Many “early modern women writers,” as Carol Pateman has observed, “cannot be fitted neatly into standard categories such as ‘the Enlightenment.’”¹ For Pateman, Mary Astell serves as the “prime example” of a writer who perplexes our categories, whose writings evidence a tenacious political and cultural conservatism, while gaining much of their energies from the emergent languages of enlightenment. In the categories E. R. Dodds employed in a very different context, Astell manifests a dual and seemingly contradictory commitment to the languages of both Nomos and Phusis—that is, to languages which would invoke the authenticity and authority of traditional theological and political antecedents, as well as, simultaneously, the emergent registers of enlightenment.²

As Catherine Gallagher has observed, Astell’s Some Reflections on Marriage itself entails a strange hybrid of radical gender insights and right-wing Tory politics.³ Astell’s adaptation of the language of passive obedience in the context of marriage situate her work squarely within the conservative framework of an absolutist political culture of Nomos which would hark nostalgically back to the Stuart line—and the “Blessed Martyr,” Charles I. But as Gallagher has herself observed, the commitment to the emergent registers of proto-feminism on the one hand and absolutist politics on the other, though perhaps anomalous from the historiographical perspective implicit in a feminist tradition based on rights and natural liberty, in Astell’s work actually help to inform one another. This is not to deny Hilda Smith’s insight that Astell’s thought was sometimes characterized by contradiction, but to argue that Astell’s feminist and Tory commitments can be understood as complementary languages of critique.⁴

Notwithstanding our own associations of Tory languages with a monolithic old regime, Astell’s High Church discourses represent a refusal of an emer-
gent culture of Whig enlightenment—not in opposition to, but in consonance with, her feminist commitments. Indeed, Astell’s feminism is precisely a response—and one of vehement opposition—to what J. G. A. Pocock has referred to as the culture of latitudinarian orthodoxy. For Astell, then, the crisis in gender relations that leads her to advise that “it is not good for a Woman to marry,” both parallels and reflects a contemporary crisis in politics. Indeed, the very artifice, inequality, and inauthenticity which characterize the gender relations of Some Reflections find their parallel, for Astell, in a political establishment, epitomized in the culture that followed the Williamite succession in 1689, but founded at the moment of the execution of Charles I in 1649. For Astell, the death on the scaffold of the “Martyr Charles” becomes the signal moment of modernity—the fall into politics of inequality, inauthenticity, and artifice. Astell’s extended reflections upon the relationship between the sexes is at the same time a meditation upon the inauthenticity of the postrevolutionary culture of William III, registering as well a nostalgic desire for a return to integritas embodied in the persona of Charles I.

To be sure, Gallagher’s heuristic model “Tory feminism,” adopted to accommodate the protofeminisms of Astell, Cavendish, and Anne Finch (among others), is not the only available paradigm for the description of the commitments of early modern feminists. The works of Catharine Trotter, for example, whose various defenses of Lockean epistemology and politics would locate possibilities for feminist emancipation in Whig and protoliberal traditions, emerged precisely from those Whig traditions which Astell was busy attacking. Although the Whig tradition of feminist rights present in Trotter’s work would be refined almost a century later in the works of Mary Wollstonecraft, providing the basis for a modern feminism based upon rights and natural liberty (and grounded in Phusis), Astell’s feminism was still firmly rooted in conservative political commitments and the language of the High Church.

Within the contours of Astell’s own set of political languages, however, the critique of the culture of latitudinarian orthodoxy—and her own persistent assertion of the authenticity of the culture of “Olde England”—do not necessarily contradict her feminist insights, but may be seen as helping to provide the grounds for their articulation. The inequality and inauthenticity which characterize the relationship between the sexes emerges in Astell’s argument, when seen in relation to her specific interventions in political debate, as a reflection of an illegitimate and inauthentic political establishment founded by the regicides in 1649. Viewed from the contexts of the languages of Astell’s High Church polemics, Some Reflection emerges—with its persistent critique upon masculine “artifice,” “prejudice,” and “wit”—as a critique not only of contemporary gender relations, but of a distinctively masculine modernity.
I. THE GENDERING OF WIT

Astell’s critique of gender relations and her radical historiography of the modern are both presupposed upon the appropriation of notions of wit, artifice, or what Gallagher in her Nobody’s Story simply calls “fiction.” Though Gallagher explains that the discursive category of the “fictional”—with its attendant and various genres—was, in the years after the Restoration, largely a “wild space” still “unmapped and unarticulated,” its epistemological status had already been clearly mapped out in the Enlightenment languages of post-Hobbesian philosophers.10 Because of fiction’s association with “subjective imagination, passion and the monstrous,” as Robert E. Stillman observes, an Enlightenment culture foregrounding “objective judgment, reason, and the natural,” would attempt to instantiate a divide between “truth and falsehood, natural philosophy and poetry, and philosophical discourse and rhetoric.”11 Hobbes, as Stillman argues, had himself in the Leviathan lead the charge in the battle against fiction and the “monsters of metaphor.” Although recent critics of enlightenment have shown how modern philosophers and scientists were themselves unable, as Desiree Hellegers puts it, “to get outside of representation,” avatars of enlightenment nonetheless founded their projects upon an explicit antipathy towards language, figuration, and metaphor.12 As Hellegers explains, Hobbesian epistemology was, for example, in many ways a product of his absolutist political ideology: truth was “constructed and imposed” by means of “monarchical fiat,” and the “multiple and subversive meanings associated with metaphor outlawed.”13 Hobbes’s absolutist political ideology is thus paralleled, Hellegers argues, in his arguments about language and representation where categories of fiction yield to the ostensibly objective and neutral languages of emergent discourses of science and philosophy.

Hobbes’s turn to the empirical was in some sense underwritten by Francis Bacon’s precedent efforts in marking out the discourses of early modern science. What James J. Bono has described as the “revolutionary stance” of The Great Instauration marked the “turn from words, symbols, and unity . . . towards things, particularity and diversity.” Bacon’s own theological hermeneutics—applied to both “Books” of God, the Book of Nature and the Bible itself—turned towards “things in themselves,” abandoning an older set of practices which sought to elaborate the “complex webs of signification whose nodes, through resemblance,” were said to “reverberate sympathetically.” Bacon thus resisted both the philosophical and theological impulses that sought to reimagine “interconnecting symbols,” advocating instead, as Bono terms it, “a metonymy of identity and difference.” As he further argues, Bacon’s skepticism extended to all of the “fantasies” promoted by “false philosophies” and “false methods,” but most specifically and centrally, “to images and imagination itself,” that is, “fictions.”14 Later, Robert Boyle, founder of the Royal Society, may have evidenced, as Robert Markley points out, an “ambivalence to
metaphor and imagination,” but Isaac Newton himself would thoroughly reject a hermeneutics which focused upon “symbols and sensible objects,” advocating instead a “scientifically based religion,” which turned away from representation towards Truth itself.15

Between Bacon and Newton, Hobbes himself would identify “judgment” as the sole condition for “true wit,” relegating “fancy”—with its imaginative impulse towards discovering resemblance—to inferior generic and epistemological categories. Like Dr. Johnson, who would later reject the synthetic tendencies of the metaphysicals in his famous “Cowley” essay, Hobbes’s assertion of a new hierarchy of discourses (in which poetry, rhetoric, and wit were now downgraded as mere “embellishment”) served as a means of attempting to distinguish an Enlightenment culture from its pre-Enlightenment antecedents.16 The older culture, in which truth claims emerged through webs of linguistic signification, what Johnson refers to in his Cowley essay as “discordia concors,” would now give way, in the aggressive formulation of enlightenment philosophers, to abstract conceptions of speculative truth. According to the avatars of this emergent culture of philosophical enlightenment, historians, for example, might produce the same kinds of truth claims as scientists and philosophers only insofar as they turned away from “rhetorical embellishments and poetic fancy” to embrace an “unadorned truth,” reflecting the ostensible objectivity of the empirical.17

