Introduction
A Wanton Chase

This is a book about how literary culture engaged with the aesthetics of motion between 1650 and 1810, a period when writers and readers redefined how plots and characters should and could move. I begin with the argument that motion matters a lot more to literary history than we usually acknowledge. It is not surprising that interest in motion's aesthetic power surged in the decades after popular Newtonianism took Britons by storm. The preoccupation with literary motor imagery was not, however, sparked only by the elegant simplicity of the Prime Mover's laws. It was also deeply rooted in the classical sources that still formed the bedrock of a gentlemanly education. In Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and Quintilian's *Intitutio Oratia*, the primary function of metaphor was "bringing-before-the-eyes": a writer's capacity to make their audience visualize the motion of unseen events or objects with great vividness.[1] Throughout the long eighteenth century, writers debated how poetry and prose might differ from other "sister arts" in their capacity to evoke a sense of movement in readers. Why could a reader, to a much greater degree than a viewer of a painting or a theatrical performance, vividly imagine themself moving through a fictionalized setting, whether calmly gliding or hurtling at speed?

The importance of movement to literary experience was reinforced by the widespread assumption that emotion *was* motion. Thinkers from Margaret Cavendish to Erasmus Darwin wrote detailed descriptions of movements in and through the body, be they atoms swirling in the brain or the agitations of sense organs, to explain how humans think and feel and respond to texts.[2] If perceptions and passions could be explained by the flow of humours and animal spirits or the vibration of nerves, then it followed that aesthetics – as the study of sensory experience and response – must also focus on movement. Moreover, the social importance of deportment made reading and interpreting bodily motions – someone's "bearing," "carriage," "mien," "air," and "attitude" – a crucial skillset during the period. Moral philosophical treatises, conduct books, and

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novels were all keenly attuned to what Friedrich Schiller called "the tone that determines the manner of the movement" ("Ton, den sie angibt, die Weise der Bewegung").[3] If a person's movements were too hurried, too languorous, or otherwise "aukward," this could serve as evidence of something off-kilter in their morals or health. Each posture, gesture, or tic was a legible sign of a hidden interior cause. But ultimately, the whims and intentions that spur our actions are invisible and hence require a kind of storytelling. There is no "Momus's glass in the human breast," and hence, as *Tristram Shandy* notes, we cannot "observ[e] all [the soul's] motions . . . her frisks, her gambols, her capricios," to determine what drives "a man's character."[4] Desire, will, motive, temperament, habit, impulse: all unquestionably play a role when we move, but how these fit together is a fiction, a narrative constructed either by ourselves or by people who observe us.

But what about those motions that elude narration because they are difficult to capture in words? In 1747, Samuel Johnson held up "wanton" motion as a prime example of why the English language needed "sort[ing]" out.[5] On the one hand, to call a person "wanton" in everyday parlance was to cast aspersions: to hint that they were "lustful," "licentious," or "loose." On the other hand, to call the endearing romps and gambols of a toddler "wanton" had nothing to do with sidelong insults about sexual mores. This problem arises, Johnson suggests, because in its aesthetic or "poetical" sense, *wanton* denotes movement through space: specifically, a "motion [that] is irregular without terror."[6] Johnson blames the common usage of wanton-as-amorous on a seventeenth-century etymological error: one that mistakenly linked wanton to its near-homophone "want one."[7] This case of mistaken identity is problematic because it links wanton motion to an aim or desire when, in fact, the very irregularity of wantonness lies in its lack of clear motivation.

Indeed, the un-mindfulness at the heart of wantonness suggests that the mover might simply desire movement for its own sake, detached from any thought process or design. William Hogarth's *The Analysis of Beauty* (1753) links the pleasure of viewing motion that "leads the eye a wanton kind of chace" (*sic*) to the fact that "the eye is peculiarly entertained and relieved in . . . pursuit" "merely as pursuit."[8] The fact that human vision enjoys serpentine movement merely for the sake of serpentining is a universalizing principle in Hogarth's aesthetics of motion: both the sinuous "curvetting" of "a fine arabian war-horse, unback'd and at liberty, and in a wanton trot" and the spiralling of a common kitchen clockwork roasting spit are "beguiling" because of the intricacy and open-endedness of their movements, not because they bring to mind a desire or purpose.[9]

