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MARIVAUX TRANSLATED AND NATURALIZED: SYSTEMIC CONTRARIES IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH FICTION

IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY Britain, critics and novelists referred, not a few times, to the French romancier, Marivaux, with respect as well as hauteur, with keen admiration as well as nationalistic pique. This essay questions why he figured so prominently in British literary history of the period. The answers provide a context for interpreting the curiously ambivalent stance towards Marivaux in the works of Fielding, Burney, and Richardson: their stance helps uncover the nationalism of eighteenth-century British fiction. More than they conceded, Fielding, Burney and Richardson were affected by the experiments with narrative mediation that Marivaux conducted in *Le Paysan Parvenu* and *La Vie de Marianne*. Since the scope of these experiments is clarified by the two major translations of these novels, this essay analyzes the ways in which they were rendered into English: Marivaux's texts were adapted and naturalized in a manner exposing the polarities which inform and define British fiction when viewed as a complex, institutional system. The essay closes by discussing the polar aspects of eighteenth-century fiction evidenced by comparing Sterne and Defoe to Marivaux: systemic relations between him and the British writers query those truisms of literary history which declare Sterne to be atypical and Defoe marginal.[1]

Since eighteenth-century British writers assumed that literary reflects cultural history, they commonly viewed Marivaux as a prominent figure, taking him to be a cultural index. In 1763 Adam Smith opined that the French monarchy had reached "its greatest pitch of glory," resembling Rome in "the reign of Trajan" (108). At times of national security when a state is flourishingly strong, its citizens, according to Smith, turn away from "the hurry of life" to "the motions of the human mind." In this context, he parallels Marivaux's achievements to those of Tacitus, the innovative historian who, rather than record events, stressed the psychological effects of narration. Unconcerned that their writing is "of so contrary a nature,"

[1] Dr. Vivien Bosley's kind invitation to present a paper to the Marivaux Colloquium held at the University of Alberta in 1988 sparked my interest in the French novelist. The result, "Marivaux and England: Fictional Exchange," was published in *Le Triomphe de Marivaux* (57-68). The present article is a much expanded and reconceived version of the first. I am grateful to Professor Milan V. Dimié for encouraging me to rewrite it in terms of systemic concepts of literature. I am indebted in this regard to the works of Hawkes, of Lambert and van Gorp, and of Dimié and Garstin cited in the bibliography. In this essay, I employ the words "systematic" and "systemic" distinctly. The first adjective applies, to the construction of a system from the maker's external viewpoint, the second to the components of a single system and to the interactions of plural systems viewed structurally, organically, and internally. My goal is to compare and contrast the contradictory ways in which British eighteenth-century writers systematized literary history with the dialectical or contrary forces that sustain it as a set of literary and cultural systems.

Smith holds that their works are equally "at great pains to account for every event by the temper and internal disposition of the several actors, in disquisitions that approach near to metaphysical ones." The inward turn of their writing, its charting of mental territories, is a corollary for Smith of imperial power, national harmony, and domestic comforts. Hugh Blair likewise lauds the romancier: the "works of Marivaux, especially his Marianne, discover great refinement of thought, great penetration into human nature, and paint, with a delicate pencil, some of the nicest shades and features in the distinction of characters." Blair makes this claim in 1783 when commending French authors for reforming the "spirit of Novel Writing": he judges that they make imitation of life and character, social and psychological detail, rightly the major concern of fiction. Whereas French novels are "full of good sense, and instructive knowledge of the world," British novelists are "inferior"; they neither "relate so agreeably, nor draw characters with so much delicacy." Granting that Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding write excellently, Blair takes Marivaux's superior narrative to be a sign of France's greater cultural power (2: 308-09).

Viewed by Smith and Blair as an ultimate symbol of the superior political civilization and cultural sensibility of France which allowed them to adopt a systematically negative stance towards domestic literary history, Marivaux was not found so exceptional nor referred to for such programmatic reasons by all British commentators. William Warburton, for one, while anticipating Smith and Blair in his appreciation of the psychological refinement of romance, allows patriotism to modify his connection of fictional reform to cultural supremacy. Like Smith and Blair, he eulogizes the French, "This great People (to whom, it must be owned, every Branch of Science has been infinitely indebted)," because they found that, by chastely imitating "real Life and Manners," their fiction amused refined minds and promoted refinement, too (4: 169). His celebration of French culture, however, does not induce him to find Marivaux incomparable: he says that Fielding is foremost with Marivaux and argues that, through their superior "comic art," they perfected romance equally. For Warburton, praise of French cultural superiority involves equivalent – and implicitly contrary - praise of Britain and Fielding. Lauding Fielding in terms of Marivaux, Warburton not only implies Britain's growing eminence but promotes the comparability of British and French culture.

Resistance to French cultural superiority and to the genre of romance lies behind James Beattie's remarks about Marivaux. Since he condemns romances as a "dangerous recreation," Beattie's appreciation of the French writer is cool and unenthusiastic. He depreciates romances because they "corrupt the heart, and stimulate the passions," breed "a dislike of history" and "substantial" ideas, and fill "the mind with extravagant thoughts" and "criminal propensities." He admits Marivaux's writing is humorous and witty and that his style is simple, natural, and agreeable, but pedagogical interest in cognition stops him turning Marivaux into a cultural symbol. Since, according to Beattie, romances neither appeal to mature

minds nor refine ideas, he holds that Marivaux's works, to the extent they possess "a moral tendency," may be read "without danger" (570-73). Ignoring claims that Marivaux's novels experimentally chart the mental world, thus denying the romancier a presence in the British literary system, Beattie defends a form of rational morality that devalues French culture.

If, in their apologies for Marivaux, Thomas Gray and Horace Walpole uphold their favourite writer as an emblem of a superior culture, to them this culture is past, not actual: their praise of Marivaux, in relegating British literary achievement, detracts, too, from French rational optimism. Writing to Richard West about Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, Gray must subordinate the British to the French author. With an appreciation of fictional affectiveness remote from Beattie's distrust, Gray aims to be just. Judging some of Fielding's incidents "ill laid and without invention," he lauds his humorous depiction of nature and people: his "light things" are as "weighty" and "useful" as "grave discourses" about passions and the mind. Whereas Beattie condemns fiction for subverting philosophy, Gray celebrates Fielding's novel for its emotional, anti-rational and non-schematic appeal. Yet, for Gray the greatest "paradisiacal pleasure" is the prospect of reading "eternal new romances of Marivaux and Crebillon" (388). Gray's sense that Marivaux better than Fielding exemplifies the paradox of literary affectiveness matches Mrs. Mary Collyer's sentiments in the preface to her translation of *La Vie de Marianne*. For her, "the love of pleasure is the most natural and easy inlet to young minds," whereas "grave and serious discourses may sometimes fail of the intended effect" (4).[2] To the extent that Gray and Mrs. Collyer sustain the paradox that bathos may prove elevating, their celebration of Marivaux is informed by the conviction that he achieved the highest sensibility and that to belittle him in the name of systematic reason is culturally regressive.

A letter from Walpole to Gray on 19 November 1765, written twenty years after Gray's to West, confirms that, if Marivaux still served as an emblem of French culture, his image was mediated by changing views about intellectual progress in France. Walpole's letter, criticizing the French for lacking delicacy and gaiety, objects to the dominance of the *philosophes* whom he finds superficial, fanatical, dull, and overbearing. Signs of French culture's decline for Walpole are that Crebillon was out of fashion and that Marivaux had been turned into a "proverb." He reports disgustedly that the newly coined words "marivauder and marivaudage" are synonyms for "being prolix and tiresome" (2: 313). His voicing of this anti-French praise of Marivaux, no more than three years after Smith celebrated the romancier's high status as an emblem of contemporary French culture, shows that reactions to Marivaux reflect the ideological differences of British writers.

