

Introduction: Its, Parts, Wholes, and the Eighteenth-Century Self

This book centers on the strange transformation of things into a powerful vocabulary of selfhood during eighteenth-century England's rise to a global market economy. As exotic and manufactured commodities filled its social landscape, eighteenth-century England's human inhabitants encountered new tools for devising novel versions of the self. Within this world of goods, the centrality of the object—as manifested in the material goods themselves, the idealized and ideologically shaped models of the self, and most generally, the perception of a thing—created a rich and exotic idiom for selfhood. Indeed, the eighteenth-century self reached its most lively articulation through the material objects we traditionally consider as trivial imitations or supplements of the human: dolls, machines, puppets, wigs, muffs, hats, pens, letters, bound books, and fictional narratives. Within England's rapidly expanding market culture, these newly prevalent artifacts not only mirrored and symbolized the self, but also became identifiable as the self itself. Imitated by humans, as well as ingeniously imitating them, the anthropomorphized objects of my study created new understandings of subjectivity that have endured as decisive attributes of modern life. Not least are its powerful fictions of the self as a malleable commodity on one hand, and an object of empirical investigation on the other.

Bernard Mandeville in *The Fable of the Bees* introduces the moral complexities introduced in eighteenth-century England's commodity culture when he attributes "the Wealth, the Glory and the worldly Greatness of Nations" to human vanity and its attendant lust for commodities. "It is the sensual Courtier that sets no Limits to his Luxury, the Fickle Strumpet that invents new Fashions every Week; the haughty Duchess that in Equipage, Entertainments, and all her Behaviour would imitate a Princess; the profuse Rake and lavish heir, that scatter about their Money

without Wit or Judgment, buy every thing they see, and either destroy or give it away the next Day,” and not peaceful and charitable Men, free of desires, who “are the Prey and proper Food” of the “full grown Leviathan” that constitutes a “Great and Wealthy” nation.¹ Mandeville emphasizes that it is not just desire, but mimetic desire that propels industry and trade, when he describes vanity as a condition in which men and women elicit a “fondness for imitation” as well as a need to “appear what every body sees they are not” (“A Search into the Nature of Society,” *Fable I*, 358).

So central did the acquisition and display of objects become to forming the self—and invariably a feminine self—that objects threatened to displace the subject as a locus for selfhood in eighteenth-century England. The growing institutions of prostitution and slavery in the eighteenth century, for example, illustrate most radically how human beings partook of the grammar of trade by becoming commodities themselves. And yet such confusions between people and things took place on a more universal level as the very condition of consumer desire. The relationship I distinguish between “subject” and “object” is mainly a grammatical one as demonstrated in Mandeville’s division between the “wishing self” and the “wish’d for self.” Relegating them to positions that can be described by the rules of grammar—subject and object, active and passive—Mandeville stakes out two versions of the self that commercial society creates: “It is the Self we wish well to; and therefore we cannot wish for Change in ourselves, but with a Proviso, that . . . that Part of us, that wishes, should still remain: for take away that Consciousness you had of yourself, whilst you was wishing, and tell me pray, what part of you it is, that could be the better for the Alteration you wish’d for?” (*Fable II*, 137). In other words, Mandeville’s subject, the “wishing self,” in entertaining fantasies about an idealized and improved self, runs the risk of being replaced by the object of its desire, the “wish’d for self.”

An early example for how eighteenth-century subjects registered the category of “object” as a constituent of selfhood appears in Locke’s exploration of identity and diversity in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. While describing the self as “that conscious thinking thing . . . conscious of Pleasure and Pain,” Locke concedes that even “the little finger is as much a part of it *self*” insofar as it also plays a role in

forming consciousness. However, "Upon separation of this little Finger, should this consciousness go along with the little Finger, and leave the rest of the Body, 'tis evident the little Finger would be the *Person*, the *same Person*; and *self* then would have nothing to do with the rest of the Body."² Locke's ironic hypothesis raises the possibility, or the threat, of radically objectifying the self in any effort to formulate self-consciousness.