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In his 1763 *Elements of Criticism*, Henry Home Lord Kames argues that "motion is agreeable to the eye without relation to purpose or design."[10] More than a century later, the nineteenth-century philosopher Paul Souriau agreed: if an observer gets the sense that motion – no matter how "lovely" or "meandering" or "varied" – is in pursuit of an aim, this lessens its appeal.[11] As I show in the chapters that follow, this was true not only for spectators watching a sprightly Arabian horse or a corkscrewing mechanism but also for authors hoping to evoke vivid motion imagery for their readers.

I argue that the wanton was a vital and unique aesthetic category for writers, one that could not be classified under the familiar headings of "the beautiful," "the sublime," "the novel," or "the ridiculous." While these aesthetic categories were undoubtedly important to eighteenth-century discourse, this book asserts that they leave out key features unique to wantonness: the nimble, the whimsical, the exuberant, the unselfconsciously irregular. Eighteenth-century writers sought ways to convey unusual or unintentional movements that broke or bent certain social laws of motion. They were concerned with what happened between two aesthetic vanishing points on the spectrum of intentionality: on the one hand, too little self-command, and on the other, too much. In the first case, to move with abandon is pleasing, but only to a point. When lambkins wantonly frolic and frisk or when ringlets wantonly curl and bounce, these sights are charming because they are unrestrained. But the pleasures of unrestrainedness evaporate if the mover appears to lose control and veer off into "freaks" of excessive waywardness. In the second case, the allure of wanton movement disappears when we suspect that a mover is overly self-conscious. Between these two extremes, negligence is a key area of overlap between British common law and literatures of conduct and comportment. To appear unintentional is essential both to masculine codes of *sprezzatura* and feminine conventions of *dishabille,* both of which inspire what Robert Herrick called "delight in disorder": "A sweet disorder in the dress / Kindles in clothes a wantonness."[12] If we detect that a mover's supposedly *négligée* postures are in fact carefully calculated simulations, then their deportment seems affected and awkward.[13] Wanton movement strikes a balance between a reckless lack of restraint and intentional negligence. It is an unselfconscious vitality that can feel automatic but not automaton-like.

Wantonness, by separating bodily movement from moral motivation, was for eighteenth-century writers a way to make sense of causality that was non-agential, what Jane Bennett, following Gilles Deleuze, calls the

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"quasi-causal."[14] When Johnson uses *wanton* to define other words, which he does in more than thirty entries of the *Dictionary*, he emphasizes how the intentions of a moving person or thing can seem strangely divorced from the motion itself.[15] While a handful of these entries reflect the quotidian "lewd" (*lascivious*) and "amorous" (*buxom*), the vast majority convey "thoughtless" (*play*) or "careless" (*waster*) movement: "frothy frolicks" (*toyishness*), "moving hastily" (*skittish*) with "levity" (*play*), "exuberance" (*luxuriance*), "festiveness" (*riotous*), or "jauntiness" (*to smerk*). Examples include "*disporting*," "gliding" (*lubrick*), "tripping" as in "dancing" (*to foot*), or "*flourishing*." Such movements *can* indicate some desire on the part of the mover, but that desire is not necessarily libidinous, nor does it aim for culmination or consummation. Johnson underscores this when he takes a phrase from John Milton's Eden as an illustrative quotation for the verb-form "*to wanton*," "to move nimbly and irregularly": "for Nature here / Wanton'd as in her prime, and plaid at will / Her Virgin Fancies."[16] In Christopher Ricks's famous reading of these lines, Milton's diction establishes a layering of the pre- and postlapsarian: although wantonness can have no dissipated connotations for the innocent Adam and Eve, for postlapsarian readers such suggestions are inevitable. Hence, as readers remind themselves that in Eden irregular movement *does not* imply moral abandon, both meanings nevertheless come into play.[17] The sheer number of Johnson's *Dictionary* definitions that address wantonness as an embodied expression of quasi-intentionality, a state in which the mover loosens their executive function and "pla[ys] at will," points to the unique significance of the wanton to the aesthetics of motion during the period.