[2] In her preface, Mrs. Collyer says Marivaux's novel "is a production that reflects a glory on the French nation" (5). Whereas she translated the novel in 1743, Grays letter to West dates from April 1742. Gray's and Collyer's remarks about pedagogy and Marivaux as a national, cultural emblem are close in spirit. Mrs. Collyer's translation is the one cited throughout this article.

The contrasting ways in which they honour the French writer say as much about the British literary system as about culture in France: Walpole's lament for the abuse of Marivaux implies that he does not think highly of British culture, if it also means he regards it less unfavourably than he does that of Enlightenment France.

The systemic ambivalences and rival cultural ideologies that emanate from eighteenth-century British views of Marivaux may be summarized by comparing and contrasting how Clara Reeve and Lord Chesterfield praise him. In her history of romance, Reeve, like her predecessors, finds the Frenchman's works "of capital merit"; they are "pictures of real life and manners" and their sentiments and language are "highly polished." But, if *La Vie de Marianne* is praiseworthy for unifying the demands of realism and refinement, she is less generous to *Le Paysan Parvenu*: this work is "somewhat exceptionable"; its "French morality is not suitable to an old English palate" (129). Her view problematically implies that the novels have distinct moral systems: without explanation, she asserts that one is natural and the other too French. It is unclear how Marivaux could have adopted an acceptable morality in *La Vie de Marianne* when *Le Paysan Parvenu* shows that French morality is neither pure nor traditional. If Reeve's variable estimates of French morality, her unrelated internal and external views, are not held by Chesterfield, he is contrary about Marivaux on other grounds. Affecting Enlightenment positivism, he modifies his admiration by pretending to be superior to the Frenchman's over-refinement. In one letter, he declares Marivaux "a beaucoup étudié et connoit bien le cœur, peut-être même un peu trop." In another, he demeans the writer's emotionalism by saying, of his ideas about the heart, that he "refines so much upon its *plis* and *replis*, and describes them so affectedly, that he often is unintelligible to his readers, and sometimes so I dare say to himself?"[3] If Reeve's patriotic stance towards morality explains her systematic resistance to French rational optimism and her ambivalence to Marivaux, Chesterfield's assimilation of contemporary French urbanity makes him treat the romancier condescendingly and embrace that modish French dismissiveness which Walpole decried.

The contrary grounds on which British authors praised Marivaux imply that literary history, far from constituting a single, uniform system, evolves for political and cultural reasons quite likely to be systemically at odds with one another. The critically divergent views in eighteenth-century Britain about the romancier also suggest that, if literary history is an institution, it may not be defined by commonsensical geographical and historical categories: it is a system involving political and cultural ideologies which, striving against one another to appear systems in their own right, pretend to avoid inevitable arbitrariness. We may advance the idea that literary history is a system containing competing systems and propose that it requires a disciplined eclectic and dialectical stance by examining

[3] The letters were written in December 1750 and April 1751 respectively (Stanhope 1 384, 431). Chesterfield probably met Marivaux thirty years earlier (Desvignes-Parent 25, 32).

the two most extended critical essays on Marivaux.[4] The first is a two-part article in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for 1749 comparing the French author to Richardson, the second is Arthur Murphy's preface to *The Works of Henry Fielding*, published in 1762, comparing him to Fielding. These essays, partly since opinion was so divided about the relative merits of the British authors, offer sharp insights into the function of literary history. Placing Marivaux below Richardson and Fielding on opposing literary but similar cultural grounds, they indicate that, far from abstractly analyzing writers, literary history strategically compares them, in the process systemically transposing cultural ideology into moral language.

The essay in *The Gentleman's Magazine* quite typically holds that *Le Paysan Parvenu* and *La Vie de Marianne*, since they are "paintings after life," reformed French romance, returning it to "nature." Sharing Reeve's view of Marivaux's admirable verisimilitude, this unknown writer does not, however, think the two works are morally distinctive. Moreover, whereas Chesterfield accuses Marivaux of excessive concern with psychological precision, this writer insists Marivaux lacked the courage to detail "private and domestic" life. For *The Gentleman's Magazine*'s writer, the difference between the representation of phenomena and mental ideas is an issue. Unlike both Smith who appreciates the inward turn of Marivaux's narratives and Chesterfield who thinks the romancier is so precise psychologically that he dissolves phenomenal certainty, this writer claims that Marivaux refuses to exhibit the "particulars which constitute a virtuous life": he offers no "representation of the minutiae of Virtue" to match Richardson in *Clarissa*. Starting from a position lauding Marivaux's representationalism, the writer in *The Gentleman's Magazine* ends up dispraising it. While he bases his criticism on generic terms, underlying these formal criteria are national and religious values. If *La Vie de Marianne* is a "kind of chronicle, in which some memorable adventures are well described," *Clarissa* is "an history, where the events of her life follow each other in an uninterrupted succession." The purposeful arbitrariness of the British critic, the fact that his generic terms are far less categorical than he pretends, becomes quite obvious when, despite his commendation of Marivaux's realization of nature, he says that Richardson "paints nature, and nature alone." Setting aside his failure to see that *Clarissa* involves a complicated editorial reconstruction, this critic's view that French romances never mention God gets at the root of his preference for Richardson and of his liking of the fact that Clarissa always confesses her religious duty. His remarks about narrative viewpoint, no more precise than his generic commentary, also testify to religious prejudice. He declares that Marivaux's perspective is less plausible than Richardson's because French romances are improbably retrospective: they "suppose the history to be written after the series of events is closed by the catastrophe." Although he concedes the epistolary form to be improbable since it assumes that characters

[4] "The very use of the concept of system implies that we are aware of conflicts and parallelisms between systems and sub-systems" (Lambert 51).

share an "uncommon taste" for "immediately committing" everything to paper, he still claims to find writing-to-the-moment more credible. The weakness of his reasons for doing so becomes inescapable when he praises Richardson's religious effects in Clarissa. For he says, on the one hand, that the novel delineates "the duties peculiar to every hour of a life of perfect virtue" and, on the other, that the heroine is in the "same station of life" as the reader so that the reflections formed by her "unshaken constancy" are "within the reach of every capacity." There is religious complacency in the view that Clarissa is both a perfect human and a model easily imitated by all readers.[5]

His preface evidences that, like the critic in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Murphy endorses typically systematic views about Marivaux only to expose their ideological prejudices. Like Warburton, he at first grants that Fielding will be more respected by posterity for being the "illustrious rival" of Marivaux, that "excellent genius." With critical astuteness, he treats Marivaux as a satirist who targets dissimulation, cunning, and arrogance and exposes "the false pretences of assumed characters" and "the subtleties of hypocrisy and exterior religion" by way of promoting "the delicacies of real honour, and the sentiments of true virtue." However, this generous tone falters; he starts echoing Chesterfield rather than anticipating Smith. On praising Marivaux for not resting content to "copy" appearances and for tracing the "internal movements" of passions with curious penetration, Murphy alleges that the romancier too much makes narrative an exploratory process: he is "over-solicitous" and "over-curious." The "traces" Marivaux depicts "grow minute and almost imperceptible": so constantly touched and retouched are they that they grow delicate and lose their outline. Murphy prefers the logical rules on which Fielding bases his "comic fable" to the commitment to "all the finer features of the mind" which Marivaux makes in his "fictitious biography." His bold plots, correct style, and efficient characterization make Fielding a superior comic writer to Marivaux who works at his "air of originality" too proudly. The Frenchman uncovers "nicer and more subtle workings of the mind" and heart, but Fielding more strongly rouses the reader's curiosity (1: 42-44).

The opposing grounds on which *The Gentleman's Magazine* and Murphy base the British novelists' superiority, namely, that the former claims Marivaux avoids verisimilitude, preferring Richardson's novels for embodying Christian ethics, while Murphy faults his elaborate psychological detail and praises Fielding's Aristotelean sense of plot, suggest that literary nationalism obliges British critics to disparage Marivaux's narrative experiments. If, then, Marivaux was the systematic focus of British literary history, the varying and contradictory ways he was honoured and dispraised expose tensions within the conscious and unconscious ideology of that system. How Fielding and Burney invoke Marivaux in their novels, by showing they do not fully admit their indebtedness, further exposes conflicts in

[5] *The Gentleman's Magazine* 19 (1749): 245-46 and 345-49.

that system, proving that creative writers, like critics, exploited and were trapped by unresolved ideological and systemic tensions.