Perhaps the most vivid examples for human identity's susceptibility to becoming embodied in inanimate objects lie in the period's satirical representations of inanimate objects either "coming to life" or carrying traits of human subjecthood. Alexander Pope's mock-epic poem *The Rape of the Lock* derives its formally subversive effects not only from placing satirical emphasis on a lock of hair, but also in depicting "The Cave of Spleen" as a fantasy space where "living teapots stand," jars "sigh," and a goose-pie "talks."³ Hogarth's print "Royalty, Episcopacy, and Law," or, "Inhabitants of ye Moon" satirizes contemporary politics by drawing a portrait of the royal family as figures composed almost entirely of inanimate objects: the king's head is a guinea, the bishop's a Jew's harp, the judge's a gavel, and the lady-in-waiting, in addition to a teapot for her head, has a fan for her torso (see Figure 1.1).⁴

Other spectacles of humans transformed into commodified and consumable objects arose in the popularity of dolls, waxworks, and automata as forms of entertainment, thus demonstrating the period's fascination with "man-made" versions of the human, as well as objects made to look like the human. While the act of constructing a self-moving doll indicated a wondrous advancement in science and technology, and while dolls in general played important roles in developing a new market for fashion and leisure, automata and dolls also represented the growing complexity of modern subjectivity. Complicating notions of agency and mastery in fashioning the self, the prevalence of dolls in eighteenth-century culture shows how the modern subject, through continually striving to objectify and construct its qualities of presence and experience, leaves the self both pleasingly and distressingly "a thing."

At this same moment, the novel as a literary form appeared to embody and turn into an object the experience of life itself. In representing an individual psychology and recording "the contingencies and changing valences of modern life," it could not help but turn life into an object.⁵ The



*Some of the Principal Inhabitants of the MOON as they
Were Perfectly Discover'd by a Telescope brought to it's Greatest
Perfection since it's last Eclipse Exactly Engraved from the
Objects, whereby it's Curious may Guess at their Religion
Manners, &c.*

FIGURE 1.1. William Hogarth, "Royalty, Episcopacy and Law," or "Inhabitants of the Moon," ca. 1724–1725. Courtesy of the William Ready Division of Archives and Special Collections, Mills Library, McMaster University.

novel as a literary form—both in its material status as a book, a thing that binds printed paper, and as a purported “container” of an individual subjectivity and the objects that chart and surround it—operates in a fashion similar to the sacks and pockets that hold the Laputians’ tools for language in *Gulliver’s Travels*. As it foregrounds the status of objects by using them to express qualities of individual experience—Richardson’s catalogues of Pamela’s bundles of clothing and Defoe’s inventories of Moll’s stolen goods are two examples—and by being an object itself, the eighteenth-century English novel self-consciously incorporates the tools and language of “objecthood” as well as objectivity. Even as the language of early novels stayed rooted in the factual and historical modes that seventeenth-century natural philosophy advised for all written prose by incorporating meticulous rendition of circumstantial details, neutrality of narration, and adherence to verisimilitude, it flew in the face of accepted epistemologies and literary standards by being essentially about events that never happened and people who never existed. Such textual masquerades can be traced in the way that the early novel often labeled itself as a “history” of an individual subject.⁶ By virtue of ordering subjective experience into the language of truth throughout its narratives, the early English novel masqueraded subjectivity as an objective construct.

This effect was a surprising, and above all, novel one. Eighteenth-century English readers, who themselves were turning into something new, were not used to seeing the mimetic principles of poetry and drama applied toward constructing the psychological interiority and reflexivity that became the novel’s distinguishing features.⁷ Narrative tools contributed to this technology, transforming the way texts about the human subject were written, much in the same way the period’s consumer culture and fashions heightened human subjects’ potential to become malleable as social texts. In this way, while partaking of the new science’s experimental program and factual language, the novel collaborated with consumer society’s fictional lure of promising a new and ideal self that based itself in the material of everyday life, from domestic objects to daily fashions. An anonymous critic of the “new species of literature” exemplified by the works of Henry Fielding, figures the formative novel’s mixture of romance and history as a process of exchange: “For chrystal Palaces and winged Horses, we find homely Cots and ambling Nags; and instead of Impossibility, what we experience every Day.”⁸

While romance with its extravagant plots and characters constitutes a “strange monster” and “prose run mad” for this critic, its offshoot, a yet unnamed genre, proved itself more novel as “a lively Representative of real Life.”⁹ In such a capacity, the novel provides its author with the opportunity to play the role of a collector in choosing what aspects of “real life” to exhibit. According to Samuel Johnson in *Rambler* 4, authors of the formative novel are not so much “at liberty” to “invent” but “to select objects” of “real life.” Those objects, “cull[ed] from the mass of mankind,” warrant close “attention” and have much in common with “a diamond” that is “polished by art, and placed in such a situation as to display that luster which before was buried among common stones.”¹⁰ The novel itself, like the natural oddities that packed the curiosity cabinets of the scientific community, appeared as an alluring object to eighteenth-century readers precisely because it engaged in two simultaneously modern projects: objectifying the self and deepening its interior reaches in doing so.