Theorists of belles-lettres singled out wantonness as an aesthetic category that was, for better or worse, crucial to the verbal arts. This was in part because inadvertency, unintentionality, and the breakdown of causal chains were necessary to the reading process. In 1701, the influential critic John Dennis argued that a "cause not clearly comprehended" was a crucial condition of literary experience in that the reader must be unable to pin down precisely what has led to their emotions while reading.[18] This reading un-comprehension depends upon depictions of movement. Dennis insists that if a writer wants to compose absorbing descriptions that "imperceptibly" "carry along" the "unknowing" reader, they must master the craft of vivid motion imagery.[19] But this cannot happen unless the writer is also passionately moved such that they cannot fully account for the cause of their feelings. The experience of "enthusiastic" immersive reading – the aesthetic response to verbal art in which the writer *and* reader

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engage in lively image-making – is, in Dennis's account, fundamentally predicated on wanton chains of causality.[20]

Both wantonness and reading un-comprehension are baked into the English language in Johnson's famous preface to the *Dictionary* (1755). Johnson points out that English orthography "has long wantoned without controul" and that British authors have willy-nilly adopted foreign loan-words out of either "ignorance ... vanity or wantonness."[21] Whereas ignorant authors make mistakes, and vain authors intentionally put on airs by strewing their pages with exotic terms, wanton authorship hints at a playfulness that verges on the irreverent. Johnson exemplifies this linguistic wantonness with the shift in the meaning of the word *buxom* from obedient to lustful. He attributes this to a "merry" misreading of ancient wedding vows: "buxom, which means only obedient, is now made, in familiar phrases, to stand for wanton, because in an antient form of marriage, before the reformation, the bride promised complaisance and obedience in these terms, 'I will be bonair and buxom in bed and at board.'"[22] Readers and authors have playfully misconstrued the proximity of the phrase "in bed" as sexually suggestive such that buxom-as-obedient has come to mean buxom-as-lustful. (We see a keen awareness of this shift when in 1648 Herrick's speaker insists that when he "sing[s] of ... Bridegrooms, Brides, and of their Bridall-cakes," "I write of Youth, of Love, and have accesse / By these to sing of cleanly-Wantonnesse.")[23] Linguistic wantonness – especially when it is not entirely "cleanly" – captures for Johnson the tendency of English speakers to play with language flippantly or with a kind of careless abandon.

Certainly, many in the period understood the act of reading not as an exercise in focused rigour but rather as a thoughtless frolic.[24] Numerous readers of the *Dictionary*, Johnson predicts, will read his etymologies as "wanton sports of wit."[25] While Johnson's self-deprecating claims about the "drudgery" and "sluggish resolution" of lexicographers are well known, rarely do we acknowledge Johnson's insistence on the "sportive" and "capricious" aspects of dictionary-writing and dictionary-reading, those moments when even the most sombre logophiles can have fun with the fact that "our language was ... thrown together by negligence" and "admit [s] of numberless irregularities."[26] Rather than worrying that the capriciousness of English will require "drudgery" on his part, Johnson revels in this irregularity that gives him licence to "wander from the tropic to the frozen zone."[27] Johnson's modest claims to bewilderment in *The Plan* are tempered by hints that entering "the mazes of such intricacy" might also be an occasion for delight and even play – in short, for a kind of

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wantonness.[28] Johnson admits that he has created in his *Dictionary* a wanton text, one that invites readers – especially those looking for a laugh – to read entries on words like *buxom* out of context: "I know well . . . how trifling many of these remarks will appear . . . and how easily they may give occasion to the contemptuous merriment of sportive idleness."[29] This "sportive" reader who dips in and out of the *Dictionary* without considering that "trifling" is a driving force of the English language unwittingly embodies the spirit of the language itself. To study English and make things with English words is, then, not to strive for the beautiful or the sublime, the deepest character or the tautest plot. It is to be careless and negligent and playful and emergent and to embrace the absorbing and accidental configurations that reading and writing take in the mind and the body.