Not obviously nationalistic in his allusions to the French writer, Fielding appreciates Marivaux's rhetorical engagement of the reader. Yet, the vagueness of the allusions, in concealing the range of motifs drawn from his predecessor, implies a patriotic bias. The authority he grants Marivaux is circumscribed. He cites the romancier's best known works in *Joseph Andrews* when he marks his own writing off from romance and chronicle. Without admitting that Marivaux uses a similar demarcation, Fielding declares that he takes biography as a model for his comic novel, being more interested in typical than documentary truth.[6] By saying that "*Le Paisan Parvenu*" and the "history of Marianne" inspire him with techniques for making readers "contemplate their deformity," thereby reducing "public shame" through "private mortification" (158), he assigns rhetorical humanism to the Frenchman without conceding that the latter's experiments with fictional biography undermine humanistic truths. As well as ignoring the critics' claims that Marivaux wrongly subjects plot to psychological detail, he does not admit that the Frenchman's ironic mode informs his own elaboration of the reading process. He similarly celebrates Marivaux, along with other writers, in *Tom Jones* for embodying the comic energy that induces readers to criticize themselves and to forgive their neighbours (2: 686). Yet, by suggesting Marivaux is a humanist who simply opposes moral self-deception, he is not forthright about the inspiration that he received. Evidence for this is the paradox that Fielding seeks to humble readers by placing himself in a literary canon alongside Marivaux, Shakespeare, and others. The self-assertion afforded by the reference to Marivaux helps to reveal Fielding's strategic cunning. If he does not openly treat the French author as one who figures prominently in cultural debates, his argument that Marivaux straightforwardly endorses Christian ethics calculatedly values nationalistic pride more highly than systemic awareness.

Like Fielding, Burney cites Marivaux in a mode the inconsistency of which raises questions about her acknowledged dependency upon him. In the preface to *Evelina*, she mentions him, along with Rousseau, Johnson, Fielding, Richardson and Smollett, as one who has rescued the novel from contempt (7-9). Her point of view is unsteady, however. Awareness of her novel's flaws induces her to put on the mantle of anonymity, yet she denounces the luxurious imagination of romances as though speaking univocally. She is, of course, mouthing truisms. Her insistence that originality is a paramount criterion of fiction is undermined when she says one may read her book without moral danger since she has based its characters on life and not art; such sentiments are commonplaces of fictional rhetoric. Her discrep-

[6] For a modern example of the strategic comparison of Fielding, Richardson and Marivaux, consider Green's views. Comparing Fielding to Marivaux in order to contrast Richardson and the French author, Green then suggests that Marivaux is much more subtle than Fielding (*Literary Ideas* 388-89). For Marivaux's experimental humanism, consult the study by Coulet and Gilot.

antly conventional insistence on originality is revealing in the light of her displacement of Marivaux: on repeating the list of writers whose authority she admits but whose influence she would avoid as much as possible, she omits his name. The erratically timid and aggressive tones of her preface heighten the omission, making her systematic imitation of the names and plot of *La Vie de Marianne* the more revealing about Marivaux's powerful, if undisclosed, systemic influence (*The Virtuous Orphan* xxxviii).

If Burney's displacement of Marivaux makes her nominal borrowings from him striking, it gives greater significance to her self-conscious experiments with narrative mediation. Throughout *Evelina*, she dramatizes the forms of writing, creating tensions, in the manner of Marivaux, between conduct-book didacticism and the relativizing power of autobiography.[7] The growing anxiety assigned to Evelina reflects Burney's sense of the absorbing complexity of the writing process. If, from the start, Evelina is an accurate commentator on social life whose naivety is supposedly not at odds with her innate percipience, she still discovers herself in the course of transcribing ideas and feelings. Initially sure that writing is just a form of speaking (26), she learns that script is reflexive and that shaping ideas in a journal is problematic; "melancholy phantasms" hurt self-expression (130). At moments unable to "journalise" because moods prevent her shaping thought (255), at others expression is blocked by the simultaneity of numerous ideas (239). Since experience and writing are mutually susceptible to emotional and mental disturbance, Evelina realizes that her pen may reveal things preferably kept undisclosed: she learns that correspondence entails a more intimate revelation than is comfortable. Forced by her journal to admit her snobbery and social awkwardness, she sees that writing constitutes, as well as assumes, identity and that, far from conveying meaning transparently, it requires interpretation. The letter apparently from Lord Orville, actually from Sir Clement Willoughby, confirms these points about mediation. However, the anxieties of script lead Evelina to metonymic ideas that help her to understand the personal value of mediation. To her guardian, Mr. Villars, Evelina becomes a "book" that needs a reading separate from her letters (263). To her lover, Lord Orville, she is a text, too (288): she learns about herself by reading in his face how he reads her person. The metonymic route by which she reaches a sense of mediation, selfhood, and the dialectic between revelation and concealment in writing terminates when she confesses that Orville's declaration of love is engraven on her heart but is unscriptible (352). In converting a naive letter-writer into someone whose identity depends on mediation, Burney explores the contraries of fictional autobiography, closely following in Marivaux's footsteps.

Far from making his narrative medium simply transparent in the way claimed by Murphy, Fielding, like Burney, pays heed to the psychological complexity of

[7] For a fine account of why the "significance of autobiography" should be sought for "beyond truth and falsity," see Georges Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography" (Olney 28-48).

writing and reading. His comic insistence on the fluctuations of narrative and identity suggests he is closer to the experimental stance of the French author than his conventional, humanist invocation of Marivaux indicates. His stance is not steadily third-person. Not only does he often use first-person pronouns but he constantly switches between the singular and plural forms, his changing stance complicating for readers the relation of individual and representative voices. Moreover, his style of addressing readers is amusingly problematic: in *Tom Jones*, if one moment angry at "reptiles of critics," he at the next calls the reader "my good reptile" and then simply "friend" (525-27). Anticipating Sterne, he variously stipulates readers' roles in *Tom Jones*, classifying them, for example, as young, curious, worthy or judicious. He also dramatizes point of view by adopting many social registers. If he asserts he is the "Founder of a new Province of Writing" (77) to pose as superior to the reader on the basis of jurisprudence, he also justifies the withholding of narrative information by speaking like a cautious, empirical philosopher (235).[8] Among his voices are those of monarch, pedant, preacher, and clown. His many stances heighten the reader's sense of mediation. Fielding's self-consciousness about authorial digression, rhetorical amplification, and plural viewpoints reveals that Murphy is blind to how his author generates literary rules for generic and affective purposes. By constantly differentiating narrative styles, Fielding approaches the ironic mode of Marivaux as much as he does Aristotelean concepts of plot. The allusions made by Burney and Fielding to Marivaux, since they are self-defensive as well as programmatic, evasive as well as creative, illustrate that novelists as much as critics uphold and are implicated by the literary system. Burney and Fielding champion the French author within an ideological framework that undervalues his narrative experiments: his exploratory, if not subversive, sense of mediation they subordinate to his traditional moral code. Ambiguity about French culture inhibits acknowledgement of their indebtedness: admiring him, they ridicule those who imitate French manners, associating such imitation with insensibility.[9] If single-mindedly hostile to things French, Richardson, like Burney and Fielding, manifests the contradictions of the British literary system. Often compared with Marivaux, Richardson never mentions him. The link between this evasiveness and hostility to French culture appears in a prefatory letter to *Pamela* opposing its "native Simplicity" to the "Strokes of Oratory" that "frenchify our English Solidity into Froth and Whip-syllabub" (7).[10] The link is also evident in the fact that Lovelace, the villain of *Clarissa*, resides for a "good while" at Versailles where he picks up the court's corrupt manners so that his na-

[8] I discuss Fielding's variable philosophical stance in "Empiricism and Judgment in Fielding's Tom Jones," *Ariel* 11 (July 1980): 3-21.