The Hobbesian appeal to the empirical, and the concomitant advocacy of the analytical faculty of “judgment” (alone adequate to the particularity of the evidentiary) finds its echoes in Locke’s Essay in which Enlightenment hierarchies of discourse and genre are further articulated. For “Wit,” Locke writes, “most in the assemblage of Ideas, and putting those together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity, thereby to make up pleasant Pictures and agreeable Visions in the Fancy.” “Judgment, on the contrary,” Locke continues, “lies quite on the other side, in separating carefully, one from another, Ideas wherein can be found in the least difference, thereby to avoid being misled by Similitude, and by affinity to take one thing for another.” Against what Foucault has called the analogical habits of mind of pre-Enlightenment culture, Locke, like Hobbes before him, turns away from the “entertainment and pleasure” of wit, rejecting both “metaphor and allusion”—with their dependence upon both “resemblance” and “congruity”—in favor rather of “the severe rules of truth and good reason.” For “Men who have a great deal of Wit,” Locke continues, “misled by Similitude,” do not always possess “the clearest Judgment or deepest Reason.”18 To be sure, Locke’s relation to wit, like that of Hobbes before him was, in actual practice, as William Walker has shown, ambivalent at best.19 Locke’s conception of the hierarchy of the faculties would, however, in its explicit registers, represent as well an implicit historiographical argument for the inferiority of a culture based upon analogy and resemblance.
As Erica Harth has recently explained, the “discursive shift from resemblance to objective analysis” (elaborated by Hobbes and Locke and, with different—less empirical—emphases by their counterparts on the continent as well) sought to eliminate the “mediation of resemblance” which characterized “metaphorical and analogical thinking,” and thus contributed to the emergence of a “rational discourse of abstract universality and objectivity.”

Notwithstanding the proliferating locales on Gallagher’s map of the “wild space” of fiction, within the languages of emergent philosophical discourse, those fictional locales were increasingly marginalized. For the languages of the emergent Enlightenment philosopher, often writing in the service of truth, as Spinoza would put it in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, lie not in “images,” but rather in “universally valid axioms.”

As Harth goes on to explain, women were not only excluded, by virtue of “historical contingencies,” from the pursuit of such an objective and universal truth, but in the emergent discourse of Enlightenment in England, wit and indeed all of the genres which Gallagher groups together under the heading of “fiction” increasingly tended to be gendered as feminine. Although the actual gender of wit would continue to be contested through the end of century, there was an increasing tendency, in Gallagher’s terms, to see an “overlap” of the feminine and the fictional (with the inclusion of wit or fancy in that latter category). Samuel Parker’s *Impartial Account of the Platonick Philosophy* of 1666, with its Hobbesian resonances, attests to the marginalization the imagination, and its gendering as specifically feminine. In Parker’s appropriation of Hobbesian aesthetic registers, Parker would turn against “platonick philosophy” (primarily the works of Henry More as well as other Cambridge Platonists) for forwarding a philosophy immersed in the languages of poetry and romance.

Parker himself, though, for over twenty years an outspoken defender of the orthodox Anglican establishment, according to Jon Parkin may have been unjustly cast as an “outright Hobbesian.” Despite Parker’s distance from some of the extremes of Hobbesian absolutist politics, he does nonetheless appropriate Hobbes’s aggressive condemnation of poetic representations. Against the standards of “pure and genuine Reason,” Parker proclaims that he himself “cannot be persuaded to think the Quaintest plays and sportings of wit to be any true and real knowledge.” “Rampant metaphors” and “Pompous Allegories” are the “empty Schemes” of “Poets and Romancers.” “True Philosophe,” however, “is too sober to descend to these wildnesses of Imagination, and too Rational to be cheated by them.” For Parker, the rationalist philosopher, the desire to locate “Truth” in “Metaphors and Allegories” is “nothing else but to sport and trifle with empty words.”

In the Hobbesian registers of Parker’s *Impartial Account*, however, such “sport” is figured in the particular languages of feminine seduction. Which is to say that Hobbes himself had imported the animus towards the image
implied in Plato’s “divided line,” though in fact rejecting the entire realm of the “Forms” to which Plato had attributed the highest ontological status. Parker in his own appropriations would gender the Hobbesian animus to the image by associating it with a degraded—and for him fully feminized—form of wit.26 Parker thus echoes the Hobbesian antipathy towards representation, combining it with an argument which would link figuration and the feminine. In his account, the “soul” of the “Platonick philosopher,”

being enamour’d with the transcendent Beauty and Loveliness of Truth is enamfam’d with impatient desires of enjoying her embraces, and therefore Wooes and Courts her with indefatigable Patience, for she must be supposed (as all other Beauties are) excessively coy and difficult, but by diligence and importunitie the understanding wins and enjoys her.27

In Parker’s language, the apprehension of Truth is couched in the language first of sexual pursuit, and finally of sexual consummation: when “they express their embraces in the same language, they would speak of the private transactions between Man and Wife.” Thus the encounter with the “gaudy and extravagant Phancies” of the “ungovern’d Imagination” is one likened by Parker to the private and domestic scene of sexual seduction, while the public philosopher soberly seeks out “true knowledge.”28

Parker, however, readily acknowledges that he is not himself immune to the “unpardonable Luxury and Wantoness” of “Amorous Romances,” and must therefore defend himself from the seductive guiles of the poetic. Fancy and the imagination are not only rejected as in Hobbes, but are figured as sexually potent and injurious to the “true philosopher.” Indeed, the “wanton & luxuriant fancies” of “Fancy” threaten to climb “up into the Bed of Reason” and “defile it by unchaste and illegitimate Embraces,” and thus “impregnate the mind with nothing but Ayerie and Subventaneous Phantasmes.”29 Vulnerable to the insinuating powers of the fictional, Parker, like the Hobbesian empiricist, aligns himself with the “thing itself,” and not that realm of “similitude observ’d or made by Fancy.” Thus Parker’s philosophical reason is associated with a chaste masculine judgment, while the fanciful and dangerous realms of fiction are relegated to the feminine imagination.

Joseph Glanvill’s Vanity of Dogmatizing provides another example of Enlightenment anxieties and uncertainties about reason’s powers against the insinuations of feminine deceit. Even more so than his contemporary Parker, Glanvill, an early latitudinarian divine with strong connections to the Cambridge Platonists, was certainly distanced from the excesses of Hobbesian absolutism. Nonetheless, throughout his early works, Glanvill puts conventional antifeminist argument in the service of masculine Reason, and against what he would call feminine “deceit.” As Glanvill would have it, where Paracelsus had written that the art of medicine is rooted in the heart and that
one “discovers the curative virtues of remedies” by “true love,” Glanvill warned of the “power our affections have over our so easily seducible Understandings.” When “Will or Passion hath the casting voice,” Glanvill writes, “the case of Truth is desperate,” for the “Woman in us, still prosecuted a deceit, like that begun in the Garden; and our Understandings are wedded to an Eve, as fatal to the Mother of our miseries.” In Glanvill, as in Parker, “Truth” maintains only a tentative command over the deceitful tendencies of the feminine. For, as Glanvill warns, there can be no prospect for the pursuit of truth, when “the Affections wear the breeches and the Female rules.”

Parker and Glanvill combine Hobbesian and antifeminist argument in the early languages of Enlightenment in England. Over a generation later, a new and more complex and more fully articulated association of the imaginative with the feminine had already taken root in the culture of the Whig aristocracy for which Joseph Addison was the spokesman. To be sure, the new economy of passions and interests demanded something like a rapprochement with what J. G. A. Pocock has described as the “female principle.” Without doubt, Addison’s celebration of the “pleasures” of the “polite imagination” represent a departure from the more rigorously philosophical perspectives of either Parker or Hobbes. But notwithstanding the Addisonian appropriation of the imagination for the requisites of the Whig commercial oligarchy, Addison, like many of his precursors, registers his anxiety about the excesses of the feminine imagination.