Perhaps the most immediate and material example of the crossings between literature and technology that pervaded the eighteenth-century novel is the notion of “character.” As Deidre Lynch reminds us in *The Economy of Character*, the pliancy of the eighteenth-century notion of character, the fictional representation of a person, that is, hinged on a pun: the “imaginary people” that novelists produced were entwined with Defoe’s definition in *An Essay on Literature* (1726) for character: “types impressing their Forms on Paper by Punction or the Work of an Engine.”¹¹ This pun heightens our understanding that the tactile properties of fiction, derived from *fingere*, a fabricating of the mind and the hands, resonated both in the making of eighteenth-century novels and with human subjects. Joseph Moxon, author of *Mechanick Exercises: Or, the Doctrine of Handy-Works Applied to the Art of Printing* (1683), advances this notion by claiming that the typographer was the “Soul [who] by his own Judgement, from solid reasoning with himself, can either perform, or direct others to perform from the beginning to the end, all the Handy-works and Physical Operations relating to Typographie.” Moxon, in short, believed that the cutting of letters, so crucial to the mechanical production of books, was a “philosophical” project. Throughout my own project I explore how the eighteenth-century novel, situating itself in these conflicts between self

and object and mind and machine, produced the self not only as a textual construct, but as a deeply material and even mechanical one.

As I demonstrate how the eighteenth-century English novel innovated representations of subjectivity in conjunction with contemporary languages of objectivity, I draw on eighteenth-century philosophy, imperialism, religion, libertinism, political economy, consumerism, conduct literature, and the cult of sensibility. Common to all of these discourses is an overriding approach to objects as a means not only for acquiring knowledge of self and others, but also for acquiring the self. My study stresses that in the eighteenth-century, the language of objects constituted a way of defining the self through things. In doing so, it positions the literary genre that began to be called “the novel” in eighteenth-century England as a fetishized commodity bespeaking human passions, commensurate in value and influence with an array of other new commodity objects. In its own status as a “new” literary form that turned the experience of life into a curiously lifelike object of psychological and circumstantial plausibility, the novel shared a vital relationship with other objects of market culture positing subjectivity. Throughout individual chapters on each object—novel, instrument, fetish, doll, automaton, and puppet—I uncover how both things and textual representations share an intense desire to penetrate and embody an authentic human and predominantly female interiority through complex mimetic strategies. That so many popular and definitive novels of the age were written by male authors impersonating female subjects (Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana*, Richardson’s *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, and Cleland’s *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* are some examples), suggests one of the guiding terms for the evolving genre was a textual desideratum for female interiority, in itself a novel territory for readers. Coinciding with the novel’s emphasis on materiality and material objects to render its reality effects, then, was an implicit desire to realize the human subject as a female one, thus suggesting the pervasive and diverse connections between women and things themselves throughout the eighteenth century.

By no means is it a new argument to assert the relationship between the developing novel of realism and the rise of consumer culture and empiricist epistemologies, as Ian Watt in *The Rise of the Novel* had done

with considerable influence, nor is it now uncommon to seek connections between the material culture and literature of the period.¹² My study, however, rewrites both past and more recent approaches to eighteenth-century literature by integrating the novel and its techniques within the lives of objects and their human subjects. It shows not only how the early novel has come to structure our experience of the world and the making of ourselves in that world, but also the idea that we can make ourselves at all. Important studies that follow and revise Watt's, such as Michael McKeon's *The Origins of the English Novel*, argue that its most decisive generic innovation lies in the way it blurs lines between reality and fiction.¹³ These studies, however, do not show how such categorical blurrings became a part of lived experience that worked in concert with ones taking place in contexts apparently remote from aesthetic and textual ones. This study does so by revealing how the nexus of terms derived from Latin words for making, forming, or producing artificially—fashion, fiction, fact, fetish—was far more densely entangled in eighteenth-century England's approaches to subjectivity, and its inherent thinghood, than has been realized.