This book argues that aesthetic and legal theories about wantonness were among the key discourses that structured how authors and audiences imagined and engaged with literary experience. My central claim is that wanton action is a way to read against the grain of what have been deemed the dominant narrative strains of the past: masculo-achievement arcs, sentimental marriage plots, and *Histories and Adventures of* exceptional individuals who are the strongest link in their own providential chain of causality. Wantonness tends to empty out subjectivity while nevertheless maintaining the sprightly irregularities that mark a person as being alive and in-the-moment. As I discuss in what follows, I call this kind of characterization *vital impersonality*: it is impersonal because it diminishes the sense that a person's movements arise from a fixed interior autonomous drive or will and yet "vital" because it conveys an exceptionally vivid sense of a character's unique way of being embodied. The figure of "the wanton" allowed writers of the period to explore forms of looseness and liveliness that expanded notions of human agency beyond that of the controlling mind or soul. We see this in a breadth of genres from essays on criticism and conduct, to it-narratives, harlequinade flipbooks, travel fiction, and abolition literature. These texts share an interest in wantonness as a moral grey area between negligence and recklessness, one that not only frames intentionality as a spectrum but also subverts the notion of a central fixed selfhood from which intentions arise. In this sense wantonness is excentric or decentring of personality and interiority. This is especially important when texts depict persons who are not fully aware of the causes – be they feelings, intentions, or external forces – of their own movement. Description can suggest a mimesis of aliveness that is not strictly agentive but rather dwells in the complex (dis)connections between character and

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action that occur in quasi-intentional or unselfconscious states. When is movement not an action? When it floats free from character such that the subject might come to resemble an object.

This prising apart of cause and agent is central to my analyses of the shapes and speeds of plots. The unique ambiguities of wanton causality allow us to think differently about the centrality of movement to narrative. *Wanton Motion* focuses on prose works in which the "what" and the "why" of the plot are less important than the "how." Considering narrative in terms of contours of movement helps us to break away from assumptions about linearity that do not apply to many eighteenth-century texts, which can seem miscellaneous and amorphous compared to later nineteenth-century narratives. This hodgepodge tendency is due in part to the fact that earlier time periods understood causality differently, and wantonness, I argue, captures this for the long eighteenth century. Wanton plots defy classifications such as "comic" or "tragic" because they upend both physical and moral chains of cause and effect. While it is certainly true that the texts I discuss link recklessness to the inevitability of suffering, this book also recognizes that an experience of unpredictability or unrestrained-ness might bring delight or a joyful sense of defiance.

It is worth pausing to acknowledge that the title of this Introduction cuts the phrase "kind of" from Hogarth's famous description of the motion of lines that lead the viewer's eye on "a wanton kind of chace."[30] But while "kind of" makes for a clunky chapter heading, this quality of ambiguity is an important feature of what *Wanton Motion* sets out to capture: the ways that writers puzzled over how to describe and theorize a sort of movement that was seemingly casual and wandering and yet nevertheless fundamental to aesthetics, decorum, and agency. Part of the challenge of articulating the profound significance of wantonness for eighteenth-century British letters is that movements of the "wanton kind" are often erratic: they are hard to predict and even harder to express in language. This book foregrounds those aspects of aesthetic experience that are left out of the Shaftesburian connoisseur's disinterested attention: playfulness, heedlessness, unexpected vibrancy, wanderings, frolics, sportiveness, giddy energies, aimless flow. Kevis Goodman has noted that while principles of impartiality and consensus were gradually coming to define most standards of taste, certain concepts posed challenges to eighteenth-century ideals of detachment.[31] I argue that wantonness is precisely one such concept. If, on the one hand, a reader feels wanton in a lustful, "want-one" way, that person merely reinforces the distinction between disinterested good taste and base appetite. But if, on the other hand, a reader experiences a sense of absorption and flow that feels

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thoughtless and yet lively, nimble and yet irregular, this "conjunction of heightened focus and sensual self-loss" shatters the detachment/attachment binary and refuses to resolve the tension between the two.[32]