The Spectator and Tatler essays, as Erin Mackie has argued, would persistently argue for the distinction between the “healthy and disordered imagination,” associating the latter with a “bad femininity” governed by an “excessive devotion” to both “fashion” and “ostentatious personal display.” Indeed, despite Addison’s acknowledgment of the refining tendencies of the healthy or “polite imagination,” he nonetheless shows an unreserved contempt for what he calls the “fantastical disposition” of women who are “smitten with everything that is showy and superficial.” Attracted to the “superficial parts of life,” as Addison writes, women “never cast away a thought on those ornaments of the mind” which make a “person illustrious to themselves and useful to others.” Taken in by the excesses of artifice, women, Addison observes, “very much cherish this natural weakness of being taken with outside and appearance” and thus inhabit the world of what Addison describes as “fiction.” Perpetually in “pursuit” of “glittering trifles,” women, Addison concludes, cannot help but be more “attentive to the superficial parts of life, than the solid and substantial blessings of it.” Indeed, throughout Addison’s Spectator essays, the “solid and substantial” are gendered as masculine, while the excesses of artifice and fiction are always understood as distinctively feminine. Because, as Addison argues, women see “only the drapery of the species,” they are condemned to the lower epistemological status of the fictional, where they perpetually dazzle “one another’s imaginations,” filling
“their heads with nothing but colours.”35 As Mackie explains, for the Addison of the *Spectator* essays, feminine “indulgence of distorted fancy” and their “unrestrained capitulation” to “delusive spectacles” were not merely the symptoms, but also causes of individual and social decay.”36 Feminine immersion in the insubstantial discourses and practices of fashion and fiction were thus seen as the source and origin of a contemporary social decline for which, as Mackie argues, the prescriptions of the *Spectator* and *Tatler* were provided as a remedy.37

In 1709, there was yet another intervention in the discursive history of wit. Echoing the opinion of the “Great Mr. Lock,” the author affirms that “Wit lies quite on the other side of Judgment; and consists in something that is not perfectly conformable to Truth and Reason.” “Another ingenious Writer tells us,” this author continues, “That Wit chiefly considers Appearances, takes them for Reality, puts one thing instead of another, with like Dexterity as a Jugler does his Balls.” Indeed, “Wit and Reason are as Inconsistent as they are Different”—the former preferring the “airy Fancies of a roving Imagination, before the most Rational and Solid Account of Things.” The features of the argument—the citation of Locke, the assertion of epistemological and generic hierarchies, the implicit historiographical rejection of an earlier culture of resemblance—are all routine. It is only perhaps the authorship of the tract which is noteworthy. For these were the arguments of Mary Astell in her Bart’lemey Fair, the polemical response to Shaftesbury’s *Letter Concerning Enthusiasm* of the previous year.38 Seen by themselves, Astell’s rhetorical citation of the conventional languages of wit (which by the time of the *Spectator* essays had very clear antifeminist associations) may seem puzzling. An examination of the languages of Astell’s *Some Reflections Upon Marriage*, however, not only clarifies the rhetorical strategy of the later tract, but it reveals Astell’s powers of appropriation as she confronts and transforms the associations implicit in the earlier history of the gendering of wit.

II. “HIS FANTASTICAL HUMOURS”

From the very outset of *Some Reflections*, Astell makes clear that her observations on the relationship between the sexes are underpinned by epistemological arguments. While Astell elicits sympathy for the Duchess of Mazarine (whose unhappy marriage and subsequent divorce had occasioned the tract), she is nonetheless critical of the Duchess for her failures of “discretion,” and more particularly, for her pursuit of “Consolation” from “Domestic troubles” in the “Gaieties” of “Gaming and Courtship.” Arguing against the Duchess’s “Follies”—particularly “her seeking Relief by such imprudent, not to say scandalous Methods”—Astell argues for a different kind of feminine representation:
Truth is bold and vehement; she depends upon her own strength, and so she be plac’d in a true Light, thinks it not necessary to use Artifice and Address as a Recommendation; but the prejudices of Men have made them necessary: their Imagination gets the better of their Understanding, and more judge according to the Appearances, than search after the Truth of Things. (SRM 6)

In this extraordinarily compressed passage, Astell invokes the convention- al Enlightenment opposition between “Truth” and “Imagination,” only to entirely reverse its usual connotations. In Astell’s reading, “Truth” emerges as feminine, and the artifice employed by the likes of the Duchess of Mazarine emerges as a function of distinctively masculine “prejudices” and “Imagination.” While Addison would elaborate a version of femininity associated “with everything that is showy and superficial,” in Astell’s aggressive reformulation of the conventional languages of gender and genre hierarchy, it is men who “judge according to the Appearances,” turning away from the “Truth of Things.” Though the behavior of the Duchess, Astell writes, cannot be “excus’d,” she assures her readers that once freed of the influence of the “Imagination” of “Men of Wit,” women will be able to safely distinguish “between Truth and Appearance, between solid and apparent Good” (SRM 16). In Astell’s radical formulation—and her desire to historicize and thus explain the behavior of the Duchess and those like her—the conventional association of the imagination with femininity has been transferred to a masculine “wit.” The masculine “wit,” “a mere Outside,” his “Mind” as “base and Mean as his external Pomp glittering,” engenders the “Folly” of women (SRM 32).

Though women may themselves be susceptible to the flights of imagina- tion, Astell acknowledges, “it must not be suppos’d that Women’s Wit approaches those heights which Men arrive at.” For “decency lays greater restraints on them,” preventing them “from breaking thro’ those restraints and following their Masters and Guides in many of their daring and masculine Crimes” (SRM 19). The scene of sexual seduction, for Astell, is a criminal scene, and the primary means for the pursuit of this crime are masculine imagination and artifice. Women, as Astell wrote in her earlier Serious Proposal to the Ladies, may “chuse amiss” and, as a consequence, incur the “loss”; the “Crime,” however, remains “the Deceivers.”

Evoking the tone and distance of something like a sociologist of her con- temporary court culture, Astell, much like her Tory and feminist antecedent Aphra Behn, reveals the stratagems of artifice employed by “Men of Wit.” Though there are those women, Astell acknowledges, “who can believe a man, Proud and Vain as he is,” Astell herself remains unenthralled by “giddy Humour”—that is, capable of delineating the subtext behind masculine strategies of “Flattery” and “feign’d Submissions.” Like the contemporary strategies of the emergent genre of the secret history, which, as Annabel Patterson
has shown, would reveal “what official history would prefer to keep secret,” Astell’s *Some Reflections* reveals the secret intentions behind masculine utterances.43 “The plain English,” Astell writes, decoding the languages of male courtship, “is this”:

I have a very mean Opinion both of your Understanding and Vertue, you are weak enough to be impos’d on, and vain enough to snatch at the Bait I throw; there’s no danger of your finding out my meaning, or disappointing me of my Ends. I offer you *Incense* ’tis true, but you are like to pay for ’t, and to make me Recompence for your Folly in Imagining I would give my self this trouble, did I not hope, nay were I not sure, to find my own account in it. If for nothing else, you’ll serve at least as an exercise of my Wit, and how much soever you swell with my Breath, ’tis I deserve the Praise for talking so well on so poor a Subject.... *(SRM 24)*

Astell’s dispassionate prose penetrates beyond “the Flatterer’s Language” to the “true sense of his heart.” Here the acknowledged “Folly” of the feminine imagination emerges only as a consequence of its acquiescence to the “exercise” of masculine “Wit.” Indeed there is no “more sufficient Demonstration” of “Masculine Wisdom,” Astell writes sardonically, than their greater share in “Artifice”:

What good Conduct does he shew! what Patient exercise! what Subtilty leave untry’d! what Concealment of his Faults! what Parade of his Vertues! what Government of his Passions! How deep is his Policy in laying his Designs at so great a distance, and working them up such little Accidents! How indefatigable is his Industry, and how constant his Watchfulness, not to slip any Opportunity that may in the least contribute to his Design! What a handsome Set of Disguises and Pretences is he always furnish’d with! How conceal’d does he lie! How little pretend, till he is sure that his Plot will take! And at the same time that he nourishes the Hope of being Lord and Master, appears with all the Modesty and Submission of an humble and unpretending admirer. *(SRM 63–4)*