In demonstrating these central yet overlooked correspondences between novels and consumer objects, I argue that the early novel's advancing models of verisimilitude worked as pivotal agents in a prehistory for Marx's inescapable narrative of commodity fetishism, whereby things possess human qualities and agency. As it historicizes the psychology of objects within the framework of eighteenth-century England's thriving consumer culture, *The Self and It* revises a story that others have viewed as originating in later centuries: in an age of Enlightenment, things indeed have the power to move, affect people's lives, and most of all, enable a genre of selfhood. This is a study of material objects in eighteenth-century England that shows how much the modern psyche—and its thrilling projections of "artificial life"—derive from the formation of the early novel, and the reciprocal activity between made things and invented identities that underlies it.

That our use of the word *novel*, according to Watt, was not fully established until after the latter half of the eighteenth century to denote a literary object and yet flourished as an adjective to describe cultural impressions, shows how the novel was well in place as a genre of experience

before it became a prominent genre of literature.¹⁴ If the eighteenth-century novel as a literary form appeared new or original, it was because it served as a form of mediating human subjectivity through an object—an object that “speaks for itself,” as Daniel Defoe put it in *Roxana*. Indeed, *Spectator* 478 takes this vision of an anthropomorphized book even further and foregrounds the relationship between books and dolls in the “Imaginary Repository for Fashions” it conceives and describes. In this institution for disciplined knowledge, books with “gilded Leaves and Covers” turn out to be boxes containing dolls that model every fashion ever invented. This project, in showing how the culture of novelty in eighteenth-century England collaborated with the novel as a literary form, permits two of its most distinct objects, mutually propelled by mimetic urges, to converse with each other. What results in the dialogue between book and doll is an understanding that “the novel” existed as a model for subjectivity, well before the novel as a literary genre came into full development. Indeed, when Joseph Addison in *Spectator* 412 claims that “everything that is new or uncommon raises a pleasure in the imagination, because it fills the soul with an agreeable surprise, gratifies its curiosity, and gives it an idea of which it was not before possessed,” he could easily be referring to the experience of reading novels, or encountering novel objects as operative vehicles of novelty.

One might argue that in an age where conceptions of “the self” were being radically objectified in philosophy, science, and literature, and increasingly conceived as prone to the material enhancements energetically promised by a consumer society, dolls naturally exerted a strong influence on the eighteenth-century popular imagination. Almost like children themselves—indeed, the child was a frequently invoked subject for the philosophical narrative of enlightened becoming—eighteenth-century consumers were discovering how to develop identities in a strange and newly object-laden world through striking fanciful and intense relationships with those objects. The objects that were made to look like human subjects, such as dolls and waxworks, were bound to exert influence when secular possibilities for creating and controlling versions of the self were becoming more common—whether through the objectifying procedures of scientific experiments, literary narrative, fashionable adornment, or musing on sensorial existence in time and space.

In its own displacements of abstract forms with concrete signs of subjectivity, the eighteenth-century novel as a material object was governed by a set of conventions that shaped its appearance and usage. As the market for decorative and fashionable objects swelled, so did the market for printed books. As manufactured articles put up for sale, novels as printed books, in fact, comprised the same market as that of fashion and luxury goods. By the time they appear in Jane Austen's works, circulating libraries function as signs to denote the fashionableness of a social setting. The unfinished novel *Sanditon* in particular indicates the glamour of the novel as a consumer object when describing a circulating library as affording "every thing; all the useless things in the world that could not be done without," and such "pretty temptations" as Frances Burney's *Camilla* alongside "drawers of rings and brooches."¹⁵

Such commensuration between book and bauble perhaps fell out of the smaller formats in which novels were published. Often appearing in duodecimo-sized volumes of about four by seven inches, novels were marketed and used as eminently portable books. As books in the eighteenth century were made available to a much wider range of readers than before, they also had greater capacity for intimacy with the individual reader's body. Typography also participated in a similar effort to accommodate the human figure and even its ineffable and absent parts. The row of asterisks to denote female genitalia in Sterne's novel and the symbol of the pointing finger representing Lovelace's epistolary invasions in Richardson's novel—as well as Tristram's own intrusions in Sterne's book—exemplify how print graphically renders the human body in eighteenth-century novels. Throughout the eighteenth century, books and body parts, much like Locke's own little finger, operate not so much as appendages, but as the very constituents of selfhood.

