes' narrative have the effect of casting some doubt on the quixotes' methods, actions, and worldviews, balancing out social critique with a critique of quixotism itself. *Gulliver's Travels* unmistakably features a quixotic conversion, though for Gulliver, the conversion is neither a renunciation nor an affirmation of quixotism, but a shift from one mode of quixotism to another. The conversion moment in *The Algerine Captive* has been the subject of much scholarly discussion, though frequently without due consideration of the quixotic history or lineage of such conversion scenes, and how this lineage operates in Tyler's narrative. For this reason I would like to consider how Tyler uses lineage and influence in *The Algerine Captive* to provide a narrative history of quixotic delusion and revisionism against which Updike's final quixotic conversion can be read.

Updike is discovered by a minister to be fit for a scholar, educated in Latin, Greek, and the classics, made a school teacher, and subsequently chased out of a number of New England locales for his classical education, pedantry, and high-mindedness. He then studies to become a physician, and finds similar dissatisfaction with repressed, vulgar, and uneducated

Americans first in New England, and then in the American South. Frustrated, he quits America for England, and takes up a physician post aboard the slave ship *Sympathy*. Marooned on the Barbary Coast thereafter, Updike is captured and made a slave himself in Algiers. After spending much of Volume I drifting from failed occupation to failed occupation in his native America, Updike spends Volume II narrating his experiences as a slave and a practicing physician in Algiers.

Tyler's narrator introduces his own adventures by way of an ancestor, Captain John Underhill. Updike spends the first three short chapters of his account explaining the circumstances of his ancestor, as he tells us, "one of the first emigrants to New England," who undergoes a persecution saga of his own before we get to Updike's story (11). Captain Underhill, who "had early imbibed an ardent love of liberty, civil and religious, by his service as a soldier among the Dutch" finds himself exiled from his Massachusetts settlement under John Winthrop because of his attitude of religious tolerance, and charged with "adultery of the heart" for gazing upon a sleeveless woman (11, 14). The banished Captain resettles in New Hampshire and is elected governor there before the Massachusetts government claims jurisdiction over New Hampshire too, forcing him to relocate to Dutch-settled Albany. There he is granted a tract of land by the Dutch for his services in battles against Native Americans (20). The Captain dies without capitalizing on his land grant, which sets up Updike's future encounter with unscrupulous land speculators in Hartford who attempt to purchase and then sell Updike's ancestral claim to the land with full knowledge that no such land, or no such title, formally exists.

The introduction of Updike's ancestor into the narrative provides an historical context against which we can consider Updike's experiences, then his post-conversion sentiments. Like his ancestor, Updike moves from state to state in his own country, having difficulty

finding a place to settle in which his ideals are taken seriously, or in which he can find tolerable acceptance. And once captured in Algiers, he struggles to reconcile his Christianity with the Muslim faith of the Algerians, as well as his naiveté with the artful traders looking to capitalize on his circumstances. As John Engell has notably pointed out:

the two great tests of Updike's captivity, his debate with the Mollah and his dealings with the son of Abonah Ben Benjamin, parallel the adventures of his ancestor, Captain John Underhill. The Mollah, like Winthrop and his followers, tries to enslave a man to a sectarian religious hypocrisy. The young Jew, like the English Land-Speculators of the frontier, promulgates slavery for the sake of greed (28).

Tyler familiarizes the reader with a narrative history of persecution in America and abroad that repeats itself across generations from one Underhill to the next, introducing a pattern of circumstances and behavior that Updike will quixotically fail to acknowledge. As he endures escalating hardship in his travels, he increasingly romanticizes these histories of persecution, leading up to a quixotic conversion scene in which his account of American life becomes, seemingly, pure, nationalist apologia.

Updike has been the subject of a critical debate very typical for quixotes, the debate over the extent to which the end-result of quixotism—whether the quixote remains quixotic or “converted”—reflects a critique of the quixotic mindset itself or a critique of the society or societies the quixote inhabits or passes through. In most cases, as I have suggested, quixotes produce double-edged critiques of both quixotic behavior—conflating fiction and reality—and the quixote's surrounding circumstances through degrees of difference between quixote and society, as with Captain Farrago in Hugh Henry Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry*, Parson Adams in Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, and Arabella in Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*. *The Algerine Captive*'s cosmopolitan outlook modifies this critical framework by setting up layers of difference (between quixote and society, between one society and another), but demonstrating *similarity* among them. With a narrative strategy similar to that which Swift deploys in *Gulliver's Travels*, Tyler's narrative treats difference as a mirror, gaining

critical traction by demonstrating counterintuitive and sometimes shocking commonalities between generations, characters, and societies that we presume to be radically different. The novel's final conversion scene, however, can lead readers to mistake cross-cultural similarity for the minimization or elision of difference, and thus to misread Tyler's ending as an endorsement of nationalist unification projects in the early republic.

The Algerine Captive ends with a fairly traditional quixotic conversion scene. Updike finally escapes captivity, finding his way back to America. Upon landing on home soil after the harsh circumstances of his captivity, he declares that he had been "degraded as a slave, and was now advanced to a citizen of the freest country in the universe." Once embattled in and disdainful of his American surroundings, in which he was a disrespected teacher and unsuccessful doctor, the restored Updike vows "to contribute cheerfully to the support of our excellent government, which I have learnt to adore, in schools of despotism; and thus secure to myself the enviable character of an useful physician, a good father and worthy FEDERAL citizen" (225). A straightforward reading of Updike's closing statements suggests that he has learned the error of his ways in a sort of trial by fire; that he demonstrates remorse for having thought his circumstances as an American so unfortunate before having been swept up and cast into the cold reality of slavery in a foreign land. Now, we might suppose, the quixote has been converted and restored, a "worthy FEDERAL citizen," in solidarity with his nation and national government, who, in writing his memoir, hopes that his "fellow citizens may profit by [his] misfortunes" (225).

Even those who have called attention to quixotic influence in *The Algerine Captive* have largely ignored or minimized Updike's quixotism as it relates to his final conversion. A number of critics have shown fundamental disagreement over how to read Updike's experiences in captivity and subsequent quixotic "conversion": a testament, perhaps, to Tyler's

artful awareness and subversion of his own authorship. As Edward Larkin notes, Tyler is “a once staunch Federalist who famously and unsuccessfully courted John Adams' daughter,” a figure whose political orientation has left his novel open to political allegory critiques not unlike those so frequently applied to Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (514). Nonetheless, Davidson prudently urges us to consider that, though Tyler himself was a Federalist, he was considered relatively moderate and even-handed in both his personal and political life (289). Wood cautions further against “the tendency to over-identify Updike with his Federalist creator Royall Tyler...” (137). Thus, the potential for misreading Tyler’s novel by over-associating Tyler’s Federalist politics with those of his narrator is considerable.

In a reading of *The Algerine Captive* that frequently aligns Updike’s politics with Tyler’s, Larry Dennis suggests that Updike is indeed changed by his experiences as an Algerine slave. For Dennis, Updike’s sense of the redemptive potency of his “inherent romantic qualities, is cruelly shattered by the squalor and wretchedness of the real situation” in Algiers (77). In such a reading, then, slavery in Algiers is a pivot point for Updike toward what might be understood as “successful” quixotic conversion, as well as a build-up toward Updike’s comments in the final conversion scene, in which, for Dennis, “there is no distance...between the persona’s perspective and the real author’s” (79). In other words, for Dennis, Updike’s conversion is the primary means by which Tyler emphasizes the importance of national solidarity. Without aligning Updike’s politics with Tyler’s so directly, Davidson has taken a similar view on Updike’s conversion, claiming that “for Underhill, to travel is to see different things, but, more importantly, to sojourn for six years in Algiers is to see things differently. The protagonist learns much from his captivity...” (302). The view that Updike undergoes a serious transformation in captivity, and thus that Updike’s final narrations might be read straightforwardly as representative of Tyler’s “republican values of individual

responsibility, individual conscience, and individual action within and for the good of the commonwealth,” has been taken up by others as well (Davidson 303). Wood suggests that the “upbeat mood and Quixotic undertones of Underhill’s American quest are swiftly dissipated in the face of the diabolical slave trade he encounters along the Ivory Coast” (123), while Joseph Schopp writes that Updike “shows that his own captivity has taught him the lesson of the ‘inalienable birth-right of man’” (302).

Each of these readings adheres to what Stephen Shapiro has diagnosed in *The Culture and Commerce of the Early-American Novel: Reading the Atlantic World-System* as a “nationalist imaginary” preoccupation, for which the assumed novelistic aim is to address anxieties over national identity and (dis)unity amid the instability of the early republic. A “nationalist imaginary” reading presupposes that if Updike is truly reformed and converted after enslavement in Algiers, this is the case because the quixotic dissatisfaction with America that led him into greater trouble abroad is unacceptable for those invested in metanarratives of unification and nationalization in early America. Accordingly, Updike’s quixotism must be “dissipated”: the quixote must be re-educated and converted, through harsh treatment on foreign soil, from disaffected and defected critic to penitent patriot, a “worthy FEDERAL citizen.”

Contrarily, others have read Updike’s changes after captivity primarily as rhetorical ones, unsupported by Updike’s actions. The naïve American rambler who expects better of his own country finds his medical abilities respected for the first time as a physician, although still a slave, in Algiers. He remains as gullible as ever throughout his captivity as well, believing in self-interested frauds who claim to be able to deliver him to freedom. And in his poignant exchange with the Algerian Mollah, who offers to make him a free citizen of Algiers in exchange for religious conversion, Updike, like Gulliver before the Brobdingnagian king,

retains his quixotic (religious) idealism, even as he fails to justify his Christian faith coherently to the Mollah, and even as he is cast back into slavery. Picking up on these factors, John Engell reads irony in the constancy of Updike's worldview as a "free" American and a slave in Algiers, understanding Updike's seeming inability to surrender his idealism as Tyler's means of commenting at a distance on various modes of "slavery" in free America. For Engell:

The lessons of *The Algerine Captive* are at once more harsh and more subtle than previous critics have noted. Were the United States to be made of 'worthy FEDERAL citizens' like Updike Underhill, the country would quickly descend into slavery, taking the very path followed, quite innocently, by Tyler's narrator. Readers, if they are to be true worthy citizens, must, like Captain Underhill and Benjamin Franklin, gauge the limits of human goodness and the potential of human depravity... They must see that the American citizen of 1797 or of any age can, by staying at home, become an Algerine Captive (31).

Engell points us to a counterintuitive comparison of American and Algerian forms of oppression, understanding the central problem of *The Algerine Captive* as one of rigid insularity, or Updike's inability to move beyond his single-mindedness to address observably exigent problems. Engell recognizes Updike's conversion scene as ironic because Updike has demonstrably failed to learn from his experiences by the novel's end; yet the role that quixotism plays in Updike's naïve constancy goes unregistered in the critical interventions of Engell and others. Edward Watts, who identifies the "genre-switch" of Updike's conversion scene not as quixotic, but as "resembl[ing] a sermon in which the homily is republican," has similarly found Updike's conversion scene evident of "Tyler's irony" in closing with a protagonist who "teaches imitation, not freedom" (92). Watts similarly shies away from any discussion of the quixotic and its significant influence on Tyler's novel, specifically on Updike's imitative behavior. Though these critics reject certain versions of the "nationalist imaginary" preoccupation by arguing that Updike's newfound prudence and nationalism after being enslaved are not a genuine, Federalist push for national unity, but instead an ironic jab at discourses of lockstep unification or a somber warning against nationalistic single-

mindedness, these readings nonetheless recapitulate the “nationalist imaginary” construction by assuming the primacy of questions of American citizenship and nationality in Tyler’s novel. As the next sections will demonstrate, however, *The Algerine Captive* actually assumes a much more global scope of concerns and influence, particularly via its quixotic influences, which call our attention not so much to the “local” categories of citizenship and national identity as to the potency of quixotic imitation beyond nationality and across national borders.

2.2 Quixotism and the Transnational Imaginary

Updike, quixotically, might be considered a *student* of imitation as well, spending much of his narrative under the tutelage of preceptors and coming out of it at the end mimicking the life trajectory of his ancestor, Captain John Underhill, who flees his native England in search of freedom and a better life only to arrive in a state of persecution. By affirming, upon his return to America, a form of American nationalism based on “uniting... federal strength to enforce a due respect among other nations,” Updike rearticulates the American split from its “parent” country, but in the very terms of transnational self-fashioning that made early America almost at once a liberated colony and, like its former colonizer, a colonial force (Tyler 226). Thus, the “different” stories of Updike and his progenitor Captain John Underhill fictionalize in many ways the relationship between early America, which Shapiro rightly identifies as a “re-export republic,” fully engaged in the lucrative Atlantic economy of the late eighteenth century and growing into its ambitions as an international power, and its English parent (Shapiro 5). While Tyler uses lineage and ancestral influence to give Updike’s behavior and adventures an historical reference point, he simultaneously lifts Updike and his ancestor out of national (American) context, placing them instead in a cosmopolitan world of transatlantic trade and cross-cultural exchange.

We can observe the beginnings of *The Algerine Captive*’s global scope of concern even

before we get to the narrative itself, in a telling preface written under the Updike persona after he has returned from captivity and begun to embark on the writing of his adventures. The preface concerns itself with three primary observations: first, that in the time Updike was away, Americans had developed as a reading nation through increased literacy and the formation of “social libraries” for those interested in reading for pleasure, rather than instruction; second, that this newfound interest in novels, romances, and travel narratives has resulted in, lamentably for Updike, the sale and consumption of books “not of our own manufacture,” that is, from overseas; and third, that because these books are foreign and fanciful, they are problematic for young American readers. As Updike warns, as though he were the author of a quixotic narrative rather than a quixote himself, “if the English Novel does not inculcate vice, it at least impresses on the young mind an erroneous idea of the world, in which she is to live. It paints the manners, customs, and habits of a strange country...” (5-6).

In addition to the particularly quixotic undertones of Updike’s preface—its allusions to the potential of European novels and romances to corrupt one’s sensibility or lead one down a dangerous path of fancy—the preface positions Updike’s own narrative in comparative terms. The preface justifies the split-structure of *The Algerine Captive*, the first section intended to “display a portrait of New England manners, hitherto unattempted,” and the second section aiming to portray Updike’s “captivity among the Algerines, with some notices of the manners of that ferocious race, so dreaded by commercial powers, and so little known in our country” (6-7). Updike’s positioning of his narrative account as a necessary “New England” addition both to domestic American literature and to an international literary conversation on Barbary narratives and Atlantic trade demonstrates his narrative’s global and comparative outlook, which is only reinforced by continual references to the world beyond America and ample

narrations of international travel. Where Updike's preface takes nationalist stances, we are compelled to read these, as with his final conversion scene, with irony. As though he were one of the European novelists he addresses in his preface, Updike allures the provincial American reader with tales of high-seas adventure, English hypocrisy, and orientalist ethnography, "paint[ing] the manners, customs, and habits of a strange country," all while cautioning against the "dangerous" curiosities that compel one to pick up a European novel or board a transatlantic vessel. Always prominent in the narrative, however, is the Atlantic trade system in which America is a crucial participant. Notably, Updike criticizes the transatlantic book trade, apprehends slavery in the American South, and gains passage to England aboard a slave ship not long after he identifies the South as "the high road to fortune" (74). Similar to the entrepreneurial inflection of *Gulliver's Travels*, action and plot advancement in *The Algerine Captive* are frequently powered along by the engines of the Atlantic economy. Gulliver's quixotism of travel is frequently accompanied by not-so-subtle indications that overseas travel is also a means of accumulating wealth, and of bringing the goods and curiosities of foreign lands back to England for profit.

Despite these observations, some critics have questioned *The Algerine Captive's* engagement with issues arising from America's transatlantic relationships. Gesa Mackenthun, who reads the former-slave Updike's readymade capitulation to the notion of a free and unified America upon his return to native soil as a demonstration of the novel's wilful amnesia over America's participation in slavery, argues that early American political discourse was mostly focused on domestic, rather than transatlantic or global, issues (342). In this sense Tyler's tidy ending—through Updike's quixotic conversion—would certainly seem to indicate that for America in the late eighteenth century, tidying up, or smoothing over the striations of American difference and polyvocality under the banner of Updike's "by uniting we stand, by

dividing we fall” aphorism, may indeed have been more important as a domestic goal than taking on the issue of transatlantic slavery (226). But in its ancestral preoccupations and purposive discussions of difference between Algerian, American, and English literatures, customs, religions, politics, and societies, *The Algerine Captive* is indeed, as Armstrong and Tennenhouse suggest, cosmopolitan in its scope, engaging rather clearly with American identity as a transnational and transhistorical phenomenon. Mackenthun—for whom “Updike finds himself happily reconciled with his nation and family, his abolitionist designs...evaporated from his consciousness”—cleverly calls attention to the novel’s “double semantics of slavery,” alleging that Tyler has his narrator forget about his prior abolitionist tendencies, even after the abject experiences of being aboard a slave ship and being enslaved himself, because of domestic pressures to affirm a national discourse of unity (341-42). But such an interpretation, like others focused on the “nationalist imaginary,” relies on a straightforward reading of the quixotic conversion scene—a reading that, as I have suggested, is at least questionable.

Attention to *The Algerine Captive*’s quixotic elements helps both to illuminate and to call into question each of these “nationalist imaginary” readings, which proceed from two basic formulations. The first of these formulations is that, as Mackenthun argues, Updike turning his back on his prior abolitionist position and giving himself over to a Federalist, nationalist politics of unity at the end of the novel is to be read straightforwardly as evidence of the narrative’s wilful amnesia (with regard not just to slavery, but to the rest of Updike’s unfulfilling American past as well). Taken at face value, Tyler’s wholesome ending certainly suggests as much; however, taken as quixotic conversion, it becomes clear that Updike’s closing sentiments are not reliable intimations, but quixotic delusions derived from a demonstrable pattern of quixotic behavior. The second basic formulation of “nationalist

imaginary” readings is that, given the first formulation, *The Algerine Captive* ventures beyond American borders as a travel narrative and a captivity tale only to focus our attention back onto questions of American national identity. If, in other words, Updike’s alacrity in rejoining his native country tells us reliably that all else, including slavery, is mere afterthought in light of his full and committed reinstatement into the American citizenry, then *The Algerine Captive*’s comparative structure and transnational narrative engagement are not genuinely comparative, but simply means of reinforcing an *a priori* nationalist position.

I have already mentioned that reading Updike’s final remarks as quixotic conversion calls into question a number of straightforward “nationalist imaginary” readings. Additionally, by fashioning Updike as a quixote, Tyler gives us cause to re-examine Updike’s travels as genuinely comparative—that is—as means of de-emphasizing the nationalistic concerns that Updike parrots upon return to native soil, emphasizing instead the importance of understanding America as part of a larger, interconnected world. The quixotic narrative has historically taken on a similar comparative function in its migration to early America, placing quixotes in a multitude of locales and social situations in order to test, as Eve Tavor Bannet has argued, the “cultural fit” of foreign customs and behaviors in societies largely shaped by “transnational codes” of behavior (553). For early America, the quixotic narrative is somewhat like Gulliver himself: a foreign thing brought within national borders that arouses curiosity among the locals just as it finds itself prodded and tested by their difference. The problems of unity and national identity favored by “nationalist imaginary” readings arose, then, not simply through an oppositional relationship between Americans and foreigners, but rather through the ways in which various transnationally circulated behavioral codes were understood or misunderstood by “consumers” of literatures and fashions across the Atlantic. Taken this way, in light of the quixotic narrative’s considerable role in the early-American

testing and trying-on of foreign customs and behaviors, Tyler's "New England" account of the Barbary Coast can be understood as a legitimate comparative intervention into the Atlantic cultural economy by way of a mock-nationalistic quixote, an unworthy global citizen, who travels the world but learns little from the experience. In quixotic fashion, then, *The Algerine Captive* teaches us that the steadfast insularity brought about by unreflective (and unreflexive) nationalism is a significant barrier to cross-cultural understanding.

2.3 Re-Reading Quixotic Conversion

As I have suggested, critics reading Updike's comments upon his return to America have disagreed plausibly over issues of narrative distance and irony in Updike's conversion moment; however, these readings have not taken into account the literary lineage of quixotic conversion as it relates to the global scope of *The Algerine Captive's* concerns. Taking Updike as a quixote whose precepts are by definition imitative or derivative—part of a quixotic lineage—a straightforward reading of Updike's stock, nationalistic comments at the end of the novel becomes less tenable. Even critics who read *The Algerine Captive* as a quixotic narrative have neglected to focus on the quixotic nature of Updike's homecoming and conversion.

Placing *The Algerine Captive* rightfully within its lineage of quixotic narratives highlights Updike's entrée into a story of his own through the idealized history of another, and thus the mimetic imperative that operates within Updike, the quixote. Beyond his itinerancy, his penchant for classical learning, his idealism, and his naiveté, Updike remains throughout the novel a fervent imitator of a fictive model of America and American identity, which is derived from and evinced in his romanticized account of his noble ancestor's struggles. After including in his narrative the text of a letter from his ancestor explaining the circumstances of his persecution, Updike colors our impression of Captain John Underhill's founding American

society with the following quixotic apologia, a tract that bears strong resemblance to Gulliver's ironic, Utopian apology for English colonialism—"this Description, I confess, doth by no means affect the *British* nation, who may be an Example to the whole World for their Wisdom, Care, and Justice in planting Colonies"—at the end of *Gulliver's Travels*:

Whoever reflects upon the piety of our forefathers, the noble unrestrained ardour, with which they resisted oppression in England, relinquished the delights of their native country, crossed a boisterous ocean, penetrated a savage wilderness, encountered famine, pestilence, and Indian warfare, and transmitted to us their sentiments of independence, that love of liberty, which under God enabled us to obtain our own glorious freedom, will readily pass over those few dark spots of zeal, which clouded their rising sun (Swift 275; Tyler 18-19).

Traveling throughout America, Updike's disdain for many of those around him is drawn from such idealized impressions of his ancestral and national histories, or, in other words, from his quixotic tendency to hold fast to an antiquated and romanticized model, despite knowledge and experiences to the contrary. When Updike first takes up his post as headmaster at a country school, he vows to be "mild in [his] government, to avoid all manual correction," expecting "by these means to secure the love and respect of [his] pupils" (31). In the spirit of early-American republicanism, he believes in an orderly system of governance that absorbs dissent smoothly and without violence, until he is met with the cold reality of a beating by a parent after deigning himself to administer a beating of his own to a misbehaving student. When he decides to venture to the South to practice medicine, he does so conceiving of the South as "the high road to fortune," believing southerners to be "extremely partial to the characteristic industry of their New England brethren." He seeks, like his ancestor, the free and industrious America of American folklore. At the same time, he leaves his native New England on account of "the illiberality and ignorance" of its people, the shortcomings of New Englanders that Captain John Underhill witnessed generations prior (74). Yet it is Updike's "New England conscience"—the idea of liberality—that later results in his astonishment over the harsh treatment of a southern slave at the hands of a highly respected parson, and

eventually his disenchantment with the American South (80). Nonetheless, after Updike ventures to foreign lands, he takes with him the mythical sense of American identity that he has seen disproved with his own eyes, and evaluates other societies against his ideal of America, rather than his experience of it.

Shortly after leaving for London in disgust over America, Updike lambastes England as a place of “hereditary senators, ignorant in inattentive to the welfare of their country, and unacquainted with the geography of its foreign possessions” (86). He denounces Thomas Paine as boastful, “his bodily presence...both mean and contemptible” (88-90). And once aboard the slave ship *Sympathy*, he laments the conditions under which the slaves are kept out of, as the ship’s captain suspects, “*some yankee nonsense about humanity*” (99). Each of Updike’s criticisms of societies and practices that are foreign to him is born of an American-styled ethos of freedom, justice, and humanity that both Updike and his ancestor fail to find on American soil. He likewise continues to vaunt, while abroad, a crude brand of American exceptionalism that betrays the material truth of his reasons for leaving first New England, and then America altogether. Once in captivity, delivered to the Algerian Mollah for his first consultation, and finding the Mollah in lavish circumstances, Updike observes that “in all countries, except New England, those, whose profession it is to decry the luxuries and vanities of this world somehow or other, contrive to possess the greatest portion of them” (128). Updike keenly observes hypocrisy in the colonizing English “boasting of the GLORIOUS FREEDOM OF ENGLISHMEN” and the Algerian Mollah’s adornments, yet he fails to make comparable connections between the notion of freedom and enterprise in New England that he continually lauds and the illiberal treatment of his ancestor; or between the Southern parson’s hard usage of an African slave and the Christian morality that Updike defends to the Mollah (86). Updike persists in the face of material reality with a derivative quixotic reality.

Justifying the Christian Bible to the Mollah, he argues: “we have received it from our ancestors, and we have as good evidence for the truths it contains, as we have in profane history for any historical fact” (132). Like Gulliver before the Brobdingnagian king, his arguments falter, but his resolution remains. For Updike, the evidence of mythical histories trumps the evidence of experience in much the same way as, for any quixote, the evidence of *histories*—romances, novels, fictions, and travelogues—trumps that of material reality.

It is helpful to bear in mind, then, that in dealing with Updike we are dealing with a quixote, one whose nationalist sentiments are inherited from those of the times of his ancestor even as, like his ancestor, his own experiences would belie such sentiments. Based on the idealized version of America and American identity that Updike borrows from his ancestral past, coupled with the contradictory realities that Updike illustrates for us throughout his travels and dealings with global difference, we can read the glaring irony in Updike’s closing remarks, and thus the irony in Tyler’s quixotic conversion scene, as primarily a function of Updike’s quixotism. Rather than simply eliding America’s various forms of oppression, from religious persecution to slavery, upon Updike’s return and conversion, Tyler gives us a quixote whose frequent blunders and romanticized worldview continually draw our attention to the process of elision. In giving us the parallel histories of the Underhills cast through the lens of the quixotic, *The Algerine Captive* reminds us not merely that Americans can be persecuted in the “free republic” just as one could be in the Barbary Coast, but that the quixotic inheritance of the idealized past can be highly influential beyond national boundaries and throughout global experiences. As Tyler’s novel exhorts, knowing, or even living, a transnational history of oppression, for Updike and for upstart America, is rarely enough to prevent history from being repeated.

2.4 Outward-Oriented Quixotic Exceptionalism

As I have suggested, the ability of *The Algerine Captive* to draw our attention to this process of eliding or apologizing for acknowledged or demonstrated problems within and between nations is not unlike that of *Gulliver's Travels* to highlight the process of Gulliver's quixotic shifts of national (or species) loyalty. Each of these narratives engages with powerful notions of national (or transnational) exceptionalism, in these cases the quixotic tendency to “read” ideologies of nation or national identity as though they were Don Quixote's chivalric romances. In *The Algerine Captive*, this mode of quixotic exceptionalism is starkly conveyed by the fact that Updike reflects literally on “texts” of his ancestral past in order to forge his image of a national present, such that his romanticized history becomes like a chivalric romance, with his ancestor, Captain John Underhill, situated as the heroic knight in a time in which such mythical heroism is alleged (by Updike) to have been common among those fighting for pre-revolution liberty.

When Armstrong and Tennenhouse emphasize the suitability of the Barbary narrative for early American writers focused on America's place in the wider world, they might also acknowledge that exceptionalism of the sort that Updike practices is a likely by-product of the early American novel's tendency to “imagine a community in cosmopolitan terms” (668). In other words, the very building blocks of such cosmopolitan imaginaries, which for Armstrong and Tennenhouse are remarkably resistant to critics' nationalization attempts, are “national” affinities and characteristics. Accordingly, in a world in which, as with Updike in captivity in Algiers, characters are “defined, not so much by their nation of origin, or home, as by their encounters in a world produced by the circulation of goods and peoples,” such global encounters are bound to produce exceptionalist justifications for observed differences that cannot be explained outside the framework of the nation, the problematic “national culture,”

or national identity (Armstrong and Tennenhouse 672). Even in *Gulliver's Travels*, in which national differences are sometimes overshadowed by (and other times conflated with) racial or species differences among fictitious, rational beings who are nonetheless non-human, exceptionalism operates centrally as a means of negotiating difference.

To be clear, that the fundamental problem of “cosmopolitan” or transnational understandings of these texts is always already the paradox of moving beyond the nation as a fixed category while simultaneously relying on nationally-inscribed characteristics to demarcate observable difference is not a critique of the transnational approach taken by Armstrong and Tennenhouse, and, indeed, by myself in this study. Rather, acknowledging the sheer incommensurability of the particulars of certain characteristics as “national” referents in texts like *The Algerine Captive* with the wider transnationalist project of understanding how these texts move beyond merely national concerns helps to explain why quixotic exceptionalism is so often a feature of narratives of the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. Often ironically deployed, quixotic exceptionalism of the kind that Updike practices functions both to point out the reality of national difference and national allegiances (the reader of Updike's travels can spot the similarities between early America and Algiers, despite Updike's inability to do so) and to call into question the nation as a deterministic category (Updike believes he has changed after his trials in Algiers, though his home nation remains as it was when he left it for better prospects). In other words, the cosmopolitan outlook of *The Algerine Captive* is not without its moments of nationalist reflection, despite the fact that the novel is indeed globally focused.

In *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Algerine Captive*, quixotic exceptionalism takes the form of romantically seeking out difference only to define explicitly one's default identity position as superior in opposition to another. Despite their thirst and opportunity for travel, and

thereby for the acquisition of novel experience and perspective, Gulliver and Updike struggle to learn much at all from their conversations, adventures, and near-death experiences. Importantly, in each of these instances of quixotic exceptionalism, the quixotes ultimately struggle to find satisfaction, or to have their quixotism vindicated. Gulliver retires from his travels as a madman who, where Swift leaves off, spends more time in the stables conversing with his horses than his human family. And Updike, full of patriotic zeal, returns after a heavily ironic conversion scene to the very country that drove him into the shackles of slavery abroad. In the following chapter on Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742), however, we will see how Parson Adams, who does not undergo any form of quixotic conversion, focuses his quixotic exceptionalism on problems of national, rather than global concern.

SECTION II: EXCEPTIONALISM AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE Rational and Mad Quixotes in the “Public Sphere”

CHAPTER 3: *JOSEPH ANDREWS*

In Gulliver and Updike Underhill we can begin to perceive the exceptionalist qualities of quixotes. Through strikingly similar ironic modes, both Swift and Tyler give us quixotes who, in their idealism and naiveté, are highly susceptible to external influences, despite thinking of themselves as individuals who have risen above the exotic pull of foreign lands and peoples, as well as the ideological struggles within their home nations. Gulliver, once an English patriot, finds himself converted to the Houyhnhnms' way of life, while Updike is converted to the very sort of nationalist stance that he ridicules among the English and the Algerines. Gulliver and Updike find ways to justify their shifting and contorted allegiances through exceptionalist arguments, understanding themselves as special cases not just while abroad, but within their own societies. Accordingly, their exceptionalism is characterized by both their orientation toward otherness abroad, as well as their ability to construe those of their own nations as alien in relation to their quixotic worldviews.

As will become increasingly apparent in this section and throughout this study, place and setting are significant factors for the forms that quixotic exceptionalism takes in the eighteenth-century quixotic narrative. Gulliver and Updike are “international” quixotes whose challenges and exceptionalist responses are direct results of their global circumstances. As this chapter will demonstrate through a reading of Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742), provincializing the quixote has the effect of re-focusing the quixotic narrative's sociopolitical concerns, turning from questions of inter/national fit within a globalized world to questions of local, public concern. *Joseph Andrews* engages explicitly with what are best understood as public issues and problems—charity, poverty, social and legal order—and figures madness as a public disease. Thus, in *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding gives us a quixote in Parson Adams who

is presented, paradoxically, as a representation of measure and sanity amid a world gone seemingly mad. Parson Adams' England is one in which the clergy have abandoned their charitable duty, and in which his copy of Aeschylus can be mistaken by another parson for a pilfered religious work.

In this way, *Joseph Andrews* is an exemplary text for examining the role of quixotic exceptionalism in public discourse. Though Fielding's novel begins, as I will show, as a response to the Richardsonian mode of domestic fiction, it evolves to become more about Parson Adams' quixotic engagement with a set of issues facing the British public than Fielding's response to *Pamela*. I will explore in this chapter the counterintuitive and slippery relationship between “sane” quixote and “mad” society, tracing a type of quixotic liminality that attributes to Fielding's quixote, as a *de facto* social critic, the dual consciousness of visionary and revisionist.²¹ This chapter will provide a refined sense of quixotic liminality as it applies to Parson Adams' engagements with provincial public life in *Joseph Andrews*. Alongside this discussion, I will consider how Fielding's quixote was created in part as a response to social uncertainties and literary-market imperatives. Fielding demonstrated interest in the quixotic narrative as a medium when he wrote *Don Quixote in England* for the stage in 1734, though his decision to novelize the quixote in *Joseph Andrews* reflects Fielding's keen sense of the emerging market for a quixotic novel, as opposed to a quixotic play. Through a discussion of Parson Adams' dual consciousness and its function in a transitional society and literary market, I aim to demonstrate the ways in which Parson Adams' quixotism functions as means of rendering the quixote an exception in political discourse, figuring the quixote misleadingly as a sage above the fray, rather than a participant within it.

²¹Though “dual consciousness” recalls W.E.B. Du Bois' term “double consciousness” from the first chapter of *The Souls of Black Folk*, it is meant here not precisely as Du Bois used “double consciousness,” referring to being both an American and an African American. Still, the notions of interiority/exteriority and of the divided self that Du Bois' term suggests are relevant to my use of a similar phrase, as well as the meaning I intend. See *The Souls of Black Folk*. Ed. Brent Hayes Edwards. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.

The question of madness versus rationality is especially pertinent to Cervantes' Don Quixote, whose madness is not without ample moments of reason and ostensibly good sense. As the priest and the barber evaluate a bedridden Don Quixote in Part II, Chapter 1, having taken him home at the close of Part I, they judge that, after inquiring after Don Quixote's health:

he accounted for himself and the state of his health with very good judgment and in very elegant words, and in the course of their conversation they began to discuss what is called reason of state and ways of governing, correcting this abuse and condemning that one, reforming one custom and eliminating another, each one of the three becoming a new legislator, a modern Lycurgus, a latter-day Solon, and they so transformed the nation that it seemed as if they had placed it in the forge and taken out a new one, and Don Quixote spoke with so much intelligence regarding all the subjects they touched upon that his two examiners thought there was no doubt that he was completely well and his sanity restored (Cervantes 460).²²

Through this type of passage in *Don Quixote* we can begin to make sense of Fielding's casting of Parson Adams as a quixote who is at once sensible, educated, and politically and socially engaged, yet at times mad and disconnected from the ways of those around him. That Don Quixote's madness is so well disguised by his reasonable speech with regard to the well-being of the state, “correcting” and “condemning” abuses, and “transform[ing] the nation” in this episode with the priest and the barber is pertinent in light of Parson Adams' quixotic efforts to reform, as a lone knight of moral fortitude, the fallen society around him. Notably, after his assessors deem him sane and rational at the beginning of Part II, Don Quixote proceeds almost immediately to talk further of “His Majesty” summoning “all the knight-errants wandering through Spain...to gather at court” in order to fight off the Turks, declaring ultimately (and falsely) that he “shall die a knight errant” (Cervantes 461-2). In this way, Don Quixote continually defies hard definitions of madness and rationality, occupying the deceptive, liminal state that Fielding later picks up on in his rendering of Parson Adams.

²²Cervantes, Miguel de. *Don Quixote*. Trans. Edith Grossman. New York: Ecco Press, 2003. All references are to this edition.

3.1 Notions of Madness in Eighteenth-Century England

“In the landscape of unreason where the sixteenth century located it,” writes Michel Foucault, “madness concealed a meaning and an origin that were obscurely moral; its secrecy related it to sin, and the animality imminently perceived in it did not make it, paradoxically, more innocent” (220). This relates to the understanding of madness that Foucault draws from *Don Quixote*, whose madness, like that which frequently appears in Shakespeare, is primarily tragic, associated with an irredeemable sense of demise (thus Don Quixote's deathbed renunciation of his quixotism as simultaneously a pathetic and redemptive gesture), or of falling into such a lamentable state of unreason that it is akin to sin. By the eighteenth century, for Foucault, understandings of madness in Britain undergo a shift, characterized by a returned association of madness with morality, and a fear of madness as a social disease capable of transcending the individual case:

The unreason that had been relegated to the distance of confinement reappeared, fraught with new dangers as if endowed with a new power of interrogation. Yet what the eighteenth century first noticed about it was not the secret interrogation, but only the social effects: the torn clothing, the arrogance in rags, the tolerated insolence, whose disturbing powers were silenced by an amused indulgence...this was the first time since the Great Confinement that the madman had become a social individual²³ (200).

This characterization of what was understood as the social danger of madness as the tattered madman bears the traces of Cervantes' description of Don Quixote, who notably appears ragged, tattered, battered, gaunt, and sickly, especially after his more extreme bouts of madness result in physically destructive bouts with others. In eighteenth-century Britain, the quixotic narrative modified this image of the quintessential seventeenth-century madman, Don Quixote, to address perceived social ills associated with what Foucault identifies at mid-century as the emergent fear of social madness, “formulated in medical terms, but animated, basically, by a moral myth” (202). Concern over the social implications of madness resulted

²³By “Great Confinement” Foucault refers to a seventeenth-century phenomenon, primarily in Paris, in which a significant portion of the population of the poor, unemployed, and criminal were institutionally confined. The English workhouse movement, however, practiced similar methods of concentrating the poor and indigent in areas of confinement.

in the seeking of “a political and economic explanation...in which wealth, progress, institutions appear as the determining element of madness” (Foucault 213).

Parson Adams is perhaps the quintessential quixote of eighteenth-century Britain, whose quixotic madness is not only moral and social in its scope of concerns, but distinctly religious as well. As Foucault notes, citing case instances from the *Encyclopedie*, “for a long time doctors were suspicious of too strict a devotion, too strong a belief. Too much moral rigor, too much anxiety about salvation and the life to come were often thought to bring on melancholia” (215). Accordingly, Parson Adams' religious quixotism could be understood as a like form of madness, in his brooding over sermons and scriptural passages, preoccupation with classical texts as gateways into religious and moral learning, and tendency to over-read his sermons as does Don Quixote his chivalric romances.

Yet, as with Don Quixote, Parson Adams' mode of quixotic madness is especially unsettling—especially fear-inducing—because his instances of madness are so frequently couched in the language of reason, understanding, and scripture itself. In this way Parson Adams embodies a societal understanding of madness in eighteenth-century Britain that not only associated madness with questions of moral and religious well-being, but was also increasingly invested in concerns about madness as a social contagion. As Parson Adams passes through the English countryside with sermons in hand and a command of language and classical scripture that appears almost foreign to his interlocutors, Fielding raises questions about the quixote's liminal role as a figure of madness and of moral fortitude. Other important changes within and beyond Britain give greater force to widespread concerns about madness.

3.2 Innovation, Imitation, and the Literary Marketplace

Caught in the tides of Enlightenment change, the wake of the rise of financial markets and print culture, simmering and cooling revolutions, and reconfigurations of relationships

between citizenry and state, Parson Adams is made to negotiate changing conceptions of innovation and imitation, as was the author who created him. In his essay “Innovation and Repetition,” René Girard follows historical changes in societal understandings of innovation in the West, and what these changes suggest about a society’s relationship to its cultural models. Prior to the European and Atlantic Enlightenments, innovation was a largely negative concept, defined in a theological context, and considered of the order of heresy. For Girard, “the negative view of ‘innovation’ reflects...*external mediation*, a world in which the need for and the identity of all cultural models is taken for granted” (231). Further:

the world of external mediation genuinely fears the loss of its transcendental models. Society is felt to be inherently fragile. Any tampering with things as they are could unleash the primordial mob and bring about a regression to original chaos. What is feared is a collapse of religion and society as a whole, through a mimetic contagion that would turn the people into a mob (232).

As Girard writes, “hostility to innovation is what we expect from conservative thinkers, but we are surprised to find it under the pen of authors whom we regard as innovators.” He provides examples of Calvin denouncing “the appetite and desire to innovate, change, and stir up everything,” Cromwell in 1658 railing against “Designs...laid to innovate upon the Civil Rights of Nations, and to innovate in matters of religion,” and even Diderot, warning that “in a government, every innovation is to be feared” (Girard Journal Reprint 8, 9).