It is not as Addison would argue, women perpetually dazzling “one another’s imagination”; here rather the politics of courtship are predicated upon the masculine abuses of Wit—such that woman are “dazled” with the “Glitter,” “Pomp,” and “False Appearance” of masculine artifice *(SRM 53).* “Pretence,” “Plot,” “Policy,” and “Design” are the means of such deceit, so cleverly concealed (as if the Castiglionian principle of “artfully” concealing artifice has been internalized into the politics of courtship) as to leave woman no choice but to “act a Farce for the Diversion of their Governours” *(SRM 62).* In a sexual politics defined entirely in terms of inauthenticity, the masculine artifice of
courtship and adulation precedes and predetermines the “farce” of feminine behavior at Court (like, for example, the “Childish, Ridiculous,” and “Ilnatur’d Amusements” of the Duchess of Mazarine [SRM 4]). Which is to say that for Astell, the feminine imagination is always activated, indeed preceded, by the masculine imagination: the courting “Lover” condescends “to set a Pattern” of idolatrous adulation “in the time of his Addresses,” and only after that does “his Wife Copy after it all the rest of her Life” (SRM 55). The “Designs” of the Courtier provide the “Pattern”; the Wife, the mere “Copy.”

While Samuel Parker sought to protect the chaste fortress of the mind of the “sober philosopher” from the wiles of feminine artifice, in Astell’s prose, it is a thoroughly femininized Reason that needs to fend off the influence of masculine prejudice and imagination. For, if a woman “is entangled in the Snare” of masculine artifice, Astell laments, then “Reason and Perswasion may as properly be urg’d to the Folks in Bethlem as to her.” Indeed, the “Passions,” Astell acknowledges, “are always furnish’d with plausible Pretences, and those very Prejudices, which gave rise to this unreasonable Passion.” These “Prejudices”—always for Astell the product of a particularly masculine imagination—will “for certain give her Obstinacy enough to justifie and continue in it” (SRM 68–9). Thus Astell describes a kind of co-dependency of courtship in which “his fantastical humours” only “grow with her desire to gratifie them” (SRM 28; emphasis added).

To avoid this cycle of dependency and the “plausible Pretences” engendered by masculine prejudice, Astell advises that a woman must exercise her “enlightened Reason” and “sound Understanding” even in the face of a wild Imagination (SRM 42, 32). Writing of the minatory approaches of a prospective lover, Astell advises: “Strip him of Equipage and Fortune, and such things only dazle our Eyes and Imagination, but don’t in any measure affect our Reason.” As a consequence of such feminine discrimination, “the poor Creature,” Astell concludes, will simply sink “beneath our Notice” (SRM 33). Only through the exercise of “Prudence,” “Foresight,” and “her early Caution,” however, can a woman free herself from the influence of “his fantastical humours,” and thus prevent the “Designs” of those “whose Interest it is to declaim against them” (SRM 64).44 To do this, however, Astell’s contemporary women must learn to pride themselves “in something more excellent than the invention of a Fashion,” and abandon the notions which they derive “from Plays and Romances” for a “prudence” based upon “Reason” (SP 10, 23).45

Where in Parker’s Impartial Account, a distinctively feminine imagination endangered the philosophical pursuit of truth, in the radical reformulations and regenderings of Astell’s Some Reflections, a now thoroughly masculine artifice and wit endangers feminine Reason.

In Astell’s argument, only feminine Reason stands in the way of a private sphere governed entirely by the rituals of masculine artifice and design. Astell’s feminine assertion of “sound judgment,” however, not only repre-
sents a protest against the sexual politics of courtship and marriage, but it repre-
sents as well a protest to the more general culture of Whig Enlightenment. This is not only to underline Patricia Springborg’s judgment that *Some Reflect-
tions*, with its attacks on political “voluntarism” and “social contract theory,” is “a truly political” text. But the work achieved by *Some Reflections* is not only through its rejection of the specific political arguments of contract theory argued by Hobbes and Locke, but in its more general elaboration of the inauthenticity of a contemporary culture governed by masculine artifice. Indeed, throughout the tract, Astell shows herself eager to articulate the homologies between the private and the public: the fall into the sexual politics articulated throughout the tract is mirrored in the relations of artifice that characterize the public sphere in general. *Some Reflections*, especially when seen in the context of her other polemical writings of the period, emerges as a critique of gender relations which are themselves a symptom of a fallen modernity. The languages of feminine authenticity, reason, and truth that emerge in relation to Astell’s resistance to the sexual politics of “conceited men,” figure more broadly in Astell’s prose as means of resisting the particularly masculine discourses of the modern.

While *Some Reflections* focuses its attention upon the personal sphere, the crimes of the masculine imagination are not limited to the domestic scenes of seduction. For Astell, the very man who sets himself up “for a Wit” in the domestic realm “rallies against all that is serious” to become first, a “Contem-
ner of the Priests,” and then of “the Deity himself” (*SRM* 29). The masculine artifice manifested within the private sphere of courtship thus has its corre-
sponding effects in the spheres of the political and the theological. Those “whissing Wits” who “scoff” at the notion that women should be treated with “a little more Humanity and Regard,” are those very men who “Rally,” Astell insists, against “everything tho’ ever so Sacred.” “Religion, its priests, and those its most constant and regular Professors,” Astell continues, “are the usual subject of their manly, mannerly, and Surprizing Jests” (*SRM* 50; emph-
asis added). In Astell’s reading, the very men who exercise “their Wit and Satyr” in making “Invectives” against Women, employ their distinctly manly jests in the mockery of the “Sacred.”

Wit and the “nauseous Ostentation” of power and “artifice” are therefore not only the means of domestic, but political domination as well. Indeed, there is a curious overlap of registers between the artifice and designs that lead to domestic and political domination:

When a Man, and for certain much more when a Woman, is fallen into this Toyl, that is, when either have been so unwary and indiscreet as to let another find out by what Artifices he may manage their Self-Love and draw it over to his Party, ’tis too late for anyone who is really their Friend, to break the Snare and disabuse them. (*SRM* 73–74)
In this passage, Astell freely adopts the languages which she had employed to describe domestic deceit in her description of the political process now also wholly governed by manipulation and the “Artifices” of Party. Just as artifice is the means for a sexual domination predicated upon inequality, so in the public realm, the artifices of Party lead to political domination. The avatars of party politics, with their adoption of “artifices” as a means of forwarding their self-serving machinations and interests, represent yet another symptom of a much broader and far-ranging masculine culture of deceit.

Artifice not only governs the personal and the political, but in the closing section of Some Reflections, Astell demonstrates the way in which masculine wit emerges as something like an underlying cultural principle in the both “mannerly” and “manly” culture of the emerging Whig orthodoxy. “It were ridiculous,” she begins, “to suppose that Woman, were she ever so much improv’d, cou’d come near the topping Genius of the Men.” For her account of masculine “Strength of Mind” and its “topping Genius” provides an ambivalent tribute:

Their Subtilty in forming Cabals and laying deep Designs, their Courage and Conduct in breaking through all Tyes Sacred and Civil to effect them, not only advances them to the Post of Honour, and keeps them securely in it for twenty or thirty years, but gets them a Name, and conveys it down to Posterity for some Hundreds, and who wou’d look any further? . . . ‘tis Men who dispute for Truth as well as Men who argue against it; histories are writ by them, they recount each others great Exploits, and have always done so. All famous Arts have their Original from Men, even from the Invention of Guns to the Mystery of Eating. And to shew that nothing is beneath their Care, any more than above their Reach, they have brought Gaming to an Art and Science, and a more Profitable and Honourable one too, than any of those that use’d to be call’d Liberal! (SRM 87–88)

Although Astell may seem to praise men for their “Courage and Conduct,” for their pursuit of “Honour” and “Truth,” and for their endeavors in history and the “Arts,” beyond the surface of apparent praise lies a powerful attack upon the culture of masculine inauthenticity. For the very same “Subtilty” employed in the masculine rituals of courtship here inform the “deep Designs” of “Cabals” whose “Courage and Conduct” are devoted to the breaking of “all Tyes Sacred and Civil.” Further, though men pursue “Honour,” such a pursuit is merely for the sake of getting “a Name”; and their masculine histories are revealed as mere instruments of their own interests (like the strategies of courtship described throughout Some Reflections), as they “recount each others great exploits.”