In the eighteenth century, things held fascination not only in themselves, but also in their ability to undergo transmutations. On this count the fetish is a persistent form of object in this project as it represents imaginative constructions of the self that are projected into social reality. At a basic level, fetishism is a powerful model for thinking about the acts of substitution and symbol formation that take place in our everyday lives. Furthermore, it compels us to take into account the historical and cultural

context in which we form our identities, while understanding that objects in themselves indicate specific human investments and values.

The model of the fetish I formulate and generate in this book, basing itself as much on eighteenth-century developments of the topic as on Marxian and Freudian formulations, approaches it as a particular kind of object that retains an opaque subjectivity. The repetition of its logic in eighteenth-century cultural discourses—arising in this book in commentaries on English fashion by Mandeville, Addison, Richard Steele, and Henry Fielding; in David Hume's study of religion; and in Charles de Brosses's pseudoanthropological treatise on the cult of fetishism—shows how permeable the realms between public and private spaces were throughout the period insofar as the fetish, in its psychoanalytic and even Marxian sense is "a story masquerading as an object."¹⁶ Thus, the fetish is a story about the relationship between humans and things. As such, it is a story that narrates the border condition between humans, things and their apparently disparate worlds.

From exotic products that cross bodies of land to manual, optical, and sexual instruments that bridge the organic and the mechanical parts of bodily being, borderlines and the process of becoming haunt eighteenth-century negotiations with the object world.¹⁷ The movements of the fetish represent, above all, a problem in Enlightenment standards of knowing. Eighteenth-century instruments of knowledge manifest perhaps the most compelling aspect of the fetish in their ability to bridge the fantastic and concrete, and to make the object world coextensive with human desire. Fetishism, liminal because it reifies abstract thought at the same time it endows objects with the fleeting qualities of the fantastic, pervaded eighteenth-century attempts to create and fulfill standards of objectivity in Enlightenment discourses of vision in science.

In basing selfhood on the status of material objects, the figures in my study—from Richardson, Burney, and Charke to libertines, female shoppers, people of fashion, and fetishists—regard things as transmutable, buoyant, and agentive. Addison describes this very ability to "converse with a picture, and find an agreeable companion in a statue" as the attributes of a "man of a polite imagination."¹⁸ Elsewhere in the same essay, he renders novelty, an aspect of the imagination, not only as a condition in

which objects move, but also as the human response of pain and pleasure when the object falls out of reach: “We are quickly tired with looking upon hills and valleys, where every thing continues fixt and settled in the same place and posture, but find our thoughts a little agitated and relieved at the sight of such objects as ever in motion, and sliding away from beneath the eyes of the beholder.”¹⁹ This statement presents an idea common to the eighteenth-century subjects in this book: objects move of their own accord as well as move the feelings of their would-be possessors and imitators. Not only this, the objects that exert the most influence on the individual psyche are those that, in resisting possession, possess the individual. True fetishes, they are as much objects of the material world as they are of the imagination. That such objects “slide away” from the view of reality comprises perhaps the most persistent fear for many of the subjects in this study, not least of all the writers who gave shape to the literary object we now call “the novel.”

Two types of objects govern the structure of this book: “part objects” that supplement aspects of the human, such as a dress or a hat, and anthropomorphized objects that replicate the human subject in its “totality,” such as a doll or a puppet. In following the dynamics of part-to-whole relationships, the object types reflect the classical relationship between metonymy and metaphor, as well as the Gulliverian dialectic between the miniature and the gigantic.²⁰ Indeed, the story about things as people and people as things in eighteenth-century England is a cultural enactment of terms that have always been central to literary and rhetorical studies. And what Roman Jakobson has claimed is the mode of the realist novel—metonymy with its contingent, accidental, and alienable connections, as opposed to metaphor’s essential ones—is also the procedure of commodity culture and its fetishism.²¹ Yet the processes by which things become subjects—whether in apostrophe, synecdoche, personification, or prosopopoeia—and by which printed words obtain and project “voice” have always been accepted in poetic practice. This book shows how the eighteenth-century novel’s most novel elements arise most powerfully in its translations of poetic norms into narrative practice. Furthermore, it shows how the advancements made in the eighteenth-century novel—from free indirect discourse and its own translation of subjective experience into objective language, to the manufacturing of voice for inanimate

things and invented identities—were made in collaboration with other material artifacts that posited lifelikeness, novelty, and subjectivity.