We can see immediately in Girard’s description of pre-Enlightenment “external mediation” some of the backward-looking or revisionist aspects of the characterization of Parson Adams. His transcendental models being theologically based, the Parson laments what he perceives as his contemporaries’ departure from those (Christian) models. Parson Adams is very much a New-Testament-style Christian, emphasizing charity, purity, good works, repentance, and “turning the other cheek” when victimized by unjust actors. Despite their chastity and good nature, Joseph and Fanny find themselves repeatedly reprimanded by Parson Adams for their shortcomings, or for their generational and theological distance from

Adams' rigorously classical and scriptural models of good conduct.

Girard identifies an Enlightenment-era shift in understandings of innovation, at which point the related concept of imitation gains new relevance. Whereas innovation was often discouraged, and imitation meant conforming to an *a priori*, accepted set of models in pre-Enlightenment societies, the revolutionary eighteenth century brought about a reconceptualization of these terms as they relate to one another:

Paradoxically, the [French] Revolution did not reinforce the ancient fear of *innovation*, but instead greatly contributed to its demise. The guillotine terrified many people, of course, but it was 'political' terror in the modern sense, and no longer something mysterious and uncanny. What disappeared at that time was the feeling that any deliberate tinkering with the social order was not only sacrilegious but intrinsically perilous, likely to trigger an apocalyptic disaster. Even if the bad connotations of our word occasionally resurfaced in the eighteenth century, the story of the hour was not the perpetuation of the past, but its overthrow. It was not the core *meaning* of 'innovation' that changed, but its affective 'aura' (233).

This reframing or emancipation of the concept of innovation from its negative history or negatively "affective aura" came about through the gradual "toppling" of backward-looking (theological, *a priori*, fixed) transcendental models, allowing for the emerging possibility of new kinds of imitation. Unlike older models of imitation that required one to conform to an accepted set of behavioral and creative guidelines, the movement away from a world of *external mediation* meant that "individuals and communities [were] free to adopt whichever models they prefer[red] and, better still, no model at all" (239). Thus, in addition to the considerable socioeconomic changes that took place, the eighteenth century was in many ways the cusp of a conceptual shift in modeling what might be considered the social good or the way to betterment. Straddling this cusp, Parson Adams attempts, quixotically and unsuccessfully, to lend his sane vision to an age of change through dated or incompatible precepts. His author, also negotiating the ways in which innovation and imitation operated in the literary marketplace, attempted his own visionary project in writing *Joseph Andrews* "in

imitation of the manner of Cervantes, author of *Don Quixote*” (Fielding 1).²⁴

Girard’s brief history of eighteenth-century innovation, which allowed for the imitation of various cultural models (or none at all), provides the framework for his theorizing of innovation, imitation, and competition, all of which are bound together through mimetic relations. For Girard, “in economic life, imitation and innovation are not only compatible, but almost inseparable” (239). Denying the possibility of “absolute innovation,” innovation that bypasses the imitative process, Girard sees innovation as a product of a constant imitative process in which imitators identify a successful or superior model, imitate the model as a basis for their own success, then, in some cases, grow adept enough in their imitation to innovate. Imitation requires the recognition of a successful model, and thus the competitive, mimetic urge to achieve one’s own success based on the perception of the model’s superiority:

All imitators select models whom they regard as superior. In ‘internal mediation,’ models and imitators are equal in every respect but one—the superior achievement of the one, which motivates the imitation by the other. This means, of course, that the models have been successful *at their imitators’ expense* (240).

The famous rivalry between Fielding and Richardson, precipitated by the introduction of *Joseph Andrews* into the literary marketplace as a “*Quixote*-like critique of Richardsonian fiction,” is arguably one such example of an innovative attempt spurred by an imitable model (Reed 117). This is particularly the case in light of Fielding’s re-creation of the Pamela figure in *Joseph* (imitation), and, as Ian Watt and James Cruise both observe, his fastidious effort in commingling classical literary models and a Cervantic “manner” in order to create, as he saw it, a new literary genre (innovation) (Watt 248; Cruise 123).

Ronald Paulson has suggested that in writing *Pamela*, Richardson “shifts the emphasis from profane to sacred texts,” his means of “replacing the novels of amorous intrigue with his new, improved novel.” But for Fielding, as Paulson continues, “Richardson has tacitly

²⁴Fielding, Henry. *Joseph Andrews and Shamela*. Eds. Douglas Brooks-Davies and Thomas Keymer. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999. All references are to this edition.

retained the plot, setting, and assumptions of these amorous novels and associated them with religious texts” (146). Fielding, then, engages in the parodic imitation of Richardson because he sees in *Pamela* an embodiment of the sort of novel he aims, in his Cervantic way, to innovate beyond. Thus, in Girard's terms, an essential part of Fielding's innovation in *Joseph Andrews* is the preservation of certain aspects of *Pamela*, or the imitation of *Pamela* in the act of innovating beyond it. As Paulson argues,

In *Pamela*, Richardson has introduced the religious text as the object of imitation; and by opening the door to the suspicion that he has conflated Scripture with romance (supported by the promoting of *Pamela* by clergymen) he has permitted Fielding to make *Pamela*, itself essentially a religious text, the object of scrutiny by clergymen in *Shamela* and to introduce religious texts as themselves the source of imitation in *Joseph Andrews* (146).

Notably, the perceived flaw in *Pamela* to which Fielding reacts most strongly in *Joseph Andrews*, particularly through the chaste and virtuous duo of Parson Adams and Joseph, is its commingling of archaically religious and romantic tones. Pamela's lamentable situation is the result of the double-edge of religious chastity and sheer physical beauty, the textual result of which is the fetishising (and thus foregrounding) of feminine sexuality as something always to be withheld in accordance with religious prescription. Just as the morally superior Pamela laments without irony “what a World we live in! for it is grown more a Wonder that the Men are resisted, than that the Women comply,” the equally moral Joseph, in a farcical gender-role reversal, laments the sexual unscrupulousness of his female suitors (Richardson 71). Fielding thus discharges the romance-genre tensions of sexual withholding by making light of the Pamela plight, turning instead to the asexual exemplar of Christian *agapé*, Parson Adams, for his novel's moral drive in an attempt to hold separate the romantic and the religious.

A significant aspect of Fielding's claim to originality and innovation in *Joseph Andrews* is his disavowal of preexisting literary forms, and accordingly his sense that, in Girard's terms, the literary marketplace was ripe for the consideration of new imitative models, apart from scripture and from romance. James Cruise finds Fielding's awareness of

the influence of his contemporary literary marketplace particularly acute:

The fact that this [market] consciousness assumes explicit forms throughout *Joseph Andrews* is indicative of just how dominant a market sensibility had become in the production of the genre, but the role of the market serves other less apparent functions as well. Although one would scarcely characterize the relationship between Richardson and Fielding as a partnership, it does make sense from an institutional standpoint to propose, as Michael McKeon has done, that their efforts yielded ‘a form sufficient for the joint inquiry into analogous epistemological and social problems.’ I would only add as both problems came to be defined through the marketplace and the commercial narrative (123-4).

When Richardson and Fielding entered into a mimetic and competitive situation within the marketplace—what Cruise calls tentatively a “partnership,” but what might better be called, in Gerard’s terms, a mimetic rivalry spurred by *Pamela*’s success—a kind of imitative innovation resulted, as Cruise and McKeon suggest. Concomitant with relatively widespread social changes in mid-eighteenth-century England, the two authors witnessed within the literary marketplace, and not independent of the effects of their own contributions, an innovative shift to new imitative models.

In responding to Richardson with *Shamela* and *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding took an opportunity to imitate an additional model, *Don Quixote*. Compatible with Fielding’s mission to create an unwritten and unseen novelistic form in *Joseph Andrews*, Don Quixote’s iconically quixotic exteriority—his distance from those around him in both fantastic worldview and assumed metaphysical superiority—proves an exceptional imitative model for Fielding’s ambitious purposes. As Don Quixote asserts to Sancho in a quintessential moment of quixotic exteriority and exceptionalism, after Sancho suggests “there’s nothing your grace doesn’t know,” “everything is necessary...for the profession I follow” (Cervantes 202). As Fielding’s new quixote in *Joseph Andrews*, Parson Adams is, not surprisingly, an aloof figure who claims transcendent understanding through his knowledge of classics and of scripture or, in other words, through his superior imitation of anachronistic models. The distance between Parson Adams’ actions and convictions and the actions and convictions of those in the society around him is both the main source of the ridiculous in the novel and the generative space

from which arises his quixotic liminality, his relative madness or sanity in an altered society.

As his form-consciousness and narratological dexterity in *Joseph Andrews* suggest, Fielding's mode of literary innovation, not unlike Lennox's in *The Female Quixote*, is somewhat of a quixotic adventure itself, which tested the suitability of his attempt at formal distance within the literary marketplace, as well as his authorial intervention into the political discourses of mid-eighteenth-century England. Additionally, by entering the quixotic "genre" for the first time in novel form (as opposed to writing for the stage, as with *Don Quixote in England*) and taking up Cervantes' "manner," Fielding nodded not just to genre imitation, but to genres of imitation as well, doing so in a time in which strict imitative adherence to transcendental models like those of Parson Adams was being questioned, and new notions of innovation considered. The historical background against which this literary innovation took place is worth considering, as Parson Adams' moral and social awareness mirrors in many ways the concerns of mid-century authors like Fielding, who were skeptical of the potential effects of considerable political and economic shifts in Britain, Europe, and the wider Atlantic world.

3.3 Quixote in a Mad World

Apart from the quixote's liminality and visionary claims, the societal madness and societal breakdown surrounding Fielding's quixote have been a subject of considerable attention. Contending that "*Joseph Andrews* is about the absence of charity in eighteenth-century England," Christopher Parkes demonstrates how Fielding conveys through characters like Lady Booby and Peter Pounce some troubling, if exaggerated, English notions of dealing with poverty, including putting the poor to pasture, as one would a horse, because of the abundant grazing fields and freshwater streams available throughout the countryside (17). Similar moments of absurdity and of victimization of the disadvantaged populate and to an

extent characterize Fielding's novel, from Joseph's reluctance to give up his borrowed breeches at gunpoint before being beaten nearly to death on the occasion of one of multiple roadside attacks (as he would not be able to make good on his word to return the breeches to the lender) to the macabre, horseback pursuit of Parson Adams by, as Fielding writes, "a great Hunter of Men," in the tradition of ferreting out and hunting game (Fielding 44, 207).

Though Parson Adams, in his "simplicity," is continually portrayed as outmoded and distant from the unquestioning perfidy of so many of those with whom he comes into contact on the road, the degree to which Fielding casts his English society as madly corrupt and uncharitable, if not at times sociopathic, renders Parson Adams a figure of measure by comparison. Walter Reed calls Parson Adams "a Quixote of ethical rather than aesthetic precept"; and in his important study *Joseph Andrews, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art*, Martin Battestin sees Parson Adams as a kind of moral yardstick for the times "in his bewildered exposure to the vanities of the age: the levees of great men, country hunting matches and horse races, drums and routs, beaux and coquettes" (Reed 126; Battestin 113). But to avoid simply re-casting eighteenth-century England in the moralistic terms of Fielding's Parson Adams as a juror from *Modern Chivalry* might remark—"fit for Bedlam"—it is necessary to consider how socioeconomic changes of the time might give the impression of madness or disorientation, like the proverbial rug pulled out from under one's feet (Brackenridge 431).²⁵

Beyond the context of Fielding's fictional world gone mad, Parkes and others have suggested that the early-eighteenth century was a time of considerable socioeconomic transition. As Judith Frank observes, "work on both the satire and the fiction of this period has tended to focus on the transition from patrician culture to a culture dominated by the logic of

²⁵Brackenridge, Hugh Henry. *Modern Chivalry*. Ed. Claude M. Newlin. New York: American Book Co., 1937. All references are to this edition.

the market, or what Michael McKeon has described as the tension between aristocratic and progressive ideology” (3). Recalling Fielding’s uncharitable clergymen, Parkes calls attention to the ways in which the workhouse movement and Poor Laws reform, aimed at systematizing care for and control over the poor, allowed clergy to abandon more localized charitable endeavors under the pretense that other state provisions were available (18).

In addition to substantial changes in the handling of the English poor, the last decades of the seventeenth century and the first few decades of the eighteenth century leading up to the publication of *Joseph Andrews* witnessed a rise of financial markets (the “financial revolution” of William III, the nationalization of debt, and the creation of the Bank of England in 1694), and thus a shift from the land-based accumulation of material wealth to credit-based speculation. Michael Gilmore describes this shift as the installation of “a system of public credit and national debt...created in order to underwrite commercial expansion and the wars with France,” which included in the first two decades of the eighteenth century the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-14), and, by the time of the publication of *Joseph Andrews*, the War of the Austrian Succession, including the transatlantic King George's War (1740-48).

Emphasising the destabilizing nature of this shift, Gilmore goes on to write:

While real wealth in land was taxed to pay off interest on the debt, stockjobbers and speculators were amassing fortunes by manipulating worthless paper. Scandals like the South Sea Bubble of 1720, when the stock climbed astronomically and then abruptly plunged, strengthened the conviction of the landowners that the new economic order was unstable, irrational, and a menace to civic health (182).

The early-century rise of finance economies was an antecedent to a related but different phase of societal change, which emerged in the wake of Walpolian policies and the opposition to Walpole as a legacy of Walpolian materialism and self-interest. Contributing to this emergent sense of societal madness and cynicism in the 1730s was Walpole's reputation for covering up corruption, and an attendant lack of trust in public figures (Gerrard 175). This notion of mistrust in the mid-1730s, leading up to the publication of *Joseph Andrews*, only

compounded prior skepticism, generated from the fallout of the South Sea Bubble, about the direction in which British society was heading. Consequently, as Christine Gerrard writes, “larger patterns of deception, enticement, and moral metamorphosis” were behind what Walpole's opposition believed were “people's changed moral behaviour in Walpolian Britain” (176). Fielding was very much an active participant in the discourse of Walpole opposition, and was an adherent to the political view that, amid a morally deteriorating society, there were yet sly and powerful figures, like Walpole, who aimed to lead people ever farther astray. Curiously, one of Fielding's satires on Walpole, published in the *Champion* on 13 December 1739, figures Walpole as a magician who, posted in a pastoral setting, lures passers-by into complicity by taking them by the hand and giving them a “gentle squeeze” (Gerrard 181). Parson Adams, hardly a Walpolian figure, is nonetheless something of a mystic in the eyes of the uneducated and uncharitable country masses in *Joseph Andrews*, his moral quixotism in a society gone morally awry contributing to his liminality as both a sage and a dunce. The sense that when Walpole fell, cynicism reigned, idealism vanished from British society, and Britain entered in the mid-century an anti-quixotic phase of national politics is thus complicated by Parson Adams, a moral idealist critical of the idealization of self-interest.

The seeming “irrationality” and instability of financial markets (sentiments that no doubt resonate with us today, given the ubiquity and prominence of finance economies), joined with marked shifts in the loci of personal versus social responsibility and the prominent Walpole-opposition's notions of a regressive “moral metamorphosis,” make Parson Adams’ England indeed a world of particular uncertainty, perhaps even in some ways an ostensibly mad world.

On the other hand, Parson Adams’ bookishly quixotic resolve can appear wholly irrational in the face of Joseph’s meager appeals to emotional and circumstantial validity,

though Joseph frequently becomes the more quixotically irrational of the pair when it comes to Fanny, his Dulcinea. Further, the very notions of capitalization and self-interest, very much driving sentiments in the transitional eighteenth century, are in a sense among the most fundamental forms of rationality; yet the positing of capitalization and self-interest as transcendent or wholly benevolent virtues risks partaking of just another mode of quixotic idealism. As we can see, rationality and madness can neither be independent nor fixed; rather, they take on meaning dialectically. The process of mythmaking or of rendering a given position exceptional occurs at this dialectical site, when a move is made to fashion oneself outside or beyond the dialectical production of meaning. Parson Adams frequently attempts to situate himself not at the margins of, but morally and intellectually *above* his society and its many inhabitants he encounters on the road; and his dissent in the face of tumult and uncertainty seems certifiably quixotic. However, when the society appears so mad that the quixote can seem sane by comparison, the assumed fundamentals of quixotism—among them, an idealism that defies sanity—invite further scrutiny.

As Battestin argues convincingly, and Fielding illustrates rather transparently in his portrait of Adams the parson, Parson Adams is an “imitator of Christ,” and Fielding drew his basis for Adams’ character from a series of homilies that stress “the depiction of the good man as hero” (Battestin 26; Mandel 154). Parson Adams-as-quixote, then, would seem to fit into a lineage of quixote criticism that reads the quixote as the hero and protagonist of the quixotic narrative, and the surrounding “world of windmills” as the villain, or the object of quixotic satire (Mandel 154). Parson Adams’ relative sanity, stemming from his moral and ethical grounding, is perhaps the foundation of his quixotic heroism; though not necessarily, as we can observe, without its complications. His litany of comic overreactions, from flinging his beloved copy of Aeschylus into the fire at Fanny’s slightest disturbance to the entreaties to

others in dire peril to “repose thy Trust in the same Providence, which hath hitherto protected thee,” depict a figure who is quixotically detached from and anachronistic within a mad society, yet not wholly sane, nor wholly heroic, thereby (122). Attentive to the world before his eyes, Adams recognizes exigent social problems, and courageously attempts to engage them; yet his orientation, vaguely nostalgic, is also to a world very distant from the one he occupies, rendering his precepts for the most part ineffectual. The breakdown of stable notions of sanity and madness exemplified by Parson Adams in eighteenth-century England points to an important facet of quixotic liminality; namely, the line between sane and insane, visionary and revisionist.

A case can be made likewise for Joseph-as-quixote, in light of both Joseph’s quixotic commitment to chastity, duty, and Fanny, and Parson Adams’ Sancho-like prudence in moments of danger or distress. Despite the slightly different class dynamics between quixote and sidekick in this model—Parson Adams is not Joseph’s servant, nor is the servant Joseph in Adams’ employ throughout their journey together—Fielding endows both characters with quixotic qualities. In this case the critical tendency to treat quixote and servant oppositionally is made to confront considerable complication, where even opposites partake of mimetic behavior to the extent that they begin to mirror each other. Erich Auerbach recalls in “The Enchanted Dulcinea” a scene from Part II, Chapter 10 of *Don Quixote* in which Sancho beguiles his deluded master into receiving “three peasant women on donkeys” as his beloved Dulcinea and two lady attendants on white steeds (338). Sancho successfully carries out his deception by speaking and persisting quixotically, as his master does: when Don Quixote accurately interprets the scene—“three farm girls on three jackasses”—as Sancho typically does, Sancho orders him to “Open those eyes of yours and come do reverence to the lady of your affections, for she draws near” (336). Joseph and Parson Adams share similar moments

of mimetic duplicity, as when Joseph, in Adams-like fashion, implores the Parson to heed his own prior advice about excessive passion, divine will, and attachment to worldly things after Adams, being told (falsely) that his son has drowned, begins to “stamp about the Room and deplore his Loss with the bitterest Agony” (270). As these cases demonstrate, the quixote’s liminality is a salient feature of the quixotic narrative. But more importantly, such liminality results not merely from an autonomous function—a straightforward case of quixotic madness or “turned brain”—but rather from a series of situations produced by the quixote’s (often mimetic) relationship to servant, sidekick, and society.

Crucial to our understanding of Parson Adams' liminal role and function in Fielding's novel is the way in which Adams avails himself of quixotic exceptionalism both to position himself as an objective onlooker above his society—as Ruth Mack might suggest, a “quixotic ethnographer”—and to cast his surrounding society as mad and unscrupulous, despite his own anachronistic worldview.²⁶ In this way the Parson collapses his liminal position into a fundamentally quixotic position, his quixotism effectively obviating the problem of difference (and distance) between himself and the characters he encounters on the road, and ultimately justifying (in quixotic terms) his function as a humorous, at times ironic, but not unserious critic of the provincial worlds he passes through.

3.4 Sanity/Madness: Three Ways of Reading Parson Adams in *Joseph Andrews*

Quixotic narratives often end with scenes of mixed resolution, in which the quixotes are restored to comfortable and respectable places in society, though only after realizing and taking responsibility for their follies and renouncing their quixotism. Both Gulliver and Updike undergo similar quixotic conversions of their own, though with mixed results, in *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Algerine Captive*. At the end of *Joseph Andrews* we find Parson

²⁶Mack's article on *The Female Quixote* is titled “Quixotic Ethnography: Charlotte Lennox and the Dilemma of Cultural Observation.” *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 38.2/3 (2005): 193-213.

Adams endowed with a solid annual salary and joyously marrying Joseph and Fanny, though in the final few pages of the novel Adams remains the butt of Fielding's jokes, accidentally spurring his horse and being thrown from it, chastising Mr. Booby and Pamela at the wedding for "laughing in so sacred a Place, and so solemn an Occasion," and overindulging in so much "Ale and Pudding" as to have "given a Loose to more Facetiousness than was usual to him," remaining at the novel's close a kind of comic anachronism (Fielding 300-02). The ambiguity created by writing the quixote as both a comical figure for readers to justifiably mock and a sympathetic figure whose behavior and worldview raise questions about the surrounding society with which the quixote is largely incompatible is part of a narrative strategy that enables writers to make subtle, veiled, and multifaceted social critiques.

This narrative strategy, which hinges upon our readings of the sanity or madness of quixotes, and hence our determination of the objects of quixotic critique or satire, is both what enables the broad adaptability of the quixotic narrative across linguistic, geographical, and political spectra, as well as the impression of quixotic narratives as boundless, formless, and ideologically inconsistent. Readings of quixotic narratives typically take the shape of one of three (or a combination of these) general approaches: de-emphasizing the quixotic altogether, emphasizing quixotic liminality as the primary (if not only) characteristic of quixotism, or close-reading quixotic conversion as a heuristic means of determining whether the object of critique is the quixote (and quixotism) or the society that finds quixotism so perplexing. Considering Fielding's deployment of quixotic liminality in *Joseph Andrews* as a way of giving his ranging social critique a double edge, *Joseph Andrews* is a prime quixotic text for examining these methods of reading quixotic narratives.

Though *Joseph Andrews* may well have been a political investment against what Fielding saw as a decline in charitable endeavors, a legal system presided over by unfit

magistrates, and national flirtation with economic ruin (through the financing of considerable debts and continual wars), Fielding's innovative novel certainly offers a more ranging and complicated intervention than these salient critiques and fictionalizations of political concern. As I have shown, many of the seminal and influential scholarly discussions of *Joseph Andrews* have focused, quite rightly, on its engagement with the relevant social issues confronting mid-eighteenth-century Britain, including questions of how to house and provide for the poor, how to keep provincial areas and roadways safe, how to curb greed and callousness, and how to manage the risks associated with a finance-based economy. Battestin and Watt are especially attentive to the moral questions to which Fielding draws our attention, while Cruise and Gilmore pick up on Fielding's heightened awareness of the stakes of the literary market, as well as the potential pitfalls of mid-century British monetary policy. Each of these readings treats quixotism in *Joseph Andrews*, either explicitly (by the absence of consideration of how quixotism operates in the novel) or implicitly (by the recognition that there exists some quixotic influence in *Joseph Andrews*, but that such influence is merely formal), as a secondary concern. While putting quixotism aside is a perfectly justifiable approach for those interested especially in historical aspects of a given quixotic narrative, excluding a text's quixotic elements, or treating quixotism mainly as a formal element, or an allusive or surface-level connection to Cervantes or to *Don Quixote*, can minimize attention to aspects of the quixotic narrative that can profoundly change the way we read such narratives.

Without attention to Parson Adams' quixotic liminality, for example—specifically how Adams as a liminal figure in relation to the surrounding society he aims to critique is fundamentally quixotic—we can easily lose sight of the fact that Adams' moral bearing is not only a “yardstick,” as Battestin suggests, demarcating the dated from the new, but an idealistic vision, or a quixotic attempt to re-institute the moral codes of the past. As a quixote, Parson

Adams is, likewise, an imitator of the past, a misplaced romantic, and a driving force of precisely the kind of bourgeois self-regulation that is to the inhabitants of the provincial Britain with which Adams interacts what chivalry is to those who mock Don Quixote for scrupulously sitting vigil over his arms before he is to be “knighted” by the confounded innkeeper. Historical readings that de-emphasize the quixotic risk missing connections of this sort—connections that can alter our understanding of well-studied motifs—morality, charity, chastity—in well-studied novels like *Joseph Andrews*.

A second, prominent way of reading quixotic narratives is by locating the absence or presence of a “quixotic conversion” at the end of the novel, then evaluating the conversion scene in order to determine whether the primary object of satire or critique is the quixote or the surrounding society. Though Cervantes' Don Quixote famously undergoes quixotic conversion at the end of the novel, renouncing on his deathbed his quixotism and his consequent adventures as irrational, imprudent, and regrettable, not all quixotes undergo conversion. As I have mentioned, Fielding concludes *Joseph Andrews* on a jovial and lighthearted note, showing Parson Adams in the pleasant position of marrying Joseph and Fanny, and maintaining his quixotic behavior and worldview in the novel's final pages. Though Fielding's treatment of Parson Adams is not without irony in the novel's closing moments—the Parson is still shown preaching solemnity to guests at the wedding simply looking to share in the joyousness of the occasion—we also get the sense that, even for his quixotism, Parson Adams is vindicated in marrying the two besieged young lovers. In the primarily comical and upbeat final scenes of *Joseph Andrews*, the microcosm of British society over which Parson Adams loosely presides is indeed, as Ruth Mack attributes to Arabella's vision in *The Female Quixote*, “a better reality,” a harmonious and virtuous segment of a nation portrayed otherwise as burdened by social and financial difficulty (Mack 193).

In reading quixotic conversion scenes of this nature, one must always temper one's readings with the awareness that such conversions are often ironic or even duplicitous (as is the case in *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Algerine Captive*), and cannot be taken for themselves as keys to locked or obscured hermeneutic doors. Nonetheless, reading quixotic conversions can provide us with crucial insight into the quixotic narrative's object or objects of critique, its orientation toward quixotism (and the value of quixotism) itself, and the broader politics with which the quixotic narrative engages or aims to engage. Reading quixotic conversions attentively can also help us take account of the extent to which protagonists are or remain quixotic by the novel's end, and the bearing of sustained or abandoned quixotism on other events within and aspects of the novel. In *Joseph Andrews*, Parson Adams' sustained quixotism and central role in a generally positive and tidy ending suggest that the narrative treats its quixote (and quixotism) with perhaps greater sympathy than does, for example, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

A third way of reading quixotic narratives (and one that I have touched upon already) focuses on the liminality or ambivalence of the quixote. These readings, well-represented in the work of Cathy Davidson and Sarah Wood, call specific attention to the portability of the quixotic narrative as a function of the quixote's dual perspective as both a hero (or heroine) and a misplaced, tragicomic figure. I have focused on Parson Adams' quixotic liminality in this chapter largely because this liminality—Adams' relative sanity or madness in comparison to the society he inhabits and the villages he passes through—is what lends *Joseph Andrews* its comic and critical momentum. At one level, Parson Adams' admirable loyalty, heartfelt duty of care over Joseph and Fanny, and principled stances against uncharitable landowners and hypocritical clergymen must be taken seriously as heroic virtues, and thus as attributes that cast his surrounding society in justifiably unfavorable light, animating Fielding's critique. At

another level, however, the very same virtues that make Parson Adams so laudable a figure can also make him seem ridiculous in his interactions with a world that seems to have long since passed him by: Adams' anachronistic worldview is thereby the driving force of the comic and of the ridiculous in *Joseph Andrews*. This liminality, as I have suggested, reinforces the general critical sentiment that the quixotic narrative is necessarily and insurmountably ambivalent.

One need not deny quixotic ambivalence or liminality, however, to locate consistency in and across quixotic narratives like *Joseph Andrews*. Rather, by acknowledging the presence and function of quixotism in novels like *Joseph Andrews* not merely as a surface-level intertextual characteristic, but as a rich, complicated, and telling phenomenon, we can, perhaps counterintuitively, move toward a more wieldy and substantive understanding of the quixotic. As *Joseph Andrews* demonstrates, quixotic liminality is only the precondition for quixotic exceptionalism. As something of a mad visionary, Parson Adams, like Don Quixote in Part II, in his eloquent and insightful communication to the priest and barber of needed political reforms, can benefit from the very fact of his quixotic distance from the “sane” and “rational” status quo. Being *too* literate to be accepted and understood within the day-to-day discourse of even the magistrates and clergy with whom he comes into contact, Parson Adams understands himself to be an exception to the rule of moral and societal decay. From this position, the likes of Joseph and Fanny, however skeptical at times of his seemingly irrational moral fastidiousness, nonetheless consider that Parson Adams must be possessed of a higher-order understanding.

Thus, the “sidekicks” that accompany Parson Adams are not beholden to his worldview and moral outlook merely out of duty or class-based obligation (despite the fact that Joseph and Fanny are both of the servant classes, they are not Parson Adams' servants),

but because they place some degree of faith in his moral precepts and his conduct as an exemplar of charity, justice, and good sense. Parson Adams' quixotic ability to draw Joseph and Fanny into his ways of thinking and acting—even when immediately harsh and dire circumstances give them pause—is predicated on his characteristically quixotic eloquence, learnedness, and convincingness as a quixotic visionary. Parson Adams can rope Joseph and Fanny into his way of being by claiming an *a priori* position of intellectual and moral superiority, which, for the young couple amid the throes of love and adventure, is especially compelling.

Nonetheless, the class difference between Parson Adams and his “sidekicks” is not irrelevant to the dynamic between these characters, nor is it irrelevant to Adams' quixotic claim to exceptionalism. Adams' learnedness relative to Joseph and Fanny is largely a function of his class standing as a member of the clergy, just as the class and social roles of Joseph and Fanny demand that they maintain a degree of humility and respect for the likes of Parson Adams. This makes both susceptible to Adams' quixotism. Though Sancho Panza is something of a picaresque figure—an opportunist—who sees in Don Quixote a means toward a better (or at least more exciting) life, with promises of land, riches, and political power, Joseph and Fanny are morally involved sidekicks to a morally preoccupied quixote.

Considering the various ways of reading quixotes, a combination that is attentive to quixotism as a concept-in-itself leaves us with an understanding of Parson Adams as a typically liminal quixote who nonetheless turns to quixotic exceptionalism—in Adams' case, an unquestioned understanding that his precepts of the past ought to be those of the future—in order to level a series of relevant and often prescient critiques of a society he perceives as perilously mad. In the process, however, his methods of discourse and interaction—also the fruits of his exceptionalism—largely fail to move his interlocutors, or even to protect Joseph

and Fanny throughout their adventures. The following chapter explores a comparable quixote in Hugh Henry Brackenridge's Captain Farrago, who, like Parson Adams, is moved by an exceptionalist belief in his visionary status to change the “mad” society in which he lives.

CHAPTER 4: *MODERN CHIVALRY*

The background and political engagements of Hugh Henry Brackenridge are a useful point of departure for understanding some of the ways in which early America, in the decades before the turn of the century, looks strikingly similar to mid-century Britain. In this context, and in contrast to Royall Tyler's globally engaged *The Algerine Captive*, Brackenridge's rambling *Modern Chivalry* (1792-1815) becomes, like Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, a quixotic-narrative commentary on national issues of explicitly public political concern, including, as in *Joseph Andrews*, issues of perceived societal madness, civic well-being, and governmental reform. *Modern Chivalry*, the first of early-America's expressly quixotic narratives, emerges during a period in which, as I will argue, America undergoes something of its own quixotic phase, and inaugurates that phase within American literary history. While its explicit treatment of domestic political concerns (“domestic” in the sense of national politics as opposed to global or transnational politics, not to be confused with the “domestic” politics of the estate discussed in the next chapters) make it unmistakably Fieldingesque, *Modern Chivalry* actually takes the politicization of the novel a step further than does Fielding in *Joseph Andrews*, and engages directly with questions of representative democracy.

Brackenridge, born in Scotland in 1748 and transplanted with his family to Pennsylvania as a child in 1753, was among the most legally and politically engaged of the prominent early-American writers. He attended The College of New Jersey (present-day Princeton University) with the poet and polemicist Philip Freneau and the eventual fourth president of the US and “father” of the US Constitution, James Madison, where the three founded the American Whig Society, a group of playful polemicists established to counter the Cliosophic (Tory) society and its politics. Though Brackenridge was himself an especially complicated political figure, as evinced by his bipartisan efforts and negotiations in helping to

end the Whiskey Rebellion, his even-handedness in critiquing both mob mentality and detached plutocracy in the early republic, and his career as a highly respected and politically translucent judge, his affiliation with Madison and the Princeton Whigs reflect his seminal participation in an extraordinarily important partisan political movement. By the turn of the century, during the period in which Tabitha Gilman Tenney wrote *Female Quixotism* and the partisan divide between Federalists and Democratic-Republicans rose to a crescendo, Madison and Thomas Jefferson were aligned against the Hamiltonian Federalists with a brand of republicanism that Brackenridge, Freneau, and Madison helped shape at The College of New Jersey. Brackenridge would go on to practice law and serve as a magistrate, a justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, and the eventual founder (while among the earliest group of settlers of the Pittsburgh frontier) of the Pittsburgh Academy (present-day University of Pittsburgh) and the periodical *Pittsburgh Gazette* (present-day *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*). This diversified background of legal and political involvement, educational stewardship, and experience on the Western Pennsylvania frontier primed Brackenridge to write one of the early republic's most ranging and subtle quixotic narratives, *Modern Chivalry*. True to the popular characterization that has become a distinct observation to be moved beyond in this study, *Modern Chivalry* reflects much of the political ambivalence that Brackenridge embodied in his literary and professional life.

Published initially in two parts in 1792, *Modern Chivalry* was eventually bolstered to include two more parts (in 1793 and 1797, respectively), a revision in 1805, and a final revision in 1815. Brackenridge's ranging narrative, closer in length to Cervantes' *Don Quixote* than the other early-American quixotic narratives, features a bookish statesman-quixote, Captain Farrago, who departs from his Pennsylvania farm in order to travel on horseback throughout the frontier. Captain Farrago's Sancho Panza is an Irish immigrant, Teague

O'Regan, illustrated by Brackenridge as a rough and heavily racialized stereotype of a servant-class Irishman. In their travels across the frontier, the highly educated, bourgeois, and articulate Captain Farrago attempts to persuade a series of uneducated frontier mobs of his political philosophies and recommendations for good governance and an engaged and productive citizenry, while Teague takes an entirely different approach to public life. As Captain Farrago struggles to gain popularity with the citizens of the frontier on account of his high-mindedness and patriotic idealism, the uneducated, incurious, and unceremonious Teague eats, drinks, and womanizes his way into the hearts and minds of frontier settlers, schoolmasters, clergy, and politicians. Captain Farrago's quixotism, in many ways the cause of his lack of social and political success amid his travels, takes the form of an aloofness—an especially reasoned, learned, even patrician approach to political dialogue—that frequently resembles Fielding's Parson Adams in its ambitions to alter the political and moral landscape of his surrounding society.

Continuing with the idea, developed in the previous chapter on *Joseph Andrews*, of the aloof quixote traveling across seemingly mad landscapes, and with a focus on the Atlantic politics of early America, I aim to challenge more explicitly in this chapter the myth of quixotic exteriority, or of the removed philosophical-anthropological idealist—the pure quixotic visionary—who writes and sells the history of “America” the transcendent, or American exceptionalism. In so doing, I will call attention to the Atlantic as a mirror for societal madness on both of its ends, as madness is represented in *Joseph Andrews* in the mid century, and rewritten for an early-American readership in *Modern Chivalry* in the late century. Though much of the following reading proceeds, at least ostensibly, from an assessment of national political climate, I will move, ultimately, away from a “nationalist imaginary” reading toward a quixotic reading that gives greater account of the quixote in

public or political life as a shared Atlantic phenomenon.

Understanding rightly that the long-eighteenth-century histories of Britain and America do not reflect equivalent or compatible Atlantic and global relevancies for each nation within any given stretch of time—that while Britain was engaged in certain geopolitical affairs at mid-century, America was not similarly engaged until the late-century—Stephen Shapiro introduces an important avenue for critiquing and improving transatlanticism as a theoretical model. My linking in this chapter of Parson Adams in mid-century Britain to Captain Farrago in the late-century America requires a more nuanced understanding of the eighteenth-century Atlantic world than “first-wave” transatlanticism—the study of interaction and causal relationships between Britain (and its literatures) and America (and its literatures) in a common period—can provide.

As Shapiro notes in his reading of the novel more generally as, in part, a reflection of and response to class shifts and conflicts, “a reading of the early American novel's regional particularity as a result of altering global conditions has been difficult to perceive, not because the claim is obscure, but because existing frameworks for the novel in general and early American fiction specifically have made it so” (8). Frameworks for understanding the early-American novel tend to conceptualize it merely as a response to the early-and mid-century rise of the British novel, as well as an attempt to forge a distinctly “American” novelistic identity against that of Britain (paradoxically, while borrowing British novelistic models and conventions). We need not understand early-American novels like *Modern Chivalry* as responses to mid-century British novels so much as responses to similar geopolitical conditions in the American late-century that occurred in Britain during the mid-century. The link between *Joseph Andrews* and *Modern Chivalry* is, in other words, a shared set of circumstances that occur not consecutively, producing a causal relationship between the two

novels, but almost a half-century apart, producing instead a telling affinity between the two novels.

John Adams was a characteristic “pure visionary” in the early republic, who, as Michael Warner tells us at the beginning of *Letters of the Republic*, took an opportunity amid the rising tide of American revolutionary spirit in 1765 to pen a “history of the West” in the *Boston Gazette*. “It tells modern history as a story of human self-determination rising through reflection,” observes Warner; “its history of self-determination yields a proto-nationalist consciousness of America; its history of reflection takes the form of a history of letters” (1). Warner’s account of this early, adept, and successful attempt at national mythmaking is telling in its two crucial observations: first, that John Adams wrote an account of Western history, including American history, specifically to answer the challenges and uncertainties of a tumultuous time, a history in which “the Puritan colonists emerge as the heroes in a political history of enlightenment”; and second, that this work takes as central an intellectual history, a history of “reflection,” or “a history of letters” (2). This notion of intellectual reflection is of particular importance in the case of Fielding and Brackenridge’s quixotes, both of whom fashion themselves as aloof, reflective, and ultimately visionary.

Brackenridge's Captain Farrago is a quixote who explicitly travels along the margins of the early republic, through frontier towns and among people constituted as marginal in relation to the political elites, typically concentrated in cities like Benjamin Franklin’s Philadelphia, in states like Thomas Jefferson's Virginia, or in regions like the northeast, the Federalist stronghold from which John Adams hailed. Captain Farrago avails himself of the freedom to venture between and around these iconic sites of dominant American historical narrative, primarily encountering not the statesman-types whose erudite writings, powerful rhetoric, and patriotic idealism Farrago takes for his own dominant narrative of American political progress,

but temperamental frontier mobs. Accordingly, Captain Farrago derives his quixotic idealism in large part from “classical” notions of early-American political identity, traveling as such to discover an idealized early republic, and preach idealism where it is lacking.

Like Parson Adams, Captain Farrago is caught in a dilemma over social and political trends that diverge from the quixote's understanding of an ideal society, forced to contend with the tautological effect produced by this dilemma: the quixote cannot effect change as he would like to because the datedness of his precepts, manners of communication, and means of relating to those around him render the quixote a confounding and disquieting figure. In other words, the change the quixote would like to see has already passed him by. Parson Adams desires a society that resembles a willing and able congregation that adheres to less cynical, pre-Enlightenment religious models—charity, chastity, piety—but applies post-Enlightenment notions of rationality, while Captain Farrago wants to inject the order and relative stability of colonial America into the post-revolutionary American project of self-governance. Both quixotes, in quixotic fashion, want it both ways. The former laments the descent of rationality into a philosophical justification for naked pursuits of self-interest. The latter, whose sense of a more refined, reflective, and “gentlemanly” social order is decidedly pre-Revolutionary, is constantly stymied by or vexed over the revolutionary fervor of the frontier mobs. Captain Farrago's response to the mobs he encounters is best understood in the context of his early republic not as a purely national history, but as an interconnected Atlantic literary history.