[9] If Lord Orville's refinement embraces knowledge of French culture (82), the fop, Mr. Lovel, represents Burney's sense of corrupt French manners (79). Fielding's doubts about French culture are evident in his characterization of Beau Didapper in *Joseph Andrews* and Lord Fellamar in *Tom Jones*. His doubts were informed by a keen opposition to Jacobitism.

[10] Pamela herself is disgusted by the French dances she learns (77).

tive land is to him merely a "plaguy island" (161, 261, 785). As an apologist for British morality, Richardson cannot bring himself to mention France and things French positively. The transcendence he gives his heroines also enables him to displace French culture. To the extent Pamela transforms society by converting her master and to the extent Clarissa plans her death so that she speaks from beyond the grave with the most powerful spiritual force conceivable, Richardson commits himself to a religious transcendence that is also political. By having the pious Pamela inspire congregations, since raised by God to be "useful in [her] Generation" (401, 407), and ensuring the "divine" Clarissa merits "beatification" (1369-70), he implies Britain's capacity for absolute spiritual purity. As his eulogists claim, his concern with transcendence is nationalistic. Still, his stress on typology in spiritual autobiography is balanced by an interest in the involvement of mediation and selfhood reminiscent of Marivaux: offsetting his propaganda on behalf of British perfectibility is a wish to explore narrative that reveals he did not ignore the French author.[11]

Richardson's experiments with the letter form defy the view of the writer in *The Gentleman's Magazine* that the genres adopted by Marivaux and the British author are distinct. Richardson problematizes epistolary rules. Pamela's and Clarissa's letters are not simply communicative and autobiographical. Unsure of reaching their audiences, his heroines are obliged to internalize the rules of writing: far from merely dashing their letters off, they transcribe them; copies are essential to identity. Postscripts, subscripts, and restartings *in medias res* confirm that, in extending and suspending epistolary rules, their writing is prescriptive as well as descriptive. Yet, if their letters effect consolation and self-discovery, they also endanger Pamela and Clarissa. Alert to the polarities of writerly mediation, Richardson makes his heroines' letters signify their vulnerability as well as their reform of society. Making them confront the material problems of writing, he obliges them to see that the pen must oppose social prejudice strategically if it is to defend religious truths. Because letters must be written and dispatched surreptitiously since likely to be forged or stolen, they are metonyms of their writers. The strategies involving concealment of letters on the person or in the landscape imply keen intuitions: Richardson realizes that the more he stresses writerly mediation the more he can celebrate his heroines' integrity and expatiate on their spiritual virtues.

Yet, since his style of narrative self-presentation seems to derive partly from Marivaux, Richardson's mediation is also unintentionally problematic. His dramatization of writing transforms letters into journal entries with extended autobiographical reference and counters the technique of writing to the moment. His heroines, when writing about themselves, often objectify those selves. In the manner of Jacob or Marianne, they describe their former appearances as if able to

[11] Warner's study of *Clarissa* explores the systemic tensions within Richardson's text to challenge the author's supposed humanist intentions.

stand outside themselves.[12] Thus, Pamela stresses her confused, guilty look when interrupted at her writing desk by Mr. B. (40) and describes how her heart throbs through her handkerchief when creeping shamefaced toward him (82). Another large and disjunctive distance between character's and narrator's point of view is met when she supposes how she looked to Mr. B. when he spied her, through the keyhole of the locked door, lying unconscious (42). The attack on Richardson's prurience in Fielding's *Shamela*, if unjust, indicates that his heroines are self-conscious narrators who generate sympathy for themselves by objectifying their former vulnerability.[13] Whereas Marivaux's autobiographical disjunctions effect comic irony, Richardson's are straightforward: Marivaux uses the disjunctions for reflexive ends, but Richardson's transparent concern for sympathy undervalues the recursive functions of mediation.

If his strategic objectification of his heroines reveals a systemic if not systematic indebtedness to Marivaux's ideas of autobiographical mediation, Richardson's willingness to use it without irony suggests a contradictory, as distinct from contrary, sense of mediation. His intrusions as compiler and editor also manifest an inconsistent attitude towards mediation: though he wants letters to stand in metonymically for his heroines, he undermines this symbolic mediation by intruding between the characters and readers, distracting the latter with a superior literary consciousness. That he overdetermines as well as undermines mediation further emphasizes his contradictoriness. With apparent unself-consciousness he makes his heroines address the medium of manuscript while ignorant about that of print. When Pamela, hardly able to hold a pen, describes her "crooked and trembling" lines (159-60) and Clarissa remarks "how some of the letters stagger more than others" (368), they make stylography personally symbolic in a medium seen by the reader as print, not script. Similarly, when Pamela, bent on moving the reader, refers to her "blotted" and tear-stained paper, she diverts notice from pathos to the intervening printing process that effaces the stains' textual significance (25). This confused attempt to make writerly mediation a simple, sentimental sign shows that Richardson works less hard than Marivaux to create dialectical tension between different images of mediation. If Pamela's letters prove she cannot be alone without a pen in hand while marriage to Mr. B. makes writing redundant (408), clearly Richardson values writing contradictorily: it is essential to identity but is transcended by marriage. Even as he insists on the absolute closure that Clarissa's letters give to her life and her spiritual transcendence, he must use Belford's voice to mediate her posthumous letters. Richardson wishes to make Clarissa's letters appear spiritually transcendent, yet, as he partly and inconsistently realizes, their spiritual force derives necessarily from textual mediation.

[12] Marshall shows how Marianne becomes a "victim of her own story" through self- objectification (54-63).

[13] The anonymous author of *Pamela Censured* similarly criticizes the novel's prurience (28, 32, 44).

To the extent Richardson incorporates into his novels the idea that writing is essential to identity, spiritual growth, and social reform and to the extent he relies, far more than he admits, on devices that Marivaux experimented within his fictional autobiography, we may perceive systemic strains within the institution of eighteenth-century British literature. By turning to Marivaux's devices, available to British writers in translation, we can better determine Richardson's unrealized contrariness: his undisclosed dependence on the French writer typefies an outlook that exploits mediation without being bound by its systemic constraints. To Richardson, text is open process as well as closed product; it is instrumental to selfhood yet ultimately that identity transcends text; it is both reconstituted by editors and naturally possesses a spiritually reforming integrity. Far from pretending, like Richardson, that mediation can be treated single-mindedly, Marivaux consistently propounds the notion that it involves competing systems: so, self-reference is both psychologically complex and inevitably comic. For Marivaux, the objectification of self in life and writing is not to be avoided, and self-presentation is strategic and illusory, its indeterminacy rendering moral and spiritual claims amusingly problematic.[14]

In the context of Richardson's ultimate wish to present his novels as signs of morally and spiritually transcendent characters, Marivaux's disinterest in fictional closure signals his keener interest in the paradoxes of autobiography which he manifests by widening narrative gaps. The social eminence enjoyed by Jacob and Marianne neither makes their writing redundant nor guarantees them control of their texts: circumstance does not govern their role as narrators, yet neither does writerly flexibility inscribe their identities unambivalently. When tempted to view writing as a transcription of life and as a confirmation of social identity, they are obliged by the autobiographical process to realize that writing is always a rhetorically strategic activity. Moreover, the experience of written discourse makes them see that, if instrumental to identity, writing also unravels selfhood: the necessary subjectivity of writerly mediation can only disturb unitary concepts of self. With a comically ironic vision that, if unglimpsed by Richardson, prefigures Sterne, Marivaux apparently enjoys making his narrators' humanly incomplete sense of the plurality of selfhood heighten the paradoxes of literary form and accentuate the contrariness of literary systems.[15]

In the course of seeking to record the past so as to justify and celebrate themselves, Jacob and Marianne discover that writing renders identity strangely elusive: narrative is more complex than anticipated. Affecting a frankness beyond artifice, they soon see, though not so clearly as the reader, that their observations and generalizations succumb to the contextualizing, relativizing conventions of writerly mediation. To a degree, they are forced to learn that recovery of their former

[14] Marivaux's delight in literary problems is well discussed by Rosbottom in terms of the "literature of compromise" (36-47).