Chapter 1 explores how the idea of the novel as a cultural experience of novelty emerged concurrently with its solidification as a literary medium. That the global origins of England's early market culture share the same exotic background as Bishop Pierre-Daniel Huet's history of prose fiction in his influential *Treatise on Romance* indicates that novelty in eighteenth-century lives comprised as much an act of consuming strange things as reading them. Both cultural phenomenon and textual artifact, the novel introduced experiences of metamorphoses through staging encounters with alterity. Perhaps no other narrative exemplifies the entwined conditions of experiencing novelty and novel writing than Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688). The remainder of this chapter investigates how, as novelty's recurring partner, fashion operated as a powerful agent for fictions of eighteenth-century British subjectivity, and was regarded as the age of Enlightenment's own fetish. Alluring in its own novelty, fashion promised the attainment of an imagined self in everyday life. Daniel Defoe's *Roxana* brilliantly consolidates the various tensions that produced fashionable objects and the human subjects they made. A language replete with properties for manipulating the signs of gender and class that were constantly undergoing revision, the emergence of the fashion system in eighteenth-century England enabled objects to speak *for* people, including the object of the novel.

Chapter 2 examines the relationship between eighteenth-century affect and object relations by considering the story of sexual fetishism in Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747–1748) as a symptom of both libertine and novelistic ambitions. By obsessively acquiring objects and evidence of "true" feminine presence, both Richardson and the libertine character he invents register the fear of absence that threatens cultural and individual investments in surfaces and other material artifacts of being. This secret thread of fetishism running throughout Richardson's moralistic novel intersects with the eighteenth-century model of sensibility as a social presentation of emotions. Privileging the presence of "real" feeling through the body, sensibility often runs the risk of becoming fetishism as it turns the body and its parts into artifacts of interiority. Drawing closely the link between circumstance and circumscription, Richardson's acute anxiety

over circumscribing individual and gendered consciousness finds its outlet in the extravagant piling on of circumstantial details that contribute to the book's status as a prototype for the novel of domestic realism. In Richardson's novel, minute descriptions of Clarissa's status as a body—the very premise for defining her as exemplary and virtuous—become part of the fabric of seduction as conceived by Lovelace. Tracing the fetishistic strains of Richardson's novel illuminates the sexually constructivist properties of the novel of sensibility, and in turn, the affective and moral significance of fetishism. The extraordinary increase of letters, sentiments, and tears in *Clarissa* serves as the memorial to masculine creativity in its efforts to fill in the fissures and holes of everyday—and modern—life.

Chapter 3 maintains that the complex fascination with dolls in eighteenth-century culture—both life-size and smaller—held implications in constructing the female subject as a mimetic self suspended in a state of perpetual desire. At the same time the English novel was further developing its tradition of “formal realism,” the growing preoccupation with dolls in popular entertainment reflects a more general trend toward a culture of realism, and toward fulfilling the desire for re-creating “true” consciousness and “true” being through artifacts. Imitations of the human subject haunted the metropolitan scenes of pleasure and leisure throughout the century in the forms of puppet shows in public parks, automata museums, waxwork exhibitions, toyshops, and performing animals. While dolls as spectacles promoted entertainment and pleasure, they were often created initially to mourn and commemorate the dead, as the popular funerary dolls of royalty at Westminster Abbey attests. Furthermore, dolls functioned as figurative and literal models for eighteenth-century women, whose close readings of novels, conduct books, and fashion plates alike conditioned them to desire being another. In emulating fashion dolls, eighteenth-century women imitated objects already made to look human—and feminine. Functioning for women as an international traveling dummy, the fashion doll disseminated information in an age when the fashion press had not yet come into being. Noting how objects impose a “wish'd for self” in place of the “wishing self” in *Fable of the Bees* (1714–1732), Mandeville strikes upon the fashion doll's status as a consuming double for femininity. This mode of wishing discloses the psychic qualities of novelty: wishing in an age of consumerism, after all, demands new

objects to complete its meaning and function. And yet, to fulfill the wish is to cancel the subject who wishes, as well as the state of wishing itself.