4.1 A Quixote of the “Public Sphere”?

While *Joseph Andrews* is a key text for understanding eighteenth-century British notions of quixotic madness, Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry* is especially important for understanding the function of quixotism within what is broadly construed as the “public sphere.” Before discussing in greater detail the quixotism of Captain Farrago in

Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry*, and its relation to the quixotism of Parson Adams, it is necessary at this point to address the notion of the “public sphere,” and how various distinctions between public and private life operate in *Modern Chivalry*, and affect our understanding of Captain Farrago's civically minded quixotism. Rather than attempting to distill a long and contentious history of scholarship about the public sphere en route to a firm conclusion about whether such a separate sphere of civic life ever existed, my discussion of the public sphere in this chapter considers elements of civic life, pertinent for *Modern Chivalry*, that the public-sphere scholarship of Jürgen Habermas, Michael Warner, and Michael McKeon has elucidated. Taking the public sphere as a guide, rather than an absolute, I will discuss the public sphere (or the “public-sphere orientation” of *Modern Chivalry*) as a means of productively differentiating Brackenridge's novel from *Joseph Andrews*, despite the abundant similarities between the two.

Though both are principally concerned with public affairs, *Joseph Andrews* and *Modern Chivalry* are far from identical in this regard. Brackenridge goes a step further than Fielding in building his narrative around events concerning public discourse and democracy, which makes further consideration of the public sphere essential for discussions of quixotism in *Modern Chivalry*. Though Fielding's Parson Adams is very much a quixote concerned with morality as a public virtue, understanding moral shortcomings as problems that can affect the nation and not merely the individuals immediately involved, *Joseph Andrews* is still largely a reaction to Richardsonian portrayals of domesticity, an innovative novel that nonetheless remains at least partially engaged with *Pamela* on Richardson's terms. Parson Adams' interactions with various character types, most of which convey some sense of moral inadequacy, are rarely explicitly related to political issues concerning the state, though these repeated kinds of interactions in the aggregate form a distinct portrait of national character

(not necessarily an accurate or unproblematic one). Nonetheless, the charges of Fielding's quixote also include attempting to keep Fanny out of the clutches of abductors and Joseph free from temptation, portraying domesticity and its themes, farcically, as things to be moved beyond, toward a more explicit engagement with the concerns of the so-called public sphere and the institutions that comprise it. Though perhaps not formally or stylistically what Fielding might have had in mind, Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry* takes the quixotic narrative tradition of wider intervention into public affairs—a tradition in which *Joseph Andrews* certainly participates—to the level of the literal, bringing his quixote before the rule and judgment of the frontier mobs amid public gatherings and roadside conversations.

A relevant question, then, is whether such a notion of a public sphere, as expressed in *Modern Chivalry*, and as discussed in much of the critical commentary on the early-American novel since Michael Warner's *The Letters of the Republic*, coheres in any meaningful or useful sense. Warner's influential notion of the “*res publica* of letters” is particularly relevant for studies of *Modern Chivalry*, just as Michael McKeon's understanding of the public sphere in *The Secret History of Domesticity* has been informed by the work of Warner, and is also relevant to *Joseph Andrews* as a commentary on the domestic-narrative tradition; however, a triangulation of these commentaries on British and early-American texts with the Habermasian theorization of the public sphere that so fundamentally informed them can help draw each of these texts together for the purposes of a comparative discussion.

Especially important for making sense of quixotic exceptionalism as a political gesture is Habermas' observation in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* that the public sphere developed as a bourgeois construction, comprised of, as Craig Calhoun notes, “narrow segments of the European population, mainly educated, propertied men,” who “conducted discourse not only exclusive of others but prejudicial to the interests of those excluded” (3).

The bourgeois public sphere, according to Habermas, expanded from there (as did the bourgeoisie), bringing in increasing numbers of participants until the point at which the public sphere became one of the fundamentals of democratic life—a movement, in other words, from elitism to inclusion. This “public of private individuals who join in debate of issues bearing on state authority” is prominent in *Modern Chivalry*, and to a lesser extent *Joseph Andrews*, in a characteristically eighteenth-century form (49). With the emergence of the modern state, as Habermas understood it, in the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, along with the proliferation of capitalist and specifically finance economies, the bourgeois characteristics of the public sphere underwent a shift. With an expanding public sphere occurring alongside the “court society” and discussion in the salons, the bourgeois character of the public sphere was not, as Calhoun notes, based merely on “the class composition of its members,” but on the characteristics of an already-bourgeois British society that developed the public sphere (7). In other words, “the new sociability, together with the rational-critical discourse that grew in the salons (and coffee houses and other places), depended on the rise of national and territorial power states on the bases of the early capitalist commercial economy” (Calhoun 7). The public sphere arose and developed, then, based on the very sort of eighteenth-century social, economic, and political factors and concerns that *Joseph Andrews* and *Modern Chivalry* dramatize.

As Michael Warner points out, the public sphere is necessarily a place in which politics is held separate from both the state and civil society, producing a type of political conversation that is oriented around textual productions, such as periodicals, novels, and art criticism (38). *Modern Chivalry* treads a fine line along this distinction, being a text that is, as Grantland Rice argues, a performative effort to demonstrate resistance to textual authority, but also a text that complicates Warner's distinction with its series of depictions of political speeches and

dialogues by and between members of the public who are not state officials, but who would still appear to be participating in a form of civil society. Where Brackenridge's novel becomes a representation of the public sphere in the Habermasian sense would seem at first somewhat difficult to determine if we consider Warner's emphasis on print textuality of public-sphere interactions as a complicating factor, given that *Modern Chivalry* is more reflective of public gathering and conversation than the kind of print culture that intrigues Warner. Arguably, however, the impromptu assembly or gathering, the occasional stump speech, or the philosophical discussion on the road do constitute public-sphere interactions, being based upon frontier community “institutions” not as defined as the London salon, but certainly analogous to it: conversation with a passer-by along the road, or political discussions in the inn. From this point of view, much of the political discourse in *Modern Chivalry* could be understood as belonging to and representing an early-American notion of the public sphere, as well as a social “text” of interwoven dialogues. The “social” dialogues in which Captain Farrago and Teague engage throughout their travels fall squarely within the purview of Habermas' definition of the public sphere as “a realm of our social life in which something approaching a public opinion can be formed,” and for which

access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body. They then behave neither like business or professional people transacting private affairs, nor like members of a constitutional order subject to the legal constraints of a state bureaucracy. Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion—that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions—about matters of general interest (49).

Warner's interest in the public sphere as a point of reference for understanding early-American political discourse focuses on “the textuality of print” as evinced in the periodical reporting of a series of public controversies, arguing ultimately that the creation of such a bourgeois public sphere “required a new but tacitly symbolic vocabulary for understanding printed texts, which rendered the early-American 'language of republicanism' a

'metadiscourse'" (39). Representations of the public sphere in *Modern Chivalry* take on a similar function: the "low" discourse of the frontier mobs (the likes of Teague) becomes for Brackenridge's novel the farcical "language of republicanism," while Captain Farrago's measured and sophisticated discourse precludes his successful participation in Brackenridge's burlesque rendering of early-American political discussion. In this way, thinking of *Modern Chivalry* as a quixotic narrative that is rather directly engaged in conduct within the public sphere aids our understanding of Captain Farrago's quixotism. Like Parson Adams' antiquated rhetoric and precepts, Captain Farrago's high-minded speech indicates, in itself, his quixotic aloofness, or his critique of the effects of an expanded early-American public sphere. Captain Farrago is in this light a quixote who yearns for a mythical level of "social" political discourse that matches that of the educated, bourgeois elite. As Terry Eagleton writes,

the bourgeoisie...discovers in discourse an idealised image of its own social relations...It is not for nothing that Goldsmith noted the significance of the phrase 'republic of letters'; for what could better correspond to the bourgeoisie's dream of freedom than a society of petty producers whose endlessly available, utterly inexhaustible commodity is discourse itself, equitably exchanged in a mode which reconfirms the autonomy of each producer? (16-17).

Eagleton's observation thus explains much of the bourgeois idealism of Captain Farrago, that which enables him to view his long-winded pronouncements as necessary insights for the betterment of the republic, and the patriotic idealism ("the bourgeoisie's dream of freedom") that he associates with the circulation of his mode of political discourse.

Returning to the question of whether *Modern Chivalry* illustrates any meaningful or useful notion of the public sphere (as put forth by Habermas and his subsequent interlocutors), and considering further what this suggests about the quixotism of Captain Farrago, it would seem that, in contrast to the texts discussed in this study thus far, the public sphere is indeed an important concept for *Modern Chivalry* as a quixotic narrative. Though Brackenridge's novel does not contain scenes in the London salons, nor is it constructed around print culture controversies, it is clear that a mode of social or "unofficial" public discourse is important for

exposing difference between Captain Farrago, whose discourse marks him as a madman in relation to the frontier mobs, and Teague, whose discourse, like that of the mobs, connotes madness in the eyes of Captain Farrago. Further, this dynamic, by which the quixote gains his objects of critique (just as he is rendered an object of critique himself), also distinguishes *Modern Chivalry* from *Joseph Andrews*, as the public-sphere inflection of *Modern Chivalry* evinces a slightly different narrative strategy. At the same time, this markedly public-sphere orientation makes *Modern Chivalry*'s Captain Farrago germane for comparison with *Joseph Andrews*' Parson Adams, as Captain Farrago's statesmanlike quixotism can be seen as an example of Parson Adams' "social-values" quixotism, divorced from the domestic-narrative tradition and re-situated in a time and place in which the primary concerns were not how to reform a society, but how to govern one.

Having considered the public-sphere orientation of *Modern Chivalry*, we can turn now to some of the specifics of the environment in which Brackenridge created his quixote alongside those of the mid-century British world in which *Joseph Andrews* was written, as well as the relevance of Captain Farrago's quixotic exceptionalism in relation to that of Parson Adams. As we can observe in *Joseph Andrews*, Parson Adams' exceptionalist move is to place himself, as a "moral" and classically educated quixote, above the tumult of the society in whose shifts and shortcomings he undoubtedly participates. Parson Adams' British society of the mid-eighteenth century was notably unsettled by The Forty-Five, the last of the Jacobite rebellions, war and geopolitical tensions between Britain and France, the continued rise of the finance economy, and, eventually, colonial expansion across the Atlantic.

4.2 America's Quixotic Phase

Approximately a half-century after quixotic narratives began to flourish in Britain throughout the eighteenth century, alongside radical social and political changes, post-

Revolutionary America embraced the quixotic narrative. Calling attention to the transatlantic potency of “imitative genres,” Eve Tavor Bannet writes:

The publication of successive translations, imitations, abridgements, and adaptations of Cervantes' early sixteenth-century novel throughout Europe and on both sides of the Atlantic made quixotism itself a transatlantic and transnational genre. In this respect, quixotism was comparable to the circulation and adoption in different parts of Europe and America of other genres, such as the romance or the sentimental novel. Quixotism itself therefore bears witness to the importance of genre, and of its diverse methods of transplantation in making Atlantic literary cultures more alike (554).

Picking up on the transatlantic relevance of the quixotic narrative and, perhaps more importantly, reconstructing the formal models of Cervantes, Fielding, and Swift to create a quixotic narrative for early America, Brackenridge was also attuned to the role of imitation in the nascent republic's relationship with Britain. *Modern Chivalry* imitated the imitated forms of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and the British quixotic as a means of addressing and engaging the early republic's considerable set of transatlantically informed challenges. Not long after the French and American Revolutions, which participated in the reconceptualizations of imitation and innovation that René Girard describes, early America was arguably engaged a quixotic phase, marked by an innovative relationship to Britain, rather than a directly imitative one. This phase was characterized by the liminal distinction between its mimetic relationship to Britain and its struggles to innovate beyond British cultural and political frameworks, the early republic's dated, imitative models.

Modern Chivalry intervened in early American discourses of growth, prosperity, and national self-fashioning, producing a quixote in Captain Farrago whose quixotism attenuates the force of his social insights. Emory Elliott rightly attributes to Brackenridge “acute social insight,” arguing that “At a time when other learned men were perplexed, he perceived his nation with remarkable clarity” (176). Elliott goes on to consider Brackenridge's awareness of political corruption and greed within the ruling classes of American society, as well as disregard for learning, religion, art, and moral behavior. Yet, as Brackenridge critics

continually warn, the similarities between the author and his quixote are almost always exploded and contradicted by Brackenridge throughout the novel. Thus, though Brackenridge was well aware of “conniving politicians” and unbridled self-interest, Captain Farrago frequently cheats Teague out of opportunities for social advancement by the very “conniving” tendencies that Brackenridge critiques through his quixote (Elliott 177). This relationship between Captain Farrago and Teague reflects a quintessential Brackenridgean ambivalence, or a tendency to provide a compelling critique or satire of a given political phenomenon, only to dismantle his own position in a moment of self-reflexive narrative hypocrisy. Though Brackenridge is clearly concerned with a form of quixotic idealism in his portrayal of Captain Farrago, his Cervantic ability to laud quixotism while simultaneously calling it into question has significant bearing on our understanding of Captain Farrago as a figure of political critique, rather than a representative of Brackenridge's own politics.

Instead of recapitulating a politics of quixotic idealism by speaking through his quixote as an authorial stand-in, Brackenridge addresses the early republic's quixotic dilemma, through the relationship between quixote and society, by critiquing the very notion of America as the quixotic ideal. Grantland Rice posits convincingly that Brackenridge wrote *Modern Chivalry* to “shock his audience into an awareness not only of their social predicament as citizens in a fledgling republic but also of their vulnerability to the structural limitations and the potential designs of a print culture constituted by mass-produced and widely disseminated texts” (257). We see this in *Modern Chivalry* in the rhetorical disparity between Farrago and Teague and between Farrago and society, the frequent use of phonetic dialect, the unreliability and ineffectuality of rhetoric, and the overwhelming force of mob mentality. Considering Warner's characterization of early America as a “republic of letters” in which rhetorical skill could be deployed in an environment of ubiquitous print materials to effectively “evacuat[e]

the liberal subject from the public realm by destroying the capacity for critical thinking,” we can understand how a popular belief in the ultimate reliability of political narratives and textual productions could endanger the functioning of a representative government (Rice 259). Rice reads *Modern Chivalry* as a means of not only undermining the notion of the unquestionable rationality of print, but also of undermining the “conventionalizing power of an emerging print culture industry” (258). The apotheosis of rational print culture that “engendered such immutable texts as the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights,” and produced iconic, “American,” quixotic visionaries like John Adams, constitutes a move toward quixotic exteriority, the perceptual absolutism that renders quixotes sane and insane, visionary and revisionist in reference to those around them (Rice 258).

The quixote’s claim to exteriority—for Don Quixote, to be in the business of knowing everything; for Parson Adams, to understand the roots of wickedness in his society but not in himself; for Captain Farrago, to distinguish himself from his peers through his measure and sane realization of his own madness—is a central distinction between the quixote and the picaro, or the idealist and the scoundrel. Responding to changes around them without adopting compatible (that is, new) imitative models, and having to navigate thereby their liminal positions between the rationality of social mimesis and the irrationality of mob mentality, Parson Adams and Captain Farrago illustrate a fundamental feature of all quixotic visionaries. Their insights are based on antiquated models, and their inability to signal and adapt to changes—their quixotic inability to mimic, as Bannet argues, the right models—binds them to the political realities of the societies in which they live, despite their visionary qualities.

Such is a useful way to understand the early republic’s quixotic phase, as well as its historical quixotes. The liminal position of early America between imitation and innovation

with respect to Britain suggests that American quixotism is not what Girard would call “pure innovation,” the ideal of a wholly self-cultivated and self-determined America absent an imitative process prior to innovation; nor is it simply, in post-colonial terms, a mimetic response to its “founding” culture. Likewise, the sanctified documents and rhetoric that stemmed from the “republic of letters” cannot be seen as products of heterotopic spaces, or of thought processes in a vacuum. Brackenridge’s choice of the quixotic narrative for a social critique of the mythical claims of early-American self-fashioning foregrounds, by virtue of the prominent roles of imitation and innovation in the tradition of quixotic narratives, the mimetic or imitative power of the quixotic narrative over time, the quixotic tendency toward aloofness and “visionary” status, and the prominent roles of these in the construction of American national identities and national myths. The quixotic narrative framework itself gives authors like Brackenridge the model for a quintessentially Cervantic authorial distance, enabling them to address performatively the very process of myth construction, or of layering stories upon stories to the point at which the originator—the author—has become buried beneath the layers. This quality of the quixotic narrative has made it an attractive form for writers engaging expressly with political themes, and produces in the quixotic narrative as such its own mimetic appeal. Further, the quixote, a figure whose reading, misreading, and over-reading endow him or her with both a disconnectedness from broader society, and a consequently “visionary” tendency, is well equipped to be a purveyor of myths, intentionally or otherwise.

4.3 Another Quixote in a Mad World

With respect to the mid-century portrait of Britain that Fielding paints in *Joseph Andrews*, Captain Farrago’s frontier America of the latter-eighteenth century is a world of comparable, if not exceeding, madness. Not unlike eighteenth-century Britain, the early US was influenced by Walpolean financial ideas, mainly through the intermediary of Alexander

Hamilton, the first US Secretary of the Treasury. Linking aspects of Hamiltonian economics with economic trends in Augustan England, Gilmore describes “a kind of social madness in which ‘imagination governs the world’”; thus, parts of *Modern Chivalry* satirize “the epidemic of fantasy produced by Hamilton’s financial program,” portraying early America as “the very antithesis of a sane society” (186-87). As Gilmore demonstrates, the transatlantic financial currents that brought a brand of Walpolean economics to America also roused more than a modicum of Oppositional spirit in Brackenridge, whose *Modern Chivalry* aligns significantly, in its American context, with the sentiments of an English landed gentry who opposed Walpolean programs that heavily taxed their land in order to finance national debt. Only for Brackenridge in *Modern Chivalry*, Hamiltonian economics represented both a failure and abandonment of popular sovereignty, in that irrational, mob thinking among the populace was responsible for electing the wrong leaders, who in turn failed to serve the best interests of the people.

Occupying a society that is “the very antithesis of sane,” Captain Farrago, despite his quixotism, can actually appear at times rational and deliberative. Joseph Harkey urges us to note that “the frontier society, not Farrago, is mad in *Modern Chivalry*.” Similarly, between Captain Farrago and his servant Teague, in contrast to Don Quixote and Sancho, the Captain represents the “rational minority,” while the servant is, like the mass public, fickle and “impetuous” (194). Captain Farrago goes to lengths to remove himself from the opinions of the masses—“it is of little, or perhaps no consequence to me, what my stile is amongst men”—and spends much time in the novel in distant observation and reflection over mob scenes, tarring and feathering, and chasing and shouting, all of these quite often surrounding the exploits of his servant Teague, whom Davidson rightly calls “the id” to Captain Farrago’s ego, “provid[ing] most of the adventures which keep the novel going” (Brackenridge 257;

Davidson 260).

Nonetheless, in situations in which the quixote can seem more rational than his servant, or than the society that sets the standards for his madness, notions of rationality or rationality-by-degree are particularly difficult to pin down. Captain Farrago rationally sees danger in frontier mob mentality, yet it is the impetuous Teague who, unlike Sancho Panza, very rationally capitalizes on mob tendencies. And as Teague appears to learn something from his exploits—that his behavior is capable of producing favorable results—Captain Farrago works himself into virtually endless frustration over his inability to fruitfully assess the people with whom he comes into contact on the road, as well as his uneducated footman's continual success. One might suggest that Teague struggles to make sense of Captain Farrago's rather elegant philosophical pronouncements; except that he barely concerns himself with them, the very attitude that makes him more successful in his political operations than his learned employer. In this sense, Teague is himself an ambivalent figure, lacking the first-instance skepticism and general common sense of Sancho Panza, yet politically shrewd in his own way.

Captain Farrago treads a similar line in *Modern Chivalry*. Wendy Martin identifies Captain Farrago's strange "inversion of values," by which the mad quixote represents and identifies with "sanity in a society where profit takes precedence over knowledge" (249). Farrago makes a claim to his sanity by way of his own madness, bemoaning: "I am shut up here as a mad man, in a mad place, and yet it appears to me that I am the only rational being amongst men, because I know that I am mad" (Brackenridge 385). In complicating his quixote's relationship to the society he occupies, Brackenridge, like Fielding, opens up space for a double-edged satirical critique: the politically elusive and ambivalent Brackenridge pillories not just the uninformed, unreflective mob, but also the pedantic and distrustful Captain Farrago, all while undermining the general credibility of rhetorical claims about

madness and sanity.

As with Parson Adams and Joseph, Captain Farrago's liminal position between sanity and madness relies upon a play of relativity. Despite Captain Farrago's attempts to socialize Teague, to dress up his person and his manners in the image of a gentleman before he is to assume a government post, Teague appears obstinately anti-mimetic. In Part I of Book III, Chapter Twelve, when Farrago has a serendipitous encounter with his former servant after having let him go so that he may take up his newly acquired government position, Teague has bartered away the horse that Farrago had given him (Teague having been no longer a footman) for a watch, despite his inability to tell time. Teague's decision to trade the horse for the watch is a mark of his general disinterest in adopting the oft-mounted Captain Farrago's means of travel, and with that Farrago's knightly and gentlemanly visage. It also bespeaks Teague's appreciation of the surface-level requirements associated with political success, a property that distinguishes him from Captain Farrago in an important way: the rational and practical Farrago lends his former footman a horse for transportation—the gift equivalent of an unglamorous but necessary political pronouncement—and Teague exchanges the horse for an object of no practical use to him, other than to give him the appearance of what he understands as an important political figure. Moments later, in stark contrast to his apparent social advancement, Teague is ready to strike Farrago's replacement servant, Duncan, with his cudgel, forcing Farrago to pacify the two.

Teague, a crudely and offensively stereotyped Irishman not altogether very different from his Scottish counterpart Duncan, embodies all that is appetitive, impetuous, ignorant, and hot-tempered—a polar opposite of the refined, calculating, and articulate Farrago. Yet where Farrago's words ineffectually wash over his interlocutors and observers (as do Don Quixote's in his many moments of grand delusion), Teague proceeds through the novel in episodes of

relative success, effortlessly winning the favor of both crowds and women. Teague's success frustrates Captain Farrago, who is continually confounded by it. As Bannet writes:

In *Modern Chivalry*, complete unwillingness to imitate either classical or English models is used to characterize the Pennsylvania backcountry. Brackenridge ironically dramatizes Franklin's dictum that America is 'the best poor man's country in the world,' by showing Teague...being offered every manner of opportunity in the new world. Meanwhile, his master, Captain Farrago, repeatedly tries to distract attention from Teague to himself by explaining to local communities what he has learned from books (559).

The diametric distinctions between the Captain and his servant operate against the backdrop of Brackenridge's fictional frontier society—a society much more like Teague than Farrago—and are thus critically significant beyond the terms of the disparate relationship between Farrago and Teague, quixote and sidekick. Inasmuch as Captain Farrago lays claim to sanity by his relative thoughtfulness and measure, he is, as he laments, a madman shut up in a mimetic world, a world in which the impetuous circuitously mimic one another. Captain Farrago's reluctance to participate in this mimetic cycle renders him, rather than Teague, the anti-mimetic figure, or perhaps the wrongly mimetic figure. Though quixotes are imitators of a given model (and in many cases flawed imitators whose readings are too literal), they are also, paradoxically, anti-mimetic in relation to the "sane" worlds that they inhabit. Teague resists Captain Farrago's attempts at socialization, believing (perhaps correctly) that his demeanor, as well as his ability to mimic the mobs, is the foundation of his success. Captain Farrago's measured distance from the crudely mimetic world around him is central to his quixotism: once he develops a taste for a given model, the scope of his mimesis is stubbornly narrow. He is mad in his inability to mimic a model that would bring him success (like that which his footman enjoys), yet in that same inability he is also sane, possessed of an understanding that if all were to fall into the mimetic cycle in which the mobs participate, the country could not survive, much less get off the ground.

Farrago is thus, like Parson Adams, part visionary who sees beyond the fray of

profiteering and unenlightened self-interest, and part revisionist whose precepts seem no longer applicable to rapidly changing social landscapes. It is this mode of quixotism—the reasoned aloofness, the visionary outlook—set against the semi-fictional background of a “mad” mid-century Britain or early America, that makes *Joseph Andrews* and *Modern Chivalry* such compatible narratives for understanding how quixotism operates within public discourse. It is important to note, once again, that this form of quixotic liminality is an essential precondition for quixotic exceptionalism, in this case the elevation of the quixote above the very concrete social problem of his obsolescence, and that of his worldview. For Captain Farrago, reticence in the face of a seemingly ill-advised mob populism—an anti-mimetic quality—demonstrates one of the primary ways that quixotes preserve quixotic idealism, despite social forces acting to bring the quixote back to the reality that others practice: the obstinate belief in one's own approach and worldview, despite concrete evidence of its falsehood or inadequacy.

Davidson reads the duality of both Brackenridge's objects of critique and Captain Farrago's inability (an inability often shared with Parson Adams) to practice as he prescribes as a prime example of “the double perspective of the picaresque and its reliance on contradictory rhetorical strategies” (260). Yet here what is perhaps more illuminating than the *picaresque* (polyvocal, rambling, contradictory) qualities of these novels, or the correlatives of these qualities in trans/national discourses, is the quixote's *quixotic*, idealistic claim to aloofness and to sanity in relation to a world gone mad; a claim, in other words, to exteriority and to a transcendent truth. The discursive correlative of this claim lies at the heart of mythmaking in the early US, through the emergence of a class of quixotic elite, like John Adams, whose skillful rhetoric was tailored to cut through American polyvocality and produce an exceptionalist national identity. The aloof and morally resolute Parson Adams, observing

injustice and iniquity all around him, could well have become the Puritan colonial hero of John Adams (or the mock-hero of Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry*) had he boarded a ship to America. The equally aloof Captain Farrago, by contrast, is aware of the instability of his own footing, and is as such the early republic's discursively disruptive figure *par excellence*, Parson Adams' American quixotic foil.

4.4 Quixotism as Nationalized Narrative and Inflated Discursive “Currencies”

As I have suggested, eighteenth-century atmospheres of significant change in the late-century US and mid-century Britain—including the changes that came with Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary transatlantic relations between the two—rendered the quixotic narrative a powerful choice for writers writing about politically germane topics like social and governmental reform and both global and national self-fashioning. Not surprisingly, then, the central plight of the fledgling democracy or the transitional society is also central to the quixotic narrative: where singular ideologies threaten to suffuse over polyvocality and polyvalence, polyvocality and polyvalence also risk producing a critical mass of meaning—an inflation of discursive “currency”—into which anything or nothing can be read. This is the condition under which the quixotic risks becoming a vehicle for the fashioning of myths or singular ideologies under the guise of heroism, idealism, and other assumed or sanctified codes or values that also happen to be the driving forces of quixotes, in all of their madness and wisdom.

The implication here, of course, is that quixotic exceptionalism is closely tied to national exceptionalisms of the kind that Captain Farrago espouses in his very measured, sane, and historically informed outlook on American political discourse. As the frontier mobs lack coherence in their multitude of demands and priorities, and lack the linguistic and civic sophistication that would otherwise aid them in expressing political difference in any

meaningful way, Captain Farrago attempts to impose his own quixotic narrative—which is explicitly tied to a mythical, national narrative—in an attempt to make early-American democracy coherent. Brackenridge, almost always adeptly aware of his narrative position, and thus almost always difficult to decipher politically as a writer, writes Captain Farrago as a largely unsuccessful quixote, one who struggles to impose his quixotic narrative of optimal American political discourse, despite his clear educational and intellectual advantages over those who constitute the frontier mobs. Nonetheless, Captain Farrago's exceptionalist attempt—the positioning of himself above those around him, along with his removed, anthropological intervention into political affairs—aligns him with the politics of early-American exceptionalist figures like John Adams, whose narrative attempts at smoothing over the problems of difference with grand narratives of founding heroism are positively quixotic.

My reading of *Modern Chivalry* thus far risks falling into the “nationalist imaginary” trap, and also threatens to impose its own type of grand, national narrative upon the rise of the early-American novel. Such a narrative presumes that early-American novels like *Modern Chivalry* are part of a generalized national unification project. While it is certainly plausible, given this reading of *Modern Chivalry*, that Captain Farrago does behave in many ways like prominent New England Federalist politicians like John Adams, who were indeed engaged in political projects of national unification, what we can take from such a comparison is not that *Modern Chivalry* is necessarily part of a national unification project, but that quixotism like that of Captain Farrago was part of a bourgeois political project, aimed at inflating the value of rational political discourse. Where Captain Farrago behaves like or stands in for a nationalist political figure he is also, crucially, a quixote. As such, where his quixotic gestures, approaches, and worldview reflect those of his contemporary political figures in US history, they demonstrate a definitive mode of quixotic exceptionalism at work in early-American

governance and the management of early-American popular opinion. Quixotism, accordingly, plays a key role in understanding early-American politics, though not without due consideration of how quixotism operates in the novels in which it is deployed. The tendency in critical studies of early-American novels toward “national imaginary” readings, in other words, loses sight of not only, as Shapiro notes, the concerns of US citizens (especially the successful, emerging class of Atlantic merchants among them) who are not politically polarized between Federalist New England and Democratic-Republican Virginia, but also the quixotic elements that repeatedly arise in American novels of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. This quixotism, exhibited by Captain Farrago in *Modern Chivalry*, carries a range of implications—for class, political discourse, and literary and cultural adaptation—across the transatlantic history of the quixotic narrative, rooted in Spain, translated in Britain, and re-worked in early America. Thus, situating Captain Farrago's quixotism not merely as part of an American literary history, but as part of a transatlantic literary history of the quixotic narrative, brings into view those elements of Farrago's quixotism—his aloofness, his claim to sanity within a mad society—whose roots precede the American unification project that so frequently preoccupies scholars of early-American literature.

We have seen in *Joseph Andrews* and *Modern Chivalry* how Parson Adams and Captain Farrago fashion themselves as exceptions within mainstream public discourse and public affairs. As we will see in the following section, which focuses on eighteenth-century narratives featuring female quixotes, Charlotte Lennox and Tabitha Gilman Tenney fashion the domestic setting as the primary site of quixotic exceptionalism and political intervention. As female writers, Lennox and Tenney had strategic incentive to validate the societies in which their quixotes lived as part of their mechanism of social critique; thus, as we will shortly see,

Arabella and Dorcasina eventually repent and resign themselves to “proper” social roles. In so doing, they performatively demonstrate the dangers of “bad” reading in addition to the social restrictions that lead women to seek solace in imaginative practices. As Nancy Armstrong writes of mid-eighteenth-century novelists (particularly Richardson), “In shaping an ideal woman out of the stuff of novels...novelists did not appear to be assaulting the dominant culture so much as rescuing both the female and the domestic life she superintended from their fate at the hands of degenerate authors” (96). Lennox and Tenney ingeniously contort this scenario into metafiction by inventing domestic, female quixotes who, having been turned by their adherence to romantically idealized female literary roles constructed in part by what Armstrong terms “degenerate authors,” commit their own undoing, precluding and mocking thereby the possibility of “rescue.” The force of this mode of satire lies, then, in its withholding of explicit and broad cultural critique, and its foregrounding of the limits of domesticity.

SECTION III: EXCEPTIONALISM AND THE GENDER-CLASS AXES
Female Quixotes and their Servants

CHAPTER 5: *THE FEMALE QUIXOTE*

Beginning with quixotic narratives in Section I focused on global and international matters as means of critique, then moving on in Section II to quixotic narratives concerned with national matters as means of critique, our focus now shifts one more degree of localization, to quixotic narratives that take the domestic estate as the primary site of critique. For the purposes of this study, what distinguishes the novels treated in the previous section—*Joseph Andrews* and *Modern Chivalry*—from the “female quixote” narratives of this section is that the former create a kind of “narrative public” by staging plot events and political intervention through a series of interactions between various sets and types of characters along the road, while the latter take the setting and model of domesticity and its affiliated romantic conventions as the primary site of narrative events and political intervention. For example, Tabitha Gilman Tenney's narrative strategy in *Female Quixotism* (1801)—holding the quixote fixed on her estate while bringing the travelers to her—produces a notably similar effect to that which is produced through the quixote's travel in *Joseph Andrews* and *Modern Chivalry*; yet the central concerns of Tenney's quixote—finding a suitable partner to marry, keeping her maid in line with her romantic visions, and helping other female readers avoid the trap of quixotism—emphasize the politics of reading frontier domesticity above political concerns about national political issues or affairs (as with Lysander's ownership of slaves, for example).

Brackenridge and Fielding, by contrast, maintain a traditionally masculine model of valuation in their novels, positioning rhetoric and rationality at the top of the value system in *Joseph Andrews* and *Modern Chivalry*, and allowing their quixotes to participate freely in public discourse beyond the estate. Accordingly, Fielding punishes his quixote with drubbings and embarrassments when the quixote succumbs to quixotic irrationality in public, all while mocking the quixote's society for lack of order, erudition, and measure,

while Brackenridge's Captain Farrago spends much of his time fleeing angry mobs. Whereas quixotes in Tenney's *Female Quixotism* and Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752) lack the agency to suffer extreme and recurrent public consequences for their quixotism, instead exercising their domestic agency to defer ill consequences to their servants, the quixotes of Fielding and Brackenridge answer for their quixotism at the hands of unruly societies. The question of mad society versus mad quixote takes on different meanings, then, for Lennox and Tenney than for Fielding and Brackenridge. For the former, as we will soon see, quixotic madness is a consequence of and a scapegoat for a deep-seated societal madness, and is thus quarantined as a function of the quixote's immobility; for the latter, quixotic madness is a means of addressing the consequences of societal madness in transitional times, and is thus tested in varying locations and cultural moments as a function of the quixote's mobility.

Though Michael McKeon suggests that domesticity is "a species of modern privacy" that we should nonetheless avoid "collaps[ing] into privacy or privacy into domesticity," we can reasonably understand the treatment of domesticity in Lennox's *The Female Quixote* and Tenney's *Female Quixotism* as commentary on both domesticity and its relegation to the "private sphere" (Domesticity xxi). The aim of this distinction between the privatized politics of "domestic concern" and the publicized politics of "national concern" is not to suggest that the domestic is an apolitical category (quite the opposite: the domestic is the primary site of political commentary for Lennox and Tenney), nor to reify a theoretical boundary between public and private as an absolute distinction, but rather to differentiate heuristically between what might be considered the "latent" politics of domesticity in which Lennox and Tenney engage and an "overt" politics of public action and public statesmanship in which Fielding and Brackenridge engage. This distinction is important for the study of quixotes because it informs the narrative strategies that give these quixotes their animating objects and obstacles: for Lennox and Tenney,

domestic privacy—the sequestering of the female quixote and her imaginative worldview—is both the problem and the solution, just as public conduct and public discourse are for Fielding and Brackenridge. This distinction is also important because it helps to determine the means of political intervention (and hence the forms of quixotic exceptionalism) that appear in the two sets of novels. The political critiques of Lennox and Tenney's female quixotes are often far more subtle than those of Fielding and Brackenridge's quixotes, largely because, for the former, domesticating the quixote story, and holding it as separately as possible from the overt concerns of the nation-state, is, performatively, at the core of the political interventions of “female quixote” narratives.

Among the most striking and, in recent decades, regularly read and studied reconfigurations of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* is Lennox's *The Female Quixote*. In addition to the mid-eighteenth-century praise it received from the likes of Samuel Johnson, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding, Lennox's novel has become a staple on today's eighteenth-century reading lists, and a canonical text among literatures in English. Though some have argued for its candidacy as one of the first American novels, based largely on the fact that Lennox, the well-traveled daughter of a Scottish army officer, relocated with her family to New York from 1739 until her father's death (c. 1743) before making way back across the Atlantic to London, *The Female Quixote* was written, set, publicized, and published in Britain, where Lennox lived the great majority of her adult life (Doody xi-xiii).

The Female Quixote, Lennox's second and arguably most successful novel, features a quixotic heroine, Arabella, born into seclusion on her Marquis father's estate, and taught to read and write in English, French, and Italian from a young age. Having demonstrated a great talent and appetite for learning, she is given access to the Marquis' library, which happens to contain “a great Store of Romances” that belonged to her mother, deceased

shortly after Arabella's birth (Lennox 7).²⁷ In quixotic fashion, Arabella becomes thoroughly and tragically immersed in the imaginative plots of her mother's French romances, to the bewilderment of her father and her cousin-suitor, Glanville. Among the adventures that ensue from Arabella's quixotic distance from the behavioral modes of the world around her, Lennox's Cervantine conflation of the slapstick and the truly disheartening has, like *Don Quixote*, provided a considerable challenge for readers aiming to make sense of quixotism as a tool for social critique. That Lennox's Don Quixote is actually a *dona* is worth exploring further, beyond notions, frequently taken up by contemporary scholars, of Arabella's quixotic imagination as a means of feminine empowerment.

5.1 *The Female Quixote* and the British Novel

The “female quixotism” motif takes on particular significance when we consider Lennox's novel within the wider context of the thematic and stylistic progression of the British novel through the mid-eighteenth century. Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747-48) could be characterized as the most prominent mid-century British novels that still retained as central, and without irony, the abduction-plot elements of the French romance tradition that so engrosses Lennox's Arabella, though Richardson's novels are also markedly less fantastic than the narratives of the French romance tradition, with particularly harsh effects on Richardson's heroines. Within the British romance tradition, Lennox was able to bridge with *The Female Quixote* the literary innovations of Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, and Eliza Haywood in amatory fiction with increasingly realist developments in Richardson's novels.²⁸ Though Richardson enjoyed tremendous success working somewhat within the romance tradition, he did so at a time during which the political (the Jacobite Rebellions, the questioning of financial markets) and literary

²⁷Lennox, Charlotte. *The Female Quixote*. Ed. Margaret Dalziel. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989. All references are to this edition.

²⁸Jacqueline Pearson notes the praise Behn's *Oroonoko* has received for its “originality” and “innovations” in narrative method in “Gender and Narrative in the Fiction of Aphra Behn,” *The Review of English Studies* 42:165 (1991): 40.

(Haywood's *The Anti-Pamela* and Fielding's *Shamela* and *Joseph Andrews* backlash) climates had begun to shift away from the romance tradition. The narratives of Fielding, Sterne, and Smollett represented a mode of novelistic innovation aimed at mocking and questioning the moralist assumptions of romance novels. While Richardson cleverly wrote romance, as in *Clarissa*, with a heightened sense of realism, a departure from the romance tradition that also resonated with a mid-century demand for “practical,” realist, or didactic novels, Lennox found herself at odds with this largely masculine trend in British novel writing. Whereas earlier romance novels were frequently written by women, whose assumed “predispositions” toward such writing contributed significantly to the demand for their novels, the romance traditions in which Lennox herself likely read widely (in English and French) had begun to fall out of fashion in mid-century Britain, forcing Lennox to position herself as a writer amid the transition. Indeed, just as *Don Quixote* is often said to have grown, in part, out of the sometimes indecipherable structural and stylistic elements of romance and of novel, *The Female Quixote*, which positions the seventeenth-century French romance as an instructional misfit for British ladies like Arabella, weaves the upper-classed, grandiose elements of the French romance together with the related conventions of British amatory fiction in her innovation beyond both of these motifs.

In this way, *The Female Quixote* was, not unlike Fielding's “comic epic poem in prose,” *Joseph Andrews*, something of an experimental offering. Adopting the quixotic narrative allowed Lennox at once to pick up on the emerging metafictional trends in Fielding and Sterne and to recover the force of romance writing. *The Female Quixote* mocks the over-interpretation of romantic plots—and the anachronistic behavior that over-interpretation produces—while demonstrating how Arabella's romantic worldview is also, in its own ways, empowering. Lennox illustrates in *The Female Quixote* how the fantasy of one woman (Arabella) can be an imaginative adventure, a part-way-romantic re-casting of Richardson's demonstration that a family's upward-mobility fantasy can be the ruination

of their daughter (Clarissa). Thus, in writing *The Female Quixote*, which she promoted alongside some of the most powerful literary figures of the eighteenth century, Lennox successfully forged her own imaginative space within a changing literary marketplace largely dominated by men—an endeavor not so dissimilar from Arabella's clever maneuvering around her father and Glanville in *The Female Quixote*.