This refusal led writers of the period to debate the extent to which wantonness was in good taste. Anthony Ashley Cooper, Lord Shaftesbury's *Characteristicks* (1711) links "the wanton" to an aesthetics of pagan permissiveness and poetry that depicts the gods fuelled by haphazard desires "wander[ing] in the loosest manner."[33] Mary Poovey has shown how the Shaftesburian position pits lust against the aesthetic because it threatens "both contemplation and disinterest."[34] Because a "loose" or thoughtless state of mind is likely to turn to lustful desire and to seek a form of possession or consummation, such "wandering" is supposedly at odds with rational disinterestedness. Francis Hutcheson's 1726 *Inquiry* adapted Shaftesbury's argument to social manners and warned readers that although wantonness is a subtle quality or "je ne scai quoy" (*sic*) that seems attractive, it is fundamentally incompatible with beauty.[35] Hutcheson gives practical advice about how to judge whether a person is truly beautiful or merely wanton: his readers must develop a healthy "aversion" to people whose "whole air and motion" has too much "folly" and "levity."[36] Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty*, however, turns Shaftesbury's model on its head. Hogarth uses the term "disinterestedness" with ironic disdain and urges his readers to reject the Shaftesburian tendency to plod along "the wide Roads of uniformity and regularity," which, although they might lead to "contentment," can never "excit[e] the lively feeling of wantonness and play."[37] The mistake that Shaftesbury and Hutcheson make, Hogarth suggests, is to confuse "wantonness and play" with the rapacious pursuits of Jupiter. As Hogarth formulates it, the wanton manifests as an immersive state of mind that feels like the unfettered movements of playful pursuit. This form of pursuit is not so much single-minded as absent-minded, in that our minds naturally tend to see movement in otherwise static shapes. Hogarth uses both printed line illustrations and verbal imagery to evoke a sensorimotor experience in which the viewer/reader feels like they are moving along the contours of "a wanton kind of chace."[38] If we assume that chasing involves a clear intention and presence of mind, then we can read the phrase "a wanton kind of chace" as an oxymoron. But while a straightforwardly end-oriented pursuit cannot be wanton, an indirectly playful chase can. This is why Hogarth implores his readers to follow the "Right Road of Nature's more superficial Beautys [sic] of sportiveness and fancy."[39] Here "superficial" does not mean "trivial" but rather commonsensically manifest or readily visible "on the surface" without unnecessary

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theorization.[40] Rather than striving for a disinterested appreciation of the rational and orderly, Hogarth suggests that more meaningful aesthetic pleasure can be found by valuing what nature immediately offers up to the senses: reproducible forms like the serpentine line that are always already unfurling before our eyes. Hogarth notes with ironic glee that the "right road" is not the straight and narrow one but rather a winding and mazy path that dips in and out of sight.

The Wanton and Its Load-Bearing Concepts: Motion, Causality, Selfhood, Form

My argument calls for us to preserve wantonness's specificity as an eighteenth-century aesthetic category in its own right. I maintain this claim throughout this book with the help of four load-bearing concepts: motion, causality, selfhood, and form. Peter De Bolla defines "load-bearing concepts" as "those that enable us to think (or conceptualize) something else," and argues that when concepts are crucial to more than one sphere – such as the aesthetic and the legal – it helps to think in terms of a "conceptual array."[41] Hence, for example, the load-bearing concept of causality props up other important concepts, such as intentionality, agency, habit, and accident. This helps me both to articulate wantonness's significance and to engage with recent critical conversations about four lines of inquiry: what is motion? Why do we move or what causes our movement? Who gets to move and how does this define the limits of selfhood? And what forms should or can motion take? While it might seem like aesthetics only pertains to the last question – the *how* of movement – I argue that all four inquiries were aesthetic questions for eighteenth-century writers.

My focus in these pages is on *the literary sensorimotor*, by which I mean the array of theories and debates, both ancient and modern, about how verbal imagery can capture what it feels like to be a body moving through space. Vivid descriptions of embodied action necessarily privilege proprioception: what Alva Noë defines as our sense, distributed throughout our body, of how we orient ourselves and move through the world.[42] Previous studies of literary representations of movement have tended to focus on visual and sonic imagery at the expense of readers' proprioceptive experiences.[43] While Elaine Scarry's compelling *Dreaming by the Book* (2000) led the way in theorizing narrative instructions for motor image-making, her study took for granted that visual imagery is the ultimate standard of vividness.[44] I align my textual analyses with more recent work