Chapter 4 shows how the perpetual motion of female wishing and its nonreproductive effects contrast with the wonder that automata produced in eighteenth-century pleasure seekers. The growing absorption in what it means to be a machine produced a mechanics of affect. Burney indicates the cultural evolution of the automaton in the eighteenth century when, in her first novel *Evelina* (1778), venues such as Cox's Mechanical Museum featured as stopping points in the heroine's fashionable London excursions. Later, in *Camilla* (1796), the automaton figures not as a spectacle of pleasure but as a model of eighteenth-century femininity compromised and burdened by conduct book directives. Burney depicts women whose attempts to solidify their social positions are thwarted by their drives to spend their resources to the point of abjection. In Burney's world, the uncertainty of existing on social and psychic borderlines threatens to produce the self as an abject spectacle of automated being, divided from her individual and rational self. As Burney's journals and letters show, working with the novel form was fraught with technical and psychological difficulties. The intellectual and ideological background surrounding constructions of exemplary femininity poses an even greater challenge to the idea that women can innovate reality, proceeding by progression as opposed to repetition. Much like the automaton—whose smooth regularity it seems to disrupt—the underlying anguish of abjection in Burney's novels derive not only from the impossibility of establishing female identity as either subject or object, but also from its own status as textual representation.

Chapter 5 reveals that the mood of self-objectification is very different in the case of the self-proclaimed “oddity of fame” and “curiosity,” Charlotte Charke, and her projects of self-fashioning. Her work as a puppeteer implicates her propensities for theatrical and everyday cross-dressing while at the same time demonstrating her facility for manipulating voice, an integral feature of modern fiction. In *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Charlotte Charke* (1755), itself a strange object of self-commodification, Charke uses narrative to mediate a life that eluded final definition through her serial appropriations of different social personae. While enjoying popularity especially with women, Charke, puppets, and opera singers (the infamous castrati whose “property is their throats,”

according to Fielding) were also derided as “mere representatives” of men, as *Spectator* 14 puts it. The male organ, missing in all members of this family of cross-dressing puppeteers, castrated male singers, and inert wooden figures, placed them in a species closer to monsters, curiosities, and things. In these examples of “naked unaccommodated man”—both living and wooden—eighteenth-century subjects encountered their sexually indifferent but powerfully vocal doubles. Thus, Chapter 5 works to suggest that these figures collaborated with the work of the contemporary novel in their attempts to fabricate individual “voice” through media that fall outside the natural boundaries of the human.

Chapter 6, the concluding chapter, reveals how the equation of the desiring self to thing (id = it) as a function of novelty is the chief Enlightenment legacy to our commercial, and even psychoanalytic, culture. Indeed, the transmutation of the term *novelty* into the uncanny in Freud testifies to the transcultural and transhistorical continuity of thinking about the self as an object and its unceasing mechanism of making self and things strange. Just as Locke turned the space of the mind into a space to operate and to form, Freud transformed the self into a geography of different regions that remains inseparable from the material objects outside of it. In attempting to define a phenomenon that is above all a “subdued emotional impulse” and “a special core of feeling” in his essay “The ‘Uncanny’” (1919), Freud attributes great power to inanimate objects. As the concept of the uncanny indicates, with its incorporation of repetition in its very meaning, the process of making strange the objects of everyday life that was so definitive of novelty in eighteenth-century England has become registered as infinitely repeated and repeatable in Freud’s twentieth-century Austrian context. Indeed, as I show in my concluding chapter, objects of the Enlightenment and the trope of Enlightenment itself, once novel in their own context, have become uncanny.

Rife with references to dolls, automata, “painted ladies,” prostitutes, and fetishes, Freud’s essay perpetuates an attachment to themes that preoccupied eighteenth-century writers. Observing that the uncanny arises (almost automatically) when “the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is,” or when “a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes,” Freud revisits the dilemma that originally troubled the eighteenth century. “The

Enlightenment," dedicated to naturalizing superstition, supposedly ended the age of wonder, according to the intellectual movement's most notorious critics, Horkheimer and Adorno. But it may be that belief in miracles and sorcery died out only to become reborn in the wake of eighteenth-century consumerism. In an age of Enlightenment, and then in an age of psychoanalysis, objects indeed have the power to move, affect people's lives, and most of all, enable a fictional genre of living.

The Self and It presents the literary genre of the novel as a vital aspect of Western cultural and material history. It asks that we reevaluate our assumptions about the position of literature in both our intellectual and daily encounters with the medium. In drawing on artifacts of material culture alongside literary texts and various nonfictional treatises, it questions established theories of knowledge and develops new ones. What is the relationship between material objects, literary texts and historically modulated forms of affect? How might the relationship transform what we assume about the materials and categories of lived experience? Such questions expand the importance of literature because it identifies the novel as a constitutive element within a movement long identified as central to eighteenth-century culture, if not modern culture in general: their materialist structures of thinking, feeling, and indeed, writing.