[15] Greene argues that the paradoxical characterization of Jacob makes him an "open character" (193).

selves involves being exclusively secret: the paradox that revelation of self requires withholding of self is borne in on them. For Marivaux, the continuity of narrated and narrating self may not be assumed: the recovery of the former self entails a re-creative identification which obliges the autobiographer to move beyond fixed narrative perspectives (Rosbottom 220). Marivaux's view that the self is neither transcendent nor reflexively transparent seems to have prompted him to experiment with the contraries of mediation and to explore the impact on writing of tensions between conduct and transcription.

Jacob's autobiography begins with seemingly unchallengeable authority, yet within a few pages he is ensnared in writerly ironies.[16] Asserting that he has "never dissembled" the "Truth" of his birth, witness his autobiography's title, he claims that Heaven has rewarded his "Sincerity" (1). Not recognizing that his title is generic and anonymous rather than unique and transparent, he demeans those who "screen themselves" by "mean Dissimulation" against their low origins. He denounces such "Artifice," confident that it recoils on those who use it (2). Assuming the reader is on his side, he admits that he diverts criticism by declaring his humble birth strategically. Far from conveying an absolute sincerity, he embodies a complacency which, through dramatic irony, establishes the terms of judgment applicable to him. That his inconsistent retrospection sharpens the reader's narrative memories is made keener by Marivaux's pluralizing of writerly motives and forms of self-presentation. At one moment, Jacob says he writes to inform readers and to amuse himself. At the next, he declares that his book is a "History" not "forg'd for Diversion." Then, he withholds his name, for to give it would "lay a Restraint" on his "Narrations" (5). His stress on factual transparency is undermined by generic indeterminacy: his variable tone saps his control of the narrative future. On dismissing his nephews from his text for having made him digress, he changes stance in mid-sentence:

> … so much the better; for it's proper I should accustom my Readers betimes to my Digressions; I am not very positive whether I shall be guilty of many, perhaps I may, and perhaps I may not; I can answer for neither; only this I am resolv'd, not to confine myself: I am to give you a relation of my Life, and if I intermix any thing else, it shall be nothing but what presents itself without my seeking. (6)[17]

[16] The anonymous English translation of *Le Paysan parvenu* listed in the bibliography is the one cited throughout this article.

[17] "[e]t tant mieux, car il faut qu'on s'accoutume de bonne heure à mes digressions; je ne sais pas pourtant si j'en ferai de fréquentes; peut-être oui, peut-être no [*sic*]; je ne réponds de rien; je ne gênerai point; je conterai tout ma vie, et si j'y mèle autre chose, c'est que cela se présentera, sans que je le cherche" (*Le Paysan parvenu* 41).

His volatile digressiveness renders his programmatic spontaneity dubious. His strategic forms of self-representation also recoil on his claims to adhere to a single, natural model of narrative. As narrator, he often describes his facial features as character without depending on other observers, a trait evident in *Pamela*. Besides recalling thoughts and feelings, he pretends to recover how his face made his mind transparent: without justification, he reads his facial image as an unmediated text. So, his narrative stance perpetuates rather than questions the way, as character, he delighted to view himself in an apparently impartial, third-person mode. When he reports that, being "beau'd out, troth! Jacob made a very promising Figure" (13) or that he had the pleasure of seeing "Jacob metamorphos'd into a Gentleman" (217), the narrative distance is a form of rhetorical self-love, an image of uncritical partiality for self or *amour-propre*, a sign that Jacob naively writes as if recovery of his former self can be total. His habit of viewing this self from the outside while detailing his thoughts, as if writing naturally makes inner conform with outer life, is the target of the irony implicit in Marivaux's linguistic and narrative dialectic.

The plurality of Jacob's writing, its resistance to the narrative models he provides, is emphasized by his stance towards language. He often addresses the reader by way of stressing the verbal aspect of narration: his names for things and ideas, he claims, stem from linguistic convention and the speech community. But his diction can be circular, arbitrary and self-defeating.[18] In describing his mistress's unthinking "Libertinism," he insists he has given it "its proper Title" since he names it so (8). Sometimes merely assertive, at others he is urbanely sententious. In saying his "Rusticity was void of Dissimulation, and was only the greatest Flatterer by its not knowing how to flatter at all" (16), his equivocation is nicely paradoxical. The way he variably names his feelings for Genevieve also widens the inevitable gap between mental and physical life, between writing and speaking. He enters a linguistic "Labyrinth" when trying to reconcile his psychological state to social facts. Like Sterne's personas, he experiences a disjunction between consciousness and story which confuses his sense of narrative convention: arrogance about names leads him to recognize the instantaneous plurality of mental ideas and to disregard the boundaries between. monologue and dialogue, between direct and reported speech, thus rendering his words opaque (31-32). If problematic verbal and narrative signs force on Jacob self-conscious deliberation, they oppose him with psychological and phenomenal contraries. When Genevieve says that the money given to her by their master is a gage of her fidelity to Jacob, she tells him, he says, nothing new. Yet he is "thunder-struck as by a sudden Surprize" (40). Despite his professed moral and emotional indifference, he both morally condescends to her and registers sexual jealousy. His shock at discovering "sparks of the old Fire still alive" is not displaced by his report that it immediately extinguishes itself, for Marivaux shows that things and identity are far less stable and determinable than

[18] Bourgeacq summarizes the ironies of Jacob's diction (217-25).

Jacob supposes and enjoins the reader to take pleasure in observing a narrator who can act and write so well that he blinds himself to his best conceptions.

Marivaux's wish to absorb the reader in narrative mediation is evidenced by the ways in which Marianne, like Jacob, is obliged to experience contrary ideas of fiction and identity. From the start, her narrative recoils upon her. Thus she condemns the women who sympathized with her when she was first orphaned. From her viewpoint as narrator, their sympathy is romantic sensationalism: they gratify themselves by pretending to be "eyewitnesses of everything they were pleased to imagine" (10-11). Mrs. Collyer accentuates Marivaux's attack on such literary prejudice by having the women find the orphan's sensational life "written in legible characters" on her body. Yet, while Marianne attacks this false sense of story, she must heed it: besides having to invent the origin of her story, she must steadily read her own body as yielding narrative meaning. Marivaux further draws the reader's attention to narrative mediation through the paradoxical or contrary aspects of Marianne's self-consciousness. If, at one moment, she congratulates herself on the congruity of her ideas and precepts, at the next she suffers the disjuncture of mind and reality, experiencing the uncertainty of awareness. Writing her life reflects self-contradiction (16): when, on arriving in Paris, she finds the "new world" there "not altogether unknown" to her, she learns that perceptions may be contrary (31). Marivaux pushes this sort of narrative irony far. If, as character, Marianne omnisciently controls, from time to time, the multiple roles she performs, she cannot, as narrator, always reconcile fallibility and intuitiveness: after describing her "serious, silent intercourse" with Valville (51), she cannot say exactly "what [her] eyes said to him" (52). The alogical coexistence of certainty and confusion in her outlook reveals Marivaux's wish to make her mental flexibility stir readers to reflect on mediation. Far from making empirical and innate ideas categorically exclusive, he adopts an inclusive stance towards Marianne's variable agency and flexible awareness that implicitly values mediation itself. Strong evidence for this is Marianne's account of her reaction to Climal when this would-be lover comes upon her and the obviously favoured Valville. The account of her attempt to follow Climal's lead elicits the contrariness of her conduct and identity:

> I both did too much and too little: in one half of my behaviour, I seemed to know him; in the other, to be entirely ignorant of him. It was a perfect contradiction to itself, and seemed to say yes and no, and yet not perfectly either. (65)[19]

[19] "En un mot, j'en ris trop et pas assez. Dans la moitié de mon salut, il semblait que je le connaissais; dans l'autre moitié, je ne le connaissais plus, c'était oui, c'était non et tous les deux manqués" (*La Vie de Marianne* 108). Cf. Collyers explicit reduction to the contraries to a contradiction.