Lennox's novelistic approach in *The Female Quixote*, which reflects a comparable mutual suspension of realist and romantic motifs in her subsequent novels, has the effect of foregrounding gender concerns. Preserving aspects of the romantic plot in an arguably favorable light (or, as Margaret Anne Doody writes in the introduction to Margaret Dalziel's Oxford edition of *The Female Quixote*, refusing “entirely” to “forsake romance motifs”), against the narratological grain of her prominent male contemporaries, meant aligning herself and her female quixote with a romance tradition toward which women were already expected to be predisposed in and of their gender (Doody xxxii). Thus, when we acknowledge Arabella's fantastic delusions and romantic pronouncements as ridiculous, we do so with the knowledge that Arabella, cloistered on her father's estate, was only put in the unfortunate position of relying solely on romance reading for survival and empowerment because of the lack of agency, civic and otherwise, that attends her gender. Likewise, when we acknowledge Arabella's empowerment through imaginative reading, we do so knowing that this response to a lack of wider agency is feminine-coded: precisely because women are expected to be creatures of fancy, Arabella's ability to use fancy as a gendered instrument of critique is all the more forceful. As Cervantes' Don Quixote became increasingly, for the mid-eighteenth-century British readership, a romantic hero rather than an outmoded dunce, creating a female quixote gave Lennox an ideal framework for injecting earnest heroine-ism into her suitably metafictional account of romance and romance reading in *The Female Quixote*.

For good reason, then, critics engaging with *The Female Quixote* have taken

interest in its subversive qualities, specifically in the feminist possibilities engendered by Arabella. After all, the gesture of transgendering Don Quixote was both radical and clever. Feminizing the quixote allowed Lennox to critique not only the romantic idealism that male quixotes satirized, but also the view (as Henry Fielding expressed in his 1752 review of *The Female Quixote* in the *Covent Garden Journal*) that romantic idealism was itself a particularly “feminine” quality.²⁹ Undoubtedly, female quixotes unsettled gender conventions, and forged both imaginative and material spaces in which to exercise agency uncommonly available to women of the eighteenth century. Accordingly, there exists no shortage of critical material to corroborate readings of Lennox’s novel as a subversive and sophisticated commentary on reading gender and gendered reading.

Eve Tavor Bannet argues of Lennox’s heroine in *The Female Quixote* that, “in making Arabella a Dulcinea, Lennox transformed the latter from a figure who was, in her way, as much a passive occasion for masculine heroics as [Fielding’s] Fanny, into a controlling agent” (562). Likewise, Patricia Meyer Spacks has contended that Arabella is someone who, with “no opportunities for action and with little companionship imagines, on the basis of her reading of romance, a world in which she can claim enormous significance” (535). In such readings, Arabella’s imagination affords her a degree of unlikely agency from the margins; and we can certainly understand how the marginal orientation of the female quixote could be said to hold subversive potential. As Bannet and Gillian Brown have pointed out, Arabella is astoundingly effective in roping those around her into her quixotic fantasies, thereby modifying and disrupting behavioral conventions.

While these influential readings of Lennox’s heroine are every bit as essential as they are substantiated, their focus on certain aspects of the quixote and her relation to her male suitors—with little attention to her relationship with her female servant—effectively

²⁹Fielding claimed in his review in *The Covent-Garden Journal* (no. 24, 24 March 1752) that *The Female Quixote* was more realistic than Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* because a young woman would be more susceptible to the romances than would a man. See *The Covent-Garden Journal*, Vol. 1. Ed. Gerard Edward Jensen. New Haven: Yale UP, 1915, p. 279.

minimizes those elements of the quixotic text that address the margins of social class (and women of the non-wealthy majority). Though Arabella is marginalized along a gender axis, her wealth and class-standing afford her a degree of privilege that often goes unregistered in critical responses whose central concerns are (understandably) issues of gender rather than class. However, so long as we concern ourselves with gender implications, we ought to consider likewise what the servant characters tell us about their quixotic mistress, and, concordantly, what the nature of this relationship among women of radically different social standing suggests about the relationships between gender and class in the bucolic locales of Lennox's Britain.

Perhaps to an even greater degree than her male quixote counterparts, and certainly more out of the necessity that gender conventions imposed, Arabella relies on her class privilege (and thus her servants) to interact with and affect the world around her. Arabella's maid receives and delivers her romantic correspondences, guardedly supplies compliments and carefully constructed comments to sustain and legitimate her mistresses' fantasies, and becomes wholly (and physically) enmeshed in quixotic escapades. This occurs, all more often than not, by the quixote's mandate and against the servant's better judgement. The quixote and her servant develop a degree of codependency and participate in a cyclical power transaction, the quixote wielding class privilege to get her servant to do her romantic "dirty work," and the servant mimicking the quixote as a stand-in or a double within the quixotic fantasy in order to remain within her mistress's good graces, or to prevent the quixote from falling into greater trouble. For this reason—the female quixote's reliance on a servant to perpetuate her fantasy, and the importance of class dynamics within this scenario—*The Female Quixote* is particularly germane for studies of power as it intersects with gender and class, and the exceptionalist means by which class-based power can be preserved even as gender conventions are challenged.

Earlier eighteenth-century novels—Defoe's *Roxana* (1724) and Richardson's

Pamela in particular—depict female servants with considerable wit, cunning, and agency who sometimes deploy these tools in attempts to improve their situations through mimetic acts. Pamela, a fully literate servant who wears aristocratic clothes and is frequently mistaken for a woman of “higher breeding,” persists in writing letters in captivity like a proper romantic heroine of high status. Roxana’s servant Amy also doubles as a woman of privilege when she orchestrates her forsaken mistress’s arrangement with a local gentleman, even going so far as to play her mistress’s body-double in the bedroom. As Amy says, “if he should promise to do so and so for you, and the Condition was such, that he would not serve you unless I would let him lye with me, he should lye with me as often as he would” (29). Crossdressing the servant as the mistress is not an uncommon way of collapsing eighteenth-century class and courtship conventions into narrative thought experiments, providing readers with transgressive, counterfactual scenes in which members of the servant classes are joined in courtship with members of the aristocracy. By having servants break convention so that their masters and mistresses can do the same in pursuit of romantic partnership or a better life, eighteenth-century novelists like Defoe (*Roxana*), Richardson (*Pamela*), and Tabitha Gilman Tenney (*Female Quixotism*) developed yet another means of circumventing the consequences of social rigidity with respect to class and gender roles.³⁰ Even in America, Tenney was familiar, at least, with Richardson’s novels, her heroine in *Female Quixotism* having sought a Charles Grandison figure before fixating on the villain O’Connor. Given this tradition of mimetic female servants who play touch-and-go power games with their class superiors in a constant struggle for agency, we might consider how female quixotes magnify mimetic concerns.

By focusing on the relationship between Arabella and her maid, Lucy, in this chapter, I will argue that Lucy is a victim of what René Girard calls “mimetic violence,”

³⁰This method for getting around class rigidity is not unlike eighteenth-century tendencies to write novels as “true histories,” or to account for the fictional depiction of base or unacceptable behavior as intended to “instruct” by example.

and is thereby “sacrificed” within the narrative to uphold dominant class conventions. The mimetic pairing of female quixote and her maid is burdened by an inherent conflict of interest between concerns of gender and class; and, as I will suggest, this conflict renders necessary a sacrifice within one of these spheres of concern to restore or uphold certain values within the other. I will argue that this sacrifice functions to diminish class concerns within Lennox’s novel, and participates as such in both the upper-class coding of feminine empowerment and the upper-class coded rhetoric of exceptionalism. The relationship between victimhood, sacrifice, and mimetic violence that I aim to illustrate relies on an account of the very prominent role of mimesis in *The Female Quixote*.

5.2 Mimesis in *The Female Quixote*

Mimesis is a central concept in *The Female Quixote*, at the very least on account of the myriad mimetic pairings available in the novel. At one level, Arabella mimics the romantic conventions she draws from her novels. At another, as Thomas Schmid observes, Arabella mimics masculine authority in the process of deriving her authority from the power men grant her over them (21). At a third level, Arabella’s suitors mimic Arabella’s mimicked romantic conventions. And at yet another level very different from the prior three, Lucy is made to mimic Arabella’s mimicked romantic actions and mannerisms by serving as a surrogate Arabella in those instances in which Arabella’s romantic austerity prevents her from having direct contact with her male suitors. This third level of mimesis differs because the primary practitioner of mimicry is a servant who, though perhaps at times compelled by the romantic nature of Arabella’s constructed narratives, is primarily moved to mimicry through acts of Arabella’s sovereign power over her.

Still, Arabella’s ability to ensnare supporting characters into her imaginative world, whether by sovereign authority or by fantastic wiles, merits careful consideration. As Bannet argues, Arabella possesses

Don Quixote’s amazing ability to make everyone imitate his chosen model, whether in jest like the Duke and Duchess, from credulity like Sancho, or for purposes of persuasion like Dorotea and the

Curate. Critics have drawn attention to the ‘power’ that Arabella gains from her romance models and contrast this with her disempowerment in the more realistic novelistic world without noticing either that this contrast is already in Cervantes or that Arabella’s power over men depends entirely on her ability to inspire them with a desire to ingratiate themselves with her by imitating her model (562).

Being in a position of social disadvantage in relation to her male suitors, Arabella affects their behavior and exercises considerable agency through her ability to inspire imitation. Though Glanville refuses to read the romance novels that Arabella recommends to him, and believes that Arabella is “governed by . . . antiquated Maxims,” he nonetheless, as Bannet notes, remains “resolved to accommodate himself, as much as possible, to her Taste, and endeavor[s] to gain her Heart by a Behaviour most agreeable to her.” Glanville’s rationale for this devotion, which overtakes his sound reasoning that Arabella is reading more into the situation than is there in reality, is both because he is “passionately in Love with her” and because he admires the “Wit and Delicacy” with which she makes her romantic pronouncements (45-6).

Glanville’s admiration of Arabella’s “Wit and Delicacy” suggests that Arabella indeed possesses a particular set of qualities—her attitude, her intellect, her care and adeptness with words—that makes her capable of inspiring the imitation of her suitors. His love for her, which he professes quite early in the novel, not long after he first becomes acquainted with her, is highly romanticized; he develops passionate love based on a series of trivial interactions with Arabella that adhere to the romantic modes of courtship that Arabella prefers. As her interactions with Glanville suggest, Arabella’s source of power over those otherwise more powerful than her (within the social hierarchy) is indeed, as Bannet argues, not simply her romantic idealism, but her mimetic appeal.

However, in the situations in which Arabella’s mimetic appeal or influence operates alongside the influence of Arabella’s class privilege—in other words, in those situations in which Arabella interacts with Lucy, a *woman* of lower social standing—mimesis is not merely a function of Arabella’s mimetic appeal, but also of her sovereign power, or her class-based authority. Though at times Lucy’s alacrity in delivering Arabella’s letters or

enquiring after Arabella's affairs bespeaks a form of emotional or at least fanciful investment in Arabella's romantic saga, and thus a tendency to become swayed by Arabella's mimetic appeal, the reader is often privy to Lucy's stated fear of upsetting her mistress, her frequent acquiescence on account of this fear, and her occasional questioning of her mistress' motives while simultaneously carrying out her mimetic tasks. While Glanville acquiesces to Arabella's romantic models, even while questioning them, primarily because he is enamoured of her "Wit and Delicacy," Lucy acquiesces in large part because of the gravity of Arabella's reproachfulness and haphazard behavior, being in a social position in which, unlike Glanville after his first encounters with Arabella, she cannot afford simply to quit Arabella's company and walk out of the house.

Arabella summons Lucy to partake of her romantic fantasies from the very beginning of the novel, when Arabella has her first encounter with a suitor from London, Mr. Hervey. Arabella orders Lucy not to accept correspondence from Mr. Hervey, at the same time expecting that Lucy will deliver some news of the London gentleman's interest. Mr. Hervey's very brief courtship of Arabella (terminated after he meets Arabella on the road and she accuses him of designing to rape her) provides the first opportunity for Lucy to suffer the effects of her role in Arabella's fantasy. Arabella's unpredictable behavior—her charges to refuse correspondence from Mr. Hervey, then her constant expectation that Lucy indulge her desire and bring Mr. Hervey's letters anyway—is the novel's first occasion for verbal abuse. When Lucy reports that Mr. Hervey kissed his own letter to Arabella that Lucy returned to him, thinking it Arabella's reply, Arabella erupts: "Foolish Wench! replied Arabella, How can you imagine he had the Temerity to think I should answer his Letter?" (14). As the situation escalates and Arabella imagines that a woeful Mr. Hervey might attempt suicide after having been deprived of a response letter from Arabella, Lucy finds herself both confused and compelled by the possibility: "Lucy now began to think there was something more, than she imagined, in this Affair. Mr. Hervey

indeed, in her Opinion, had seemed to be very far from having any Design to attempt his own Life; but her Lady, she thought, could not possibly be mistaken” (15).

These brief intimations of Lucy’s reasoning abound in Lennox’s novel, and provide considerable insight into the complexity of Lucy’s position relative to her mistress. On the one hand, Lucy relies to an extent on her own judgment, and rightly apprehends a disparity between her own rational, if uncertain, perceptions and Arabella’s far-fetched yet gravely asserted suppositions. On the other, despite the accuracy of her own judgment, Lucy concludes that “her Lady...could not possibly be mistaken.” Lucy reaches a similar conclusion later in the novel when Arabella suspects that the gardener, Edward, might be a gentleman of high quality in disguise. When Arabella shares these thoughts with Lucy, Lucy replies: “truly, Madam...I never took him for any body else but a simple Gardener; but now you open my Eyes, methinks I can find I have been strangely mistaken” (24). At these important junctures in the novel, after having been harshly reprimanded for relying on her own (accurate) judgments already, Lucy is compelled to partake of Arabella’s fantasies not just because of Arabella’s dramatization and mimetic appeal, but also because Arabella is in the position to mandate fantasy in place of material reality. By the force of this mandate, Lucy is entered into a mimetic world in which her actions, emotions, and beliefs come to either mirror or stand in for those of her mistress.

We can observe this at the height of Mr. Hervey’s courtship, when Arabella decides to write Mr. Hervey a letter to pardon him from his supposed self-inflicted death sentence. Only instead of writing the letter herself, or even having Lucy take dictations in her mistress’ name, Arabella hands Lucy a handwritten note and makes Lucy copy it. The result is a letter from Lucy, addressed to “the unfortunate Lover of her Lady.” Lucy’s letter begins with “My Lady, who is the most generous Person in the World, has commanded me to tell you...” and thus proceeds with Lucy—not Arabella—at the center of Arabella’s fantasy, standing in for her mistress as the speaking subject of Arabella’s letters (16).

When Lucy departs to give the letter to her brother William to pass on to Mr. Hervey, William opens the letter and reads it. When Lucy returns to him to enquire whether the letter reached Mr. Hervey in time, citing the urgency and gravity of her mistress' orders to deliver her letter, William expresses confusion over whose thoughts the letter contains: "Your Lady! interrupted William, why was it not yourself that wrote the letter you gave to me?" (17). Lucy replies: "My Lady *made* every Word of it, and I only wrote it after her" (18).

The mimetic joining of Arabella and Lucy—the voicing of Arabella's words in Lucy's name, and the casting of Lucy's actions in Arabella's name—binds Lucy to the consequences of Arabella's whimsy, but without the consent or the agency that Arabella deploys in creating and perpetuating her fantasies. After Arabella's behavior leads Mr. Hervey to lose interest in her and retreat back to London, it is Lucy who stands in for her mistress to assume the blame. Mr. Hervey, "not acquainted with Lady Bella's Foible...concluded her Fears of him were occasioned by her Simplicity, and some Misrepresentations that had been made her by Lucy, who, he thought, had betrayed him" (21). In the end, Arabella is presumed rather innocent in her alleged rural simplicity, and Lucy falls victim to her surrogate role in the ordeal.

In addition to Lucy's mimicking Arabella's words and actions through surrogacy, Lennox's novel is filled with instances of Lucy (and other female servants) shadowing Arabella's movements and mimicking Arabella's thoughts and emotions. Lucy "always thought as her Lady did"; and when Arabella walked in the garden with Glanville, "Lucy, and another Attendant, always followed her" (26, 46). Perhaps the most pronounced of these examples comes when Arabella believes she is about to be abducted, and elicits Lucy's mirrored emotional response to the melodrama: "Oh dear Madam! cried Lucy, trembling, and pressing near her, what shall we do?" Frightened, Arabella orders Lucy to respond to a visitor at the door. Lucy, mirroring her mistress' fear, clings to Arabella, "so

afraid...[she] cannot stir!” When Lucy hesitates with fear, Arabella excoriates her: “Weak-souled Wench!...How unfit art thou for Accidents like these! Ah! had Cylenia and Martesia been like thee, the fair Berenice, and the Divine Princess of Media, had not so eagerly intreated their Ravishers to afford them their Company in their Captivity!” (93).

Arabella’s allusion here to seventeenth-century romances, in which female attendants were themselves typically of aristocratic birth, raises yet another mimetic issue. Through Arabella’s mimicking of romantic conventions and simultaneous insistence on differentiating herself and the noble-born attendants of seventeenth-century romances from the lowly Lucy, she demonstrates the perceived trouble—in Brown’s terms, the quixotic fallacy—of taking romance for reality. Lucy, an uneducated, lower-class English servant, always already fails to be the aristocratic servant of seventeenth-century romances, though Arabella insists on the paradox of Lucy being both at once. If romance is itself a mimetic genre, capable of inspiring imitation (courtly behavior, abduction scenes, complicity between lady and lady-attendants)—and Lennox was clearly addressing this possibility—then Lucy must grapple with a double and self-contradictory mimetic imperative: play the surrogate mistress and the aristocratic lady-attendant at the same time, in fulfillment of her responsibility as a servant and her mimetic attraction to Arabella’s fantasies.

Still fearing the “ravishers,” and drawing Lucy into her dire fiction, Arabella shows fear under duress, yet charges her servant to suffer the consequences of her own imagination. Lucy, mimicking Arabella’s fear and moving in close to Arabella, becomes Arabella’s unfortunate double. When the two women decide to escape the room, head through the garden, and set out for refuge at Lucy’s brother William’s farm, Lennox’s use of pronouns makes it particularly difficult to follow which woman is Arabella and which is Lucy:

Lucy, upon whose Arm she leaned, perceiving her fainting, screamed out loud, not knowing what to do with her in that Condition: She placed her upon the Ground; and, supporting her Head against that fatal Stump, began to rub her Temples, weeping excessively all the time. Her Swoon still continuing, the poor Girl was in inconceivable Terror: Her Brother’s House was now but a little Way off.

What *is* clear about this passage is that either of the two women could conceivably have been terrified, either could have been swooning, and either could have been weeping. These mimetic vignettes effectively bring Arabella and Lucy ever closer, and they become ever less distinguishable from one another within Arabella's imaginative world; however, the crucial distinction remains one of sovereign power: whereas Lucy is pulled into her mistress' fantasies to bear the harsh consequences without the power to opt out of them, Arabella is the sovereign impetus for their escapades. And, just as Arabella brings about these escapades, she too assumes the power to end them, as she does at the novel's end when she admits to the madness of her quixotic behavior, "miraculously" recognizing the folly of her ways (382).³¹

Arabella experiences at the end of the novel "violent" emotions of shame and regret for her behavior—behavior that, notably, Lennox is careful not to vindicate (383). Arabella apologizes to Sir George and gives herself over to Glanville for marriage with an air of humility that would seem to betray her independence, and likewise her prior desire "to live single, not being desirous of entering into any Engagement which may hinder [her] Solicitude of Cares" (41). Though Arabella does not emerge from her story entirely unscathed, we might consider two points before losing sight of Lucy behind Arabella's (two-page) penitent struggle after recognizing her foible. First, whatever vindication of Arabella's behavior that Lennox withholds from the novel's ending has been provided by numerous critics, who cite the liberating and subversive qualities of Arabella's powerful imagination, all of which Lennox's text evinces abundantly *prior* to its final chapters; and second, by the time Arabella comes to terms with her folly, she has already subjected Lucy to an array of violent emotions, rebukes, and situations. In the mimetic circle of exchange between Arabella and Lucy, Arabella is in the end enlightened, redeemed, and married of her own will, while Lucy disappears, as servants do, quietly into the background.

³¹Glanville refers to the Doctor's work in convincing Arabella of her folly as a "Miracle" (382).

Despite Lennox's tidy ending, what do the abundant folds of mimetic behavior in *The Female Quixote* suggest about the broader debate over allegedly dangerous mimetic force of romance reading (or misreading)? Though Arabella achieves a degree of agency by her virtues of wit and imagination, her mimetic behavior also moves her to treat many of those around her with either callous disregard or severe contempt. The mimesis of Lennox's characters would seem to suggest that romantic idealism can indeed have harsh social consequences that cannot be redeemed until the quixote herself is redeemed and her quixotism renounced. Quixotes have a *de facto* investment in romantic idealism, an investment that their servants do not necessarily share from the outset. Taking the mimetic behavior of the quixote and its consequences for the (redeemed) quixote as representative of the novel's position on romance reading, one could plausibly argue, as Fielding did, that *The Female Quixote* is a believable tale concerned with feminine fancy more so than mimesis. However, looking beyond the quixote, and considering the effects of mimesis in the novel on the quixote's supporting cast, it becomes clear that mimesis functions like a contagion, very much in agreement with eighteenth-century anxieties over the *mimetic* effects of romance reading in addition to anxieties over the cultivation of whimsical or over-imaginative faculties in women. To frame more starkly the effects of mimetic behavior in *The Female Quixote* as they relate to exceptionalism, and, heuristically, to relate mimesis to Lucy's victimhood in Lennox's novel, I will now discuss a particularly apt theory of mimetic violence.

5.3 Mimetic Violence and the "Surrogate Victim"

In her innovative essay "Sacrifice, Mimesis, and the Theorizing of Victimhood," Rey Chow explores the implicit roles of mimesis and sacrifice in Giorgio Agamben's landmark study of *homo sacer*, a figure abandoned by sovereign law and rendered as such a figure of exception or of "bare life," "a life that may be killed but not sacrificed" (83).³²

³²Agamben defines "bare life" at base as "a life that can be killed but not sacrificed." *Homo sacer* can be

Understanding victimhood as “subordinated or stigmatized existence” and tracing the ambivalent political function of mimesis briefly through the work of Franz Fanon, Homi Bhabha, Luce Irigaray, René Girard, and others, Chow posits a series of questions about what she perceives as Agamben’s curious elision of mimetic concerns in his study of *homo sacer*, Agamben’s victim *par excellence* (131). Chow’s analysis brings into consideration two distinct types of mimetic operation—the postcolonial and the psychoanalytic—that cast Agamben’s *homo sacer* and the notion of victimhood in new light.

Sacrifice and mimesis are linked by what Chow calls “an inescapable structural relation”: in the act of mimesis, the imitator is necessarily sacrificed to the copy, or the object of imitation, which in turn stands in as a substitute. Mimesis is thus “the (visibly or sensorially available) substitute that follows, that bears the efforts of (an invisible or illegible) sacrifice” (137). We can find evidence of this relationship, as Chow does, in the way mimesis operates for postcolonial theorists like Fanon and Bhabha: the colonized subject gains social cachet by mimicking the colonizer, but simultaneously sacrifices part of her subjectivity in the process. In this exchange, mimesis is derivative, a reaction among colonized subjects to their systematic subordination.

The second type of mimetic operation, which Chow draws from René Girard’s *Violence and the Sacred*, accords mimesis an originary role as opposed to a derivative or reactive role. According to Chow, mimesis is in Girard’s view “what animates and energizes the act of desiring... what gives desire its direction and trajectory as well as its objects.” To desire is thus to “to *compete* with a rival in a vicious circle of reciprocal violence, in which the antagonists become increasingly indistinguishable from each other—become what Girard calls ‘monstrous doubles.’” Chow goes on to explain that the only way out of Girard’s “vicious circle” is through the holding up of a “surrogate victim,”

killed with no legal consequences because s/he does not exist within the realm of the law, but cannot be sacrificed likewise because sacrifice performs a social function. See Giorgio Agamben. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. Sanford: Stanford UP, 1998, p. 53.

a scapegoat whose culturally sanctioned (and perhaps culturally sanctified) destruction performs the social function of precluding a greater evil, a greater violence (143).

Considering these two types of mimetic operation as Chow lays them out, we can see more clearly why Agamben is ostensibly unconcerned with links between mimesis and victimhood in his study of *homo sacer*. Agamben, who holds a nihilistic view of sovereign power and posits the concentration camp as the primary and all-encompassing instance of sovereign violence done unto “bare life,” would have to acknowledge firstly that violence could have an impetus outside the realm of arbitrary sovereign power—mimetic struggle—and secondly that the sacrificing of a surrogate victim could perform the social function of averting greater violence. For Chow, Girard and Agamben actually inhabit a very similar theoretical space. As she argues:

Despite his adherence to the need for moral compunctions in his (antisacrificial, anti-mimetic) approach to the concentration camps, Agamben’s bleak depictions of political-power-gone-berserk the world over suggest that his grasp of the unmitigated, and perhaps intractable, actuality of human violence (defined by Girard as mimetic) is, in the end, not that distant from Girard’s (147).

Though Chow reminds us parenthetically in her title that hers is “a speculative essay,” she leaves us with a two tangible and important possibilities for further considerations of the link between mimesis and exceptionalism (or the rendering of someone or something exceptional) in *The Female Quixote*. First, mimesis is inextricably linked with sacrifice, because (violent) mimetic acts produce a surrogate victim. And second, surrogate victims can perform preventative and restorative social functions.

Reconsidering the mimetic relationship between Arabella and Lucy, we can use these possibilities as a guide for understanding the ways in which Lucy becomes a victim of mimetic violence within Lennox’s narrative. But I must also emphasize, however, that the victimhood of the quixotic servant is of a very different type and degree from, for example, that of the victimhood of Agamben’s example of “bare life,” or the victims of state-sponsored violence to which Chow alludes in the final section of her essay, where she describes the application of sovereign law. Chow’s essay oscillates between examples of

victims who are “subordinated or stigmatized” systematically or surreptitiously in everyday life (not at all to be taken lightly, of course), and examples of victims of severe violence whose lives are literally destroyed as a result. Though Chow explicitly defines victimhood as “subordinated or stigmatized existence,” and Lucy’s existence could certainly be described this way, we must at the same time be careful not to meld all forms of victimhood together and risk losing the force of Chow’s argument that mimesis, sacrifice, and victimhood are conceptually and materially linked.

That said, my use of “victimhood” in this chapter adheres to Chow’s concise but wieldy definition: “subordinated or stigmatized existence.” Accordingly, we should understand sovereignty and sovereign power here in terms concomitant with Lucy’s subordinated existence under the influence of Arabella; which is to say not as the collectively sanctioned authority of a state government, but as the singular authority of the female quixote over her servant, ordained by the conventions and protocols of class hierarchy.

5.4 Sacrifice and Victimhood in *The Female Quixote*

After observing how Lucy is abused, ridiculed, terrorized, and blamed during the course of her mimetic role-playing in Arabella’s fantasies, and after taking account of Chow’s theory of victimhood, we can see more clearly how mimesis can take violent turns in Lennox’s text. As Lucy seeks Arabella’s approval and kind treatment by modifying her own thoughts and behavior to mirror those of her mistress, Arabella continually responds with demands and derision, reaffirming her difference (her superiority) according to the servant-mistress relationships in her romances. In this sense, the relationship between Lucy and Arabella is one of constant, self-perpetuating struggle—Lucy’s struggle to ingratiate herself by mimicking Arabella, and Arabella’s struggle to differentiate herself by rebuking Lucy. The struggle comes to an end by claiming Lucy as its surrogate victim, both through Lucy’s mistreatment under Arabella and through her elision in Arabella’s

redemption. This follows in the vein of the first possibility drawn from Chow's essay: mimesis is inextricably linked with sacrifice, because (violent) mimetic acts produce a surrogate victim.

Lennox's novel restores Arabella by its end, and in so doing affirms a number of its core principles (most notably the virtues of reason in *both* women and men) while complicating others (the virtues of female independence and imagination); however, Lucy, who played an instrumental role in Arabella's imaginative affairs, remains a vestige of all that Arabella cast off.³³ Between Arabella and Lucy—two subjects in mimetic struggle—the former is the face of redemption in the text, while the sacrifice of the latter signifies an abandoned sensibility, perhaps even the abandonment of Arabella's imaginative spirit. Because Lucy—Arabella's double and the primary instrument of Arabella's imaginative affairs—is sacrificed, Arabella can be restored. Lucy's function in Lennox's text is negative, in the sense that she (very significantly) carries out much of Arabella's imaginative "dirty work," then her significance is negated by and through Arabella's apostasy, her disavowal of her whimsical past. Despite Lucy's prominent role in Arabella's fantasies, we do not expect Lucy—a servant, a dispensable double—to be redeemed alongside her mistress. The "sacrificing" of Lucy speaks to the second possibility drawn from Chow's essay: surrogate victims can perform preventative and restorative social functions. In the case of Arabella, Lucy's sacrifice participates in the upholding of Arabella's class position (she marries Glanville), as well as the restoration of Arabella's damaged (quixotic) character in the eyes of her family and her peers.

5.5 Exceptionalism in Triptych: Author, Quixote, Critic

The narrative sacrificing of Lucy, which breaks the mimetic circle of violence between mistress and servant and forestalls any further disgrace or de-classing of Arabella, also signals several layers of exceptionalism at work within the novel and in its

³³After Arabella recognizes her error, Glanville is "recovered to the free Use of all her noble Powers of Reason" (382).

contemporary critical reception. Though there exists ample discussion of Arabella's acquiescence, at the novel's end, to her father, Glanville, and the institution of marriage, a fuller consideration of the quixotic and mimetic elements of the text indicates that, through her relationship with Lucy, Arabella is a beneficiary of sacrifice long before she is "cured" of her quixotism in the final pages of the novel. While the argument is often made that Arabella's final renunciation of quixotism, and her agreement to marry Glanville, constitute the unsatisfactory (but not inexplicable) sacrificing of imaginative, subversive female autonomy in order to uphold (tongue-in-cheek, or out of earnest consideration for the well-being of impressionable readers) the values of marital companionship, class preservation, fiscal responsibility, reasoned decision-making, and careful and circumspect reading practices, the quixotism that informs Arabella's treatment of Lucy engages the conundrum of feminine empowerment versus "practical" or "strategic" behavior from the novel's beginning. *The Female Quixote* addresses competing desires for feminine empowerment and socioeconomic standing, as I have shown, through a kind of mimetic rivalry, the solution to which (the sacrifice) relies on a series of exceptionalist gestures.

As Fielding did with *Joseph Andrews*, Lennox positioned *The Female Quixote* in an innovative way within the literary marketplace. Drawing on elements of the romance narrative, the quixotic narrative, and the realist, Richardsonian push beyond the romance narrative, Lennox's mock-romance also preserves in earnest those elements of the romance tradition that best serve the purposes of her empowerment within the literary marketplace. The strong record of successful female authorship within the tradition of romance writing, the popular appeal of tales of upper-class grandiosity, and the implication that reading fiction could serve as an escape from the tedious elements of domesticity all contributed to the marketability of *The Female Quixote* as something of a female-authored break, endorsed by Richardson himself, from the dominant, Richardsonian domestic narrative, featuring damsels at the mercy of competing male desires. The adoption of the quixotic

narrative framework is the foundation of this innovative approach, as it allows for a slippery and double-edged critique of the over-investment in romantic modes of reading and behavior and of the patriarchal conditions that make such an over-investment attractive to female quixotes (and female readers). This exception-producing capability of the quixotic narrative framework—the ability to put forth a literary critique that seems always a moving target—provided Lennox with a way of mediating the tension between proto-feminist ideas of female empowerment and the practical considerations of female authorship in the mid-eighteenth century. Lennox's writing and promotion of *The Female Quixote* bear in themselves some elements of quixotism, in the way in which they produced an exception to the increasingly realist novelistic trend—an exception that, in practice, cast into the background the unresolved tension between idealism (female empowerment) and practicality (the needs of a female author in a precarious financial position). However, Lennox's entrepreneurialism is far from quixotic; it is resolutely practical.

In this sense the circumstances of the writing and promotion of *The Female Quixote* already present a fascinating background with which to consider its textual mediation of concerns very similar to those Lennox faced herself. Without venturing into the perilous territory of attributing a causal link between Lennox's situation as a woman forced to live off her writing, having married the financially ill-endowed and unsuccessful Alexander Lennox and separated from him in the early 1790s, and the events that befall Arabella, we can nonetheless take the circumstances of Lennox and Arabella as important points of contrast for elucidating the function of quixotism in *The Female Quixote*. Lennox's canny pragmatism and Arabella's quixotism are both solutions to the problem of competing desires. For the former, the problem was the age-old conflict between writing-as-profession (and the imperatives of the literary marketplace) and writing-as-art; for the latter, the problem is also age-old: whether to *live* idealistically or pragmatically. Unlike

Lennox, Arabella's quixotic solution to this problem is exceptionalist: in and of her quixotism, Arabella takes idealism as the highest virtue, effectively dismissing the central problem of how she ought to conduct herself in the material world as a non-problem. In other words, quixotically, Arabella sacrifices from the beginning any consideration of Lucy in her romantic pursuit of justice on a male-dominated estate, just as the novel sacrifices from the beginning any class considerations in its illustration of Arabella's empowerment.

Any traces of exceptionalist political positioning that Lennox's novel might have aspired to within the wider field of mid-century British novels (which were moving away from the romance tradition and toward a more realist mode of expression) become fully developed in Arabella's quixotic exceptionalism in *The Female Quixote*. As the mimetic pairing of Arabella and Lucy and the eventual narrative sacrificing of Lucy demonstrate, Arabella's empowerment is contingent upon her superior literacy and literary sensibilities, as well as her sovereign power over Lucy in the carrying-out of literary fantasies. By virtue of this dynamic, Arabella's empowerment operates rather explicitly on a class register in addition to a gender register, the former frequently posing a challenge to the latter. Though Arabella's status and actions as a woman—a *female* quixote—are undoubtedly the most significant aspects of the novel's intervention into the literary discourse of domesticity and the roles of women, there remains the question of whether female domestic servants could or should participate in the liberatory gestures Arabella performs.

Accordingly, the exceptionalist move of *The Female Quixote* is the elision of the question of class as it relates to female empowerment, or the collapsing of the axes of gender- and class-based empowerment into mere considerations of gender. Arabella's quixotism is significant here, as it hinges on a literary obsession with outmoded tales of the French nobility, which presume, as does Don Quixote of Sancho Panza, that one of “lower breeding” is, *ipso facto*, simply not capable of understanding the behaviors and worldviews

of noble knights. Arabella's treatment of Lucy is likewise predicated on the quixotic assumption of the quixote-as-exception, or the circuitous assumption that complicity with the quixotic vision is mandatory and unassailable because the quixote is always already more noble and more knowledgeable than everyone else. Such assumptions leave little room for questioning whether this element of quixotism—the undeterred belief in a given worldview, regardless of counter-evidence—is really a means of class preservation, the noble status of quixotes being the *sine qua non* of quixotic adventure.³⁴ Arabella's quixotism blinds her both to the irony of the fact that Lucy possess a more accurate understanding of their surrounding circumstances than her mistress, and to the fact that class and education disparities effectively prevent Lucy from having access to the romantic opportunities—both real and imagined—from which Arabella benefits. Though, as with all quixotes, we must be attentive to the ironies at work in quixotic behavior—the excesses of romantic sentiment, the mistaking of the small and quotidian for the grandiose and exceptional, and the comic distance between quixote and others—such ironies in *The Female Quixote* serve not to draw attention to class dynamics, but to write them comically into the background.

Finally, a third and removed layer of exceptionalism related to *The Female Quixote* concerns trends in contemporary criticism. Due in large part to the quixotic exceptionalism that Arabella practices in the novel, and the consequent, exceptionalist tendency of *The Female Quixote* to put aside the question of class, critics, as I have shown at the beginning of this chapter, tend to focus on Arabella's quixotism as kind of feminine empowerment. When Bannet and Gillian Brown astutely note that Arabella has a remarkable ability to bring surrounding characters into her fantasies, compelling them to behave according to her quixotic worldview, they neglect to mention the similar effect

³⁴Don Quixote famously and comically stands vigil over his armor overnight while waiting for the first innkeeper he encounters to knight him, before which he cannot in good faith commence his adventures (Cervantes 32-33).

Arabella has had on literary critics. The critical focus on Arabella as a quixotic heroine capable of transcending gender limitations via wit, erudition, and literary imagination is not at all misplaced; yet it addresses *The Female Quixote* on the very terms produced by Arabella's quixotic exceptionalism. Considering Arabella's role in *The Female Quixote* from a wider scope, particularly with respect to her relationship with Lucy, it becomes clear that, notwithstanding its narrative focus on Arabella, the novel is about more than the quixotic "battle" between the heroine and the multiple men who attempt to ground her in the "sane" conventions of the patriarchal estate. Lucy's confused and often reluctant participation in Arabella's fantasies is ungrounded in any specific quixotic tradition, other than class difference between servant and quixote. Unlike Sancho Panza, Lucy is not lured into Arabella's fantastic world with promises of adventure, relief from an otherwise mundane existence, or governance of a kingdom of her own; rather, Lucy enters the plots of both Arabella and Lennox through simple class convention: it is expected that ladies have lady's maids, whose literary tradition of helping mistresses carry out the impossible alongside the quotidian is as much a characteristic of eighteenth-century domestic fiction as it is of the quixotic narrative. However, without literary adeptness or an appreciation for the romance tradition in which her mistress reads, Lucy is very much a quixote's sidekick, separated from her mistress not merely by class, but by a literary deficit, and classed as such. This combination of class disparity and educational or literary disparity between Arabella and Lucy forms a class-oriented undercurrent in Lennox's text.

The tendency of scholars to address primarily the overarching gender questions raised in *The Female Quixote*, at the expense of questions related to Lucy's role in the narrative (and its class implications) can be attributed to a particular kind of quixotic exceptionalism. In this case, where the axes of gender and class intersect in competing ways, the exceptionalist narrative explains empowerment as a prerogative of the privileged classes, building a narrative fence around the problematic question of whether

empowerment for an Arabella means the same thing as empowerment for a Lucy. In *The Female Quixote*, the diffusion of the mimetic interplay between mistress and maid through the sacrificing of the latter and the restoration of the former demonstrates how such an exceptionalist gesture works in narrative practice. In the following chapter, a comparable relationship between female quixote and her maid further illustrates how the American writer Tabitha Gilman Tenney's *Female Quixotism* recasts in the early Republic the same kind of exceptionalist narrative that Lennox introduced in mid-eighteenth-century Britain, but with an ending that evinces a much more explicit form of class favoritism.

CHAPTER 6: *FEMALE QUIXOTISM*

Published anonymously in 1801, almost fifty years after Lennox published *The Female Quixote*, Tabitha Gilman Tenney's *Female Quixotism* transports the female quixote story from the British countryside to the Pennsylvania frontier.³⁵ Gilman Tenney, wife of Federalist congressman Samuel Tenney of New Hampshire, wrote *Female Quixotism* shortly after the passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 and immediately after the highly contested presidential election of 1800, which saw, in the wake of Federalist hero George Washington's death in 1799, the emergence of Thomas Jefferson's Democratic-Republicans as successful challengers to the incumbent Federalist party. Given its publication amid this turn-of-the-century political tumult, along with the Federalist politics of Tenney's congressman husband, *Female Quixotism* has prompted critical readings keen to position it, like much colonial-era, post-revolutionary, and early-American literature, as an allegory about political uncertainty and political unrest.³⁶ In so doing, critics have been especially attentive to its commentary on female empowerment and gender subversion, as *Female Quixotism* avails itself of narrative strategies comparable to those in Lennox's *The Female Quixote*: the sometimes-satirical, sometimes-earnest incorporation of romance motifs as they pertain to the conduct of the female quixote. Especially telling about critical responses to *Female Quixotism* is the tendency to align questions of female empowerment with those of national politics to produce national-allegorical readings of Tenney's novel. This chapter complicates such critical responses through a discussion of the ways in which, as in Lennox's *The Female Quixote*, the relationship between the quixote and her domestic

³⁵Despite the fact that *Female Quixotism* is commonly attributed to Tenney, Stephen Carl Arch has claimed that the evidence of Tenney's authorship is dubious enough that we can question it, along with the readings that rely too heavily on the attribution of the novel to Tenney, and Tenney's biographical details (179). Though I do not question Tenney's authorship in this chapter, I do question critical reliance on Tenney's biographical details nonetheless, particularly where such a reliance leads to "Federalist" interpretations, in light of her Federalist husband.