Astell concludes the passage with the association of men with the emergence of the “famous Arts.” The lexicon of Astell’s Some Reflections would have
rendered any connection to the “Arts” extremely ambivalent at best; her actual choice of examples renders the masculine connection to the arts even more problematic. For the accomplishment of these “famous Arts” are understood either in terms of physicality as in the “Mystery of Eating,” or, in the “Invention of Guns,” in terms of violence and dispute. A masculine artifice, no less in the public sphere than the private, is thus bent upon the satisfaction of masculine “Vanity and Pride” (SRM 42–43). Astell’s final remark that men have brought “Gaming to an Art” not only underlines the masculine degradation of the true “Liberal” arts with the elevation of the emergent “art” and industry of gambling. It serves more generally as a condemnation of contemporary masculine endeavors which in their distance from rational authenticity are condemned as a mere “mannerly” games. Further, all of the masculine enterprises mentioned, whether the arts of “guns,” “gaming,” or “eating,” or the political designs of “Cabals,” have a particularly modern provenance—and an association with the emergent consumer culture of the Whigs. Not only, then, does Some Reflections provide an anthropology of late seventeenth-century courtship, but it demonstrates the ways in which these rites of courtship are themselves reflective of a contemporary culture dominated by the self-interest ed designs of the masculine enamored with the physical, the factional, and the artificial. Indeed, Mackie has shown that Addison and Steele, who targeted the excesses of feminine fashion as symptoms of “social decay,” would promote “fictions of their own integrity” and “of their own authenticity.” Astell would similarly diagnose a specifically masculine artifice as symptomatic of social decay; her prescription for authenticity would, however, be very different from that of her Whig contemporaries.

III. “SEDC’D INTO AN UNNATURAL REBELLION”

Read on its own, the connections between the political and the private articulated in Some Reflections may seem to be only implicit and indirect. In the context, however, of Astell’s more overtly political prose—I will be attending to her Enquiry into the Causes of the Rebellion and Moderation Truly Stated (both of 1704)—the problem of artifice emerges as an abiding and explicit interest, not only in the spheres of the personal and domestic, but in the spheres of the political and the historical as well. Astell’s Enquiry, occasioned by Bishop White Kennet’s sermon of the same year, A Compassionate Enquiry into the Causes of the Civil War, attacked what Springborg refers to as Kennet’s “Whig tepidness on the merits of Charles I,” as well as his refusal to acknowledge any continuity between contemporary events and the “Rebellion.” Kennet located the cause for Rebellion, as Astell writes, in the “French Alliance” and the “Fears of Popery attending it,” while Astell herself, as Springborg explains, “analyzed the Revolution of 1688 against the benchmark of 1641,” demonstrating the continuity between the politics of the regicides and the emergent culture of the Whigs.
Certainly, the rhetoric of the political argumentation in the *Enquiry* shared much with those of her Jacobite colleagues of the 1690s. Astell’s own political arguments, and in a more indirect manner even her radical accounts of gender relations, clearly emerge from the coordinates and concerns of more general Jacobite arguments. For Jacobite political argument, the distinction between truth and fiction was time and again deployed as a means of rejecting the political arguments of the opposition.\(^52\) To discredit what was perceived to be an emergent republican political culture, the Jacobites would habitually relegate both republican political argument and culture, in a not unfamiliar move, to the inferior generic and epistemological categories of “play” or fiction. Jacobites were, in some sense, as Raymond Tumbleson has suggested, appropriating the strategies of their polemical adversaries: for first Anglicans and then Whigs had employed the languages of reason and science as a means of equating the High Church with forgery, artifice, and imagination. Where Whigs would argue, according to Tumbleson, that “reason” is the “sure guide” to their own enlightenment version of truth, Jacobites and High Churchmen would appropriate the languages of reason for themselves, casting their opponents into the discredited realms of the imagination.\(^53\) Thomas Rogers’s *A True Protestant Bridle*, for example, warned of the “Black Art of Scisme and Rebellion” and those “Legendary Scribblers,” while the author of *Our Modern Demagogue* recapitulates “the Catalogue of that Knight Errantry” which was “exercis’d on this poor Nation, from 36 to 48.”\(^54\) Both texts not only reject the ostensible inauthenticity of republican culture (which in Jacobite argument was often seen as identical with Whig culture), but they do in so in such a way that the “Art” of “Rebellion” is linked explicitly with the culture of the Regicides. The *Enquiry* shows Astell employing the same generic and epistemological distinctions of her Jacobite contemporaries, which, of course, had served her so well in the very different context of *Some Reflections*.

Astell’s inflection, however, of conventional Jacobite political and historiographical tropes, very much informed by the arguments of *Some Reflections*, provides a powerful transformation of conventional Jacobite argument. Though Jacobites would habitually reflect upon the inauthenticity of republican and indeed Williamite culture, it was only Astell who would figure that culture as distinctly masculine. Charles Leslie, for example, in his own High Church historiography of the Civil War, would associate radical theology and culture, characteristically, with the “licentious” extremes of “Effeminate Romance.”\(^55\) For Astell, however, the fall away from the *integritas* (embodied in the figure of the “Royal Martyr” Charles I registered on every page of the *Enquiry*), results from the triumph of a masculine artifice and the fall into a factional politics, conceived primarily by Astell through the languages of political seduction. Indeed, just as the primarily domestic registers of *Some Reflections* reflect Astell’s political concerns, so the primarily political arguments of the *Enquiry* reveal themselves to be steeped in the languages of courtship.
Corresponding to the “Domestic Flatterers” described in Some Reflections are the “Flatterers of Men’s Follies” of the Enquiry whose “wicked Arts and Designs” are directed at winning men “to their Party” (SRM 54; IE 7). The “Artifice us’d by Factious Man,” Astell writes, are “artfully instill’d into the Minds of the People by Cunning Men and their Instruments” (IE 7). In Some Reflections, Astell deems it impossible to “recount up the diverse Stratagems Men use to catch their Prey, their different ways of insinuating” (SRM 70). In the Enquiry, Astell explains, no “Stratagems are omitted” to “infect the People’s Minds with evil Principles and Representations,” and with “Secret Hints and Insinuations” (IE 8). Further, in the political tract, Astell catalogues the stratagems of those “Men of Craft” (IE 5) which are clearly reminiscent of those in the repertoire of the “Lover” in Some Reflections (SRM 54). She writes, “They Bribe, they Threaten, they Solicit, they Fawn, they Dissemble, they Lye, they break through all the Duties of Society, violate all the Laws of GOD and of Man” (IE 6). Like the “innocent” woman of Some Reflections who, already “entangled in the Snare,” does “not know that she is more than half lost,” so the “thoughtless Men” of the Enquiry are drawn in by “Villainies,” which they never even “suspect” (SRM 74; IE 6).