Marianne's contrariness affords Marivaux considerable narrative energy. As his elaboration of her character resists systematic philosophical and psychological theories, so his exploration of the multiple relations between the narrated and narrating selves defies unitary ideas of identity. His playful experimentation with fictional autobiography thus proves narrative to be a medium that, because of its anti-doctrinaire plurality, is instrumental to humanity.[20]

If this brief analysis of Marivaux's novels in the chief translations shows that his experiments with mediation were generally available to Richardson, it is crucial, in order to be more precise about Marivaux's influence, to probe the fidelity with which the translations represent his experiments. To decide this, one must test the translations for systemic, national features. Basic here is the issue of how much the translators restrict Marivaux's concerns with textual mediation. As will become clear, they limit and extend such concerns. However, before the contrariness of the translations may be assessed, one must realize that they have distinct methods and aims. The translations, in fact, represent competing narrative modes in the British literary system. Since the one prizes picaresque satire and the other moral romance, since the one values Marivaux in a manner reminiscent of Defoe and the other in a style recalling Richardson, one must admit that the French romancier was appropriated by rival literary ideologies in the process of being translated. In turning to the textual features of the translations, it is worth observing that the format of the two title-pages emphasizes the systemic distinctions. The anonymous translator of *Le Paysan parvenu* keeps the French title primary whereas Mrs. Collyer suppresses it by inventing one that conforms to English sentimentalism. Moreover, while the anonymous translator mentions Marivaux's name, Mrs. Collyer omits it, preferring an epigraph of five lines from Thomson's "The Seasons,' lines emphasizing the pleasures of moral education.[21]

The anonymous translator of *Le Paysan Parvenu: Or, The Fortunate Peasant* effects a colloquial, idiomatic, word-for-word correctness, capturing the vain, cheeky, manipulative tone of Marivaux's Jacob. Well attuned to idioms, he finds apt equivalents. Jacob's fondness for "les choux de mon village" (65) becomes desire for "honest brown Bread in the Country" (36); "chat en poche" (68) is rendered "Pig in a Poke" (39); and when he may be "niché entre quatre murailles" (66), Jacob is threatened with having a "Stone Doublet" clapped on him (37). Yet, the translator misses some idioms completely. For example, "du pain à discretion" (84) becomes, with literal awkwardness, "excellent rolls at discretion" (59) rather than 'bread *ad lib*.' So, too, when Jacob congratulates himself on deciding to stay in Paris, the translator reads "le marché" (45) as "la marche," wrongly saying he took the step of staying (11). The translator's word-for-word focus leads him to

[20] See Jugan: "Marivaux a créé à travers les variations du récit et leurs conséquences, un romanesque nouveau où l'acte de raconter lui-même devient romanesque" (183).

[21] The hurried informality of the translation of *Le Paysan parvenu* is reflected in the fact that it neither announces volume numbers on the title page nor is complete. Mrs. Collyer's deliberateness is mirrored by such an announcement and by the completeness of her translations.

flatten the variability of narrative tone: he introduces inapt colloquialisms: thus, "adresse" (67) becomes "wheedle" (39); "de mon sentiment" (54), "jump so" (22); "sans se soucier" (54), to "hanker so little after" (22); "maltraité" (57), "black and blue" (27); "est-ce que tu ne m'entends pas?" (57), "wits gone a Wool-gatherine" (26). An excessive concern for idioms distracts the translator from subtle psychological analysis: verbal inventiveness impedes his facility with reflexive meaning, as typified by the instance when "Ma situation m'attendrit sur moi-même" (65) becomes, somewhat ludicrously, "The Circumstances I was in made me so compassionate of my self" (37). Marivaux's insinuating, flexible syntax is replaced by a stiffness that recalls Defoe's narrative style but omits his sense of irony. Still, Defoe is the model for the translator's diction and narrative tags. Phrases such as "a mean Dissimulation" (1), "little concurring Accidents" (2), "things of course" (15), and "nothing but Grimace" (27) recall the admonitory reflections of *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* rather than Marivaux's text. The same is true of the following tags: "to speak Truth" (4), "one of those errant Brutes, or Valets, call them which you please" and "may perhaps be of Service to my Readers" (44), and "I omit the Pursuit of these melancholy Particulars, an account of them would be too tedious" (46). Such verbally self-conscious tags draw attention to the narrative medium by addressing the reader but de-emphasize Marivaux's psychological and narrative contraries.

Unlike the translator of *Le Paysan Parvenu*, Mrs. Collyer de-emphasizes the earthy wit of Marianne, making her demure in the Richardsonian mode. Eschewing brevity, she lengthens sentences; fond of impersonal constructions, she lessens the force of verbs by extending nominal phrases, sustaining an elevated tone. Typically, the single word "visage" (50) grows into "the superior attractions of beauty" (7), and "le jeu d'une physionomie friponne qui les accompagnait" (50) becomes "the external charms of blooming beauty, and the pleasing air that accompanied them" (7), "roguish face" being unduly generalized. Mrs. Collyer steadily effects such monotonous emotionalism: whereas Marianne is "baignée de son sang" (the murdered woman's) in the carriage (52), Mrs. Collyer adds that it is "as if she had been taking a last embrace and was loath to bid me an eternal adieu" (9). Such amplification prizes expatiation more than irony, fluent commentary more than playful viewpoint. Sentimentality leads Mrs. Collyer to reduce autobiographical detail: "je me mis à sangloter de toute ma force" (55) becomes "I could make no other reply but sighs and tears, the natural rhetoric of an oppressed and afflicted heart" (15). Where Marivaux epitomizes Marianne's sexual sense of self-preservation in "un vrai instinct de femme" (56), Mrs. Collyer refers to the "common effect of inexperience" (17). Likewise, "cet homme-là m'aimât comme un amant aime une maîtresse" (72) becomes a "man not altogether so disinterested as I thought him" (35). By smothering sexual ideas with generalizations, Mrs. Collyer undoes Marivaux's concern with fractured awareness and identity. Thus, his "l'anéantissement" (66) is to her merely "melancholy" (29). Sentimen-

tality leads her to objectify selfhood with pictorial imagery: whereas Marianne can be "presque en pleurant de sensibilité" (70), Mrs. Collyer has her say "while my eyes could scarce return the tears of sensibility that almost overflowed their banks" (33).

When, by contrast, Mrs. Collyer translates colloquially, she heightens the idioms of Marivaux's text in a way that makes her national prejudice evident. In a mode recalling Richardson and looking ahead to Burney, she applies idioms to women, such as Mme Dutour, whose grossness she wishes to stress as a method of elevating Marianne's purity. For instance, whereas Mme Dutour is sexually implicit when she says "Mais je vois bien ce que c'est" (78), Mrs. Collyer has her say "I find the old saint has got a colt's tooth in his head" (42). While Marivaux calls her principles of sexual compromise "laches maxims" (81), Mrs. Collyer insists "they must be shocking to every mind that has the least sense of honor, the least remains of virtue established in the heart" (45). In her wish to incorporate moral essays and to prescribe a sexual code, Mrs. Collyer consistently views Marivaux's text front Richardson's perspective. So, while Marivaux can touch on Marianne's sexual vulnerability in the phrase "en pareil cas" (81), Mrs. Collyer elaborates it into "a girl in my circumstances, sure of preserving that inestimable jewel, her chastity" (45). Just prior, Marianne is "resolutely resolved to lose [her] life rather than [her] virtue" (43).