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on literary aesthetics by G. Gabrielle Starr, who contends that we lose something in treating verbal motor imagery primarily as a *visual* approximation of watching moving images from a single stationary vantagepoint.[45] Eighteenth-century thinkers developed kinetic and proprioceptive models of reading and writing that explained how literature was distinct from other art forms in its capacity to conjure vivid sensorimotor experience. These models were important not only for description in prose and verse but also for print culture and experiments in using line illustrations as instructions to the reader to imagine specific motion contours. As will be evident from the number of images that I include in this volume, it is not my aim to demote the visual but rather to prove that writers used visual illustrations as cues for the reader's proprioceptive ideation: imagine that your body is moving like or along *this line here*.

Despite the importance of motion as a load-bearing concept, the field of eighteenth-century studies does not agree on the status of the aesthetics of movement as it pertains to the literary. While I am indebted to Abigail Zitin's work on Hogarth's practical formalism, I disagree, as I explain in Chapter 1, with her suggestion that Hogarth "denies the application of this theory of beauty to narrative art" by framing narrative pleasure as "thoroughly end-directed."[46] My focus is on literary forms and genres in which narrative pleasure is *not* end-oriented. This is most obvious in looser forms like it-narrative miscellanies and harlequinade flipbooks, but it is also the case in allegedly end-oriented genres like abolition literature and travel-cure fiction, in which finding pleasure in an ending often ignores the unique trajectories of racialized or differently abled characters. It is, after all, not only the actor's "blackface" makeup that distinguishes Harlequin as an itinerant type who is both racially and nationally "other"; it is his constant bouncing against the limits of both normative embodiment and the confines of plot. Wanton motion does not march toward an end point but rather wanders beyond the customary bounds of bodily energy and demeanour such that it makes visible social and aesthetic norms that are normally below the horizon of conscious awareness.

Because wantonness denoted a particular blend of the automatic and the willed, the unconscious and the conscious, writers of the period sought new ways to explain the status of thoughtlessness as a causal force. Indeed, the etymological roots of *reckless* come from a negation of the Middle English verb *to reck*, or "to take care or thought for," the source of "to reckon."[47] But lack of thought and lack of care are not always the same thing and there will always be many a slip 'twixt cup and lip. This means that wantonness raises crucial questions about how narratives – whether they be legal rulings

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or fictional tales – can piece together uncertain chains of cause and effect. Narrating causality can be particularly difficult in stories about intentions and motives. We might, after all, not know *why* we move. What about actions that we take without knowing what our intentions are, or perhaps without intending anything in the first place? At least since Aristotle, we have agreed that observers tend to misinterpret the intentions of other people. Ross Hamilton provides a memorable example from the *Physics*: one morning a man walks through a marketplace to stretch his legs and take the air and happens to run into someone who owes him money.[48] It might *seem* as though the man went to market with the intention of collecting payment, but that was not his motive; it was mere chance that he was paid back that morning. Indeed, this gap between intention and result was key to Aristotle's definition of accident: it is not enough that an event is rare or unexpected; it must have an outcome that differs from the one intended.[49] When eighteenth-century writers discuss coincidences or accidents in which a person or group of people act with only partial self-awareness, this enters the legal realm of "wanton disregard."[50]

From the seventeenth century to today, wantonness in British common law has occupied an amorphous area between negligence (which implies "no evil motive" and unselfconsciousness) and recklessness (which implies a "bad attitude" and a consciously dismissive "I don't care!" mindset).[51] Wantonness falls somewhere between, on the one hand, an absence of mind and, on the other, a renouncement of a duty of care. But even these coordinates are murky at best.[52] Does wantonness differ from negligence only in degree, or does it also differ in kind? Is wantonness an aggravated negligence in which a tortfeasor might be semi-conscious of their morally suspect state of mind? Or is wantonness something else entirely, a gratuitous unselfconsciousness that skirts the brink of depravity and yet never tips fully into recklessness? This spectrum of quasi-intent is nebulous to the point that the legal scholar Geoffrey C. Rapp describes it as a "bizarre twilight zone not susceptible to concrete prediction or accurate application."[53] Colin Dayan argues that this lack of accuracy lends itself to racist discrimination; in Anglo-American court systems, Black and Brown people are particularly susceptible to unfair convictions of wanton disregard.[54] As I discuss in Chapter 5, this difficulty in application – specifically, the near-impossibility of convicting eighteenth-century enslavers in the West Indies of "wanton cruelty" – became a major point of contention in British debates about abolition. At stake were questions about to what extent one's environment or economic system (i.e. slaveocracy) could function as a cause that overruled an individual's morals and