³⁶Most recently in this vein, Jessica Lang reads Dorcasina's search for a romantic hero as an allegory for the early nation's search for an American hero to solve emerging national problems (*Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 51.2 (2009): 119-141). Earlier, Linda Frost reads *Female Quixotism* as representative of the feminine body-politic ("The Body Politic in Tabitha Tenney's *Female Quixotism*," *Early American Literature* 32.2 (1997): 113-134).

servant in *Female Quixotism* helps call attention to under-acknowledged class concerns, conflicts of interest between gender- and class-liberation gestures, and the participation of the quixotic narrative in the negotiation of such conflicts.

Tenney's quixote, the wealthy Pennsylvania heiress Dorcas Shelton (self-styled "Dorcasina," in romantic fashion), becomes engrossed in romance novels from abroad, and consequently adopts a very particular set of expectations for her multiplicity of suitors. Though, like Lennox's Arabella, Dorcasina is highly effective in inspiring her suitors, as well as her maid, Betty, to mimic and participate in her quixotic delusions, Dorcasina's quixotism affects her in another profound way. Despite her wealth and discernment otherwise, Dorcasina has a tendency to react amorously to almost any suitor who crosses her path, resulting in the formidable list of love interests—some more viable than others—that populate the novel (Jessica Lang has usefully catalogued them as follows: Lysander, O'Connor, Philander, Puff the Barber, Mr. Cumberland, Captain Barry, his servant James, her servant John Brown, Captain Montague, and Mr. Seymour) (119). Though her reactions to each of these suitors and suitor-stand-ins vary—and though many of them are simple con artists looking to capitalize on her wealth—Dorcasina's quixotism predisposes her, in her dangerous frontier town, to receive male passers-by as romantic interests. Unlike Arabella, who, despite her isolation on her father's estate, is an active subject in her fantasies, Dorcasina is more frequently the quixotic target of a series of cons. Though she retains in this sense her mimetic appeal—suitors who approach her frequently use florid, romantic language, pretend to higher stations in life than those they actually occupy, and profess their love to her in letters and trysts in the grove—she proceeds less calculatingly than does Arabella, spending more time in the novel reacting to amorous attempts than scheming or contemplating in her bedchamber. By the novel's end, Dorcasina finds herself old and alone, her quixotism having failed her during her "marriageable" years in the pursuit of a desirable romantic partner.

Crucially, the form of objectification that Dorcasina takes on as a target of manipulative suitors is often attributed to her gender, despite the fact that Lennox's quixote of the same gender arguably takes on a much less passive role with respect to *her* suitors. Central to Cynthia Miecznikowski's reading of *Female Quixotism*, for example, is the idea that "the crucial difference between [Don] Quixote and Dorcasina...may be expressed in terms of their gender, and herein lies the novel's satiric impulse which we may be tempted to privilege in our reading" (36). For Linda Frost, even while acknowledging that *Female Quixotism* "embodies a catalogue of class anxieties," Dorcasina is "a kind of embodiment of the American state," or "a literalization of the feminized body politic in American discourse" (114). These readings place considerations of gender at the forefront of critical response, even if Dorcasina's gender-informed passivity, in contrast to Don Quixote's bellicose knight-errantry, is actually better understood in relation to Arabella's quixotic manipulation of her surrounding male characters.³⁷ This is to suggest that, though gender, as in *The Female Quixote*, is unmistakably the most salient element of Tenney's intervention in *Female Quixotism*, the ways in which the quixote-as-female can differ, not just from male quixotes, but *among* female quixotes, can tell us much about other, important elements of the novel that binary gender readings overshadow.

Taking a different approach from critics primarily interested in Dorcasina's passivity and its feminizing potential, Cathy Davidson provides us with a reading of *Female Quixotism* as a gender-subversive text, even while acknowledging the crucial social limitations that female quixotes were forced to negotiate because of their gender. Observing that Dorcasina, unlike male quixotes, lacks the freedom to adventure through the countryside and impact the broader world, Davidson argues that *Female Quixotism* nonetheless provides a feminist counterbalance to both "male picaresque" texts (featuring male quixotes) and the titular conventions of "female" picaresque texts in the eighteenth

³⁷See Linda Frost, "The Body Politic in Tabitha Gilman Tenney's *Female Quixotism*," *Early American Literature* 32.2 (1997): 113-34.

and early-nineteenth century:

Female Quixotism runs counter to the male picaresque, to the sentimental romances affirming a patriarchal status quo, and also to another trend already underway in 1801 and one that became increasingly popular throughout the first half of the nineteenth century despite (or, perhaps, concomitant with) the highly restrictive legal and social conditions of women. I refer to the fad for female adventures starring women in their plots and almost always in their titles—*The Female Fishers*, *The Female Marine*, *The Female Robinson Crusoe*, *The Female Spy. A Domestic Tale*, *The Female Wanderer*, *The Female Spy; or, The Child of the Brigade*—even *The Female Land Pirate*” (279).

Reading *Female Quixotism* within the genre of the picaresque and the sub-genre of what she terms the “female picaresque,” Davidson asserts more generally that, by virtue of its “loose” narrative form, which allowed its quixotes to ramble through the countryside (or to imagine as much within the confines of their estate) and engage with an eclectic and polyvocal group of fringe characters, the picaresque was a genre of the margins, particularly in its American instances (234). The marginal nature of the American quixote was taken up likewise more recently by Sarah Wood, who describes American quixotes as “alone and on edge,” and as “counter-cultural figures who most frequently inhabit the geographical and ideological margins of American society” (125). These readings align marginalization along the gender axis with the formal or genre characteristics of the picaresque and the quixotic novel.

As I have suggested, however, one of the most critical aspects of *Female Quixotism* for our understanding of its telling gender-class intersections is that *Female Quixotism* is not a picaresque novel, but a quixotic one. Far from being a *picara* struggling upward on the frontier, Dorcasina is a wealthy heiress. In fact, it is precisely her wealth and upper-class literary sensibility that attract her numerous suitors. It is also Dorcasina's class circumstances that lead her, quixotically, to dismiss Betty's prudent warnings against the very real dangers that men like O'Connor introduce into her life. And, finally, it is her romantic idealism—her quixotic vision—that drives the novel's events, from slapstick humor to increasingly violent episodes. Though there has been a critical tendency to emphasize the “picaresque” nature of early-American, frontier literatures, figuring the

American frontier itself as a land of tricksters and hucksters, the quixotic roots of early-American literature are starkly present in *Female Quixotism*. As in *The Female Quixote*, a mimetic relationship between Dorcasina and her maid—a relationship premised on Dorcasina's class standing and quixotic behavior—introduces into the novel an exceptionalist means of upholding class protocol (avoiding transgression of class-based social norms) through the narrative “sacrificing” of Betty.

6.1 Mimesis in *Female Quixotism*

Like *The Female Quixote*, Tenney's *Female Quixotism* features a relationship between its quixote, Dorcasina, and her servant, Betty, which is defined by mimetic acts. Betty's forced mimetic behavior is at times very similar to that of Arabella's Lucy; however, the nature of Betty and Dorcasina's relationship produces for the most part a very different read on mimetic violence, one in which Betty does not always mimic Dorcasina, but sometimes is made to mimic *for* Dorcasina. This difference is predicated on Betty's rather explicit objection to her lady's behavior, and her consequent refusal to consent to that behavior through mimicry. But as the novel develops and Dorcasina's fantastic indulgence intensifies, it is ultimately Dorcasina's sovereign power over her servant that obviates Betty's initial withholding of consent and forces Betty into mimetic participation.

Whereas Lucy rarely voices dissent to her mistress out of both a fear of admonishment and a tendency to become emotionally absorbed in her mistress' affairs, even in those cases in which the narration tells us that Lucy is skeptical, Betty initially takes considerable liberty with Dorcasina in letting Dorcasina know when her words or actions sound or appear ridiculous. Tenney indicates at the beginning of her novel that Dorcasina has the capacity to view Betty as a companion as much as a servant. We are told that Dorcasina considers Betty

indispensable; for it would be entirely out of character, and setting aside a most essential circumstance in the life of a heroine, not to have had either a friend to whom she could confide the secret of her love, or a maid who could be bribed by an enamorado, to place a letter in her way, and

then confidentially assert that she knew not from whence it came (8).³⁸

Dorcasina relies on Betty as both a servant and a friend, and as such grants her more leeway in her commentary than Arabella grants Lucy, at least at the outset of the novel.³⁹ Though this is not to say that Dorcasina pays heed to Betty's prudent advice—on the contrary, she dismisses Betty's commentary at every turn—she does for a time allow Betty to voice dissent without fear of censure. The duality of this servant-friend relationship, the “friend” component ostensibly more pronounced at the beginning of Tenney's novel than in all of Lennox's, greatly informs the nature of Betty's subjection.

Because Betty protests throughout Dorcasina's episodes, we get at times a more vivid, realist, first-person sense of Betty's victimhood than we do of Lucy's. Dorcasina's treatment of Betty serves as a reasonably accurate gauge of the extremity of Dorcasina's immersion in fantasy; and the progression of this immersion sets up a series of cruel and violent mimetic acts. As Dorcasina becomes increasingly consumed by her fantasies, she becomes decreasingly tolerant of Betty. When Dorcasina is overcome with anxiety over the news that Lysander, a slave-owning gentleman from Virginia, will be visiting her estate, and thus will have the opportunity to be her first suitor, her first scruple over their prospective marriage is his possession of slaves. As Dorcasina troubles herself over how she might persuade Lysander to free his slaves, Betty provides an immediate reality check: “'tis pity you should make yourself so uneasy beforehand; perhaps you and the young gentleman won't fall so violently in love with each other as you imagine; and perhaps you will never become his wife” (9). We can imagine how offensive Betty's blunt wisdom might be to a quixote; but, while Dorcasina is dismissive of these words, she is not at this point derisive toward her servant.

Similarly, when Dorcasina first expresses her love and admiration for her next

³⁸Tenney, Tabitha Gilman. *Female Quixotism*. Eds. Jean Nienkamp and Andrea Collins. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992. All references are to this edition.

³⁹Betty is “preferred...to the double capacity of servant and confidante” (8).

romantic object, O'Connor—a fraud and convicted criminal who tries to con Dorcasina into marrying him with hopes of taking possession of her valuable estate—Betty immediately sees through the con, and lets Dorcasina know what she thinks:

Well, my mind of him...is, that his a bold, impudent fellor, to go for to talking about love the first time he seed you; and as he has been walking in the grove for some days, I suspects that he is after no good, and that he is no better than he should be. As to what you say of his warm manner, compared with Lysander's, you never heard him talk of love, he only writ you a letter; perhaps his talk about it would have been as lively as this forward fellor's, who nobody knows (28).

Betty gives Dorcasina a series of warnings of this nature about O'Connor, but as Dorcasina's infatuation intensifies, Betty's protests are met with condescension, ridicule, and outright coercion. Despite Betty's reasonable appeals, aimed at protecting Dorcasina from a series of pranksters and con men with designs on her wealth, Betty descends into a passive role in Dorcasina's adventures. After she witnesses Dorcasina make several clandestine appointments with the unknown and untrustworthy O'Connor, Betty remonstrates with her mistress, accusing her of drawing her romanticized image of O'Connor from books, rather than reality. When Betty continues her protests, noting that real people "don't so easily die of love," Dorcasina, piqued by the amorous possibilities on the horizon and deluded about O'Connor's background and integrity, delivers a telling line: "those are the ideas, Betty, of vulgar minds; they know nothing of that pure, refined passion, which, absorbing every faculty of the soul, swallows up all concern except for the beloved object" (33).

As quixotes do, Dorcasina mistakes her delusional "passion" for love; yet, regardless of her passion's source, it indeed "swallows up all concern" for those around her. Betty slinks off after these words "in silent dejection," and under the impression that she offended Dorcasina "by the liberty she had taken" in communicating her doubts about O'Connor (33-34). This is the most prominent indication we get early on in Tenney's novel that Betty feels she has crossed the line with her mistress, and forced her onto the defensive. Shortly thereafter, Dorcasina forbids Betty from communicating "such infamous fabrications" about O'Connor, who is now under scrutiny from Dorcasina's

father and other members of the village. From this point onward, Betty is inclined to keep most of her protests to herself, thus “effectually checked” by her mistress; and Dorcasina is engrossed in her relationship with O’Connor to the extent that material proof of his fraudulence bears no effect on her judgment (50). Dorcasina’s detachment from the material world around her, coupled with her swelling tendency to relegate Betty from friend-servant to utilitarian object, sets the stage for the novel’s two central acts of mimesis.

After Dorcasina’s father catches O’Connor in his daughter’s bedchamber and drives him out of town, Dorcasina endeavors to bring to life her fond memories of their romantic trysts in the grove. Toward this end, she approaches Betty for a favor: “well, then, Betty, you must know I have taken a fancy to dress myself in the arbour, as I did then; and to have you dress yourself in a suit of my father’s clothes, and then come to personate O’Connor.” Betty does protest her mistress’ request this time; but Dorcasina successfully goads her into compliance, remarking curtly: “it is very well, Betty...I shall know, in future, what you mean by a willingness to oblige me.” Betty, having considered her mistress’ “late trouble, and consequent weakness of mind,” gives in (97). While suiting up in the mirror, Betty “was ready to die with shame and vexation, at the ridiculous figure she made” (98).

Here Betty resembles Lucy, who, though never called upon to crossdress, found herself a hesitant and often unwilling participant in her mistress’ fantasies. Betty goes from cautionary friend-servant in the nascence of Dorcasina’s flights of imagination to Lucy-like accomplice; and she suffers the consequences of this role more explicitly than does Lucy as Arabella’s instrument of fantasy. After Dorcasina herself ridicules Betty for her inability to mimic O’Connor’s smooth talk, the other servants on the estate spot her with Dorcasina in Mr. Sheldon’s clothes. Thinking Betty a thief, they form a mob and approach her, only to find out that their “thief” is, inexplicably, Dorcasina’s maid in drag.

The group of servants bursts out in raucous laughter, while Betty, “the mortified object of their mirth, sinking with shame and vexation, endeavored to conceal herself from their view, by skulking behind her mistress” (99).

Betty’s forced mimesis in this case results in emotional trauma at the behest of her mistress. In another instance, Betty suffers physical violence as a surrogate Dorcasina when the schoolmaster who impersonates Philander dresses up as Philander’s angry mistress, then accosts Betty and beats her. As Betty recounts the horrific experience, “I was thump’d, and cuff’d, and bounc’d, and shook, and twirl’d, and had my clothes stripp’d off, and tore to tatters, as if I had been nothing at all. Besides, what I shall not soon forget, in a grum and angry voice, that was no woman’s, he call’d me old and ugly” (116). In all of these instances, as with Lucy in *The Female Quixote*, Betty stands in to bear the traumatic side effects of Dorcasina’s fantastic behavior, notably as the recipient of both physical and emotional abuse.

Cathy Davidson has argued that Dorcasina “is victimized by both her own delusions and by men who calculatingly exploit those delusions” (275). Certainly Dorcasina, like her transatlantic counterpart Arabella, plays victim to an array of ill circumstances and deficient judgments. But, also like Arabella, she manages to avoid many of the material consequences of her actions. Dorcasina’s class advantages enable her to burden her servant with tasks that indulge her whims, and likewise to put her servant in harm’s way in place of herself. Tenney’s novel displaces the majority of Dorcasina’s romantic fallout on Betty, casting Betty as a surrogate victim. Gillian Brown picks up on this:

As the unwilling participant in Dorcasina’s Quixotism, Betty very personally feels the difference between Dorcasina’s perspective of life and the circumstances of life that they actually inhabit. Thus Tenney shows how imaginative activities, far from being merely frivolous or inconsequential, require real exertions and produce material effects. Dorcasina’s pleasure proceeds at the cost of Betty’s pains...Betty serves as the surrogate for the sufferings to which Dorcasina could be subjected (264).

Brown’s contention that Tenney, through Betty’s surrogate victimhood, “shows how

imaginative activities...produce material effects,” is accurate; but as Brown herself goes on to note, the material effects of Dorcasina’s actions only materialize for Betty, who is, opposite Dorcasina, of a vulnerable social class. Brown identifies the cause—class-based vulnerability—of the novel’s disproportionate leveling of material consequences onto Betty, but demonstrates only implicitly the mechanism that the cause produces. As a servant and thus a member of a disadvantaged class, Betty is not just “unwilling” or averse; she is deprived of *consent* as a first principle amid her mistress’ escapades, and thus is always already without a will to exercise in one way or another with respect to Dorcasina’s demands. Although Betty constantly identifies the ridiculousness of Dorcasina’s actions, Dorcasina’s sovereign power precludes any of Betty’s attempts to walk away from situations that she knows beforehand to be potentially harmful. “The life that they actually inhabit,” as Brown puts it, is rather two very different lives; and “they” is likewise two very different people with a great disparity of class privilege between them. The crucial point, then, is that Tenney’s novel suggests that not only can “imaginative activities...produce material consequences,” and not only can those consequences be harsher for those in less privileged social positions, but also that upper-class sovereigns can operate both without consent and without personal consequence.

6.2 Sacrifice and Victimhood in *Female Quixotism*

Following from the possibility derived from Rey Chow's essay on sacrifice, mimesis, and surrogate victimhood, outlined in the previous chapter, that mimesis is linked with sacrifice because (violent) mimetic acts produce a surrogate victim, we can see again in *Female Quixotism* that Betty becomes victimized through two kinds of mimetic struggle. In the first instance, Dorcasina and the other servants ridicule Betty because her mimetic attempt is ridiculous, and ridiculously unconvincing. Unfortunately enough, Betty is made to stand in for one of the novel’s major villains; and beyond this, her attempt at mimicking O’Connor in the grove is (understandably) poor. Betty is sacrificed as a

surrogate victim quite straightforwardly when she faces the brunt of the ridicule for dressing up as O'Connor, despite the fact that the absurd idea to do so was Dorcasina's; but she is also sacrificed as O'Connor's mimetic double, as the remaining trace of the departed villain. For all of O'Connor's misdeeds—never mind Dorcasina's—it is only Betty who suffers punishment, literally, in O'Connor's name.

In the second instance, Betty again stands in for Dorcasina as a surrogate victim when she suffers physical assault at the hands of Philander (mimicking his made-up mistress). In the act of sustaining Philander's attack in place of Dorcasina, Betty forestalls any potential harm done to Dorcasina—harm that could register as a major violation of the novel's class equilibrium. As Gillian Brown suggests, "because her mistress believes these events to be part of a familiar and cherished narrative, and because Philander carefully respects Dorcasina's actual status as an upper-class woman throughout his prank, Dorcasina is immune to the emotions and pains that Betty suffers" (263-4). Betty doubling Dorcasina while being attacked by Philander doubling his (nonexistent) mistress thus prevents the greater evil of Philander transgressing the novel's class parameters by assaulting the aristocratic Dorcasina. Betty, then, functions also as a preventative surrogate victim.

Betty's conscious disapproval of her mistress' actions being more pronounced in *Female Quixotism* than that of Lucy in *The Female Quixote*, Dorcasina's imposition of sovereign power can seem at times likewise more pronounced. The marked decline in Betty's propensity to voice disagreement with her mistress demonstrates how sovereign power requires no justification to operate, and sometimes even prefers no justification at all. Though Betty shows sincere concern for Dorcasina's well-being both before and after Dorcasina has led her into unsavory and harmful situations, she gradually loses the ability to retain her concern for her mistress as a motive for engaging in Dorcasina's fantasies. In other words, though Betty cares about Dorcasina, Dorcasina is eventually *only* interested in

Betty's compliance. Conversely, Betty's compliance is only a function of sovereign insistence. Rather than being caught up in a mimetic circle, as with Lucy and Arabella, in which the servant vies for approval while the mistress insists upon a differentiation of status, Betty does everything in her power to show her own disapproval, and Dorcasina shows indifference toward Betty's attitude and well-being.

6.3 Quixotes, Servants, and "National" Interpretations

Having considered the ways in which the female quixote's servant can function as a surrogate victim, we might subsequently question why this is the case. Obvious answers abound: because servants occupied, by definition, a subordinate social position; because the heroines of these novels are female quixotes, and not female quixotes' servants; because women (and female quixotes) were more domestically confined than men (and male quixotes), and were forced thereby to rely on and confide in their servants, and so on. Refining this question slightly gives us, perhaps, a more useful and interesting question, which helps to illuminate these texts in a transatlantic context: why does the sacrificing of these servants as surrogate victims in two similar texts perform two very different textual functions?

In *The Female Quixote*, Lucy's surrogate victimhood is restorative: the elision of Lucy, the primary instrument of Arabella's regrettable past, allows Arabella to disavow her quixotism and marry Glanville without any remaining traces of her foible. In *Female Quixotism*, however, Betty's surrogate victimhood is preventative: Betty's standing in for Dorcasina in the novel's most violent and raucous scenes forestalls any transgression of social class protocol, or any infringement upon or contamination of Dorcasina's privilege of aristocratic aloofness. Lucy helps to enable a relatively comical series of events, then fades into the background while Arabella's restoration furnishes the romance-like happy ending that one might expect of an eighteenth-century British quixotic novel. Betty, by contrast, undergoes blatant assault, and still appears by her mistress' side at the novel's end

as the unfortunate foil for Dorcasina's class privilege, as well as her otherwise unenviable solitude. Betty's reminder to Dorcasina about how those in the community have aided her catalyzes the novel's final installment, a letter of gratitude from Dorcasina to the aristocratic Mrs. Barry (with no mention of appreciation for Betty) for all of her support throughout Dorcasina's tribulations and narrow escapes. If Lennox ties *The Female Quixote* nicely together in the mode of the British quixotic novel, and in so doing partially undermines her critique of both romantic idealism and its pitfalls and of the social circumstances that limit Arabella's vivacious will and intellect, Tenney's *Female Quixotism* is a cautionary tale of the highest order, casting its quixote in its final pages as a pitiable spinster rather than a happy penitent.

Davidson has remarked that Tenney's novel provides a "hard core realism" particularly suitable for the world of early America and its readers, a realism that is perhaps distinguishable from *The Female Quixote*'s measured burlesquing and consummate ending, both apropos of a British readership who were less concerned with the uncertainties of frontier life (279). Wood concurs, noting that "while the romance-reading women of British literature often inhabited comic texts raising laughter on their way towards a happy end, their American counterparts were more frequently the tragic figures of cautionary tales, fallen women facing ridicule, ruin, and even death" (168). The "hard core realism" of Dorcasina's fateful tale would seem to complement national (early-American) narratives of the "rough and tumble" frontier life, and the pioneering spirit of an unrefined, post-revolution US. Similarly, on the other side of the Atlantic, the comical exaggerations of social difference and tidy ending of *The Female Quixote* make sense within the framework of what Ruth Mack calls the "participation" of literature "in England's definition of itself as a modern society" (195). For Mack, the novel's tendency toward homogeneity highlights the problem of difference, and thus comments on England's understanding of its cultural composition. Mack goes on to argue:

In *The Female Quixote*, this national self-conception is limited, defined by exclusion and driven toward homogeneity, a problem that the quixote story makes visible by setting two different genres, two distinct literary worlds, side by side. Literary genre thus functions beyond exclusively literary terrain to formulate a way of thinking, a means of engaging the problem of difference that the comparison of any quixote proposes (195).

Notably, Mack's argument here culminates in the transposing of the quixotic genre "beyond exclusively literary terrain" onto historical landscapes, as well as genre's contribution to questions of Enlightenment historiography (195). But, perhaps more notably, Mack's argument centers on quixotic perception, or a form of "quixotic ethnography," that reads both literary and material landscapes through the quixote. Mack posits the quixote as a figure capable of destabilizing both straightforward "nationalist" and straightforward feminist readings of female quixotes, emphasizing in her intervention that Lennox's Arabella is "a much more radical historiographer" than prior gender-empowerment readings have acknowledged: "Arabella's significance as a woman lies in that, like other cultural outsiders, she begins from a perspective outside history...Simultaneously in history and outside it, Arabella embodies the contingency of the nation-state, and of the linear, progressive narrative of history it entails" (210). In other words, though Lennox's re-writing of the quixote story questions, rather than affirms, specific national-allegorical readings of Englishness as they relate to feminine agency, the terms in which this critique is put forth are very much those of gender politics, the nation-state, and the interplay between the two.

Because of the scholarship of Mack and others, the capability of the quixote to engage the problem of difference in her interactions with casts of characters from London to the English countryside to the American frontiers is well known and much discussed, and forms the foundation of the quixote's ability to fit an array of cultural and historical narratives. But it is the aristocratic quixote, and not her female servant, who actually produces, through her actions and worldview, this presupposed cultural and historical fit. In each of our two cases, the "marginal" female quixote, positioned "outside history" as such, becomes in literary criticism a dominant representation of a national problem, a

national ethos, or a cultural landscape. She becomes, in other words, a figure of exception, both marginal and central, simultaneously inside and outside history. What then of the material reality of those outside the aristocratic scope of cultural fit? And how does the tendency to project the privileged, educated quixote as an emblem of national character or a representation of a national problem affect our understanding of the nations and national literatures at hand?

In the essay “Enlightenment Historiography and Cultural Civil Wars,” Paul Giles provides two important suggestions for understanding these problems: first, that critics have frequently treated the “American Enlightenment” as a monolithic concept; second, that critics have tended “to move swiftly from New England Puritanism through to the nineteenth century Transcendentalists, thus foregrounding an idiom of individualism and spiritual self-reliance that was thought to be synonymous with the American national spirit itself” (22). Critics responding to *The Female Quixote* and *Female Quixotism* have tended similarly to embrace two compatible myths for their compatibility, one of the homogeneity of national identities as reflected in literary texts, another of the readymade adaptability of the quixotic narrative as a nationally representative narrative.

If the “idiom of individualism and spiritual self-reliance” that Giles recognizes as a hasty representation of “the American national spirit itself” constitutes the post-Enlightenment political and aesthetic hallmark of the Transcendentalists (just as it resonates, as well, with characterizations of the “rough and tumble” eighteenth-century frontier life), the dominant paradigm for understanding Tenney's late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century US has been Federalist versus Democratic-Republican political tensions, largely of the 1790s through the turn of the century. Though *Female Quixotism* certainly represents intra-national difference in Dorcasina's principled, “northern” stance against the Virginia-based Lysander's usage of slaves, or in the scrupulous industriousness of the businesslike Philadelphian, Mr. Cumberland, contrasted with the smooth

manipulativeness of the conman O'Connor, these differences are often subsumed under generalized critical arguments about national politics (gender, sexual, or otherwise).

As I have pointed out, Stephen Shapiro has argued that, in light of late-century shifts in the Atlantic trade economy that brought new levels of wealth to mid-Atlantic states like New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, “histories that frame the period through partisan disputes for authority between New England-based Federalists and Virginia-centred Democratic-Republicans often miss this alteration, which is not well represented in partisan debates because the re-export merchants came from different regions and were not active leaders of either political party” (5). That Tenney's husband *was* an active political leader within the Federalist party (as well as a New Englander) certainly contributes to readings of *Female Quixotism* as a Federalist, Alien-and-Sedition-Acts-informed, cautionary tale against the dangers posed by mischievous foreigners (like the ostensibly Irish O'Connor); however, as Giles and Shapiro warn, the political and economic diversity of US regions, as well as the influential shifts in the late-century Atlantic political economy, demand a tempering of “nationalist” readings of early-American novels like *Female Quixotism*. Mack's reading of the quixote as a narrative ethnographer whose numerous encounters with difference help a given national culture negotiate its multiplicities and contradictions during the process of forging a national self-image is in itself a nuanced and skillful negotiation of the kind of critical homogenizing against which Giles and Shapiro caution. While these perspectives provide strong frameworks for questioning overdetermined, “national” assumptions about these “female quixote” narratives, they stop short of addressing the problem of class in *Female Quixotism* and *The Female Quixote*: even as adept ethnographers whose perceptions of difference undermine reductive impressions of monolithic national and political cultures, Dorcasina and Arabella nonetheless apprehend their respective worlds through the often-homogenizing eyes of upper-class quixotes. In other words, without focusing on the ways in which quixotism

itself is classed, we lose sight of the power of quixotes to construct fantastic worlds and worldviews through their own class-based ideologies.

Critics have read both *The Female Quixote* and *Female Quixotism* almost exclusively through their quixotes, but without much regard for their *quixotism*, focusing on the consequences of the quixotes' mimicking of romance novels, and neglecting both mimetic interaction between servants and quixotes and the consequences of these interactions. In so doing, these critics have done precisely what Giles warns against: allowing dominant modes of literary characterization to stand in for the variegated material reality of eighteenth-century England and early America. These readings often neglect what the consequences of quixote-servant interaction suggest about national and transnational problems: to what extent did early America adopt the class conventions of its British forebear, and to what extent was early America divided by adopted class protocol? To what extent did class distinction affect notions of sovereignty and personal autonomy, particularly in the wake of Revolutionary zeal and Federalist anxieties over a dissipated and unwieldy union? Was "transnational imitation," as Eve Tavor Bannet calls it, simply the prerogative of wealthy and literate, or did the servant classes learn transnationally (Bannet 565)?

Giles claims that "the task of the cultural historian... might be to trace these areas of conflict, tension, and crossover, rather than to extrapolate any particular aspect of this complex scene into a more abstract model of Enlightenment thought," with the goal of understanding the texts and histories of the transatlantic eighteenth century "not in a positivistic but in a chameleonic light" (22). We might adopt a similar approach toward these quixotic texts, whose female quixotes come to participate in the very notions of romantically "absolutist" nationhood that their transgressive polyvalence would seem to belie (Mack 195). Meanwhile, their servants serve as lucid examples of the material margins and of the exception to quixotic rule. They likewise demonstrate how the

hegemonic forces of sovereign power and quixotic idealism have the ability to foreground difference—difference in class privilege, gender, education, location—which, wittingly or not, unravels myths of monolithic national identity and opens up space for important questions about the role of mimesis in transnational adaptation, the participation of the servant class in transatlantic exchange, and the relevance of class systems for the early-American identity as a “free nation.”

Class difference was certainly an operative aspect of early-American social relations, though, as Ronald Schultz notes, Anglo-American society was not “thoroughly class-dominated,” as “inequalities of power in all of its aspects took on many forms” (216, 212). The plantation regions south of the Pennsylvania-Maryland border, influenced by the English plantation complex of the colonial period, maintained perhaps the only “well-articulated and centralised class system in early America,” while the rural Pennsylvania in which Dorcasina's estate is set in *Female Quixotism* would have had a much less definitive class structure and relationship to the plantation complex (as evidenced, in part, by Dorcasina's stated opposition to Lysander's use and ownership of slaves) (Schultz 211). By the 1780s, at which point “changes in trade, credit, and productive strategies” led to the gradual emergence of a capitalist system and, by the antebellum nineteenth century, capitalist class relations, rural regions in Pennsylvania and the Northeast witnessed “class dominance” in sporadic areas (Schultz 213-14, 216). Related to these regional differences in class structure and coherence, the early US differed significantly from Britain in its legal treatment of the servant classes. Whereas England legislated punitive “master and servant” laws that “reduced to a single legal relation the heterogeneous manual labor statuses of early modern England,” grouping domestic laborers, outdoor servants, and apprentices generally as “servants,” early America witnessed no such laws until the first half of the nineteenth century (Tomlins 238). In Dorcasina's Pennsylvania, disciplinary laws regarding “servants” applied only to indentured servitude, and certainly not to domestic

servants like Betty (Tomlins 253-54). We can see, then, that, outside the plantation region, the early US adopted very little of the British class system, and its class relations were qualitatively different from those of its British forbear.

Though class was not yet a dominant consideration in the social organization of early America, especially when compared to British class systems of the early modern period through the eighteenth-century, there certainly existed meaningful class relations. While acknowledging the existence of class in early America, Marx downplayed its social impact, arguing that because of rapid change and high turnover in class “membership,” the US had no “fixed” classes (Elster 126). In *Democracy in America* (1835), Tocqueville similarly emphasized the notion of American upward mobility and class membership fluctuation, suggesting that all Americans, including those who inherit wealth from prior generations of workers, tend to work for a living (Elster 127). Tenney presents us with a very different picture, however, with respect to the relationship between Dorcasina and Betty. While Betty and the other servants on the estate work for a living, Dorcasina does not. Applying Schultz's Marxian definition of class in early America to the relationship between Dorcasina and Betty—“class exists when one group of people controls access to work and nature, either through direct force or the ownership of property, and forces those who lack this access to relinquish some portion of their labor to them”—we can see that conditions of social inequality need not necessarily adhere strictly to contemporary, capitalist, post-industrial understandings of those conditions that produce a “class society,” or a functional disparity in wealth and privilege (207). In other words, though a coherent sense of class in early America emerges only through the recognition of local or regional circumstances and distinctions, Tenney's novel certainly portrays a meaningful “class” difference between Dorcasina (who mimics the behavior and pastimes of the European aristocracy) and Betty (a relatively accurate portrayal of the early-American domestic servant, who does not own property and must live and work on her employer's estate).

Arguably, then, relative to the historical realities of class in early America, *Female Quixotism* presents us with a portrait of class relations that actually looks more European than we might assume. Tenney's novel is, in this way, a mimetic offering that demonstrates a European sensibility with respect to the upper-class quixote, but an entirely different, marginalized, distinctly American sensibility in its representations of Betty. While Dorcasina lives the life of a European aristocrat from a romance narrative, considering Betty accordingly as a friend and confidante in addition to a servant, Betty, who nonetheless cares deeply for her mistress, appears genuinely perplexed by her role in Dorcasina's fantasies. Despite this split-nature of the narrative's two primary perspectives, our discussions of its gender-liberation potential tend to focus, as I have suggested, on Dorcasina's perspective at the expense of Betty's. Further, this perspective is as much a tempered critique of the perceived values and fantastic worldviews of the European aristocracy as it is a critique of societal problems in early America. That early America, as I have argued, actually resisted the importation of British and wider European class structures (in part because capitalist development in the US lagged behind such development in Britain) is significant here, because the critique in *Female Quixotism* fails to map congruently onto the social realities of early American class structures.

The particularly American aspect of Betty's behavior toward her mistress in *Female Quixotism*, however, is her willingness to boldly speak her mind to Dorcasina, at least at the beginning of the novel. As Laurel Thatcher Ulrich points out, "European visitors commented frequently on the lack of deference shown by American servants," and early-American diaries and other historical records contain numerous instances of what Ulrich characterizes as maids' sarcastic responses to their mistresses (102).⁴⁰ Despite this apparent freedom of domestic servants to exercise sarcasm and vocal disagreement as means of letting their mistresses know that theirs is foremost an employer-employee

⁴⁰Ulrich's account is from records from women's household labor in Maine.

relationship—freedom that Betty takes considerably in parts of Tenney's novel—such protests are not enough to free the likes of Betty from high degrees of financial dependence on the family that employs them, nor can they bridge the education gap between upper-class quixotes like Dorcasina and their relatively uneducated servants. These factors gave mistresses considerable social influence over their servants—as Tenney's novel illustrates—making the prospect of domestic servants achieving the imaginative liberation available to their quixotic mistresses somewhat dim.

Nonetheless, between gender-focused readings, like those of Cathy Davidson and Cynthia Miecznikowski, and national-allegory readings, like those of Linda Frost and Sarah Wood (which are also heavily invested in gender politics as they relate to national-level events), observations of the class dynamics of *Female Quixotism* are infrequently made or addressed. However, what ultimately helps to connect—sometimes harmoniously, and sometimes not—the various ways of reading *Female Quixotism* is its quixotic elements. Close attention to Dorcasina's behavior as a quixote can help us make better sense of the hovering issues of gender politics, national politics, and class politics. The readings of the novel that I have addressed thus far find ways of moving between considerations of gender and of national politics—for example, by observing that Dorcasina's behavior is, like Arabella's, the result of national-scale patriarchal norms; or by relating, as Miecznikowski does, the *female* reader to national anxieties over the truth-value of novels—but they take insufficient account of how quixotism and class operate together in the novel.

6.4 Reading Class, Reading Exceptionalism

As with *The Female Quixote*, an account of how quixotism produces and informs the relationship between Dorcasina and Betty can help us move away from generalizations about national allegory and female empowerment in Tenney's novel. Because quixotism signals in these texts, upon first glance, a titular and thematic intertextuality—a link with

Don Quixote, vaguely characterized—the specific elements of quixotism (mimetic influence, dogged idealism, class privilege) can easily give way to national-politics readings.

As I have suggested, the “hard core realism,” reflected in the harsh treatment of the quixotic servant, but validated by the ultimate fate of Tenney’s quixote, reflects the critical tendency to read female-quixote narratives centrally through the quixote but without attention to her quixotism, at times at the expense of the servants who figure so prominently in the execution of the quixotes’ fantasies, and help to illustrate the quixote’s quixotism. Such readings produce modes of gender criticism and national-allegorical criticism that are relatively narrow in class scope, so much so that the liberation potential of the imaginative and countercultural female quixotes risks becoming class-coded. Beyond this, such readings also risk underestimating the comparably difficult and at times harsh circumstances, in Britain, faced by women of Lucy’s class standing, simply because the idiom of the “hard core,” applied so frequently to the American frontier, has not been as steadfastly applied to Britain’s bucolic regions in the mid-eighteenth century.

After all, *reading*—generally not a prerogative of the servant classes—is the driving force of the female quixote’s subversive imagination (Hill 227).⁴¹ Though reading also doubles as the source of the female quixote’s imaginative foible, the question raised by female quixotes is not whether women should read, but rather *what* and *how* they should read. While female quixotes are praised and admired for their wit, intellect, and command of language, quixotic servants speak (perhaps accurately) in lower-class vernacular, and are regarded as too naïve, too unrefined, and sometimes too stupid to understand and communicate on the grandiose, aristocratic wavelength of quixotes. Dorcasina’s Betty is typically, if unflatteringly, described as “good-hearted,” “honest,” and “possessed of a tolerably good natural understanding; but very ignorant and extremely

⁴¹Though most servants were illiterate, literacy increased in the eighteenth century, and was accompanied by, as Hill observes, “a general outcry about how education was ruining servants” (227).

superstitious” (8). Hence, amid the frequent instances of crossdressing and disguise in the novel, Betty believes she is apprehending ghosts or supernatural beings. Lennox portrays Lucy very similarly as too simplistic and at times too insolent to fully comprehend Arabella’s literary fantasies. Though Dorcasina and Arabella, despite powerful intellects, are not disciplined enough as readers to properly perceive boundaries between fiction and their material lives, it would seem their servants are not sophisticated enough as “readers” of their mistresses’ fantasies—not literary enough—and can partake of their mistresses’ fantasies only through imperative mimetic acts. The centrality of the reading act in both *The Female Quixote* and *Female Quixotism*, combined with the literary limits of the quixotic servants, effectively classes both the female imagination and consequent readings of the transgressive force of female imagination in these novels. Accordingly, we read and understand these texts through the lenses of the quixotes (but with little accounting for their quixotism)—what they think, how they act and react, how they imagine and construct the worlds around them—and we limit along a class axis the scope of our understanding.

To move beyond this limitation it is necessary to challenge the notion, stemming from binary, comparative-gender accounts of female quixotes versus male quixotes, that female quixotic texts are about female liberation more than they are about female *quixotism*, that any sense of that liberation must center on the quixote, and that the quixote should be the *a priori* representative figure through which liberation should be read in the text. By placing the female quixote simultaneously at the center of critique and “at the margins” of her society, critics help to construct a mythical quixote, one whose literary occupation of the margins becomes a *de facto* justification for her hegemonic place in the literary criticism of “female quixote” texts, criticism that rightly seeks to acknowledge and incorporate discourses of the margins. Critics have thus superimposed this mythical, elusive, marginal figure on the landscapes of national literatures as a stand-in for a national ethos, or as a nationally representative figure, made to translate questions of female

liberation into questions of national progress.