“Factious Men,” who, as Astell observes, will always “find something to misrepresent” (IE 7) thus similarly prey upon the unsuspecting nation. Indeed, exploitation, whether political or sexual, emerges for Astell as a function of self-interested misrepresentation—whether that of the fawning courtier or the dissembling politician. Both women and the nation, in Astell’s writing, seem alarmingly susceptible to such misrepresentation. In her Moderation Truly Stated Astell, elaborates a sociopsychological diagnosis of the English nation: “Most Men have Passions which they too much Indulge, and hereby some weak side or other whereby they may be won.” As result of these “Passions,” and notwithstanding the “Integrity of their Hearts,” they are “led into such Measures by Artful and Designing Men” to consequences that “they themselves never intended.” Party politics, corresponding in Astell’s prose to a kind of national “courtship,” leads to consequences akin to those of the courtship described in Some Reflections: the exposure to “Injuries” and the aggravation of “Crimes” (MTS 37). Men in the realm of politics in the Enquiry find themselves in the situation of the courted lover in Some Reflections who had “not the least Thought” of “what she has been afterwards betray’d into” (SRM 66–67).

For Astell, however, the provenance of the “Arts” and “Designs” of contemporary Whigs issues directly from those “Principles that brought the Royal Martyr to the Block,” and it can be “plainly shewn . . . that 48 is so like 88, and that what the Forefathers acted, proceeded from much the same Causes, by which their Off-spring were influenced” (IE 58, 53). Invoking Clarendon’s recently published History of the Rebellion, Astell identifies the true cause of the “deplorable Calamity” of the Civil War and Regicide, citing the “ill Arts of
Factious Men, their Absurd Lying, bold Scandals, boundless Promises, abject Flat-teries, and Applications to the Vulgar-spirited (IE 46). The “Arts and Designs” of Astell’s contemporary “Factious Men” have their origin in the “Fetches and Art” of the “dissenters” of “48.” “For they are all,” Astell writes, providing her own historiography of contemporary artifice,

of the same Original, they act upon the same Principles and Motives, and tend to the same End, who place the Supreme Power originally in the People, giving them a Right, or at least an Allowance to resume it . . . whenever . . . they are strong enough to put their Thoughts and Fancies in execution. (IE 48)

Not only are their “Principles and Motives” similar, but their aims and means as well, their desire in particular, to put their “Fancies in execution.” So Astell warns in Moderation Truly Stated that when contemporary Whigs had “by all the sinister, disingenuous, and righteous Arts that the Wit of Men could invent . . . obtain’d the Power, they gave a fatal Demonstration that they wanted not the Will to destroy the Church and State” (MTS 66). Against the backdrop of the innocence of the Martyr Charles, and the metaphysical integritas which he was said to represent, the regicides are shown time and again to resort to artifice—“their righteous Arts”—in order to pursue their sinister designs.57 Indeed, for Astell, the avatars of the Civil War brought about the calamity of Civil War and the death of Charles, through their persistent reliance upon artifice. John Pym, the parliamentary leader, for example, “knew very well how to raise and keep up the Peoples Fears and Jealousies, by alarming them with Desperate Designs and Conspiracies.” Indeed, Pym, Astell argues, would have certainly been “well acquainted” with such “Plots” and “Designs” since “they were forg’d among his own Party” (IE 47). Such strategies, like the “Designs and Sham Pretences of a Cromwell,” were among the habitually employed “Tricks and Ways to draw Men in, and make Tools of them” (IE 47, 15).

Even as Astell identifies the genealogy of the “Scandalous Stories” of contemporary “Cabals and Parties,” she expresses the hope, however, that the Nation not “be bubbled any more by Men of the same Principles, and the same Artifices so often detected.” She writes with even greater confidence in Moderation Truly Stated:

Our Enemies can’t wrest our Religion and Liberties from us, but they may wheedle and trick us out of them, if we will be so foolish and supine as to suffer them to play the Old, and one would think, by this time so often detected, Game once more. (IE 100; SRM 6)

The rejection of the artifice of courtship in Some Reflections implies an appeal to “Generous Minds” and a return to the language of the “Heart” (SRM 84, 72); in Astell’s political prose, the rejection of the artifice of factional politics
and its origins in the Civil War provides a more explicit appeal to “Truth,” “Justice,” and “Real Good” (IE 120).

In the contexts of both courtship and politics, however, the mechanisms of artifice are a manifestation of a particularly male cultural sensibility bent on artifice. Indeed, in the *Enquiry*, Astell borrows freely from the languages developed to describe the gender relations of *Some Reflections* in order to delineate the outlines of a particularly feminist historiography. Within Astell’s idiosyncratic Jacobite history, the fall of the nation is not only figured as kind of an enthrallment to the artifice of Whigs and regicides, but it is also figured as the seduction of a too “foolish” and (perhaps too femininely) “supine” nation. For just as the women in *Some Reflections* are victimized by the “Artifices” of those Men pursuing their “masculine crimes,” so the fall of the Nation results from art used as a means of seduction: “For such Arts as those, the putting such *Thoughts* into the Heads of the *Good-natur’d English People* was that which *seduc’d* them *into* that *Unnatural Rebellion*, which had so many dismal *Effects upon this Nation*” (IE 10–11). “Oh how happy had it been,” Astell writes later in the tract, “that the *good-natur’d English People* had not been *seduc’d* into an *unnatural Rebellion* by mere *Thoughts and Suspicions*” (IE 51).

But like the too credulous ladies of *Some Reflections*, they “have fancy’d themselves into a necessity of believing, or rather Imagining without any manner of necessity, scarce any colour for it, that they might be led out first in *Riots and Tumult*, and then in *Troops and Armies against their Lawful Sovereign*” (IE 54). Imposed upon by regicide artifices, the English nation finds itself all too easily seduced by the pleasures and colors of the regicide, and then the Whig, imagination. Seduction on a national level thus parallels what Astell had described in the realm of the domestic: just as masculine imagination both precedes and predetermines the “farce” of feminine behavior, so the seductive machinations of the regicides similarly precedes and predetermines the “Riots and Tumult” of the English nation.

For the Astell of *Some Reflections*, the fall into the modern is registered in the triumph of the masculine and consumerist arts of “guns,” “eating,” and “gaming.” Such arts are on the same continuum with the arts of political seduction, elaborated in the *Impartial Enquiry*, which had been pursued against the “*Good-natur’d English People*.” Thus the analysis of gender relations of *Some Reflections* informs the historiography implicit in Astell’s later political tracts in which the modern, with its versions of corruption—both domestic and political—have their origins in the seductive (and particularly masculine artifices) of the regicides. But more than that, Astell’s later political tracts reveal that the delineation of the masculine artifices of courtship in *Some Reflections* represents only one facet of Astell’s more general attack upon a masculine culture of artifice of which the rituals of courtship and marriage were only one part. *Some Reflections* then emerges not only as a feminine protest against the masculine abuses of domestic power, but as a complex sociopolitical diagnosis
of sexual relations within the context of the more general cultural and political
containts of her period.

Against the Party interests, craft, and inventions that Astell believed char-
acterized her contemporary world, she would nonetheless hold out the hope
of a return to “Real Good,” through both looking back to “the Spirit of Q. Eliz-
abeth” and the “Felicity” of her “Reign,” and forward to the reign of Queen
Anne (IE 61, 51). “As the Reformation was compleated in the Reign of Her
Glorious Predecessor Queen Elizabeth, so Unity both in Church and State may
be the Blessing that Posterity shall derive from the more Glorious Reign of
Queen Anne” (MTS 118). Glancing backwards to the idealized past before the
troubles of the Civil War, and forward to an as yet unachieved Reformation,
Astell longs for an escape from the artifice of contemporary life into a form
of authenticity which in both personal and political spheres would gain its ener-
gies from particularly feminine principles. Indeed, in the even more aggres-
sive registers of the 1706 appended “Preface” to Some Reflections, Astell
invokes “that GREAT QUEEN who has subdu’d the Proud,” and provided “a
new Path to Honor.” Such a path, Astell asserts confidently, will provide a
“Proof both against giving and receiving Flattery.” The world without mas-
culine “Flattery,” without the manipulative seductions in the realms of both
the personal or political, will lead, Astell writes, “to those Halcyon, or, if you
will, Millennium Days, in which the Wolf and the Lamb shall feed together.”