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willpower. If it were in fact culturally or climatologically impossible for a white West Indian enslaver to abstain from wanton cruelty, abolitionists argued, then local assemblies in Jamaica and Barbados must submit to more "rational" standards set by parliamentarians in Britain.

Eighteenth-century literary studies has benefited from influential scholarship on the push-and-pull between mental causality and environmental causes. Jonathan Kramnick's *Actions and Objects from Hobbes to Richardson* (2010) teaches us how literary texts grappled with compatibilist accounts of agency (the coexistence of free will and necessity) and notions of externalism (how mental states are connected to and extend into the environment) and argued that the narrative techniques of Eliza Haywood and others bring about "a loosening . . . of mental states from their ostensible subjects."[55] This loosening is key to the argument I make in this book, which is distinct from Kramnick's study in terms of both the genres that I address – not just poetry and prose fiction but also theatrical "moveables" and abolition-era parliamentary speeches – and its claim that the wanton functioned as the aesthetic register that allowed writers of the period to *suspend* the feeling of being subject to causes. As Goodman's *Pathologies of Motion* (2023) has shown, eighteenth-century aesthetics and medicine were keenly interested in human susceptibility to many simultaneous forces – climatological, customary, cultural, political – and what it meant to be subject to this "multitude of causes" both immediate and distant.[56] I show how a person in a state of wantonness doesn't deny causes per se, but because causality must be irregular, obscured, or at the very least loose as a precondition of wanton feelings or sensations, wantonness can feel cause-less. Wantonness is a state of *un*awareness of causal forces: what it feels like to ignore or forget or in some way distance oneself from chains of cause and effect.

This loosening or distancing of one's experience of causation is where wantonness overlaps with habit. Habitual movement might feel as if it happens involuntarily and yet cannot be called, in a strict neurological or legal sense, involuntary. For example: each day as we leave for our morning commute we sling on the same backpack, one with dangling straps that tend to get caught on a doorhandle in a particularly narrow hallway in our home. To prevent getting tangled up and jerked backward, we shrink slightly to one side and walk at an angle each time we pass through the hall. This starts out as an intentional action but gradually becomes habit. We find that we veer slightly to one side in the hallway even when we're not wearing the backpack. In getting used to wearing it, we have incorporated the backpack into our proprioceptive self-image: the feeling we have

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of what it is like to be in our body moving through the world and among objects. This is what Maurice Merleau-Ponty called *praktognosia*, a portmanteau of "praxis" (action) and "gnosis" (knowledge) that captures how our bodily experience of movement is "original" and "primary" and gives us access to the world.[57] From the primacy of the sensorimotor arises Merleau-Ponty's concept of motor intentionality, which avoids placing too much weight on human willpower, intention, or reason and focuses instead on the embodied character of human action.[58] Embodied action, in other words, requires different narratives about causality. One hundred and fifty years before Merleau-Ponty, Erasmus Darwin observed that "it is not easy to assign a cause" to habitual movement because we feel it occur "without any deliberation or sensation or irritation" and, as such, we can infer that these actions originate at the level of "individual fibres of our muscles."[59] While we wouldn't be surprised by an eighteenth-century it-narrative called *The History and Adventures of a Muscle Fibre*, Darwin's point is clear: individual fibres of muscles do not deliberate. Ultimately, much of our own action evades those traditional narrative patterns that try to explain causality in terms of motivation and intention. For Darwin as for Merleau-Ponty, our experiences of volition without consciousness not only "distinguish" our "order of being" as one of "animation" but also hint at other ways of telling stories about selfhood.[60]