For Cathy Davidson, *Female Quixotism*, read primarily through the tribulations of Dorcasina, is a “satire on a whole [early-American] society in which a deficient educational system and dubious sexual politics render women devoid of judgment by deeming judgment, in a woman, a superfluous quality” (276). Davidson’s lucid assessment notwithstanding, the same societal deficiencies—and more—fail Betty as well, whose accurate judgments in the novel are a source of comedy, not satire. If Tenney represents Dorcasina by novel's end as a lonely spinster—a cautionary figure—as well as an indication of the national climate for gender or sexual politics, then we can presume, given Betty's circumstances, that Tenney's “hard-core” realist portrayal of American frontier life actually paints a more optimistic picture for Dorcasinas than for Betties.

In light of this tempered optimism, Davidson, in her prominent reading of *Female Quixotism*, notes that Dorcasina “almost triumphantly...takes control of her life and of the final words of the text,” which are expressed in a letter that “announces she will spend the rest of her days in assisting others less fortunate than herself, in sewing, and in reading novels” (278). Conspicuously absent from Davidson’s discussion of the novel's final turn is the caveat that Dorcasina’s charities are aimed not merely at “those less fortunate,” but those “who, by misfortunes, and without any blameable misconduct of their own, have been reduced from opulent or easy circumstances to indigence” (Tenney 324). In other words, Dorcasina invests charitably only in the formerly rich. Davidson’s reading is a prime example of a noble and readerly desire to locate subversive potential in the literary, and to understand this final promotion of novel-reading as a small victory; yet in the final pages of Tenney's novel, Dorcasina displays her class pretensions even after renouncing her quixotic past. Tenney's caveat for Dorcasina—that she only aids the formerly wealthy—is not a triumphant turn showcasing Dorcasina's newfound empowerment through charity, but a telling, ironic, and otherwise structurally unnecessary addendum to

Dorcasina's retirement plans, evincing her continued disregard for the likes of Betty. Tenney draws our attention to this class distinction, yet it is convenient enough to look away. A straightforward reading of gender subversion and empowerment in this case sacrifices aspects of a competing but overlapping sphere of ethical concern: while the gendering of the literary imagination in *Female Quixotism* and *The Female Quixote* fosters subversive potential, the simultaneous classing of the literary imagination only reinforces preexisting limitations on access to that imaginative, subversive potential. What is liberating for a Dorcasina or an Arabella is not necessarily so for a Betty or a Lucy.

As we can see, then, class is largely the fulcrum upon which exceptionalism hinges in *Female Quixotism*. At the textual level, Dorcasina proceeds as an exceptional figure whose class position cannot be challenged or violated, despite the quixotic worldview and behavior that continually place her in jeopardy. Accordingly, her quixotism distinguishes her from the numerous, lower-class, picaresque characters that, in the mode of that tradition, are opportunists who use deceit, manipulation, and cunning in attempts to advance their class position at Dorcasina's expense. *Female Quixotism* is thus a lucid example of perhaps the most fundamental and important difference between the quixotic and the picaresque: the difference in class, and the ways in which class difference engenders divergent motivations for quixotes from those of picaras or picaros. Amid the narrative scenarios that evince this distinction, Betty is caught problematically in between, sharing class-based language, characteristics, and motivations with the picaresque characters who descend upon Dorcasina; yet, by the power of Dorcasina's class position and mimetic appeal, Betty is drawn into Dorcasina's upper-classed fantasies and courtship scenarios. In making an exception of herself as a quixote whose fantasies must be indulged and worldview supported and justified against all counter-evidence, Dorcasina also makes an exception of her maid, positioning Betty awkwardly between the world of her fellow servants (who mock her when she unsuccessfully tries on the clothing and

manners of the family that employs her), and the imaginative world of Dorcasina (who chastises her for her inability to adequately mimic aristocratic courtship conventions).

At the critical level, the tendency to address Dorcasina's quixotism only at surface levels—as an intertextual allusion to Lennox and to Cervantes, an orientation toward romantic modes, and a loosely defined disconnectedness from material reality—has resulted in another kind of awkward positioning. Considering Dorcasina primarily as a female reader who happens to be a quixote (as opposed to a quixote who happens to be female) has resulted in a lack of consideration of how Dorcasina, marginalized as a female character, nonetheless exercises considerable agency over her maid, with harsh effects on the novel's primary representation of a woman of lower class standing. This positioning of Dorcasina along the socioeconomic margins, but simultaneously at the discursive center of critical responses, produces its own kind of exceptionalism: just as Dorcasina's class precludes in the novel any transgression of her class position or identity, binary considerations of Dorcasina's gender (not male) have come to marginalize critical discussions of how class functions in the novel. In this way *Female Quixotism* is an especially provocative and powerful text for thinking about the complex negotiation of gender and class identities.

Taking *Female Quixotism* and *The Female Quixote* together, we can observe some important distinctions between the two texts that only reinforce their powerful commonalities. While *The Female Quixote* features an admirably proactive quixotic heroine in Arabella, who mainly moves in social circles appropriate to her class, *Female Quixotism* features a less proactive quixote in Dorcasina, whose engagements with a series of picaresque characters highlight more starkly her class position, as well as the preventative nature of her quixotic exceptionalism. Arabella's relationship with Lucy calls attention to class distinction, but with a subtlety that allows for Arabella's restoration at the end of the novel, alongside Lucy's narrative retreat from relevance. This prominent

difference in the function of each maid's narrative sacrifice indicates not merely (or necessarily) that the broadly-conceived national politics of early America, or the relative stability of mid-century Britain, demand from Tenney and Lennox, respectively, preventative and restorative narrative contributions to discourses of gender and class. Rather, these different functions suggest, at a formal level, the greater adherence of Tenney's novel to the particulars of *Don Quixote*'s inclusion of the picaresque genre within the quixotic, as well as, at the discursive level, the ways in which quixotic exceptionalism can function to protect class standing or class conventions by differing or multiple means. Rather than understanding these narratives as national allegories, we can better understand them as telling reflections of the inextricable link between gender and class concerns amid comparably formative periods in Britain and early America, as well as the role of the quixotic narrative in negotiating some of the conflicts of interest that arise through the voicing of such concerns. The following chapters explore in Tobias Smollett's *Launcelot Greaves* (1760) and Washington Irving's *A History of New York* (1809) how the quixotic narrative also helps to negotiate the voicing of the legal concerns of writers invested in legal reform.

SECTION IV: EXCEPTIONALISM AND JURISPRUDENCE
Quixotic Encounters with the Law

CHAPTER 7: *LAUNCELOT GREAVES*

Just as *Female Quixotism* has prompted critical responses that problematically position it as a picaresque narrative, the novels of Tobias Smollett regularly inspire critical confluences of “quixotic” and “picaresque” elements. The most expressly quixotic of Tobias Smollett’s oeuvre of quixotic and picaresque novels, *The Life and Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves* (1760), was published serially in twenty-five consecutive issues of the *British Magazine*, a publication “in which Smollett had a controlling interest” (Folkenflik xvii). *Launcelot Greaves* features a young, handsome, still-wealthy quixote who appears alongside a Sancho-like squire (Timothy Crabshaw), an attorney (Tom Clarke), the attorney’s uncle, who is embattled in legal dispute over an inheritance (Captain Samuel Crowe), and a misanthropic writer who is attempting to dodge an arrest warrant (Ferret), among other characters with various opinions on and orientations toward the law. As the quixotic hero Launcelot strives to rescue the ill-used and the downtrodden from corrupt magistrates and legal officials, Smollett’s critique of the mid-eighteenth-century British legal system emerges.

As with many of the quixotic narratives discussed in this study (along with many that are not), critics have mistakenly read *Launcelot Greaves* as a picaresque narrative, and its quixote as a picaro. Angus Easson reads *Launcelot Greaves* (along with *Joseph Andrews*) as part of “that English picaresque tradition which rewrote ‘rogue’ as ‘road,’” despite also referring to *Launcelot Greaves* as “Quixotic” and *Joseph Andrews*’ Parson Adams as “a Christian Quixote.” In so doing, he conflates the quixotic and the picaresque in his placement of Smollett’s novel within a wider literary tradition while going on to treat *Greaves* primarily, and aptly, as a quixote (177). Daniel Punday reads Smollett’s satirical approach in *Launcelot Greaves* as an effect of a “clash between romantic and picaresque world views,” admitting that, despite the fact that Launcelot does not display what Ronald

Paulson identifies as the “peasant cunning” of a picaro, he nonetheless possesses a “dual nature—as critic and satiric butt in his own right” (170). Easson's slippage from picaresque tradition to quixotic protagonists is a telling example of how the close historical relationship between the quixotic and picaresque traditions can produce a lack of critical precision in the use of these terms. Likewise, when Punday flags a trait—duality or liminality—as “picaresque” that is actually shared by quixotes *and* picaros, despite the fact that Launcelot Greaves, a wealthy noble whose financial means enable much of his quixotic success, is clearly neither rogue nor picaro, his entire reading is colored by a critical misapprehension in the first instance. What Punday identifies as a mix of “picaresque” and “romantic” elements in *Launcelot Greaves*—a combination that he suggests has problematically led to critics' dismissal of the novel—is really not “picaresque,” but quixotic, a motif that naturally includes and problematizes the romantic. Importantly, then, Launcelot Greaves is a wealthy, aristocratic knight-errant—a quixote—and not a picaro of low birth, struggling his way upward in society. *Launcelot Greaves* is thus a quixotic narrative, and not a picaresque, indebted primarily, as Paul-Gabriel Boucé has thoroughly documented, to *Don Quixote*. For Boucé, “*Ferdinand Count Fathom* is in fact the only principal character in Smollett's novels who really approaches the *picaro*. As to *Launcelot Greaves*, the influence, indeed direct imitation of *Don Quixote*, emphasized by the author himself, is evident and constant throughout this whole novel” (72).

What separates *Launcelot Greaves* from the other quixotic narratives previously addressed in this study is its rather thorough vindication of its quixote. Launcelot certainly appears ridiculous, dressed in full armor, upon his first encounter with a group of modern Britons engaging in conversation at the tidy and comfortable Black Lion inn, providing the quixotic narrative with a characteristic touch of double-edged critique; however, Launcelot soon demonstrates a remarkable ability to justify his quixotic behavior, to avoid much of the martial violence typical of *Don Quixote* amid his travels and conflicts, and to deliver

justice successfully for those he aims to help, as well as those villains who stand in his way. Central to our understanding of *Launcelot Greaves*, then, is Launcelot's relationship to the law (which he aims in his quixotism both to transcend and to uphold), his relative madness or sanity before the institution of the law (an institution that privileges rational argument and functions, at least theoretically, with minimal prejudice), and the ways in which each of these dynamics are romanticized in Smollett's novel in order to fashion a relevant critique of corruption in mid-century British legal systems. As I will demonstrate, Launcelot's quixotic exceptionalism—his rendering of himself as at once above the law and for the law—is a function of his rather exceptional standing among quixotes as a viable romantic hero, or a thoroughly romanticized version of the quixotic mock-hero.

As I have suggested, mid-eighteenth-century British readers and critics began to understand *Don Quixote* (and the quixotic) as an increasingly Romantic narrative, a trend that is especially relevant for the study of *Launcelot Greaves*. For Ronald Paulson, “the turn toward the side of *Don Quixote* that supports romance, imagination, and defeat at the hands of the crass world coincides with the Forty-Five, the possibility of sympathy for Scotland, its chivalric clans fallen in battle and outlawed in their own countryside” (184). Though such a plausible attribution is intriguing when positioned alongside a discussion of the Scottish author Smollett’s heroic quixote, Launcelot Greaves, one need not locate the “romantic turn” in quixote criticism specifically in the Forty-Five in order to acknowledge its presence by the mid-century. As Anthony Close argues in his thorough study on the very subject, *The Romantic Approach to 'Don Quixote': A Critical History of the Romantic Tradition in 'Quixote' Criticism*, though the German Romantics played perhaps the strongest role in constructing romantic approaches to Cervantes' knight, and though the romantic take on Don Quixote was still a “minority opinion” in early-eighteenth-century Britain, it was “an increasingly weighty minority from the mid-century on,” such that “by the beginning of the nineteenth century English *Quixote* criticism began to register in an

insistent way the Romantic cult of imagination, genius, passion, and sensibility as faculties opposed or superior to reason” (Romantic Approach 43). This understanding of Don Quixote is registered, as Easson points out, in Book V of Wordsworth's *The Prelude*. Easson calls our attention to Wordsworth's quixotic passage, in which “Wordsworth's friend, while reading Cervantes' novel, muses on 'Poetry and geometric Truth' and in a dream finds himself among desert sands: 'To his great joy a Man was at his side/Upon a dromedary, mounted high/[...]/A Lance he bore, and underneath one arm/A Stone; and in the opposite hand, a Shell” (Easson 175).

That Smollett's Launcelot Greaves exhibits particularly romantic qualities as a quixotic hero is the retort to what Boucé tells us is the primary critical accusation leveled against Smollett's novel, one of his least successful: that it is merely a “pale imitation of *Don Quixote*” (92). While Cervantes' *Don Quixote* presents itself initially, at one level, as a burlesque satire of the chivalric romance, featuring a quixote who wages war against imagined giants and drummed-up injustices (though certainly Don Quixote also battles real injustices under false pretences, as, for example, with the bound apprentice boy being whipped by his employer in Part I, Chapter IV), *Launcelot Greaves* features a quixote who sets out to battle real-life injustices. As Boucé observes, “the great difference between Greaves and Don Quixote is emphasized by Smollett from the very beginning of the novel. Greaves' appearance and behaviour may be eccentric, but the evils he intends to fight against are extremely real” (93). Thus, as Boucé observes further, when the bitter, misanthropic Ferret mocks Launcelot as he enters the inn in full armor, exclaiming “what! You set up for a modern Don Quixote?,” Smollett indicates an awareness that Greaves might be construed as too servile an imitation of Cervantes' knight, proceeding thereafter to differentiate his hero from Don Quixote just as he uses Don Quixote, rather faithfully, as a model (Smollett 15, Boucé 92).⁴² Launcelot Greaves, in fact, argues for his own

⁴²Smollett, Tobias. *Launcelot Greaves*. Eds. Robert Folkenflik and Barbara Lanning-Fitzpatrick. Athens: U

differentiation from Don Quixote at the beginning of the novel, criticizing Ferret for mistaking Launcelot's rationale for imitation, and imitation for lunacy. As Launcelot responds to Ferret's accusations:

he that from affectation imitates the extravagances of Don Quixote, is an impostor equally wicked and contemptible. He that counterfeits madness, unless he dissembles like the elder Brutus, for some virtuous purpose, not only debases his own soul, but acts as a traitor to heaven, by denying the divinity that is within him.—I am neither an affected imitator of Don Quixote, nor, as I trust in heaven, visited by that spirit of lunacy so admirably displayed in the fictitious character exhibited by the inimitable Cervantes (Smollett 15).

Thus, Launcelot simultaneously pays homage to the quixotic madness “so admirably displayed” in Don Quixote, as well as the “inimitable” Cervantes, and distances himself from Don Quixote by arguing, self-reflexively, for his own sanity. As Launcelot declares, “I reason without prejudice, can endure contradiction, and, as the company perceives, even bear impertinent censure without passion or resentment” (15). Smollett modifies Launcelot thereby as a uniquely celebrated and successful quixotic hero in an effort to “create a redresser of very real wrongs and abuses rampant about the middle of the eighteenth century” (Bouc  146). As Easson adds, whereas Don Quixote is a man approaching fifty years of age and past his biological prime, Launcelot Greaves is “a young man, handsome, in love not with some imaginary Dulcinea, but with a girl of flesh and blood, whose supposed rejection of him has turned his wits” (178).

As we can see from the outset, then, Launcelot Greaves was constructed as a highly romanticized quixote during a period in British literary history in which the quixotic hero or heroine was becoming increasingly romanticized. As the events of Smollett's novel suggest, Sir Launcelot is indeed an especially successful quixote, lending credence to the mid-century desire to see quixotes in favorable light. One of the most important components of Launcelot's ability to achieve his aims as a quixote in pursuit of justice, where other quixotes fail, is, as Easson notes, his wealth (178). Launcelot has, as Easson understands it, a “perpetual supply of money,” which enables him to use the law as a

means of addressing wrongs and pursuing justice (186). While Launcelot is notably “drained of pretty large sums of money” in his various lawsuits waged on behalf of the oppressed, misjudged, or downtrodden—and indication that, though Launcelot possesses great wealth, such expenditures are not insignificant, nor presented as such, as though there were “perpetual” financial reserves—Launcelot's wealth enables one of the novel's central features, the quixotic application of the law (Smollett 40).

In light of Smollett's portrayal of lawyers and magistrates as both central figures and corrupt ones in *Launcelot Greaves*, much has been made of Smollett's own run-ins with the law as an active and at times caustic literary personality in mid-century Britain. After publishing a negative review in the *Critical Review* in May, 1758, the author of the negatively reviewed pamphlet, Admiral Charles Knowles, successfully sued Smollett for libel, resulting in Smollett's imprisonment amid the serial publication of *Launcelot Greaves* (Folkenflik xviii). What is termed the “Knowles affair” among Smollett scholars is, however, not the first of Smollett's troubles with the law, having previously consulted lawyers over “unfortunate loans” in 1754 and 1756 (Bouc  20). Smollett's difficulties with lawyers and the law find their way into *Launcelot Greaves*, particularly in the rendition of the extraordinarily corrupt Justice Gobble, by whom Launcelot is first victimized, then avenges for his ill treatment of the poor and disadvantaged (Bouc  59). Thus, much of Launcelot's quixotic idealism is oriented toward the legal system and the roles of lawyers and magistrates in upholding justice and eschewing the sorts of institutional barriers and conflicts of interest that Swift satirizes in *Gulliver's Travels*.

If Gulliver's is a quixotism of travel, then Launcelot's could be described, generally, as a quixotism of law. At the introduction of Launcelot into the narrative, as he enters the Black Lion and engages in conversation with a group of travelers who have already met acquaintances, Launcelot's stated impetus for donning a century-old suit of armor and pursuing a life of knight-errantry is to “honour and assert the efforts of virtue; to combat

vice in all her forms, redress injuries, chastise oppression, protect the helpless and forlorn, relieve the indigent, exert my best endeavors in the cause of innocence and beauty, and dedicate my talents, such as they are, to the service of my country” (15). Launcelot, in other words, has set out by means of armed knighthood to right a set of perceived wrongs that the law has failed to address. Rather than becoming a lawyer like his compatriot Tom Clarke, Launcelot quixotically takes up the lance of vigilantism, at least ostensibly. Yet, paradoxically, Launcelot also proceeds with a quixotically idealistic belief in the potency of the law to redress the very wrongs that he would seem to want to war against extra-legally. As Aileen Douglas writes:

Greaves is dominated by the discourse in which social relationships are most explicitly and confidently recorded and promulgated: the law. The novel may begin with a comic parody of legalese, but as it advances, the law becomes not only a mechanism by which elements of the plot are resolved but also a matter for serious debate (117).

Accordingly, as I will demonstrate later in this chapter, Launcelot avails himself primarily not of his lance and armor, but of the law (and the socioeconomic position that grants him a facility with it and its institutions) as a means of battling injustice. His quixotic belief in the law is expressly connected with a quixotic belief in the premises of the law more generally, and of the English constitution more specifically, as institutions that can spare no injustice, and let no honest, law-abiding citizen fall by the wayside. As Douglas suggests, “despite his appearance,” Launcelot’s “rhetoric is that of citizenship, not chivalry. His social code is clearly that of an eighteenth-century English gentleman who believes that the law provides adequate safeguards and protection for those who live under it” (119). Launcelot’s quixotism of law can thus be understood as both an idealistic belief in the power of the law to address adequately a range of social injustices (disproved by the very fact that Launcelot’s intervention is frequently required in the novel to correct for legal corruption) and an idealistic belief in his ability to right wrongs wrought by the law (and its officers) when it fails to measure up to Launcelot’s quixotic expectations.

7.1 The Triumph of the Quixotic: Launcelot Greaves and Quixotic Liminality

Launcelot is a quixote who raises more questions than answers about quixotic liminality. We see in the quixotic texts of Lennox and Tenney scenes of mixed resolution in which the quixotes are restored to comfortable and respectable places in society, though only after realising their follies and renouncing their quixotism. In *Joseph Andrews* we see Parson Adams presiding joyously over the wedding between Joseph and Fanny, while at the same time remaining quixotically (and comically) antiquated and disconnected in his insistence that Mr. Booby and Pamela refrain from laughter and outward expressions of joy “on so solemn an Occasion” (Fielding 300-02). *Modern Chivalry* concludes with perhaps more ambivalence surrounding its quixote than any of these, with Farrago and Teague adventuring by the end of the narrative no differently from—and just as perplexingly (and perplexedly) as—at the beginning, after more than a few hundred pages of happenings in between. The quixotes in each of these novels epitomize in differing ways what readers of quixotic narratives have come to expect of quixotes: ambivalence and liminality. Thus, the quixote’s fate almost always gives way to situations of multivalence or slippery meaning: quixotes either retain their quixotic idealism and end up tragicomic, ineffectual, or disenfranchised figures (as with Cervantes’ original), or they end up materially restored at the considerable expense of their quixotism (as with Lennox’s Arabella). Readers then struggle in some cases to identify whether the object of satire is the quixote (so disjoined from society) or the society (so blind to the quixote’s insights). Writers, in other cases, take this ambiguity as a point of departure for writing over the quixotic narrative, reframing it transnationally, as Bannet has argued, to suit a particular cultural moment or location. *Launcelot Greaves*, a curious parody of English society that validates its mad quixote, has a way of defying this conventional quixotic model. As Easson writes, Launcelot’s is a “properly heroic and modern role” in attempting to rescue Aurelia from Anthony Darnel, and more generally to redress social problems (179). For Easson,

“Launcelot is not the object of satire but, as in the election and the confrontation with Justice Gobble, its channel” (179).

As we learn early in Smollett’s novel, the symptoms of Sir Launcelot’s quixotic folly are manifested in his generosity, his commitment to justice, and consequently his tendency to exhaust his resources and intervene over and above the law on behalf of the poor and downtrodden. The distance between this quixotic sense of justice, based on Launcelot’s belief in the laws of chivalry, and that of his surrounding society is Parson-Adams-like. Scorning oppressors and going to excesses to right wrongs, Launcelot, as his attorney companion Tom Clarke intimates, “acted as the general redresser of grievances” (Smollett 40). Further:

he involved himself in several law-suits, that drained him of pretty large sums of money. He seemed particularly incensed at the least appearance of oppression; and supported divers poor tenants against the extortion of the landlords. Nay, he has been known to travel two hundred miles as a volunteer, to offer his assistance in the cause of a person, who he heard was by chicanery and oppression wronged of a considerable estate (Smollett 40-41).

On numerous occasions in the novel Smollett’s quixote can be found vigorously righting wrongs, by coming to the financial aid of farmers and curates, freeing the falsely imprisoned, and standing against ignorant and corrupt magistrates. Yet Launcelot’s adventures differ radically from those of other quixotes because of the unquestionably favourable results they produce, as well as the verifiable soundness of the knight’s rationale.

When Don Quixote famously frees a group of what he believes to be subjugated galley slaves in Part I, Chapter XXII, we find that he has only set free an ungrateful lot of criminals who swiftly bring harm to their valiant emancipator; yet when Launcelot forces the corrupt Justice Gobble to retire as magistrate and let free those whom he had schemed into wrongful imprisonment, the knight indeed sets free the wrongfully imprisoned, even turning the magistrate whom he deposed into an admirer of his character. Where the austere and parodied Parson Adams struggles to connect with passers-by during his travels, Launcelot draws the esteem of virtually everyone but the so-labelled misanthropic writer,

Ferret. And where Captain Farrago is continually shouted down and chased off by boisterous mobs, Launcelot manages to win favour with a mob of, among other types, stockjobbers and weavers (both frequent representatives of mob ignorance in *Modern Chivalry*) with a high-minded and rationally articulated harangue (at least until he mentions the idea of “moderation,” a jibe that Smollett evidently could not resist) (Smollett 75). Additionally, it is Launcelot’s quixotic bravery and generosity that attract his beloved Aurelia, and not without her dying mother’s blessing. Smollett’s knight finds his quixotism counterintuitively appreciated at nearly every turn, leaving readers to question why and how such quixotic madness could be so ingratiating.

Smollett contrasts Launcelot’s quixotism with that of Captain Crowe, who, witnessing Launcelot’s success, resolves to become a knight-errant himself. Launcelot characterizes Crowe’s bumbling imitation of knight-errantry as madness, but, like Brackenridge’s Captain Farrago, acknowledges a tempered madness of his own.⁴³ When Crowe attempts to steal Launcelot’s armor, “ambitious to follow his example,” and Clarke defends him as an honest man, Launcelot replies that “madness and honesty are not incompatible—indeed I feel it by experience” (Smollett 59). Putting aside momentarily that Launcelot’s madness is clearly to be differentiated from Crowe’s, the comparison is one of a number of ways in which the acceptability—even the virtue—of Launcelot’s madness is rather meticulously supported.

Remarking on Crowe, Launcelot suggests that the idea of madness can accommodate honesty. After Ferret has him imprisoned for knight-errantry (a charge for which the knight would be *legally* exculpated), Launcelot becomes “more and more persuaded that a knight-errant’s profession might be exercised, even in England, to the advantage of the community,” though Clarke, thinking of Crowe, persists in the view that

⁴³Launcelot believes that Captain Crowe is mad, while Launcelot’s squire Timothy Crabshaw insists that his knight, too, is mad. Completing the circle, Launcelot accuses Crabshaw of being mad for “serv[ing] and follow[ing] a lunatic” (62).

“knight-errantry and madness [are] synonymous terms” (Smollett 100). Later on, Launcelot contrives to “think himself some hero of romance mounted upon a winged steed,” though “inspired with reason” and “directed by some humane inchanter, who pitied virtue in distress” (Smollett 119). In each of these examples, perhaps most boldly illustrated by way of the burlesqued imitator Crowe, Launcelot’s madness is defined circuitously by the knight’s own experience, effects, and esteem as a kind of heightened and humane rationality. Furthermore, however much such a definition, so illogically conceived, would appear to verge on the mode of quixotic solipsism or delusion that we expect, Launcelot’s actions and their results provide external validation for his own theory of “humane madness.”

For example, Sycamore, Launcelot’s mimetic rival in the courtship of Aurelia, who becomes “infected” by “Sir Launcelot’s extravagance” and challenges to “eclipse his rival even in his own lunatic sphere,” finds himself initially without a challenger when Launcelot turns down his request for combat (Smollett 139). Reminiscent of Captain Farrago in Book IV of *Modern Chivalry*, when he very counterintuitively refuses a duel, Launcelot, “even in his maddest hours,” “never adopted those maxims of knight-errantry which related to challenges.” Smartly, Launcelot had “always perceived the folly and wickedness of defying a man to mortal fight, because he did not like the colour of his beard, or the complexion of his mistress,” believing that “chivalry was an useful institution while confined to its original purposes of protecting the innocent, assisting the friendless, and bringing the guilty to condign punishment: but he could not conceive how these laws should be answered by violating every suggestion of reason, and every precept of humanity” (Smollett 141). By refusing to escalate, in Girard’s terms, the mimetic rivalry spurred by yet another imitator to the point of destruction, Launcelot displays poise and reason while adhering to his particular code of chivalry, and his particular quixotism. He shows comparable measure when he brings down the corrupt magistrate Gobble on *legal*

grounds. He does likewise when applying to the law to shut down an unscrupulously-run mad-house in which he was himself wrongfully imprisoned (a wonderful conceit in context), and again by exacting upon those who deceived and tormented Aurelia “a much more easy, certain, and effectual method of revenge, by instituting a process against them, which...subjected them both to outlawry” (Smollett 190). As Douglas argues, “the events of *Greaves*, at least in part, and the fact that various resolutions in the novel are facilitated by legal action, validate its hero's rhetoric and his faith in the law” (121).

Each time Launcelot is wronged or imprisoned, he is vindicated both by law and by the esteem of others, though his imitators—the well-meaning Crowe and the villain Sycamore—are frequent objects of unredeemed scorn and humiliation. In this way, Smollett's quixote appears to lie outside the conventional model for quixotes that we have seen thus far; and Smollett consciously demonstrates that quixotism is not flatly synonymous with madness. Though the idea of Launcelot's madness occupies center stage in the novel, as does a playful linguistic ambivalence over the line between “sane” visionary and “mad” quixote, Smollett's text is rather definitive about the auspiciousness of Launcelot's condition, however we characterize it.

What do we make of this? Smollett's novel, like *Joseph Andrews* and *Modern Chivalry*, avails itself of quixotic imitation to portray madness—as either a positive or negative form of ir/rationality—according to a preexisting ideology of right action. For *Modern Chivalry*, that preexisting ideology is one of measure and rationality itself amid the changes that came with early America's growing pains. For *Joseph Andrews*, it is a comparable wariness, and a call for the moderation of self-interest in the face of both rapid societal changes and emerging questions about from where innovative responses to social problems might come. Like the reader of these narratives who seeks to determine in which senses quixotism may be a boon (the visionary), in which it may be a bust (the revisionist), and in which it is simply resistant to such impositions, the mythmaker chooses the

particular pegs on which to hang a preexisting ideology. *Lancelot Greaves* is disarming as a quixotic narrative, paradoxically, because Smollett has chosen both our hero and our ideology for us.

Such a narrative provides a useful contrast to the more discursively ranging *Joseph Andrews* and *Modern Chivalry* because of its novel deployment, among eighteenth-century quixotic narratives, of the quixote as a triumphant figure both materially and ideologically. Smollett does little to compromise his quixote's benevolent intentions, just methods, and favorable results. In this way Smollett's satirical approach mitigates the problem of quixotic liminality because it demonstrates a relatively consistent moral philosophy even as it plays bait and switch with loaded terms like "madness" and "reason." At the same time, however, *Launcelot Greaves* is a deeply quixotic text in and of Launcelot's sustained quixotism.

7.2 Launcelot Greaves and Quixotic Conversion

For a quixote whose quixotic madness is already rendered questionable by his many successful acts of heroism, and the measured and rational means by which these acts are carried out, Launcelot's quixotic conversion is a complicating factor more than an interpretive indication or a resolution. In this section, however, I will trace Launcelot's quixotism, as well as his degrees of madness, with the goal of charting what is meant by "madness" (vis-à-vis quixotism) in Smollett's novel. As I have suggested, what separates Launcelot from other quixotes is not his good nature and goodwill toward others, especially those he perceives to be under duress—this is, as Easson rightly acknowledges, "a highly developed Quixotic characteristic"—but his ability to perceive real injustices with accuracy, and address them rarely with vigilantism or violence, but instead through the application of the law and of good sense (Easson 185). Though Launcelot is certainly a comic figure at his own expense (and at the expense of quixotism more generally), Smollett's romanticized re-writing of the quixote story presents Launcelot as a far more

sane and effectual character than British quixotic contemporaries like Lennox's Arabella, Fielding's Parson Adams, or Swift's Gulliver. Launcelot's relative sanity and success in quixotism—his complication of the notion of quixotism itself—raises the questions of from what, and to what, does Launcelot convert?

Further complicating Launcelot's conversion scene is that it functions in no way as a resolution to Smollett's novel, in the strictest sense, as Launcelot's conversion takes place little more than midway through the narrative. The series of events leading up to the conversion moment, and immediately following it, provide essential context for what is otherwise a very brief and subtle quixotic conversion. After having been separated from his beloved Aurelia, and operating under the false impression (conveyed by a fraudulent letter) that Aurelia did not love him, Launcelot has a chance meeting with her, and learns then that she indeed loves and esteems him, and that “that fatal sentence...which drove [him] out an exile for ever from the paradise of [her] affection” was actually a forgery (116). Upon this meeting with Aurelia we get a brief indication that, in her presence and with the realization of her as an attainable object of desire, Launcelot begins the process of quixotic conversion, hinting at some recognition of his quixotism as a form of madness. “Cut off...from the possession of what my soul held most dear,” explains Launcelot, “I wished for death, and was visited by distraction.—I have been abandoned by my reason—my youth is for ever blasted—” (115-16). At the same time, however, his heart begins “to palpitate with all the violence of emotion,” indicating that he is also in the process of taking on a highly romanticized quixotic madness of a different sort: a violently impassioned desire for Aurelia, his lost lover returned (Smollett 117). Having learned, further, that Aurelia's guardian is embroiled in a plot to portray her as a madwoman and have her locked up in an asylum, Launcelot continues to emote more drastically than he has to this point in the novel: Launcelot “bit his nether lip” and “rolled his eyes around” (Smollett 118). By this point, Launcelot has not undergone quixotic conversion, but has

begun moving toward it after seeing Aurelia, and learning that her initial rejection of him, which was the catalyst for his quixotism, was actually a scheme hatched by her guardian, Anthony Darnel, against the two young lovers.

Launcelot's meeting with Aurelia is cut short, however, when he hears the cries of a traveler being accosted by robbers on the nearby road, and dashes to aid the victim, forebodingly leaving Aurelia behind. As Smollett writes:

the supposition of such distress operated like gunpowder on the disposition of our adventurer, who, without considering the situation of Aurelia, and indeed without seeing, or being capable to think on her, or any other subject, for the time being, ran directly to the stable, and mounting the first horse which he found saddled, issued out in the twilight, having no other weapon but his sword (118-19).

As Launcelot rides in search of the distressed traveler, incapable in the moment of thinking of Aurelia, his movement toward quixotic conversion begins to recede; he thinks of himself, curiously and counterintuitively, as “some hero of romance mounted upon a winged steed, inspired with reason, directed by some humane enchanter, who pitied virtue in distress” (Smollett 119). Finding that the distressed traveler was none other than his squire, Timothy Crabtree, who has been roughed up by the assailants, Launcelot summons a doctor to make sure the squire's health is in good order, precipitating the quixotic conversion scene. Fittingly, Launcelot has his conversion after seeing a doctor, though, in Smollett's ironic twist, the doctor's patient is not the quixote, but the Sancho.

Launcelot's actual quixotic conversion comes shortly after this interlude with Aurelia, and occupies no more than a few lines of the text. In fact, as it occurs among a catalogue of quotidian concerns in the life of a quixote, and endures for only a few paragraphs of the narrative, readers might easily gloss over the conversion moment altogether. After seeing to Timothy Crabshaw's health and engaging in pleasant conversation with the “witty,” learned, and agreeable doctor (whose first impression of Launcelot is that he is mad, though the doctor quickly changes his mind), Launcelot settles his bills, then undergoes quixotic conversion:

Next day, Crabshaw being to all appearance perfectly recovered, our adventurer reckoned with the apothecary, payed the landlord, and set out on his return for the London-road, resolving to lay aside

his armour at some distance from the metropolis: for, ever since his interview with Aurelia, his fondness for chivalry had been gradually abating (Smollett 128).

In this moment, we find Launcelot casting aside his “traditional” quixotism—his anachronistic donning of armor, his knight-errantry, and his preoccupation with the ideals of chivalry—in a mid-novel transformation of the end-of-novel quixotic conversion motif.

Having thus abandoned this mode of quixotism, however, Launcelot instantly reverts to a different mode of quixotic behavior, or a degree of madness that arguably outdoes his “traditional” quixotism. Immediately following the narration of Launcelot's “gradually abating” fondness for chivalry, we are told that, “as the torrent of his despair had disordered the current of his sober reflection, so now, as that despair subsided, his thoughts began to flow deliberately in their antient channel. All day long he regaled his imagination with plans of connubial happiness, formed on the possession of the incomparable Aurelia” (Smollett 129). Here Launcelot's prior quixotism—the result of having thought himself spurned by Aurelia—dissipates as his quixotic imagination begins to work in a different direction. With Aurelia now firmly in his sights, Launcelot rides calmly toward London, fantasizing about “connubial happiness” with Aurelia. In the immediate paragraph following Launcelot's conversion from armor-clad knight-errant to quixotic daydreamer in pursuit of his Dulcinea, however, Launcelot's quixotism shifts yet again, as the knight reverts to his original mode of quixotism. As he approaches a mob of “men and women, variously armed with flails, pitch-forks, poles, and muskets” cornering a lance-wielding figure on horseback, Launcelot, “not so totally abandoned by the spirit of chivalry,” takes off to rescue the cornered knight:

without staying to put on his helmet, he ordered Crabshaw to follow him in the charge against those plebians: then couching his lance, and giving Bronzomarte the spur, he began his career with such impetuosity as overturned all that happened to be in his way; and intimidated the rabble to such a degree, that they retired before him like a flock of sheep (Smollett 129).

Thus, upon discovering that the knight he rescued from the mob was none other than Captain Crowe, his ineffectual imitator, Launcelot is thrown back into his original quixotism by Captain Crowe's mimicry. Circuitously, then, Launcelot's original quixotism

is restored by his impetuously mimicking a figure who initially mimics Launcelot's imitation of prior knights-errant.

Whether Launcelot's abandonment of this original, "traditional" mode of quixotism in favor of a more romanticized quixotism in his quest for Aurelia indicates sustained quixotism specifically, or merely sustained madness, invites further scrutiny. As we can see, a sign of Launcelot's sustained madness through his conversion moment is his inability to resist certain stimuli without reacting violently, either with martial violence otherwise uncharacteristic of him, or with violent emotions; yet this madness is also distinctly quixotic. Launcelot reacts chivalrously when he beholds someone in distress, and experiences drastic changes of mood and outlook each time Aurelia departs from or enters into his immediate considerations. For Boucé, Smollett's description of Launcelot's impetuosity—that hearing the cries of distress functions like gunpowder on his state of mind—"stresses Launcelot's blind obedience to this impulse which promptly suspends all his rational faculties" (186). Regardless of its objects of interest, in other words, Launcelot's madness is quixotic, and his quixotism would seem to persist. If we understand quixotism merely in the mimetic sense of Launcelot behaving like Don Quixote, or like a chivalric knight-errant, then we risk losing sight of ways in which Launcelot remains quixotic, even in the interlude during which he casts off his armor in pursuit of Aurelia. As Boucé argues, "the irony of Launcelot's decision to abandon armour and chivalry becomes immediately obvious. He renounces one form of madness only to plunge straightaway into another, to wit sweet daydreams of the happiness he will enjoy with Aurelia" (186-7).

With respect to Launcelot's quixotic madness, we can observe a progression leading up to and through his conversion moment. Though Launcelot acknowledges that having been jilted by Aurelia is what led him to be "abandoned by [his] reason," his actions in the beginning of the novel, after having been turned "mad" by this jilting, are for the most part

measured, benevolent, and rational (Smollett 116). Despite the fact that he goes about on horseback and in one-hundred-year-old armor, the essence and differentiating factor of Launcelot's quixotism is, as I have suggested, that he believes that “madness and honesty are not incompatible,” and behaves as such, practicing a largely successful brand of quixotism that, as Easson and others have pointed out, provides the reader with “little direct experience of an insane Launcelot” (Smollett 59, Easson 179). Once the possibility of realizing his passion for Aurelia is renewed upon their chance meeting about half-way through the novel, however, the measured quixote begins to act with more emotion and impetuosity than he had previously. He quits Aurelia suddenly when he hears cries of distress, irrationally leaving behind the object of his romantic desire, and leaving Aurelia vulnerable to the kidnapping (which, in conjunction with the attack on Crabtree, was all by design to divert Launcelot); then, having returned to find that she had been kidnapped, is bizarrely content. He is

on a candid scrutiny of his own heart...much less unhappy than he had been before his interview with Aurelia; for, instead of being as formerly tormented with the pangs of despairing love, which had actually unsettled his understanding, he was now happily convinced that he had inspired the tender breast of Aurelia with mutual affection (Smollett 125).

Pleased with having been relieved of the “pangs of despairing love,” despite the fact that Aurelia has just been kidnapped—a kidnapping made possible by the fact that he abandoned her on account of his quixotic duty to the distressed—Launcelot gains apparent satisfaction from the plot twist that turns his pursuit of Aurelia into a more traditional romance narrative: his beloved has been kidnapped, and it is now her knight's duty to rescue her from her guardian-villain. In the very moment in which Launcelot appears to retire his interest in chivalry, he embarks on a classically chivalrous mission, emboldened by the promise of Aurelia, continuing in this revised quixotic mode in a manner more mad and impetuous than before.