Astell’s millennial aspirations, however, are decidedly not presupposed upon
emergent enlightenment conceptions of rights, but rather upon a notion of
authenticity nostalgically associated with a prerevolutionary past, leading to a
future without the “Tyrannous Domination” of the masculine, once more
anchored in the authentic registers of the feminine.

NOTES
1. Carol Pateman, “Women’s writing, women’s standing: theory and politics in the
erly modern period” in Women Writers in the Early Modern British Political Tradition, ed.
Hilda Smith (Cambridge, 2001), 369.
3. See Gallagher’s “Embracing the Absolute: The Politics of the Female Subject in Sev-
4. Women’s Political and Social Thought: An Anthology, eds. Hilda L. Smith and Berenice
A. Carroll (Indiana, 2000), 100.
6. Mary Astell, Some Reflections Upon Marriage (London, 1700), 89 (cited in the text as
SRM).
7. The predominance of the Tory feminist model may be in part explained by the fact
that, as Hilda Smith explains, the radical protestant political discourses that provided
the precedent for the languages of protoliberalism were often hostile to and dismissive of
feminine intelligence and agency (Smith, An Anthology 100).
8. For Trotter’s Defence of Mr. Locke’s Essay of Human Understanding, see The Works of
Mrs. Catherine Cockburn, ed. Thomas Birch (London, 1751); for an introduction to her
work, see Mary Brandt Bolton, “Some Aspects of the Philosophical Work of Catharine
Trotter,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 31 (1993), 565–88. Though in retrospect the promise of what Pateman calls the ideal of the “freeborn Englishwoman” would seem to have provided the more likely path for protofeminists, as Pateman has shown, the feminist appropriation of the language of rights was much simpler in theory than in practice. As Pateman describes, the battle against feminine appropriation of language was fought on two fronts, the pragmatic and the theoretical. On the pragmatic level, men “took vigorous steps to enforce their rule,” attempting, among other things, “to consolidate their special rights to government in the state.” Similarly, the philosophical discourses which promoted a universal language of rights tended to assume that the category of “women” by nature fell “outside of the category of ‘man’ who is born free” (371, 377).


12. Desiree Hellegers, *Handmaid to Divinity* (Norman, OK, 2000). Although, as Stillman points out, Hobbes may seem “single-minded” in his opposition to rhetoric, fiction, and poetic metaphor, his *Leviathan* “earnestly disavows traditional forms of rhetoric,” while “reintroducing rhetorical devices.” “Fierce as his opposition appears,” Stillman writes, the Hobbesian attack on metaphor “stands in contradiction to the constitutive role of figurative speech in his political science.” Thus Hobbes, writes Stillman, remains “unable to avoid entanglement among the monsters of metaphor even as he sets out to destroy them” (125, 154, 118, 136). For similar insights about Hobbesian immersion in rhetoric, see David Johnston, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan* (Princeton, 1986) who claims the Leviathan as a “work of rhetoric”; see also Quentin Skinner, who writes in *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge 1996) that Hobbes would ultimately endorse the alliance between “the methods of science” and the “products of the imagination” (372).


14. James J. Bono, *The Word of God and the Languages of Man* (Madison, 1995), 215, 232, 233, 244, 228. Bono notes, however, that Bacon did not believe in the possibility of an unmediated relation to nature; indeed, even the languages of early modern science had, as Bono emphasizes, a narrative context. Bacon’s own “turn to things” remained “mediate” and was made possible only through properly understanding the proper relation between the “Word of God” and the “languages of man” (227, 214–44 passim.)


1983), 247. Shapiro’s narrative of enlightenment, however, fails to give the full sense in which, within the seventeenth century, emergent categories and criteria of truth were in fact contested. Stillman, among those whom he calls “the new revisionary critics,” have helped to demonstrate that both “sciences and fictions” were “struggling for meaning in the same ‘prison house of language’” (119). For an account of those who would refuse the truth criteria of natural philosophers such as Hobbes, as well as the dominant ideologies of the Royal Society, see Hellegers (passim), who finds in Donne, Milton, and Anne Finch (among others) models of truth based not upon abstract systems of speculative knowledge, but language, contingency, and poetic representations. For the specifically Miltonic resistance to the languages and categories of emergent enlightenment philosophy, see my Milton’s Warring Angels (Cambridge 1997), 63–83.


19. Just as Stillman has shown Hobbes’s ambivalent relationship towards metaphor, William Walker, Locke, Literary Criticism and Philosophy (Cambridge, 1994), has problematized the role of rhetoric, metaphor, and wit in Locke’s Essay. The Essay, writes Walker, at once “condemns the figurative application of words,” while, “on the other hand, recommends it.” Thus the opposition between wit and judgment may not be, in Locke’s rhetorical practice, as hard and fast as he himself sometimes claims. See also in this regard Richard Kroll, The Material World: Literate Culture in the Restoration and Early Eighteenth Century (Baltimore 1991), who argues that, despite the specific arguments of the Essay against fancy, Locke failed to “keep different discourses separate in his own epistemological writing” (57).


21. As Ruth Salvaggio argues, Enlightened Absence: Neoclassical Configurations of the Feminine (Urbana, IL, 1988), the discourses of Enlightenment configured “that which violates cohesive, systematic structure as feminine,” and that the feminine itself became “a sign and symptom of everything that would not conform to systematic structures” (ix, 11).


23. Gallagher, Nobody’s Story, xxiv.


25. Andrew Marvell, in his The Rehearsal Transpros’d would ironically attack Parker for his own affiliation with the language of the poets: “our Divine, the Author,” writes Marvell, “manages his contest with the same prudence and civility, which the players and Poets have practiced in late in their several Divisions” (The Rehearsal Transpros’d, ed. D. I. B. Smith [Oxford, 1971], 9–10). As N. H Keeble, “Why Transprose the Rehearsal” in Marvell and Liberty, eds. Warren Chernaik and Martin Dzelzainsis (London, 1999), would write, Marvell condemned Parker’s prose for “its immoderation and exaggeration” which lead to the “fanciful, the fictional, and the absurd” (257). See also in this regard, Derek Hirst, “Samuel Parker, Andrew Marvell, and political culture, 1667–73” in Writing and Political Engagement in Seventeenth Century England, eds. Derek Hirst and Richard Strier (Cambridge, 1999) who argues that Marvell wielded conceptions of “authenticity and accuracy” against Parker’s own use of “romance, fiction and rhetoric” (259).

26. Dryden’s “An Essay of Dramatic Poesy” in Essays of John Dryden, ed. W. Ker (Oxford, 1926), roughly contemporary with Parker’s essay, provides a very different—and still masculine—version of poetic wit (see especially, 106–07). For another contempo-
rary—and again masculine—conception of wit, see the works of Abraham Cowley, particularly his “Of Wit.” Robert B. Hinnman, “Truth is Truest Poesy,” ELH 23 (1956) demonstrates how Cowley’s wit—inherited from Donne—would be aligned with both poetry as well as the experimental philosophy of the Royal Society (201).

27. Samuel Parker, A Free and Impartial Account of the Platonick Philosophy (Oxford, 1666), 73–75.

28. Parker, 75.

29. Parker, 76, 79.

30. Cited in Evelyn Scott Keller, Reflections on Gender and Science (New Haven, 1985), 52–3. Interestingly, in the works published a the end of his life, as Jackson I. Cope, Glanvill: Anglican Apologist (St. Louis, 1956), explains, “wit” would welcome “imagination as a necessary vehicle for its full expression” (161). Associations on this point with Glanvill’s contemporary, John Milton, are unavoidable. Though Milton was still immersed in the analogical thinking rejected by the likes of Parker and Hobbes (Milton’s Raphael reveals to Adam in Book V that Reason is informed by both “fancy and understanding” [V 486]), Milton, Paradise Lost, ed. Alastair Fowler (New York, 1991), himself still associates the excesses of the imagination with Eve. It is Eve, in Book V, whose sleep is interrupted by a dream, which Adam subsequently explains to be a function of “mimic Fancy” which “misjoining shapes/Wild work produces oft” (V 110–12). Similarly, it is Eve in Book IV whose gaze fixes on her own image until Adam beckons her for the causes of history and procreation (IV 456–75).