The allegation that Mrs. Collyer approaches Marivaux from the standpoint of Richardson's contempt for French mores is substantiated by the consideration that, like the British writer, she handles the motif of reflexive transparency in an overdetermined and single-minded way. As mentioned before, to Marivaux's statement that the women who observe the young orphan imagine they see "dans mes traits quelque chose qui sentait mon aventure" (53), Mrs. Collyer adds that they saw her adventures "written in legible characters" (10). She often makes Marianne's body mediate her soul more unambiguously than does Marivaux. Thus, Marianne takes "inward satisfaction in the vivacity of [her] countenance" (16) and is sure humility is "visible in [her] behaviour" (33). Mrs. Collyer's view of Marianne's moral radiance transforms Marivaux's concern with psychological flux. Consider the shallowness with which Mrs. Collyer's Marianne lets writing mediate her sexual identity. Her Marianne says the coquette "knows how to be many women in one and, by turns, assumes each perfection, suits herself to the inconstancy of her admirers, by presenting them every day a new mistress" (47). This generalizes and simplifies what Marivaux's Marianne says. She is personal and direct: "Je fixais l'homme le plus volage; je dupais son inconstance, parce que tous les jours je lui renouvelais sa maîtresse, et eétait comme s'il en avait changé" (83). While Mrs. Collyer's Marianne accommodates herself to her own plurality, Marivaux's accommodates her plurality to men's fantasizing about plurality. Mrs. Collyer does not grasp the reflexive processes of self reached by Marivaux. She is impeded by her uncritical commitment to the religious and aesthetic ideology of Britain, as most clearly evi-

denced by her account of the de Rosands, Marianne's guardians. Her extensive interpolation regarding their garden and aesthetic sense of landscape champions the ideas of Shaftesbury and Addison (12-13). Her wish to naturalize Marivaux's text is even more evident in her attribution of a genteel but heroic deism to M. de Rosand (18-19). He dies, not by falling from his horse as in Marivaux, but because fellow Catholic priests deny him liberty of conscience.

Mrs. Collyer's subversion of French culture by embedding British aesthetic and religious values into Marivaux's novel exemplifies the systemic, national appropriation involved in translation. That the stylistic marks of her version differ from those of the translation of *Le Paysan Parvenu* reveal, moreover, the ideological tensions within the host or "target" literary system (Lambert 44). The rival styles of translation impose Britishness upon Marivaux by privileging the modes of either Richardson or Defoe. Marivaux's experimental, plural and dialectical narrative styles are simplified because of the rivalry in the British literary system between sentimental and picaresque modes. However, while the competing styles of translation minimize Marivaux's exploration of narrative mediation, they illustrate the interpenetration of style and ideology. Whereas Marivaux's experiments seem bent on showing that concepts neither motivate nor transcend narrative, the translators, through imposing systematic ideas on his fiction by way of appropriating it, only succeed in illustrating how fiction resists transparency, only succeed in heightening fiction's reflexive and systemic involvement of form and content.

In the context of his criticism of the British literary system and of his refusal to adopt realist tenets, Sterne's admission that Marivaux was a major influence upon him is significant.[22] For not only can it be argued that Sterne translated Marivaux's fictional experimentation into the British novel but also that, by doing so, he proved himself to be profoundly alert to the operation of his native literary system. The truism of literary history that Sterne is both atypical and eccentric is belied by his sensitivity to Marivaux. The British author looked with a far keener eye than his fellows at the French romancier's explorations of mediation and autobiography. The problematization of literary rules, the reflexive relation of the theory and practice of writing, and the need to make texts resist transparent meaning are issues he would have derived from Marivaux's novels. *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey* show that, like the Frenchman, Sterne did not preoccupy himself with closure or the direct communication of moral codes but preferred exploring mediation as a subject in its own right. Like Marivaux, Sterne was intrigued by the recursive aspects of autobiography, entangling his narrators in their accounts of self in order to celebrate how the paradoxes and the contraries of fictional illusion serve the identity of writers and readers.

[22] Sterne said the writers who most influenced him were Rabelais, Joseph Hall, the Elizabethan satirist, and Marivaux (*The Virtuous Orphan* xiv). The relation between Sterne and French sentimentalists is treated compellingly by Brissenden (*Virtue in Distress* 110 ff).

Marivaux's influence on Sterne manifests itself in the extreme volatility of Tristram and Yorick: both narrators express contrary views of their readers, their writing, and their identity. When explaining the gradual development of familiarity between reader and writer, Tristram says that the reader and he are "perfect strangers" but, the next instant, calls the reader "my dear friend and companion" (11). Categorical claims made by Sterne's narrators recoil on them: they are victims of authorship and metaliterary statements. When Tristram says that the more he writes the more he has to write and that "this self-same life of mine" will be "the death of me" (286), he realizes that writing, far from a matter of just transcribing experience, has a life of its own. Setting out to capture his life, he is thrown back on the instrumentality of language, getting ensnared in narrative processes. His intention of being a unique writer who is unconfined by "any man's rules that ever lived" (8) is countered by the plural ways in which he must classify his literary authority. When he calls his book "this dramatic work" (18), "this rhapsodical work" (35), "this cyclopaedia of arts and sciences" (122), and a work of "strict morality and close reasoning"(218), he conveys the plurality of his text and the limitations of his literary classifications in a manner that invites the reader to understand the necessary conflict between respect for and displacement of narrative rules.

Marivaux's psychological contrariness most significantly informs Sterne's dialectical treatment of fictional autobiography. Neither Tristram nor Yorick can write the story of self straightforwardly: both seek to figure as heroes, but their attempts to triumph become triumphs against themselves. Still, such a recoil is not merely ironic; it proves telling against the self is essential to life-writing. Sterne's dialectical rather than systematic mode of fictional autobiography is reinforced by his narrative polarities and by his irreverence towards epistemology. Hence, the "machinery" of Tristram's account involves "two contrary motions"; it is "digressive" and "progressive" at the same time (73). Although Tristram and Yorick discuss the contrariness of their writerly principles, they do not steadily grasp them because Sterne wishes to transgress the boundary between narrative principle and narrative rationalization: his narrators are often merely mouthpieces for narrative contraries in the manner of Marivaux. Whereas Tristram seems to attack the principle of closure with a knowing irony when he declares that his book is "more perfect and complete by wanting [a] chapter" (313), his claim that writing is "but a different name for conversation" (108) is undermined by his constant emphasis on typography and on graphic aspects of print mediation.[23] Sterne's challenge to the philosophical assumptions of narrative is particularly evident in his seeming response to the way Marivaux deals with mediation of the self. Admitting "our

[23] Compare, for example, *Tristram Shandy*: "Writing, when properly managed (as you may be sure I think mine is) is but a diferent [*sic*] name for conversation" (108) with *La Vie de Marianne*: "je n'ai garde de songer que je vous fais un livre, cela me jetterait dans un travail d'esprit dont je ne sortirais pas; je m'imagine que je vous parle, et tout passe dans la conversation" (71).

minds shine not through the body" (75), Tristram also claims that, when dipping his pen into his ink, he notices "what a cautious air of sad composure and solemnity there appear'd in [his] manner of doing it" (215). Denying transparent meaning to the body at one moment, Tristram asserts it at another. By presenting opposing concepts of self-presentation in the manner of Marivaux, Sterne parodies the Richardsonian style of writing-to-the-moment, converting it into a device that invites the reader to experience the opacity of mediation.

Sterne's ironic and contrary narrative style moves "backwards and forwards" to "keep all tight together in the reader's fancy" (462). This concern for the readers' response to mediation means that Sterne must expose Lockean concepts to irony, for such ideas cannot be allowed to distract readers from the opacity of mediation. Locke's efforts to distinguish between sensation and reflection and between wit and judgment when upheld by Sterne's narrators regularly cause them problems for the benefit of readers. Thus, far from proving to be a tool comfortably effective in self-representation, Sterne's narrative recoils on his narrators, obliging them to see that writing is as likely to open as to close gaps between perceptual and mental awareness. So, Yorick confuses the rules of direct and reported speech, of speech and writing, and of narration and printing, as is clear in his marvellously self-defeating address to Englishmen in his preface (13). Like Jacob and Marianne, Tristram and Yorick fuse speech and writing though they know that the conventions governing speech and writing are distinct. Like Marivaux's narrators too, Tristram and Yorick are variously active and passive before the facts of their lives, variously schematic and whimsical about narrative order. The French and British authors give integrity to their fiction by making it encompass a wide range of contrary ideas without relying on simple conceptual, that is to say, systematic, schemes. For Sterne as for Marivaux, narrative is provocative, absorbing, and most fully itself when it defies truisms about the singular self, about the direct connection of sensibility and moral conduct, and about writing as transcription of facts, and speech.