Thus, Smollett's heavily ironized quixotic conversion scene depicts the shedding of the overt trappings of quixotism (conversion) simultaneous with a stark intensification of

Launcelot's madness and impetuous behavior. Though Launcelot notably resolves to take his time on his way into London in pursuit of Aurelia, thinking it more prudent to “wait with patience, until the law should supersede the authority of her guardian,” he does so, curiously, so as not to “hazard the interest of his passion” (129). Smollett's language here is loaded: Launcelot aims carefully not just to “hazard” Aurelia, who is “the interest of his passion,” but also not to hazard the interest of his passion itself, which has begun to alter his entire quixotic approach.

As we can see, then, Launcelot's degree of madness is a function of his relationship with Aurelia, and the prospects of that relationship, while his quixotism remains a separate factor, and is sustained even as the objects of his immediate idealism shift. Whether his present concerns are primarily upholding the law, rescuing the endangered, aiding the poor and downtrodden, or pursuing Aurelia as a love interest, Launcelot proceeds quixotically. His idealistic, upper-class perspective on the role and application of the law cause him to esteem the law as an institution and a corrective mechanism while at the same time fighting to address its shortcomings; his impulsive need to rescue imperiled travelers and stand up for the poor is fueled by a more traditional quixotic idealism, a belief in the basic laws of chivalry; and his pursuit of Aurelia fills him with so much passion and emotional and sensory overload that it diffuses his otherwise logical and prudent apprehension of the world around him, drawing him into a similarly traditional quixotic world of abducted ladies in distress and the heroic knights who come to their rescue. The qualitative change in Launcelot's brief, mid-novel conversion moment, then, is not from quixotism to sanity—a “cured” quixote—but from Launcelot's characteristic version of measured and effective quixotism to an impetuous quixotism focused on Aurelia, his Dulcinea. Of course, it is important to emphasize that even this conversion moment is fleeting, such that Launcelot is launched back into his prior form of quixotism just as impetuously as he is moved, briefly, to abandon it.

There remains one final element of Launcelot's quixotic conversion that is of interest before moving on to a summation of what quixotic conversion tells us in *Launcelot Greaves*. Though Smollett gives a clear nod to the tradition of quixotic conversion in Launcelot's mid-novel conversion moment, placing what is typically an end-of-novel confession rather subtly amid the height of mid-novel action, Smollett's closing chapter also hints less explicitly at quixotic conversion. After Launcelot rescues Aurelia, finding the "leisure to unravel the conspiracy which had been executed against his person," he chooses rather coolly to avenge the conspirators by way of the law, rather than hunting them down on horseback to vanquish them with a violent attack, as Don Quixote might have done (Smollett 189). Boucé reads this aspect of the final chapter as an indication that, by painting Launcelot as a figure of measure by novel's end, "Smollett confirms that Launcelot is definitely cured"; however, it is also clear that a quixotic belief in the power of the law, which proves, based on prior events throughout the novel, to be a precarious position, has been a significant part of Launcelot's default quixotism, a quixotism of law. Thus, though *Launcelot Greaves* comes together in the end in a tidy manner that resonates for Boucé as "part of the moral mythology of the eighteenth-century novel," as does *Joseph Andrews*, Launcelot, like Parson Adams, never actually learns his lesson amid the tidy ending, and likewise does not actually experience an end-of-novel conversion (Boucé 189).

What this suggests about quixotic conversion in *Launcelot Greaves*, foremost, is that Smollett's novel, despite being typically read by both his contemporaries and ours as a rather slavish imitation of *Don Quixote*, is actually, like *Gulliver's Travels*, a prime example of the eighteenth-century British departure from the hard-and-fast traditions of the quixotic narrative in its strictest, most imitative sense. Just as in *Gulliver's Travels* we can observe the emergence of quixotic behavior in Gulliver that is nonetheless not directly tied with Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, we can see in *Launcelot Greaves* an inverse narrative

strategy: Launcelot appears ostensibly, both to Ferret and to critics, as “a modern Don Quixote,” yet his quixotism is a radical departure from quixotism in the traditional or referential sense, the quixotism of Don Quixote. The shifting quixotisms of Gulliver and Launcelot—through various phases and with varying objects of quixotic idealism—mark a departure from more traditional understandings of quixotic constancy, as displayed by quixotes like Arabella and Parson Adams. Though Launcelot's quixotism is sustained through his conversion moment and for the duration of the novel, its direction often changes, complicating strictly imitative notions of quixotism derived from *Don Quixote*. Smollett re-writes the quixote story, providing readers with all of the salient trappings of quixotic idealism, but twisting the very nature of quixotic idealism. Whereas Lennox's primary intervention is to alter the quixote's gender, Fielding's is to alter the quixote's geographical orientation and surrounding society, and Swift's is to give us a quixote disguised in the plain clothes of an everyday bourgeois Englishman, Smollett's primary intervention is to re-write quixotic constancy or single-mindedness. Quixotic single-mindedness is thus, as evinced by Launcelot, a constancy of idealism, yet not necessarily a constancy of idealism's objects.

7.3 Wealth and Quixotic Exceptionalism

Despite the fact that Launcelot is not actually converted from his quixotism by the end of Smollett's novel, Smollett does close with an ostensibly misplaced but ultimately telling addendum to the primary plot surrounding Launcelot and Aurelia. After the young lovers are married, and their friends and supporters restored to happy circumstances, Smollett's final paragraph concerns the disagreeable cynic, Ferret, and his return to misanthropy after he becomes bored with “his easy circumstances” (198). Placed after the happy closure of the novel's central plot, Ferret's decision to return to “the [London] metropolis, where he knew there would always be food sufficient for the ravenous appetite of his spleen” would appear to be Smollett's final satirical swipe at the eighteenth-century

novelistic convention of bringing such narratives tidily together, as in *The Female Quixote* and *Joseph Andrews*, with easy circumstances and wedding celebrations (198). As Boucé argues, however, it also signifies a small act of insurrection on the part of Ferret, who, in his departure to London, “embodies the freedom of the individual who rebels against the insanity of bourgeois society” (189). This addendum is significant for our consideration of a broader metanarrative arc in *Launcelot Greaves*, the exceptionalist preservation of class protocol, as in the “female quixote” narratives, by and through a number of his actions, in addition to the institution of law.

In fact, that Launcelot's wealth and noble status are foregrounded in *Launcelot Greaves* has been a significant point of interest for several critics. Boucé notes that, as both Launcelot and Don Quixote hail from aristocratic roots, “Launcelot, like Don Quixote, refuses to soil his lance with plebeian blood,” such that it is “necessary that Launcelot should be attended by a man of the people who, like Sancho, would serve as a foil to his master” (95). Though it is not merely Launcelot's wealth and social standing that render him a successful quixote—both Arabella and Dorcasina have considerable wealth and privilege, above and beyond a comfortable, middle-class standing, despite the fact that both sacrifice their quixotic ideals for less than ideal results—Launcelot's social status is an important factor. His reason and measure are perhaps his primary distinguishing features as a quixote; however, when it comes to dealing with the lower-class Crabshaw, Launcelot's general magnanimity breaks down into harsh treatment and intolerance. Douglas notes that “when Crabshaw crosses the hounds at a hunt, Greaves, 'instead of assisting the disastrous squire, exhorted his adversaries to punish him severely for his insolence’” (Douglas 123). And as Launcelot finds Crabshaw along the road after the squire was accosted and beaten by “miscreants” and “ruffians,” Launcelot first admonishes him for “talk[ing] very much at [his] ease” for “a man in [his] condition” before watching him struggle to stand and mount his horse without lending him any

assistance:

Timothy actually made an effort to rise; but fell down again, and uttered a dismal yell. Then his master exhorted him to take advantage of a park-wall, by which he lay, and raise himself gradually upon it. Crabshaw, eyeing him askance, said, by way of reproach, for his not alighting and assisting him in person, 'Thatch your house with t——d, and you'll have more teachers than reachers' (Smollett 120).

Smollett's novel includes numerous scenes of this sort, in which Launcelot, otherwise a vocal advocate of aiding the disadvantaged and upholding a higher standard of civic morality, treats those of lower-class standing with indifference or contempt, much like the aristocratic figure Matthew Bramble in Smollett's most heralded novel, *Humphrey Clinker* (1771).

In addition to the operation of the quixote-servant relationship in Smollett's novel, for which the class-preservation function of the servant character is comparable to those in *The Female Quixote* and *Female Quixotism*, Launcelot is the beneficiary and proponent of other class-preservation strategies. As I have suggested, Easson notes that Launcelot's wealth is a powerful enabler of his quixotic success, while Douglas traces the link between Launcelot's quixotic appearance and his social standing:

[Launcelot's] peculiar appearance is connected to his class politics. As a 'gentleman' Launcelot is allowed by law to wear armor in his own defense, and as his quixotic vocation may make him the victim of 'attempts of treachery,' 'combat against odds,' and assaults by a 'multitude of plebeians,' he has chosen to protect himself with 'the armour of [his] forefathers.' Launcelot's armor symbolizes his belief that social order puts the law, and its gentlemanly 'coadjutors,' in opposition to plebeian multitudes (Easson 178; Douglas 118).

Thus, the connection, previously mentioned, between Launcelot's class status and his favorable understanding of the law as the most legitimate avenue for social justice is more than just a circumstantial effect of his class status; it is also the central site of quixotic exceptionalism in the novel. Launcelot's quixotic approach to the law produces his exceptionalist attitude that the law is at once inadequate enough to require his quixotic intervention and the primary and legitimate channel for righting social wrongs. Likewise, and related, his upper-classed exceptionalism drives this ambivalent orientation toward the law, causing Launcelot to understand, in especially bourgeois terms, the law as a solution to *institutional* problems just as Launcelot himself feels free, beyond his attempts to use

the law to correct institutionalized problems, to ignore his general ethos of magnanimity in his personal treatment of lower-class individuals like Crabshaw. Douglas rightly understands *Launcelot Greaves* as “a meditation on the institutional and public uses of terror, apprehension, and mental infirmity” (117). Accordingly, a particularly important facet of Launcelot's quixotic exceptionalism is the risk it takes in furthering a bourgeois understanding that prevalent social problems in eighteenth-century Britain, like widespread poverty and the unwarranted institutionalization of the poor and indigent in prisons and insane asylums, are problems for which an institutional commitment to their solutions could excuse lapses in the charitable attitudes of individuals toward the downtrodden.

The engagement of *Launcelot Greaves* with explicitly legal questions, and with the law as at once a problem for social progress and, in another sense, an effective means of addressing prevalent injustices, could be contrasted with Washington Irving's treatment of the law in *A History of New York* (1809). As the next chapter explores, in *A History of New York*, Irving was wary of an overly legalistic approach to resolving social and political problems. Whereas Smollett imagined a legal-minded, aristocratic quixote who both participates in the legal system and precipitates legal reform, Irving's quixote in *A History of New York* is himself a writer who takes up his pen as a lance in the crafting of a polemical critique of early-American legalism.

CHAPTER 8: *A HISTORY OF NEW YORK*

As Christopher Benfey recalls in a recent review of Elizabeth L. Bradley's *Knickerbocker: The Myth Behind New York*, the fictional historian of Washington Irving's *A History of New York* (1809) made his first public appearance not in Irving's *History*, but in the October 26, 1809 edition of the *New York Evening Post*. In a fairly elaborate hoax that contemporary scholars are fond of recounting, Irving introduced Diedrich Knickerbocker in a series of letters to the *Post* under the persona of a landlord, who claims that a mysterious, "elderly gentleman, dressed in an old black coat and cocked hat," who is, as the landlord believes, "not entirely in his right mind," had disappeared from his lodgings without settling his bill, but having left behind a "curious" manuscript. In Irving's following letter to the *Post* under the landlord persona, the landlord claims that if Knickerbocker does not return to pay his bill, he will endeavor to recover the balance by publishing Knickerbocker's abandoned manuscript (Benfey).⁴⁴ Thus unfolded Irving's ingenious hoax, which created, in the contemporary vernacular of viral marketing, a "buzz" surrounding the publication of *A History of New York*, a mock-historical (and metahistorical) narrative penned by Irving in the persona of the quixotic Knickerbocker (Irving's *A History of New York* was initially published under Knickerbocker's name). Fittingly, then, in light of Irving's public hoax in the *Post*, we get to Knickerbocker's narration in *A History of New York* by way of an "account of the Author" by "the public's humble servant" Seth Handaside, a landlord who houses Knickerbocker before Knickerbocker mysteriously absconds without paying his room and board, leaving behind instead a manuscript, "History of New York." What follows is Knickerbocker's "most excellent and faithful" history, as published by Handaside, in which Knickerbocker assumes the narrative mantle of quixotic historian (Irving 376).⁴⁵ The history chronicles

⁴⁴Benfey's review includes the quoted excerpt from Irving's published letters to the *Post*. Bradley's book, reviewed by Benfey, was published in 2009 by Rutgers UP.

⁴⁵Irving, Washington. *A History of New York*, in *History, Tales, and Sketches*. New York: Library of

the earliest seventeenth-century Dutch settlements in the Manhattan area, what Knickerbocker terms the “Dutch Dynasty,” from the generally placid reign of its first governor, Wouter Van Twiller (Wouter the Doubter), through the embattled tenure of its second governor, William Kieft (William the Testy), to the final era of Dutch reign, that of the heroic Peter Stuyvesant (Peter the Headstrong, Peter the Great), leading up to the British takeover that made Dutch New Amsterdam into British New York.

Though Knickerbocker's history is charged with Irving's satirical swipes, and is certainly not written with sincerity as a thoroughly “serious” history (Irving did write scholarly biographies of George Washington and Christopher Columbus), it does, as has been widely noted over the years, contain a great deal of accurate historical fact and scrupulous historical scholarship on the part of Irving (Insko 609). In fact, including in Knickerbocker's history a great deal of legitimate historical material was a significant part of Irving's strategy in critiquing through Knickerbocker the prevailing, heavily nationalist historiographical approaches of prominent, early-American historians like Jeremy Belknap and Benjamin Trumbull (Insko 610). As Jeffrey Insko writes, “at the time of its publication, *A History of New York* was the best (in fact, the only) account of the early Dutch reign of New York that had yet been published and could thus—and was intended to—take its place” among the work of these “serious” historians (609-10). The historiographical concerns of *A History of New York* function both to “deflate the high moral import of nationalist historiography,” as Insko suggests, and to introduce a layered structure and series of clichés, imitated from historians of Irving's time, aimed at challenging the romantic and legalistic tradition of the American “Founding Fathers” (Insko 610). From the beginning of his history, Knickerbocker continually alludes to the conventional language of historians justifying their histories. His work is “an improvement in history, which [he claims] the merit of having invented”; he makes

frequent reference to his as “this most accurate of histories”; he makes ample references to classical texts and scholarship; and he draws attention to evidence from historical records or documents, or from “authority still more ancient, and still more deserving of credit, because it is sanctioned by the countenance of our venerated dutch ancestors...founded on certain letters still extant” (Irving 404, 424, 445). In these ways Knickerbocker mounts a critique not just of early-American historians and historiography, but of the high-minded Democratic-Republicanism of Thomas Jefferson's presidential tenure more specifically, and the founding project of the US more generally. Though Irving is known to have been a Federalist, and to have taken a number of seemingly pro-Federalist stances in *A History of New York*, the narrative's ambiguities and contradictions render it a more general burlesque of American legalism, politics, and culture than a coherent political allegory (Hedges 158). In this vein, Robert Ferguson identifies *A History of New York* as “the first American book to question the civic vision of the Founding Fathers,” Diedrich Knickerbocker being “the natural enemy of...rational, legal spokesmen in early American literature” (30).

8.1 Irving, Knickerbocker, and the Law

By taking the law and its practitioners as objects of satire, *A History of New York* operates with a mode of quixotism similar to that which drives Smollett's *Launcelot Greaves*, reflecting the tendency of both Irving and Smollett to write their own legal concerns into quixotic narratives. Only for Irving, *A History of New York* is a unique instance of portraying the quixote as a *writer*, and the process of writing as a quixotic endeavor, the creation of a quixotic narrative whose turns and adventures are literary in more ways than one. Knickerbocker is an historian who likens “the writer of a history” to “an adventurous knight, who having undertaken a perilous enterprise, by way of establishing his fame, feels bound in honour and chivalry, to turn back for no difficulty nor hardship, and never to shrink or quail whatever enemy he may encounter” (Irving 412). Ferguson's account of the engagements of both Irving and his fictional Knickerbocker with

the law as salient context for Knickerbocker's history and its modes of critique provides a crucial insight for a quixotic reading of *A History of New York*. While Knickerbocker, as quixotic historian, is somehow turned toward an idealistic, romanticized view of his role as historian in “rescu[ing] from oblivion the memory of former incidents, and...render[ing] a just tribute of renown to the many great and wonderful transactions of our Dutch progenitors,” romanticizing in that process the idle and law-averse rule of Wouter Van Twiller as a golden age in which no legal intervention was necessary to keep the peace, Irving was made averse to the law by the study and practice of law itself (Irving 377). Having studied and practiced law for ten years before writing *A History of New York*, Irving had plenty of reason, in his circumstances, to bring his views on the law and the legal profession to bear on Knickerbocker's history. As Ferguson tells us, Irving initially admired the profession, “admired Cicero, dreamed of success as a heroic citizen before the bar, and made the customary resolution 'to sacrifice *all* to the law’” (23). Nonetheless, as Irving's notebooks and letters suggest, he soon became jaded in his pursuit of a legal career, applying himself to the study of law with minimal interest and motivation, eventually lamenting that “wrangling drying unmerciful profession” and its “ponderous fathers” (Ferguson 23-4).

When in 1808 Irving pronounced his love to Matilda Hoffman, the youngest daughter of “Irving's employer and one of the leading lawyers in New York,” his employer, Josiah Ogden Hoffman, offered to grant Irving his daughter's hand in marriage, but with the caveat that Irving better establish himself as a legal professional. After Irving started writing *A History of New York* on the side and in a divided state of mind about his professional and personal ambitions, Matilda Hoffman died abruptly of consumption in April of 1809, leaving Irving in despair, but simultaneously resolving his conflict of interest. Irving then “abruptly 'abandoned all thoughts of the law' and turned for solace to his writing” (Ferguson 25).

As with Smollett and his series of mid-century legal troubles that manifest themselves in caricatures of lawyers and magistrates in *Launcelot Greaves*, Irving's experience with and understanding of the law are evident throughout *A History of New York*. Ferguson understands Irving's rejection of the law in Knickerbocker's history as a transformation of Irving's "private alternative to professional ambition" into "a writer's formal act of rebellion," claiming that "Irving's emotional rejection of law—fictionally portrayed through the collapse of New Amsterdam—supplies a dramatic unity and thematic coherence that set *A History of New York* apart from his other imaginative works" (Ferguson 26). This claim finds support in Knickerbocker's innumerable references to the law (or laws) as harmful and inefficient when conceived in abundance, or seemingly reproduced haphazardly and for their own sake. In contrast to the placid reign of Wouter Van Twiller, in which the Dutch settlers spend so much time eating, smoking, and lazing around that the law need not apply, the ruinous reign of Thomas Jefferson stand-in, Wilhelmus Kieft, or William the Testy, is one of legal and legislative hyperactivity. As Knickerbocker writes, William the Testy

conceived that the true policy of a legislator was to multiply laws, and thus secure the property, the persons and the morals of the people, by surrounding them with men traps and spring guns, and besetting even the sweet sequestered walls of private life, with quick-set hedges, so that a man could scarcely turn, without the risk of encountering some of these pestiferous protectors (Irving 539-40).

Irving goes further to compare Kieft's hyper-legalistic approach to governance, and his propensity to be "continually dipping into books, without ever studying to the bottom of any subject," to Sancho Panza's would-be rule over the fictional island of Baratavia in *Don Quixote*, positioning Kieft as something of a quixote wannabe who too frequently resembles a bumbling sidekick instead:

There is a certain description of active legislators, who by shrewd management, contrive always to have a hundred irons on the anvil, every one of which must be immediately attended to; who consequently are ever full of temporary shifts and expedients, patching up the public welfare and cobbling the national affairs, so as to make nine holes where they mend one—stopping chinks and flaws with whatever comes first to hand...Of this class of statesmen was William the Testy—and had he only been blessed with powers equal to his zeal, or his zeal had been disciplined by a little discretion, there is very little doubt but he would have made the greatest governor of his size on record—the renowned governor of Baratavia alone excepted (Irving 535).

The positioning of William the Testy in these terms is part of Knickerbocker's ability to question, as Ferguson argues, “the whole legal vision of America upon which Jeffersonianism is based. [Knickerbocker] argues that legal administration favors the rich and contentious over the ignorant poor and that it quickly becomes an instrument of oppression” (Ferguson 29). In the process of writing this argument into his history, Knickerbocker, like Launcelot Greaves, fixates on the law as the primary mechanism of social and political change, whether the law is portrayed as a barrier to productive change (as for Knickerbocker) or an avenue for it (for Launcelot Greaves).

8.2 Knickerbocker's Writerly Quixotism

Knickerbocker's task in his writerly quest is to give an account of an under-acknowledged history while critiquing an especially legalistic Democratic-Republicanism (especially in its Jeffersonian form) “demolish[ing]” along the way “the intellectual foundations for a progressive interpretation of American culture” (Ferguson 32). In looking, quixotically, “to a golden age of simplicity and virtue in much the way as Blackstone or a whig historian regards Anglo-Saxon England with its pure legacy of immemorial common law,” Knickerbocker lambastes not just a history of American exceptionalism, but the ongoing exceptionalist attitudes produced by the “Founding Fathers” “rhetoric in which opponents were either fools, unpatriotic knaves, or traitors” (Ferguson 32, 36). For this reason—the limited leniency allowed by the political climate in Irving's early US for critique as radical as that leveled in *A History of New York*—Ferguson argues that Irving turns to “the saving mask of comic humor” in order to render his satire more effective (36). This recognition that a turn to comic humor would be more politically viable makes the quixotic narrative mode a fitting vehicle for Irving's (and Knickerbocker's) critical interventions.

It is worth demonstrating, then, the many ways in which Knickerbocker behaves quixotically. Though *A History of New York* includes plenty of Quixote allusions and a

second major quixotic hero, Peter Stuyvesant, or Peter the Great, with a Sancho-like sidekick in the trumpeter Antony Van Corlear, I will begin with Knickerbocker's quixotism. Foremost, from the beginning of the narrative, Knickerbocker proceeds with a basic form of quixotic exceptionalism in his approach to the act of writing history. In a manner similar to that of Parson Adams and Captain Farrago, Knickerbocker positions himself above, or as exception to, other historians whose truth claims must withstand the interrogation of a basic historiography that Knickerbocker himself brings to bear on histories not his own. Apart from his recurring claims that his is a true history, unerring in its devotion to fact by virtue of Knickerbocker's skill and devotion to the task, he also believes he is free of bias as an historian. Distinguishing himself from booksellers and literary writers, Knickerbocker writes:

To let my readers into a great literary secret, your experienced writers, who wish to instil peculiar tenets, either in religion, politics or morals, do often resort to this expedient—illustrating their favourite doctrines by pleasing fictions on established facts—and so mingling historic truth, and subtle speculation together, that the unwary million never perceive the medley; but, running with open mouth, after an interesting story, are often made to swallow the most heterodox opinions, ridiculous theories, and abominable heresies...I will proceed with my history, without claiming any of the privileges above recited (Irving 511-12).

Irving himself is self-aware in the writing of Knickerbocker, leaving Knickerbocker to put forth a number of theories that stretch the limits of logic, draw comically overdetermined connections between historical events, and arrive at spurious conclusions as a result. Yet Knickerbocker, in his criticisms of various authors before him, remains ostensibly oblivious to the fact that he partakes of precisely the underhanded narrative strategies that he rails against. This understanding—or misunderstanding—is the result of Knickerbocker's quixotic idealism about the truth-seeking and truth-affirming potential of historians and historical writing. Knickerbocker's frequent reliance upon classical texts, bookish demonstration of erudition and classical learning, and high-minded approach to his history (starting with chapters on “a Description of the World, from the best Authorities,” “Cosmogony,” and “peopling America” before getting to the subject of New York's Dutch roots) give rise to an historical narrative that is comically unaware of its place within

broader historiography, denying as such the concept of historiography itself.⁴⁶

Quixotically, then, Knickerbocker fashions himself as an historian above history, writing with a grander purpose and gravity than the common historian.

Also, like quixotes like Parson Adams and Captain Farrago, Knickerbocker possesses nostalgia for the past and a generally backward-oriented outlook. The progression of his history of the Dutch settlers of the New York region takes something of an eschatological track, tracing events from the “golden reign” of the “renowned” Wouter Van Twiller and his “unparalleled virtues” as governor in Book III, to the “fearful” wrath of William the Testy that begins the decline of the Dutch dynasty in Book IV, to the heroic-yet-futile struggles of Peter Stuyvesant that lead to the ultimate end of New Amsterdam, and the transition into British-ruled New York in Books V-VII (Irving 461-3, 525). Throughout this progression, in which peoples of other nations enter the history and begin to compete with the Dutch for land and resources such that they had not previously (or that Knickerbocker does not acknowledge), until the very end of the glorious reign of Wouter Van Twiller, Knickerbocker attributes decline largely to the policies of William the Testy, which Irving aligns in his satirical way with the progressive policies of the Jeffersonian Democratic-Republicans. Such “progress” during William's governorship—the formation of rancorous political parties, an emphasis placed on education, and the elevation of legislation and the law as virtues in and of themselves—stands in contrast to Wouter Van Twiller's “golden” tenure, in which, “in his council [Van Twiller] presided with great state and solemnity,” sitting in a “huge chair of solid oak hew in the celebrated forest of the Hague,” smoking a “magnificent pipe” (Irving 465). When Insko calls Irving “a casualty of chronology,” arguing that Irving “would seem to be a victim of the very historical processes his historian alter-ego Diedrich Knickerbocker attempts to forestall” in *A History*

⁴⁶Knickerbocker hails from a line of ancestors named for a bookish characteristic: as he tells us in Book VI, his family name is derived from “*Knicker* to nod, and *Boeken* books; plainly meaning that [his ancestors] were great noddors or dozers over books” (631). Hence, Knickerbocker's comic, quixotic bookishness has something of an ancestral past.

of *New York*, he implicitly acknowledges the backward-orientation of Knickerbocker, for whom the present seems never so good as the past. “Luckless Diedrich!” Knickerbocker writes, “born in a degenerate age” (Irving 454). As a historian, Knickerbocker calls our attention to (as I discuss below) his power to frame narratives for posterity; so when Knickerbocker, the historian, quotes “unhappy William Kieft!” from the apocryphal “Stuyvesant manuscript,” a retrospective judgment from that other artefact of history, readers get not just a second perspective that aligns with Knickerbocker's, but a second perspective colored and rewritten by Knickerbocker himself (Insko 605; Irving 550). Knickerbocker's desire to recount the past, and to laud the values of the past in his recounting, is part of his backward-oriented quixotic idealism, and enabled by the fact that, as quixote, he is also author and historian.

In addition to romanticizing his task as an historian, as well as his objects of study, Knickerbocker takes a chivalrous approach to his writing of history. Like Don Quixote, who seeks fame bestowed upon him by appreciative monarchs, Knickerbocker conceives of historians as “the sovereign censors who decide upon the renown or infamy of...fellow mortals.” “We are the public almoners of fame,” writes Knickerbocker, “dealing out her favours according to our judgment or caprice—we are the benefactors of kings—we are the guardians of truth—we are the scourgers of guilt—we are the instructors of the world—we are, in short, what we are not!” (Irving 662). Highlighting the disparity between the power he believes those of his noble profession rightfully exercise and the lack of recognition historians receive, as he sees it, compared to “the lofty patrician or lordy Burgomaster,” who “stalk contemptuously by the little, plodding, dusty historian,” Knickerbocker puts forth an image of the historian as a simultaneously humble and exalted chivalric knight (Irving 662). This chivalric style is also evident in the way Knickerbocker addresses his reading audience, in his antiquated pronouncements and exceedingly formal and courteous language when speaking directly to his reader. “But let not my readers think

I am indulging in vain glorious boasting, from the consciousness of my own power and importance,” Knickerbocker writes; in another section, he apologizes: “I am extremely sorry, that I have not the advantages of Livy, Thucydides, Plutarch, and others of my predecessors.” He addresses the reader as “most venerable and courteous,” and troubles himself not to “fatigue [his] reader with...dull matters of fact, but that [his] duty as a faithful historian, requires that [he] should be particular” (Irving 662, 620, 607, 451). Knickerbocker adheres to a chivalric code in his writing as Don Quixote does in his speech and actions. Daniel Williams calls Knickerbocker's sense of authorship “heroic,” commenting that authors of Knickerbocker's ilk are “ever protective of their readers, guarding them from confused erudition and muddled description.” “Both courteous and chivalrous,” Williams writes, “Knickerbocker himself paused throughout his narration to caution his readers before plunging them into thick passages” (264). This chivalric breed of authorship and historical writing contributes to Knickerbocker's quixotic outlook, framing him as a quixote whose chivalric code calls on him to lead the reader through a narrative adventure, supporting the reader through times of presumed distress as the fantastic and often outright nonsensical turns of his history unwind.

As we can see then, Knickerbocker's quixotic idealism unfolds not merely as a romantic view of history and the potency and importance of the historian, but also as a literary idealism about the potency of the written word, the structured narrative, the authorial voice, and the cumulative pitfalls and ambiguities of the written text. Knickerbocker is, in other words, a quixote who contorts the quixotic fallacy that Cervantes originally portrayed: while Don Quixote (and most of his literary offspring) is bewitched by reading romances, and misled by the written word to the extent that he takes fiction for reality, Knickerbocker is so thoroughly aware of the potency of text to have such an effect that he misleads himself into thinking that writing and narration should be handled as though they were producing material effects on reality in real time. For Don

Quixote, the text is reality; for Knickerbocker, the text makes reality. For this reason, Knickerbocker takes his quixotic understanding of the potency of writing a step further, inflating his authorial importance to the extent that, by the end of *A History of New York*, Knickerbocker is fighting alongside his valiant Dutch hero Peter Stuyvesant. Thus, in addition to his recurring literary references to chivalry, knighthood, mighty giants, Don Quixote, Sancho Panza, and the like, Knickerbocker comes to understand the writing of historical narrative not just as a heroic act, but as an act with direct material consequences. Beyond merely privileging or calling attention to the influence of historical record on our understanding of past events, he treats his manipulations of the written account as though he is crafting the material events of the history about which he writes. As Peter Stuyvesant prepares to ward off a Swedish invasion, Knickerbocker writes:

trust the fate of our favourite Stuyvesant to me—for by the rood, come what will, I'll stick by Hardkoppig Piet to the last; I'll make him drive about these lossels vile as did the renowned Launcelot of the lake, a herd of recreant Cornish Knights—and if he does fall, let me never draw my pen to fight another battle, in behalf of a brave man, if I don't make these lubberly Swedes pay for it! (645).

Knickerbocker's quixotism becomes increasingly apparent toward the end of the narrative, as he endows the *other* hero of the text, Peter Stuyvesant, with chivalric qualities that mirror those with which he endows himself as an historian. Stuyvesant, with his trumpet-bearing sidekick Antony Van Corlear in tow, is described as a “Cavalier” engaged in “knight-errantry,” brave, and chivalrous, proceeding into battle alongside Knickerbocker, his historian-protector, who “can just step in, and with one dash of my pen, give... a hearty thwack over the sconce” (644). In these passages, Knickerbocker's riff on the pen-sword conceit draws its comic value from the fact that Knickerbocker does not understand this relationship as a metonymic one.

Knickerbocker's quixotism can thus be summarized as follows: while Knickerbocker writes as though he possesses the power to alter history with the stroke of a pen as one could with a swipe of the sword, he also recurrently posits his history as, as I have suggested, unwaveringly true—a singular, true history—which is not susceptible to

the scrutiny that historiography brings to bear on historical account. His combination of traits and worldviews—the belief in the absolute truth of his historical account (the removed, ahistorical quixote), the belief in the author's pastoral duty to the reader (the practice of authorial chivalry), and the belief in the absolute potency of the act of historical writing (the contorted quixotic fallacy)—characterizes Irving's inversion of the *reading* quixote, whose belief in the absolute potency of reading, and in the absolute truth of the books s/he consumes, underlie the quixotic conflation of narrative and material reality. Knickerbocker writes himself so thoroughly into his historical narrative that historiography proves no viable means of extraction.

8.3 The “Golden Age” and the Legalization of New Amsterdam

As I have suggested, Knickerbocker, who tells us he is a descendant of some of the great patriarchs of New Amsterdam, pens his history of New York with a quixotic, “golden age” mentality, always looking back to the halcyon days of noble, chivalric ancestors. In light of Knickerbocker's quixotism and the explicitly legal inflection of Irving's satire in *A History of New York*, it is necessary to trace the interplay between quixotism and the law through each of the distinct periods of governorship recounted in Knickerbocker's history—those of Wouter Van Twiller, William the Testy, and Peter Stuyvesant—in order to shed light upon the strands of quixotic exceptionalism operating in the text. Before examining the reign of Wouter Van Twiller in Book III, however, the first two books of Irving's narrative merit some attention. Book I, described by Knickerbocker as “being, like all introductions to American histories, very learned, sagacious, and nothing at all to the purpose; containing divers profound theories and philosophic speculations, which the idle reader may totally overlook, and begin at the next book,” functions primarily as a parody of nationalist histories and grandiloquent historical claims, and thus positions the narrative as a mock-history, or, in Knickerbocker's understanding, a history to end all histories on the subject (Irving 383). It is, for Knickerbocker, “an improvement in history, which [he

claims] the merit of having invented” (404). Thus, Book I also introduces some of Knickerbocker's quixotic tendencies, positioning him as a combatant against the “fiery dragons and bloody giants” of historical writing (412). His quixotism continues in Book II, which tells of the Dutch settlers' contact moment with the “new” land, staging the founding moments of the Dutch dynasty in mythical terms. Following from Irving's attack on nationalist historians in Book I, Book II parallels the mythologizing of national histories and founding moments of the early US with ample allusions to classical myth placed alongside its glorified description of the “fine Saturday morning, when jocund Phoebus, having his face newly washed, by gentle dews and spring time showers, looked from the glorious windows of the east, with a more than usually shining countenance,” when Henry Hudson sets off from Holland “to seek a north-west passage to China” (Irving 427). In his vindication of the accuracy of Hudson's initial discovery of the region, Knickerbocker continues to reason quixotically, affirming his romantic view of Hudson's discovery despite material evidence to the contrary: “though all the proofs in the world were introduced on the other side, I would set them at naught as undeserving of my attention” (Irving 430). Knickerbocker adds to the mythical and romanticized origins of the Dutch settlement by introducing in Book II the quaint settlement of Communipaw and the “honest dutch burghers” that occupy it, providing his readers with a primordial picture of Dutch settlement against which we can contrast the increasing complexity of its progression from the first of its governors to the last. Knickerbocker reinforces thereby in his first two books the eschatological bent of his history, and the notion that the mythical simplicity of the “golden” earlier years becomes adulterated by “progress” and increasing legal and governmental complexity (Irving 438).

Beginning with the reign of Wouter Van Twiller in Book III, Knickerbocker's narrative takes a slightly different turn. As Charlton Laird remarks, “the treatment is more expansive, more personal, less rambling” in Book III (168). Knickerbocker appears less

distant and more invested in creating a favorable portrait of Van Twiller; yet his quixotic romanticization of the past, introduced in Books I and II, persists. At times Irving's irony in writing for Knickerbocker comes through in Knickerbocker's sentimental apologia for the past, such that it overpowers Knickerbocker's romanticism. When, for example, Knickerbocker muses about the "further particulars of the Golden Age," that "these were the honest days, in which every woman staid at home, read the bible and wore pockets," we get the distinct sense that Irving's ironic authorial voice is making an appearance through the veil of Knickerbocker (Irving 438). Nonetheless, Book III is full of slightly more believable moments of Knickerbocker's quixotic (and law-averse) outlook. Knickerbocker praises Van Twiller for having so "tranquil and benevolent" a reign that it contained no "single instance of any offender being brought to punishment," which Knickerbocker judges as "a most indubitable sign of a merciful governor," rather than a unambitious and ineffectual one (466). Knickerbocker lauds Van Twiller's "legal acumen" in the very first (and last) case over which the esteemed governor presides, in which Van Twiller rules on a grievance of fraudulent refusal to settle an account by counting the leaves in each party's account books, weighing them in his hands, and pronouncing the accounts perfectly "balanced" thereby (Irving 466-7). Thereafter, "not a single law suit took place throughout the whole of his administration," a mark, for Knickerbocker, of Van Twiller's great success as governor (Irving 467). In numerous examples of this sort, Van Twiller's reign is characterized not just by his passivity and his refusal to engage in the hallmark policies and practices of what will become those of the early-US republic, but also by his ability to avoid legal and legislative solutions to the grievances of individuals in the community. Among these avoided practices, even, is the selection of government officials under the guise of choosing leaders for their erudition, experience, and intellectual credentials, or even for their popularity, such that their sovereignty is derived from democratic processes. Van Twiller is immediately distinguished from "those worthy

gentlemen, who are whimsically denominated governors, in this enlightened republic—a set of unhappy victims of popularity,” when Knickerbocker writes with fondness that “the dutch governors enjoyed that uncontrolled authority vested in all commanders of distant colonies and territories” (Irving 468). Similarly, the burgomasters “were generally chosen by weight—and not only the weight of the body, but likewise the weight of the head” (the rationale behind this is that “the body is in some measure an image of the mind,” and that a board of rotund magistrates will “think, but very little” and be “less likely to differ and wrangle about favourite opinions—and as they generally transact business upon a hearty dinner, they are naturally disposed to be lenient and indulgent in the administration of their duties”) (Irving 469-71). Additionally, from his descriptions of the admirable qualities of “good housewives” and the constant, relaxed ways of the patriarchal family of “those happy days” under Van Twiller, Knickerbocker conveys a sense that, beyond the political affairs of the Golden Age, traditional values are preferable to any gestures toward a disruptive progress or ideology (Irving 478-9). Van Twiller's Golden Age is, then, the very romanticized historical background against which the subsequent decline of the Dutch dynasty is set in *A History of New York*. Much like Updike Underhill's romanticization of and apologies for the principles and ways of living of his early-American ancestor Captain John Underhill (whom, incidentally, Updike tells us is liberalized while living among the Dutch) in *The Algerine Captive*, Knickerbocker's romance novels are “true histories” of the Golden Age of early, pre-republican settlement in North America.

Toward the end of Book III and Van Twiller's reign, we already glimpse the movement of Irving's satirical focus toward issues within his contemporary republic during the Jefferson presidency (1801-1809), despite the fact that the critical focus on this mode of satire is typically on Book IV. Chapter VI of Book III gives an account of “the ingenious people of Connecticut and thereabouts,” whose rights-based and legalistic discourse Knickerbocker criticises before tackling the same tendencies in William the

Testy in Book IV. While Royall Tyler's Updike Underhill makes exceptionalist apologies in *The Algerine Captive* for the illiberal treatment of his ancestor, which he describes as “those few dark spots of zeal, which clouded [the] rising sun” of the early-settlers' discourse of liberality, Knickerbocker tempers his apologetic tendencies for “the zeal of these good people” of Connecticut “to maintain their rights and privileges unimpaired,” claiming that this zeal “did for a while betray them into errors, which it is easier to pardon than defend” (Tyler 18-19; Irving 494-5). Updike's ancestor is cast out of New England because of religious intolerance, the very subject of Knickerbocker's grievances against the people of Connecticut in Chapter VI. And, like Royall Tyler, Irving takes past illiberal behavior, through Knickerbocker's ironic wit, as a point of departure for critiquing his contemporary republic:

Where then is the difference in principle between our measures and those you are so ready to condemn among the people I am treating of? There is none; the difference is merely circumstantial.—Thus we *denounce*, instead of banishing—We *libel* instead of scourging—we *turn out of office* instead of hanging—and where they burnt an offender in *propria personae*—we either tar and feather or *burn him in effigy*—this political persecution being, some how or other, the grand palladium of our liberties, and an incontrovertible proof that this is a *free country!* (Irving 496).