32. Joseph Addison, The Works of the Right Honourable Joseph Addison, ed. Richard Hurd, D. D. Six vol. Henry G. Bohn: London, 1846, III 395; Spectator, 411. Addison in fact rehabilitates fancy from its deprecation in the works of Hobbes and Locke, arguing for its indispensability alongside of judgment. “The fancy,” Addison writes, “must be warm, to retain the print of those images it hath received from outward objects; and the judgment discerning, to know what expressions are most proper to clothe and adorn them to the best advantage. A man who is deficient in either of these respects, though he may receive the general notion of a description, can never see distinctly all its particular beauties . . .” (III 414; Spectator 416).

33. Erin Mackie, Market à la Mode: Fashion, Commodity, and Gender in The Tatler and The Spectator (Baltimore, 1997), 49, 63.

34. As Mackie demonstrates, Addison and Steele do not so much reject fancy as re-figure conceptions of both fancy and fashion according to the requisites of “polite society” (and its desire for “the consolidation of power and prestige”). Their strategies, Mackie writes, “do not disown but preserve” the “forces of fancy in ways that they can understand as compatible with reason, social and personal progress, and national well-being.” “They would thus,” Mackie explains, “counter conceit with conceit, fight fire with fire” (14, 62).

35. Addison, Works II 263, 265, III 421; Spectator 15, 418. Notwithstanding Addison’s relative equanimity in relation to the feminine “imagination,” he nonetheless registers his anxiety about the inherent potency of feminine “copiousness” and “invention.” Addison, in a suggestive digression, describes a “friend,” “an excellent anatomist,” who had promised him, “by the first opportunity to dissect a woman’s tongue, and to examine whether there may not be in it certain juices which render it so wonderfully voluble or flippant, or whether the fibres of it may not be made up of a finer or more pliant thread, or whether there are not in the some particular muscles, which dart it up and down by such sudden glances and vibrations . . .” (Works III 144, 145; Spectator 247).

36. Mackie, 60, 63.

37. As Mackie argues, by “directing their energies against lavish show and self-display,” Addison and Steele would “advise that the bourgeois consolidation of power and prestige operates within a very different taste and power regime.” The “stylistic stan-
dards” which they champion, however, “are part of a larger shift from an absolutist into a hegemonic mode of governance that takes place in England throughout the second part of the seventeenth century” (14).


39. Margaret Cavendish, like Astell, would transform conventional conceptions of reason and fancy. Yet while Astell fully appropriates reason for a feminist register of rationalism, Cavendish at once questions the authority of masculine discourses of rationalism and science, while also appropriating them within the bounds of an unapologetically feminine imagination. Which is to say, while Astell’s rejection of fancy and imagination is uncompromising and total, Cavendish’s relationship to both reason and fancy remains far more ambivalent. Her *The Description of a New World called the Blazing World* (London, 1668) self-consciously combines what she calls in the epistolary preface “Fantastical,” “Romantic,” and “Philosophical” parts.

40. Lady Demaris Masham, Patricia Springborg argues in “Astell, Masham, and Locke” in *Women Writers* (ed. Smith) presents an image that Astell had already “pre-saged”: that women “were the true practitioners of theoria,” and that “philosophy” could be established “as a chosen realm of female endeavor” (123).

41. Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (London, 1697), cited within as *SP*.

42. Aphra Behn, in the Prologues to the plays written during the Exclusion Crisis, had condemned Whig politics and hypocrisy, anticipating Astell’s attacks upon masculine plotting and artifice. As Susan Owen writes in *Restoration Theatre and Crisis* (Oxford, 1996), Behn had satirized what she calls “the mercantile middle class” through an association of their culture with “hypocrisy, folly, pretension, legalism, and low-class money-grubbing.” Unlike Astell, however, Behn celebrated not so much “Truth,” but poetry and “wit,” though condemning the plotting associated with politics and private interest. See especially Behn’s prologues to *The Feign’d Curtizans* in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, ed. Jane Todd (Columbus, Ohio, 1996), v. VI, 89–90 and *The Second Part of the Rover*, v. VI, 231–32.

43. Annabel Patterson, *Early Modern Liberalism* (Cambridge, 1997), 185; Astell’s *Moderation Truly Stated* (London, 1704) transferred this strategy from the realm of the domestic to the political as she reveals the falsity of the dissenting stratagems of the so-called “Men of Moderation.” For an explicit contemporary use of the trope of unmasking, see Samuel Grascombe, *The Mask of Moderation Pull’d Off* (London, 1705).

44. In the much more aggressively polemical language of the “Preface” added in the third edition of 1706, Astell is much more confident about the efficacy of feminine skepticism: “She did not,” Astell writes about herself in the third person, “advise” her audience to “think his Folly wisdom, nor his Brutality that Love and Worship he promised in his Matrimonial Oath, for this required a Flight of Wit and Sense much above her poor ability, and proper only to Masculine Understandings” (*Astell: Political Writings*, ed. Patrician Springborg (Cambridge, 1996), 8–9. In the typically sardonic tone of the “Preface,” Astell much more aggressively associates “Wit” with a masculine imagination in which women—ostensibly of “poor ability”—have no portion.

45. In *SP*, Astell further advises that “since the French Tongue is understood by most Ladies, methinks they may much better improve it by the study of Philosophy . . . than by reading idle Novels and Romances” (51).


47. The associations with the physical would have had unambiguously negative connotations given Astell’s neo-Platonist and antimaterialist bias. On Astell’s antimaterialism, see Kathleen M. Squadrito, “Mary Astell’s Critique of Locke’s Thinking Matter,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 25 (1987), 433–39, as well as Patricia Springborg, “Mary Astell, Critic of Locke,” *American Political Science Review* 89 (1995), 621–33.

48. Astell is here again reversing conventional notions and stereotypes. As Hope
Donovan-Cotton demonstrates in *Women and Risk: The Gambling Women in Eighteenth-Century England*, (Auburn Univ. dissertation, 1998), for the neo-classical sensibility, it was women who were again and again associated with the risks implicit in gaming. Addison, in a 1714 *Guardian* essay, distills cultural anxieties about the “female gamester” as he catalogs the “ill consequence” of gaming to both the minds and bodies of “our female adventurers” (*Works* v, IV, 231–33; *Guardian* 120).

On Astell’s critique of consumer culture, see Hoffman, “Tory Feminism.”

50. Mackie, 163.


54. Thomas Rogers, *A True Protestant Bridle or Some Cursory Remarks upon a Sermon Preached before the Lord Mayor, At St. Mary-Le-Bow* (London, 1694), 5, 7; *Our Modern Demagogue’s Modesty and Honesty in its True Light*, 1.


57. Thomas Long, Dr. Walker’s True, Modest, and Faithful Account of the Author of Eikon Basilike* (London, 1693), provides a typical Jacobite representation of the martyr Charles: “If I should trace all the Footsteps and Characters of the King’s Image and Superscription,” Long writes, “I must transcribe the whole, which is an express Image of his Royal Soul, which as the Philosophers say of the Souls informing the Body is, *tota in toto & tota in qualibet parte*” (56).

58. Other Tory historiography, such as that implicit in Samuel Grascome, *The Mask of Moderation Pull’d Off* (London, 1704), argued Tory “Plain Truth” against the artifice of the “Rebellion begun in 41.” In Grascome’s argument, however, the gendering of artifice is along much more conventional lines. Beneath the “fine Words” and “fine Cloaths” of the “glorious Description” of contemporary Whig culture, Grascome discovers, not “a real Beauty,” but rather “a nasty Slutt” (5, 8).


61. In the “Preface,” Astell’s nostalgia significantly bypasses Charles and centers on what she would call in MTS the “harder hand of Elizabeth” (94).