The insights provided by the parallels between Marivaux and Sterne into the theory of translation and into the institutional system of literature are not weakened by their relevance to Defoe. For, from these viewpoints, Defoe is not a marginal author. His experiments with mediation anticipate both Marivaux and Sterne, establishing a fictional procedure that, differing from Richardson's, was adopted and rejected by the translators of Marivaux examined in this study. In Defoe's fictional autobiographies, the conventions of self-representation heighten the readers' awareness: his narrators, like Marivaux's and Sterne's, are contradictory so that readers may appreciate mediation from the perspective of psychological and expressive contraries.[24]

Unlike Richardson but like Marivaux and Sterne, Defoe prizes autobiography for its ironic tensions rather than its closure. In *Moll Flanders*, he insists "no Body

[24] For a definition of Defoe's sense of contraries in terms of his verbal habits see Merrett (1989).

can write their own Life to the full End of it, unless they can write it after they are dead" (5). While Richardson attempts in *Clarissa* to overcome this convention, Defoe embraces it, as does Marivaux. He prefigures Marivaux, too, in suggesting that the commencement of autobiographies must be as indeterminate as their conclusion: Moll has heard the beginning of her life "related so many Ways" that she cannot be "certain which is the right Account" (8). By creating tensions between what the stories she has heard "all agree in" and what she is unable to give the "least Account" of, Defoe implies that the process of life-writing involves ignorance and knowledge as necessary polarities. Foretelling Marivaux and Sterne, Defoe insists that his narrators grant the contrariness of psychological and writerly experience. The life she leads with her Bath lover is a "happy but unhappy Condition" (120), and her marriage to the banker sees her both "Merry" and full of "self-reproaches" (184), the wedding making her "entirely easie" and "afraid and uneasy" (187). The reporting of action may be as polar as self-analysis: Moll calls one jaunt "a Robbery and no Robbery" (254). Writerly and experiential polarities force her to admit that identity is also contrary. Newgate compels her to admit that: "I was no more the same thing that I had been, than if I had never been otherwise than what I as now" (279). Recovery from the degeneracy imposed on her by prison confirms that personal continuity is relative, net absolute: "I was perfectly chang'd, and become another Body" (281). Emphasis on the contrariness of identity invites readers to pay more attention to narrative mediation than to characterization, as made explicit by Moll: "I leave the Reader to improve these thoughts, as no doubt they will see Cause, and I go on to the Fact" (337).

Further evidence that Defoe did not think of the autobiographical form as a transparent medium abounds in *Roxana*. The irony entailed in his treatment of this first-person novel reveals a narrative intelligence closer to Marivaux's than to Richardson's. With a presumption like Pamela's, Roxana pretends that writing her life allows her to stand outside herself and to be objective about her conduct. As narrator, she claims the right to "give [her] own Character" impartially as if "speaking of another-body" (6). This claim is soon undercut: after saying she will give "as impartial an Account of [her] Husband" as of herself, she calls him a "weak, empty-headed, untaught Creature" (7). This criticism renders her pretended objectivity ironically reflexive. As with the modes in which Marivaux's narrators present themselves, Roxana's self-objectification is always questionable. While saying of the scene in which site sits among her rags in extremest poverty that the "Thing spoke itself," she elaborates how she struck her sympathetic visitors (17): since they did not voice their feelings, she not only verbalizes what she claims does not need to be described but invents how others pictured her. Such narrative contraries stress that the relation of character and narrator in autobiography is reciprocal. This is reiterated when Roxana describes her brother-in-law's generosity towards her children: a former pleasure is re-lived in the "relating it again" (25). By making her grant both the unrecoverability of her former self and

the reciprocity of character and narrator, Defoe subtly directs the reader's attention to mediation. When she describes her excruciating talk with the captain's wife at each moment of which she expected to be exposed, Roxana concedes that she cannot picture what she looked like: sure that her face betrayed her, she does not present it as such "because I cou'd not see myself" (284). Still, this awareness contrasts with her habit of pretending, like Marianne and Pamela, to recall what her face looked like. For example, when terrified of drowning and unable to see herself reflected in the eyes of a companion, she still pictures her face (127).

Defoe's exploitation of the diverting instability of viewpoint in fictional autobiography links him to Marivaux and Sterne: all three hold that narrative reliability cannot be absolute, that first-person writing necessarily involves deceit with accuracy, that withholding of self is part of self-disclosure, and that mediation yields a concept of identity not unitary and transcendental but plural and contrary. The range of cultural and political attitudes to Marivaux expressed by British commentators provides a valuable context for understanding how the affinities of Defoe and Sterne to the French romancier enhance literary history. The notion that Marivaux's narrative experiments were anticipated by Defoe and upheld by Sterne clarifies the systemic contraries of the British literary institution in the eighteenth century. If some appreciated Marivaux's experiments, all commentators saw them in terms of religious and nationalistic values. While some critics praised the Frenchman's literary achievements, they also reduced him to a device for dignifying their culture, while others, eager to identify with Enlightenment France or to spurn it, were condescending to or dismissive of him in the extreme. Then again, novelists either appropriated his reputation or techniques while they were far from candid in disclosing that they both relied on and resisted his narrative experiments. In sum, reactions to Marivaux reveal much about polarities within the British literary system and go some way to explaining how prejudices worked against native writers who were committed to innovation. Since Fielding, Burney, and Richardson naturalized Marivaux's fiction, exploiting its psychological and reflexive traits even as they disowned them, such inconsistency towards the foreign is revealing about the ideological stance of literary history to non-conforming domestic writers.

Defoe, Marivaux, and Sterne share a keen interest in narrative mediation. This interest, since fostered at the cost of political and religious orthodoxy, explains why all three receive no more than equivocal recognition from literary history. Their experimental, playful, even subversive interest in narrative render them suspect, leading to the view that Defoe is marginal and Sterne eccentric. The connections binding the three together, because they clarify the systemic conflicts within literary history, help revise what that history is, how it has worked and how it should be renewed. That, besides being read by Marivaux, Defoe set narrative standards by and against which the French author was translated provides a new context for understanding the significance of Sterne's admiration for Marivaux

Their affinities to Marivaux also show how Defoe and Sterne fit into the literary history which belittled them: Defoe was as much an experimenter as Marivaux and Sterne, while Sterne's reactions to Marivaux prove the British author more responsive to literary tradition than he is often said to have been. In general terms, relating what the three authors have in common to the ideological contradictions of literary history reveals how it comprises rival systems of thought to which comparatist and theoretical analysis is essential. What at first seems contradictory about the response of eighteenth-century writers to Marivaux can, at a second glance, be seen as contrary: literary history is not one system but a set of competing systems polar tensions between which are dynamically important. The appropriation and the rejection of Marivaux's texts in Britain together with the complicated ways in which they were informed by and influenced British texts shows that geographical and temporal boundaries demarcating a given literary history may not be taken for granted. Indeed, the perspectives from which Marivaux is seen in this essay, glancing as they do at structuralism, the polysystem, and translation theory, suggest that literary history encompasses territories still undiscovered and operates with boundaries not yet fully discerned. What the complicated and involved naturalization of Marivaux's texts demonstrates is that the narrative contraries of the British eighteenth-century literary system validate comparatists' ideas and methods when it comes to revising the theory of that literary history and to improving its practice.

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