The use of the legalese “in *propria personae*” as a pun—in the legal sense, to mean appearing on one's own behalf without an attorney present, and in the literal sense, to be burned “in one's own person,” or to have one's body burned—provides commentary on both the illiberality of burnings at the stake in the absence of a legitimate trial (and legitimate legal representation) for the accused and the ways in which a more sophisticated, rights-based legal framework in the early republic was nonetheless ineffectual when it came to protecting one's body from less severe, but comparably archaic punishments like tarring and feathering or symbolic burnings. The legalistic critique is thus wholly present in Book III, leading into the decline of the Van Twiller governorship and the trials of the following reign of William the Testy.

As I have suggested, the Book IV governorship of William the Testy is the primary site of legal and republican critique in *A History of New York*, or is at least the section on

which critics have focused most intently in discussions of Knickerbocker's satirical turn. Laird notes that in Book IV, "the satire becomes dominant and loses some of its genial impersonality," attentive to the recognizable and much-discussed pillorying of Thomas Jefferson in the personage of William the Testy (168). This being the heavily discussed case, however, Book IV is also a curious section of the narrative in light of Knickerbocker's description of the villain William in quixotic terms. The central strategy of Knickerbocker's criticism of William's reign is the presentation of William as, as the first chapter heading of Book IV suggests, one who "may learn so much as to render himself good for nothing" (Irving 511). While writing William as the scapegoat for the decline of the Dutch dynasty and the transition away from the antiquated values of the Golden Age of Van Twiller, Knickerbocker unconsciously mocks the standards of pompous erudition, along with the quixotic investment in book-learning, that he himself possesses. As Knickerbocker writes, William makes a "gallant inroad into the dead languages"; and what he "chiefly valued himself on, was his knowledge of metaphysics, in which, having once upon a time ventured too deeply, he came well nigh to being smothered in a slough of unintelligible learning...from the effects of which he never perfectly recovered" (Irving 514). In these ways William is not just a satirized stand-in for Jefferson, but a vehicle for portraying the Jeffersonian emphasis on classical learning as a quixotic characteristic.

We can see then, that even Knickerbocker, whose apparent lack of ironic self-awareness enables him to think himself above history, and drives his quixotic tendencies, is rendered ambivalent by Irving through the description of William the Testy. The critical focus on satirizing Thomas Jefferson in Book IV, observed by Stanley T. Williams and Tremaine McDowell in the introduction to their 1927 edition of *A History of New York*, and understood by David Durant by 1970 to have become so entrenched a critical focus (a focus that persists, to some extent, today) that it has come to obstruct other viable readings of Book IV, should thus be broadened to consider how Knickerbocker paints William (and

perhaps Jefferson thereby) as a quixotic idealist with his head buried too deeply in books for him to govern properly (Durant 493).⁴⁷ In the same stroke, Irving renders Knickerbocker a liminal quixote whose quixotism is at once a vehicle for satirical critique and an object of the very same critique as he delivers it.

Of course, William the Testy is also, quixotically, a combative figure, taking rhetoric and the law as instruments of battle. William wages a type of warfare against the encroaching Yankees by “the art of fighting by proclamation.” When he employs the method of “defeating the Yankees by proclamation,” constructing a proclamation “perfect in all its parts, well constructed, well written, well sealed and well published,” in hopes that “the Yankees should stand in awe of it,” they instead “treated it with the most absolute contempt” (Irving 519). William's bookish idealism is proven ridiculous by the Yankees' continued encroachment upon the Fort Goed Hoop; yet this exposure of such a tactic as absurd only emphasizes the quixotic absurdity of Knickerbocker's eventual authorial strategy in Book VI of fighting alongside the valiant Peter Stuyvesant with the historian's pen. Likewise, when William attempts to protect his city by erecting “a great windmill on one of the bastions,” the quixotic historian Knickerbocker explains in a critical tone the quixotic martial policies of William the Testy (Irving 527). Additionally, as I mentioned previously, William battles domestic difficulties with a legalistic approach, presiding over the introduction and expansion of “petty courts,” the building of a gallows, and the proliferation of lawyers and “bum-bailiffs” (Irving 539-40). On this point, Knickerbocker resumes his disdainful attitude toward the law, separating himself once again from the quixotism of William the Testy with an ironic blow:

I would not here, for the whole world, be thought to insinuate any thing derogatory to the profession of the law, or to its dignified members. Well am I aware, that we have in this ancient city an innumerable host of worthy gentlemen, who have embraced that honourable order, not for the sordid love of filthy lucre, or the selfish cravings of renown, but through no other motives under heaven, but a fervent zeal for the correct administration of justice, and a generous and disinterested devotion to the interests of their fellow citizens! (Irving 541).

⁴⁷See introduction, *A History of New York*, Ed. Stanley T. Williams and Tremaine McDowell, New York: Harcourt, 1927, xliv-li.

Knickerbocker goes on to lament the “herds of pettifogging lawyers that infest” the overabundance of lawsuits during the reign of William the Testy, further distancing this progression from the Golden Age of Van Twiller (Irving 542).

Book IV is thus, in addition to a scathing satire of Jeffersonianism and the advancement of legalistic solutions to social problems, an opportunity for Irving to mirror Knickerbocker's quixotism in the quixotic William Kieft, lending a characteristic double edge, or a critique of quixotism, to Knickerbocker's quixotic critique of his contemporary republicanism and its legal and philosophical foundations. Recognizing the quixotic qualities of William the Testy provides an essential perspective for understanding Knickerbocker's quixotic exceptionalism: Knickerbocker positions himself not merely above history as a writer of history, but also, in the process of writing, excuses himself from (or simply fails to acknowledge) the similarities between him and his objects of critique. While Knickerbocker mocks William for his pedantic and shortsighted focus on classical learning and philosophy, Knickerbocker makes constant references to classical mythology in his glorification of his Dutch ancestors; while Knickerbocker criticizes William's tactic of waging war with words, he repeats the very same strategy with Peter Stuyvesant in Book VI. Only when it comes to the law does Knickerbocker's critique of William become more scathingly satirical than quixotically naïve and exceptionalist.

If the Book IV reign of William the Testy permits Knickerbocker to portray quixotism in a negative light, the chronicles of Peter Stuyvesant, the third and final ruler of the Dutch dynasty, present in Books V-VII a quixote in Stuyvesant who is cast as quixotic hero. Stuyvesant's first measure as governor is to dismiss William Kieft's free-talking and cantankerous council members because they “have acquired the unreasonable habit of thinking and speaking for themselves during the preceding reign,” reversing the republican trend of William Kieft (Irving 569). Thus, as a governor, the headstrong Stuyvesant takes a no-nonsense approach comparable to that of Van Twiller. What mainly separates

Stuyvesant, however, from his predecessors is his penchant for battle. In writing the reign of Peter Stuyvesant, Knickerbocker's positioning of himself as a quixote becomes more forceful and direct. Rather than writing about the lesser skirmishes between Stuyvesant and his Connecticut adversaries, Knickerbocker, “like that mirror of chivalry, Don Quixote...[leaves] these petty contests for some future Sancho Panza of an historian,” reserving for Stuyvesant his “prowess and [his] pen for achievements of a higher dignity” (Irving 579). Alongside Knickerbocker, Stuyvesant, who “perhaps had never heard of a Knight Errant,” is described as “a hero of chivalry struck off by the hand of nature at a single heat” (Irving 581). He proceeds as though he had “studied for years, in the library of Don Quixote himself” (Irving 582). And as Knickerbocker and Stuyvesant prepare for “the most horrible battle ever recorded in poetry or prose; with the admirable exploits of Peter the Headstrong,” Knickerbocker collapses the narrative strains of the two quixotic figures, writing himself directly into his history (Irving 648). “My pen has long itched for a battle—siege after siege have I carried on, without blows or bloodshed,” writes Knickerbocker, before joining Stuyvesant in the battle against the Swedes, delivering writerly blows with his pen as a knight-errant does with his sword or his lance (Irving 644). With shades of Sterne's narrative approach of commingling the writing of action and the action itself in *Tristram Shandy*, and Fielding's account of Parson Adams' mock-heroics in *Joseph Andrews*, Irving's quixotic narrator, unlike Smollett's more measured Launcelot Greaves, engages in battle with the alacrity of the original Don Quixote.

Despite his prowess in battle, however, the republican-style political culture created under William Kieft becomes the catalyst for Stuyvesant's downfall, and the eventual surrendering of the Dutch dynasty to the British. While Stuyvesant is away in battle, Kieft's political factions become increasingly involved in the political affairs of the settlement, invoking again the patriotic discourse of republicanism (Irving 670-1). Under siege from all angles, with Stuyvesant overextended from constant battles, New

Amsterdam turns again to the high-minded form of governance of William the Testy's reign, fortifying itself with "resolutions," vacuous displays of patriotism, histrionics, and mob rule (Irving 692-5). As the dynasty reaches its "destined end" by way of the British takeover of New Amsterdam and a treaty that renames it New York, it is neither Stuyvesant's mode of quixotism, nor of chivalry, that mark the end of the dynasty and Knickerbocker's history (as Knickerbocker tells it), but a lack thereof: republican-style politics re-emerge to the extent that instead of fighting their enemies in the manner of Stuyvesant, the Dutch settlers resort to ineffectual resolutions (Irving 720). As Ferguson notes, "Peter Stuyvesant... completes the fall of the Dutch civilization by negotiating legalistic, hence ineffectual, treaties with his neighbors" (28). In its close, then, Knickerbocker's narrative takes its final parodic jabs at Jeffersonianism. Unlike Book IV, however, the final chapters of *A History of New York* construe quixotism not as the bookish, legalistic, aeolistic mode of William the Testy, but as the heroic, chivalric, militant mode of Peter Stuyvesant. Alongside this shift, Knickerbocker alters his own quixotic language, referring to himself more explicitly as a chivalric knight, though not without maintaining his bookish, classical references and generally quixotic approach to the writing of history.

8.4 Knickerbocker as Exceptionalist Historian

As we can see, Knickerbocker's history winds through each Dutch governor with different narrative inflections. Van Twiller's tenure represents a reactionary Golden Age of inactivity for which Knickerbocker is nostalgic; Kieft's tenure introduces an obsession with legal and legislative solutions to problems that Knickerbocker does not acknowledge would have existed under Kieft's predecessor, drawing Knickerbocker's narrative ire; and Stuyvesant's tenure represents the chivalric final period of the Dutch dynasty struggling to fend off foreign assailants, a period that Knickerbocker treats with writerly zeal. Moving through each of these sections of his history, Knickerbocker's quixotic exceptionalism

allows him, as I have suggested, to claim the ultimate validity of what he writes without maintaining ideological consistency or historiographical even-handedness in his treatment of each of the governors. Reading Knickerbocker as a quixote who employs exceptionalist thinking in his history in order uphold an *a priori* nostalgia for the values of the past, which is also Irving's way of self-consciously mimicking the nationalist exceptionalisms of his contemporary American historians and politicians, one must allow that Knickerbocker is not as self-aware in his historical project as Irving is in his; or at least that, even if Knickerbocker's history is Knickerbocker's parody, and Knickerbocker is self-aware, he nonetheless exhibits markedly quixotic qualities that any evidence of self-awareness in the narrative cannot overshadow.

Despite the fact that Knickerbocker's quixotism comes through independent of his intentionality or degree of awareness as a fictional narrator of history, the virtually impossible question over the extent to which Knickerbocker is in on his jokes (or Irving's) has preoccupied and confounded readers and critics alike. William Hedges best expresses this conundrum in his 1986 introduction to *The Old and New World Romanticism of Washington Irving*: “is he the earnest antiquarian he claims to be or is he idiot or madman? Is he a deliberate falsifier of the past or an ingenious ironist—or is he somehow all of these? Whatever the peculiar persona is, it seems that the reader is continually thrown off balance by wanting or trying to believe him even when what he is saying is absurd” (Introduction 8).

More recently, Jeffrey Scraba has contended that Knickerbocker's production of a “cultural memory” of New York, in light of challenges to the Dutch history of New York from foreign peoples (and historians), is indeed self-aware. Scraba argues that not only is Irving writing commentary on nationalist historiography in *A History of New York*, but that Knickerbocker's narrative is to be read as self-conscious irony as well, or as a kind of quixotic historiography that is nonetheless self-conscious in its use of quixotic motifs

(389). While the question of whether Knickerbocker's historical account is self-aware has been ongoing in studies of *A History of New York*—whether we can assume a closing of ironic distance between Irving and Knickerbocker, and hence whether the two are aligned in self-conscious parody, both in on the joke and laughing from the outside at the reader's attempt to find solid footing within the narrative—Knickerbocker's quixotism would seem not to allow enough self-awareness to render Knickerbocker more Cervantic than quixotic in his authorship. As Hedges argues in this vein, citing Knickerbocker's tone in his preface “To the Public” and its contradictory elements of seeming genuineness (acknowledgements to the New York Historical Society) and blatant literary tomfoolery (“all you small fry of literature, be cautious how you insult my new launched vessel...lest in a moment of mingled sportiveness and scorn, I sweep you up in a scoop net, and roast half a hundred of you for my breakfast”):

while he sounds quite mad, his paradoxical rant makes a weird sense. Yet at almost the same time I am conscious of a secondary reaction, namely that the passage ['To the Public'] mocks the pride of historians in claiming for themselves the right to award personages 'the meed of immortality.' So there is confusion: If Knickerbocker is at this point sincere but deluded, he cannot be aware of the satire that Irving is voicing through him. Yet maybe he is aware, maybe he is not mad but very cunning; maybe the irony is not dramatic but, for the persona himself, intentional (Irving 378-81; Hedges 154).

As we can see, Hedges hedges against his initial impression because, given that Knickerbocker is not just a narrative persona, but an authorial one, one can never be sure whether his intentionality is the same as or separated from Irving's. In this sense the question of Knickerbocker's self-awareness as a narrator and an author writing a narrative within a narrative is a non-question.

If we read Knickerbocker as a quixote himself (and not as a quixotic author, or as Cervantic), as Scraba does, then, as I have suggested, attributing to him such self-awareness of quixotic folly would not overshadow or disqualify his quixotic behavior. As we have seen in Captain Farrago and Launcelot Greaves, a quixote is certainly capable of certain degrees of self-awareness. We must recognize, however, that simply because Knickerbocker is an author in Irving's narrative does not mean he is, by that very fact

itself, an omniscient narrator more so than a quixotic character of Irving's.

As Scraba rightly points out, however, regardless of Knickerbocker's level of self-awareness, much of Knickerbocker's mission is to assign a coherent cultural identity to a city that, as Knickerbocker's own history illustrates, actually had a tumultuous past full of changing and conflicting cultural identities. By reclaiming the history of New Amsterdam from the city we now call New York, as Scraba contends, Knickerbocker "challenges the emerging argument, first developed by eighteenth-century historians, and later wholeheartedly embraced by nationalist historians, that the idea of America grew from the Puritan desire for religious freedom" (409). This is to suggest that the near-constant New-England Puritan encroachments upon New Amsterdam, depicted in Knickerbocker's history, reflect Knickerbocker's concern that his New Amsterdam, and his US, could potentially take on an identity that is not his own (not just a different ethnic or cultural identity, but a legalistic, republican identity as well). From this type of anxiety over colonial Swedish and legalistic New England foes in nearby settlements, and, perhaps more importantly, over history's role in assigning identities that are eventually folded into cultural memories of place, stems Knickerbocker's quixotic need to document as the only "true history" of New York that of himself and his Dutch ancestors. Thus begins the process of mythmaking: the legends of New Amsterdam's three redoubtable governors, the renderings of the Dutch settlers as an often wretched, but ultimately victimized lot, the villainy of the New Englanders and the Swedes, and, of course, the heroism of Knickerbocker himself, historian extraordinaire, discoverer of truth, all emanate from Knickerbocker's mythical production. Though the Dutch Dynasty ultimately falls to the British at the end of the history, a walk around present-day New York City, with its abundance of cafés, restaurants, and bars named "Knickerbocker," to say nothing of the city's professional basketball team, the Knicks, makes clear that Knickerbocker—no British name—has in fact been quite a successful manufacturer of a particular New York

identity.

Crucial to this mythical construction of identity is Knickerbocker's quixotism. By making Knickerbocker a quixote, Irving invokes a literary tradition marked by ironic remove or authorial distance, humor, burlesque, and, above all, misprision. Instantly, then, as Knickerbocker's quixotic mien recalls a long intertextual history of untrustworthy narrators and overdetermined readings, the reader of Knickerbocker's history can identify his history of New York as the unreliable writings of a quixote. This recognition is compounded by Knickerbocker's numerous comic delusions, from his assertions that his is an objectively true history, and the first of its kind, to his shrewd interjection of himself into the historical narrative. As a quixote prone to conflation of myth and reality, Knickerbocker is well positioned to write an un-self-conscious history—a mythical history—that itself becomes his iconic text—his chivalric romance—circuitously driving his quixotic delusion with each stroke of the pen. By making Knickerbocker a quixote whose quixotism is characterized by the construction of myth—the primacy of an idealized Dutch-New-Amsterdam cultural identity long since suffused with the historical pluralism of New York—Irving—not Knickerbocker—emerges as Cervantic historiographer. This narrative inventiveness of Irving's has sparked a substantial critical heritage invested in notions of Irving as a proto-romantic author (and *A History of New York* as prime evidence of this characterization). As Hedges writes,

For all the literary overtones of the language, one senses in Irving's improvisations a native freedom and spontaneity. Roth's contention that that *Knickerbocker* is a 'seminal work' in American romanticism may be an overstatement, but perhaps only to the extent that it implies an actual influence of Irving's burlesque history on certain later American texts (163).

In the following coda, I will address the pertinent question of the role of not only the turn-of-the-century writer, Irving, but the notions of the quixotic and quixotic exceptionalism, in what has since become understood as the emergence of "American literature" as such, the American Renaissance, or American Romanticism.

CODA
Quixotic Roots and Futures

In a discussion of the reader reception of *Don Quixote*, John Skinner notes that while “the book was simply read and enjoyed” in an eighteenth-century Britain in which “novels were literary upstarts and reputable fiction scarce,” contemporary readers have a very different relationship to *Don Quixote*. As Skinner observes, “today, [*Don Quixote*] is often a fond but distant childhood memory for the majority of readers, or a familiar but inexhaustible quarry for critic and theorist: for a few others caught uncomfortably between these extremes, of course, it may be the acknowledged masterpiece of which one remains embarrassingly ignorant” (45). This observation is particularly resonant for me, for whom the Hanna-Barbera television-cartoon offering, *The Adventures of Don Coyote and Sancho Panda* (1989-1990), was a telling childhood introduction to a story that I would come to study as a literary scholar, having spent most of the time between these two ends of Skinner's continuum, the childly and the scholarly, “embarrassingly ignorant” of Cervantes' masterpiece. Don Quixote remains a widely recognizable touchstone for contemporary readers and consumers of news media and political discourse, given the widespread application of “quixotic” to describe a variety of naïve, imprudent, idealistic, delusional, or determined persons and actions that occur in public life; though *Don Quixote*, the literary root of the colloquial term and the ever-expansive concept of the quixotic, would seem to have become distanced from the Don Quixote who survives.

A handful of recent examples from current events gives us some sense of how “quixotic” continues to operate prominently in inter/national journalism and political discourse. A 28 November 2011 article in *The Energy Collective* (online) refers to Germany's “Quixotic Withdrawal from Nuclear Energy”; the 4 December 2011 *New York Post* (online) describes the late presidential candidacy of American Republican Herman Cain as “quixotic,” one of countless instances in which political campaigns are described this way; the 12 November 2011 *Montreal Gazette* (online) comments on Moammar

Gadhafi's "Quixotic dreams about a united Africa"; and the 7 December 2011 *Detroit Metro Times* (online) calls the current government of the Netherlands' "political campaign against the marijuana culture" "quixotic" (Yurman; New York Post Editorial; Malone; Sinclair). Centuries before these examples, Nicholas Amhurst wrote in *Protestant Popery* (1718):

Pulpit and Press fictitious ills engage
And combat Windmills with Quixotic Rage (iv, 61).

Though Amhurst, an Oxford-educated poet and polemicist who was familiar with *Don Quixote*, uses "quixotic" here in much the same way that our contemporary journalists do, and with an allusion to that "windmill episode" of Cervantes' novel familiar to many who have never read it, he references *Don Quixote* in a time in which Don Quixote was still, primarily, a *literary* figure.

This is to suggest that, though I began this study, by way of explication, by differentiating between the taxonomic application of "quixotic" in literary studies and the contemporary, colloquial usage of the term to attribute to someone or something a set of characteristics loosely associated with the behavior of Cervantes' Don Quixote, "quixotic" cannot help but signal, even today, its *literary* roots. As such, as my readings of quixotic narratives have suggested, it is important for us to understand the roots and character of quixotism well beyond the use of "quixotic" as a taxonomic term for literary scholarship, both for our comprehension and examination of literary texts in which quixotes play central roles, and also for making better sense of the colloquial, journalistic, and political uses of "quixotic" in our daily lives. For this reason, this coda will re-consider the central arguments that I have made in this study in an effort to generate new considerations and applications of the roots and futures of quixotism.

9.1 Quixotic Roots

Foremost, it is important to recall that a quixote is an exceptionalist. Cervantes' Don Quixote is not merely an exception because of his madness, a character unlike others

around him. Exceptionalism, in other words, is not just a matter of difference. Don Quixote believes himself to be a modern incarnation of a set of past values that he holds to be sacred, and proceeds as though others should make accommodations for this belief, or else face the lance. Gulliver, too, considers himself not merely different from the peoples he meets along his travels, but representative, in some sense, of ways of life he believes to be superior. Whether as an Englishman in Brobdingnag or a Houyhnhnm-convert among fellow English Yahoos upon his final return, Gulliver thinks himself responsible for upholding the “superior” values that he has left behind (or that have left him behind). For Gulliver, the naïve and isolated King of Brobdingnag cannot possibly have the breadth of insight and understanding of interconnected Britain and Europe; but later, his English family and friends cannot possibly know the exemplary qualities of the Utopian Houyhnhnms of an isolated, faraway land. Gulliver's exceptionalism takes on its ultimate form when, as a consequence of his quixotism, he manages to identify with a different species from his own, and that of his family.

Updike Underhill manages a comparable form of quixotic exceptionalism by taking his ancestor's history of persecution on American soil for his version of chivalric romance. Updike is not merely different from the Muslim cleric who engages him in Algiers, much as the King engages Gulliver in Brobdingnag. Even after the Mollah argues convincingly against Updike's quixotic romanticization of his own faith and homeland, Updike resorts to the tradition of the Bible itself as its own, circuitous justification for Updike's position. Despite the fact that, like Gulliver, he found his native country wanting enough to escape it by traveling abroad, Updike's quixotic exceptionalism is so strong that he comes to believe that his own experiences—both home and abroad—are themselves a set of delusions that led him astray. In other words, paradoxically, Updike's lived experiences become exceptions—alternate reality—while his quixotic delusions stand at the novel's end as Updike's preferred reality.

Parson Adams' quixotic delusion is, like Don Quixote, one of chronology more so than place. The pious and steadfast Adams is indeed a peculiar figure amid a society Fielding portrays as full of corruption, thuggishness, thievery, and greed; however, his quixotic exceptionalism stems from his belief that, contrary to the present, his ways of the past are the ways of the future. Parson Adams renders himself an exception to his rigorous religious teachings when, in difficult times, his humanity overpowers his pious resolve; but his exceptionalism also takes on grander forms. Parson Adams' quixotic piety leads him to position himself almost always as instructor, morally navigating the accompanying Joseph and Fanny through treacherous waters, but rarely as pupil before the changing world around him. Adams need not acquiesce to the cynicism he witnesses; but, like Gulliver and Updike, were he not quixotically deluded into thinking himself more visionary than revisionist, he might learn from what he sees, as he does from what he reads.

Like Parson Adams, Captain Farrago's quixotic exceptionalism is a function of his tendency to understand himself as a visionary within a mad (and maddening) society; and like Updike, Captain Farrago's romanticized "reading" of the founding mythos of his native America propels his visionary tendencies. Farrago ventures throughout the margins of American society, attempting to redress the discursive and legislative shortcomings of a frontier mob-populace, thinking himself and his idealized understanding of representative republicanism exceptional in relation to the seemingly shortsighted Teague, and those who elevate Teague to prestigious positions in government, education, and the church. Captain Farrago is not exceptionalist because of his difference itself, but because his bookish, high-minded quixotism leads him to believe and to act as though his surrounding society ought to follow his prescribed codes, rather than the other way around. Of course, like Gulliver, Updike, and Parson Adams, Captain Farrago's judgments are sometimes astute, his actions benevolent, and his thoughts self-reflexive; yet it is the exceptionalist approaches to right action and justifications for good judgment that ultimately render Farrago and these other

quixotes unsuccessful, often comically so, in their high-minded and idealistic pursuits.

Arabella's idealistic pursuits lead her to engage in both dated and romanticized modes of courtship, in the service of playing a traditional, though empowered, female role in the courtship process; but they also enable her, in her real-life refusal to marry throughout the bulk of the novel, to deny her expected role as a desirable and marriageable heiress. While Arabella considers herself an exception to gendered expectations, she also finds herself exceptional as a would-be heroine of a seventeenth-century French romance: her delusion-induced treatment of her domestic servant, Lucy, is less amicable (as is the convention of French romances) than domineering. Her quixotic exceptionalism is characterized by a belief that everyone in her life, regardless of circumstances, must accommodate the quixotic modes of relating to others that Arabella prefers, whether in courtship, conversation, or directing her domestic servants. The ability of Arabella's exceptionalist worldview to alter the social dynamics within her household, particularly with respect to its patriarchs, renders Arabella's quixotism empowering and at times transgressive; yet her exceptionalism also renders Lucy an exception to—or an exemption from—the liberatory potential of quixotism.

Dorcasina's quixotic exceptionalism appears cursorily as a “hard-core,” Americanized foil for Arabella's, though Dorcasina, trapped on the Pennsylvania frontier, is so compelled by European novels (like Richardson's *Charles Grandison* (1753)) that she is perhaps as odd a Pennsylvanian as Arabella might have been. Dorcasina idealizes as a potential suitor virtually every conman (to say nothing of crossdressed women) who passes through, believing herself to be an exception to the “vulgar” apprehensions of her servant, Betty, and her eventually cautious father. She is, like Arabella, an imaginatively powerful figure, so much so that she subjects Betty to the material consequences of her quixotism. She also, like Arabella, glimpses exciting possibility through her exceptionalist worldview, in which all but her and her chosen beau-du-jour are incapable “readers” of the fantastic

reality she constructs. Like Updike, what she apprehends is very different from the trials she actually undergoes; and like Gulliver back in England, her story concludes with a change of loyalty, but not necessarily an acknowledgement of past exceptionalism.

Like Dorcasina and Arabella, Launcelot Greaves' exceptionalism is more saliently tied to his class roots. Particularly for a quixote, Sir Launcelot is an exceptional righter of wrongs, a compassionate, charitable, and at times level-headed quixote who avoids challenges to duel and coolly justifies his quixotism to skeptics and naysayers.

Nonetheless, when it comes to his treatment of his squire, Timothy Crabshaw, Launcelot acts with callousness and haughty disdain. The law is Launcelot's primary weapon, which renders his a "quixotism of law," his quixotic exceptionalism taking the form of a belief in himself as justifiably above the law, to address its shortcomings, while continually making use of it. Launcelot's wealth and nobility give him access to a legal system that he acknowledges to be broken when it comes to dealing with the indigent and the downtrodden; yet when he, a noble with wealth, exercises it in the service of the innocent and poor, he is met with great success. Expecting his surrounding society and its institutions to adhere to his model of success, Launcelot, like Parson Adams, moves idealistically from good deed to good deed, but struggles to enact institutional reform.

Diedrich Knickerbocker is a quixotic author of inverted idealism, mistaking not the material world for a chivalric romance setting, but the romanticized history that he writes for a material world itself. Accordingly, in the act of writing his history of New York, Knickerbocker intervenes in the stories he tells by positioning himself as a pen-wielding quixote whose writerly strokes become battlefield blows. Saddling up alongside the quixotic Peter Stuyvesant toward the end of his history, Knickerbocker writes himself into the action as though he lived among his Dutch ancestors from generations past.

Knickerbocker's nostalgic quixotism—his romanticization of the earliest days of Dutch reign in the New York region—is, like Launcelot's, closely related to his attitudes toward

the law. Like Updike and Parson Adams, his quixotic exceptionalism is backward-looking, oriented toward an impression of halcyon days, before legalism and its instruments prevailed in a modernizing democratic republic. Knickerbocker conceives of himself as an exception to his contemporaries, like Gulliver unhappily living among an inferior breed.

We can see in each of these quixotes varying strands of exceptionalism, many of which overlap and form something of a mosaic impression of quixotic exceptionalism, the result of quixotic high-mindedness, idealism, nostalgia, and romanticization. Each of these instances of quixotic exceptionalism has roots in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, though each has moved in some way beyond *Don Quixote* as well. Whether by reconfiguring Don Quixote as an international traveler or a stationary dreamer, an aspiring politician, a preacher, a writer, or a success story, quixotic roots anchor a form of exceptionalism, but also nourish the branching-off of this mindset into different directions and toward different ends. When we look at the branches of this quixotic tree we see a sprawling and multitudinous network that appears too vast and multiform to render coherent. But when we consider the roots beneath the surface, the exceptionalism of quixotes becomes apparent. Even in our contemporary, journalistic renderings of people and actions as “quixotic,” we can glimpse the exceptionalist roots of quixotism. A “quixotic” governmental decision frequently involves a paternalistic turn away from the will of the populace, a claim to visionary exceptionalism like that of Captain Farrago. A “quixotic” political campaign is an effort against the odds, an exceptionalistic belief in one's destiny over reason, like Gulliver's continual testing of his fortune overseas in strange and dangerous lands. Whether understood as acts or instances of resilient heroism or woeful imprudence, quixotic efforts entail a belief in some form of exceptionalism, or a willingness to proceed according to a separate set of rules.

As we can see then, exceptionalism is both a root of quixotism and a product of it, stemming from the behavior of Cervantes' Don Quixote and present in the subsequent

proliferation of quixotic narratives. Returning to our “quixotic point of departure”—the heuristic list of quixotic characteristics with which I began—after reading a series of quixotic narratives, we can see how quixotic characteristics fuel exceptionalism. The first characteristic, that the quixote is an imaginative idealist with romantic tendencies, rather than a trickster or delinquent, enables quixotes to adopt grand purposes that become powerful drivers of the quixotic imagination. In this sense, quixotes can envision an ideal for which no set of rules or laws, save those according to which the quixote lives and operates, can deter the pursuit of the ideal. Arabella will not suffer Glanville refusing to read her romances for himself, nor will Updike hear the Mollah's talk of religious conversion, even if it means his deliverance from slavery.

The second characteristic, that the quixote is of the noble and educated classes (what I have described as a bourgeois-to-upper class idealist), means that quixotes are heavily invested in a bookish, literary high-mindedness, enabled by class background. Quixotes are privileged and educated enough not merely to read avidly and adeptly, but to place extraordinarily high value both on what they read (whether books of chivalry, travel, history, or religion) and on a literary understanding of the world itself. Parson Adams and Updike Underhill, the only quixotes in this study that are not of noble or aristocratic socioeconomic backgrounds, become fixated nonetheless on a kind of bourgeois high-mindedness, and enter into the discourse of the ruling elites by way of their superior educations. Their bourgeois privileging of industriousness and self-regulation within their worldviews creates grounds for their exceptionalism, enabling them to construct standards for themselves that supplant those of the surrounding societies they deem inadequate. Class privilege and its attendant literary high-mindedness, like quixotic idealism, provide grounds for quixotes to imagine themselves as exceptions.

Thirdly, in their capacity to produce exceptions, quixotes empower their exceptionalism. When Launcelot Greaves demonstrates his sanity to Ferret, denying that

he is merely an imitator of Don Quixote, while continuing to don armor and ride on horseback throughout the countryside addressing legal grievances, he sets himself up as an exception to the assumed rule that all quixotes are mad. Winning thereafter the esteem of those he aids, including his beloved Aurelia, Launcelot proceeds with his own mode of quixotic madness, reinforcing his understanding that he is an exceptional quixote, rather than a Don Quixote imposter. Dorcasina empowers her exceptionalism similarly by ordering Betty to dress as and impersonate O'Connor, producing an alternate reality that, however burlesque, sustains Dorcasina's fantasy and perpetuates her quixotic worldview.

Finally, that quixotes are themselves mimetic and also inspire mimesis also drives their exceptionalism. Quixotes fundamentally believe as they do because they over-imitate, thinking themselves modern incarnations of the heroes and heroines of a romanticized past. This tendency not only positions quixotes as anachronisms, but also generates the exceptionalist understanding that, as with Parson Adams, Captain Farrago, and Diedrich Knickerbocker, the quixote's mimicking or representation of an idealized past justifies the quixotic claim to superior values. By imitating idealized models, quixotes make exceptions of themselves as citizens of or participants in a wider social order. By inspiring others, as Arabella and Dorcasina do, to participate in quixotic fantasy and adhere to quixotic modes of conduct, quixotes reinforce their exceptionalist positioning of themselves as *above* the social order.

Thus far I have considered in this coda the exceptionalist roots of quixotism, and what acknowledging these roots means for our understanding of quixotic narratives and quixotic characters and actions, whether fictive or real. Looking back through these exceptionalist roots of quixotes and quixotic narratives can actually help us formulate a clearer sense of the futures of the study of quixotism, and where the study of quixotism fits within the broader discourses of literary scholarship. The following and final section considers one such possibility for taking the study of the quixotic, and the groundwork laid

in this study of quixotic exceptionalism, into new scholarly frontiers.

9.2 Quixotic Futures

In addition to readings of a series of quixotic narratives, I have made in this study a number of metacritical points related to the ways in which the exceptionalism of quixotes has even compelled us as scholars to view quixotes and quixotic narratives as exceptions, whether by conceiving of the quixote as an engine of satire, but not a character, seeing the quixote as a romantic stand-in for the ideas of a visionary author, losing sight of the quixote's cruelty through the veil of the quixote's charm, or relinquishing from the outset the possibility that the chameleonic nature of quixotism conceals a coherent, exceptionalist ideology. In closing, I will recapitulate some of the observations I have made about quixotic exceptionalism in the service of addressing one final, metacritical question that is particularly germane for the future of transatlantic literary studies: how does the transatlantic history of the eighteenth-century quixotic narrative relate to American Romanticism, or the emergence of "American literature" as such?

For scholars of the eighteenth-century Atlantic world who verge into the study of pre-1800 American literatures, the idea of the inauguration of American literature as a mid-nineteenth-century "American Renaissance" is perplexing. This is the case not simply because, in general terms, one can almost always locate, retrospectively, some semblance of "roots" or "foreshadowing" of new literary themes in prior literatures, or plot the early points of a progression of literary history ever earlier along an historical timeline. Rather, the inauguration of American literature as a nineteenth-century phenomenon is perplexing for two primary reasons: first, because of the identification of American literature as part of a continued, British literary history well into the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries (and thus the problem of "America" as a monolithic historical, geographical, and geopolitical construct); second, because much of this inauguration was furthered by twentieth-century Americanist scholars, like F.O. Matthiessen, who had knowledge of pre-

1800 texts, like those considered in this study as “American.”

As Paul Giles writes in *The Global Remapping of American Literature*, “after the revolution, American literature did not so much boldly anticipate the future as brood uneasily on the new nation's fractious relationship with the past” (70). Whereas Matthiessen conceived of the prominent works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, and Herman Melville as, dually, manifestations of not just a *renaissance* in American writing, but an “American Renaissance” comparable to seventeenth-century English-Renaissance “forerunners” like Shakespeare, Jonson, Donne, and Milton, Giles envisions something of a “medieval American literature” (70). Citing Washington Irving's “tributes to Geoffrey Chaucer and Shakespeare in *The Sketch Book* (1819),” Thomas Bulfinch's “widely-read” *The Age of Chivalry* (1858), and Columbia University professor Brander Matthews' “describing Chaucer and his contemporaries as part of America's common inheritance” as late as 1908, among other examples, Giles argues convincingly for an understanding of “American literature” amid the height of the inauguration of “American literature” proper as still very much untangling its transatlantic past (71). If, as Giles suggests, “the relationship between American literature and global space...has fluctuated and evolved over time,” then what of American literature before the mid-nineteenth-century, early-twentieth-century push for a distinctly “American” literary identity? (1).

Giles complicates Matthiessen's nationalistic readings of since-inaugurated American literary giants like Emerson. Drawing attention to Emerson's lectures on Chaucer, for example, Giles paints “a very different picture from that more familiar to us from 'Nature,' 'Experience,' and other heavily anthologised essays,” noting that “whereas 'Nature' in 1836 famously advocates an 'original relation to the universe,' Emerson's lecture on Chaucer, given on November 26, 1835, antithetically proclaims: 'There never was an original writer. Each is a link in an endless chain' (74). While mid-nineteenth-century

American writers and scholars apparently looked to Europe for, if not a standard to innovate beyond (as has been the orthodoxy of Americanist nineteenth-centuryists), a tradition of which to claim a part, the transatlantic American literatures before 1815 would seem to have been discounted, only until recent decades, from the American (or transatlantic, or extended-British) literary tradition.

Doubtlessly this historical exclusion has had much to do with the cultural and spatial variations of “America” that Giles acknowledges as fundamental to our understanding of a “global remapping” of American literature, such that even, as Giles demonstrates, the thoroughly Americanized literatures of the mid-nineteenth-century US were regularly and explicitly tied to British literary roots. But we might consider the possibility that the overarching “American” narrative that Matthiessen imposed upon the likes of Emerson, Whitman, Hawthorne, and Thoreau—comprised of what Giles describes as “canonical narratives of liberal individualism that epitomised patriotic values”—has its romantic roots in the eighteenth-century rise of the American novel, a tradition that was itself too heavily invested in the quixotic narrative to ignore the resonances of the quixotic narrative tradition in scholarly and writerly articulations of nineteenth- and twentieth-century American Romanticism, from Emerson to Matthiessen and beyond.

When William Hedges considers the possibility that Washington Irving's *A History of New York*, written in 1809 and placed as such somewhere in the margin between “early-American literature” and “American Romanticism,” is proto-Romantic, not “a seminal work” of American Romanticism, but influential “on certain later American texts,” we get a sense of the historical continuity of literary progress and innovation that Emerson touches on in his lectures on Chaucer (Hedges 163). Our sense is that such links are always present, the problem being not whether such links exist, but how, precisely, to characterize them. Notwithstanding the semi-quixotic aspects of American novels like *Moby Dick* and *Huckleberry Finn*, the romanticized conceptions of Emersonian self-

reliance, Whitmanesque communion with the natural world, or Thoreauvian self-isolation, so historically abundant in Americanist scholarship in large part because of the nationalist projects of scholars who inaugurated the “American Renaissance” and “American Romanticism,” evince a strikingly quixotic combination of aloofness, idealism, and exceptionalism. Far from being nationalizing projects themselves, no more so than were any of the early-American quixotic narratives that I have discussed in this study, the seminal texts of the inaugural days of American literature reflect the quixotic roots of early-American literature, as well as the exceptionalist roots of quixotism. We can see in characterizations of Emerson, in what Jeffrey Steele identifies as the “Emerson-ghost” that has “haunted” “studies of the American Renaissance” with “Emerson's possessive investment in individualism,” the bookish high-mindedness of Captain Farrago (and Parson Adams), and in Melville's Captain Ahab the quixotic adventurousness of Updike Underhill (and Lemuel Gulliver); and we can plausibly trace, as Olin Harris Moore did in 1922, “the influence of Cervantes upon Mark Twain,” an influence that passes through an eighteenth-century Atlantic literary tradition (Steele 33; Moore 322). While this study goes only so far in its conclusion as to gesture toward the possibilities of locating in the inaugural period of American literature the roots of quixotic exceptionalism, such possibilities point toward new understandings of the role of quixotism in American and transatlantic literary history beyond the eighteenth-century formation of the US state. As nineteenth-century America sought its Manifest Destiny across the North American continent, and American literary scholars and luminaries looked to inaugurate a thing called “American literature,” the specter of Don Quixote, once again, rattled his lance.

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