Because habit defines the self and yet is something other than the self, instructions for how to move one's body often balanced seemingly inadvertent qualities like "ease" or "grace" on a knife's edge of volition. When Hogarth discusses how to acquire good habits of deportment, his description gives agency to a person's limbs rather than any centralized consciousness: "graceful movements in serpentine lines . . . by frequent repetitions will become so familiar to the parts so exercised, that on proper occasion they make them as it were of their own accord."[61] Here, the "parts" have "their own accord." Souriau defines habit as a way to "become free from preoccupation with watching one's own movements."[62] A dance move or a gestural flourish might be incredibly awkward on our first attempt but becomes smoothed out and regulated by our capacity for habituation and muscle memory. This requires a particular blend of effort and ease. A graceful mover must be "conscious" and "intentional" such that motions are the "artistic product of [their] work," and yet, if their intent and effort are "too apparent," they cease to be graceful.[63] Admirable deportment cannot be so effortless as to be accidental; it must rather exhibit a "psychological ease of movement" that is infused with an ineffable *je ne sais quoi*, "a little flourish . . . something more." [64]

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While it is easy to diminish the flourish as a minor aesthetic unit (as when we refer to that which is "a mere" flourish or "little more than a" flourish), it is worth remembering that throughout the long eighteenth century flourishes were neither accidental nor icing on the cake: they were a substantial part of embodied habitus that spoke volumes about one's place in hierarchies of social worth. This means that the ability to control and aestheticize one's own bodily movements defined what we now call ableism during the period. As I show in Chapter 4, because "freaks" of action made it difficult for a spectator to determine the meaning of an "eccentric" body's signs and gestures, this posed a major problem for sensibility, which required that the body be immediately and transparently legible. Demands for bodily legibility were especially fraught for women and people of colour because motion was a load-bearing concept for distinctions in class, gender, nationality, and race. Far from a superficial accomplishment, habituated easy movement was for conduct writers like Hannah More a moral imperative, because the routinized and yet lively motions of wives and mothers were crucial to ensuring that British domestic order was a microcosm of the Prime Mover's design.[65] As I argue in Chapter 5, the abolition-era novel *The Woman of Colour* (1808) demonstrates how "unrestrained . . . ease" and "flexibility" in a wife's movements were not only markers of British national privilege but part of a complex set of discourses that defined both whiteness and biracialism.[66]

In opposition to the notion that deportment "discovered" a person's true moral self, the aesthetic category of the wanton opens up space for alternative accounts: stories that not only celebrated non-normative embodiment but also resisted literary norms of interiority. My theorization of *vital impersonality* argues that to be wanton is to resist being an individual consciousness, to flicker back and forth between subject and object in powerful and defiant ways. Vital impersonality captures both a character's particular dynamism as they move through the world and the way that energy is reflected by or projected out onto the world. Among the common ways of thinking about character that Deidre Lynch identifies is "the opposition that pit[s] characters' psychological development against stasis."[67] The *Bildungsroman* logic at work here is that the opposite of stasis – namely, movement – necessarily entails psychological development. If we follow a character through their adventures, the reasoning goes, we will end up knowing their true self, because one's movements through the world are what define one's interiority. Vital impersonality challenges this notion and notes that it is often the most hyperactive characters whose psychology seems the least accessible to readers.

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My discussion of vital impersonality in British legal debates about "wanton disregard" responds to Sandra Macpherson's insistence that while reading eighteenth-century narratives we "can best acknowledge persons by acknowledging their objecthood – their inescapable vulnerability to (cause or suffer) harm" and that such literal dehumanization "is not inhumane."[68] In this I join other scholars in the field who have argued compellingly for a need to rethink "the person" and "the nonperson" and even to "abandon" the "axis of modernity" that depends upon "interiority."[69] I take seriously Catherine Gallagher's insistence that disembodiment is not necessarily alienation but can also include productive forms of abstraction, and Lynch's argument that we can reveal "unsuspected complexities and depths in the impersonality" once we set aside the assumption that the truths of character dwell in "inner meaning."[70] Kramnick points out that literary scholars need an approach that takes into account how texts "present conscious experiences without a person having them or persons without conscious experiences."[71] Heather Love has suggested that the field of kinesics, which focuses more on bodily movement and gesture and less on motivation, might provide literary scholars with new modes of reading that emphasize description rather than depth hermeneutics.[72]

Hence, my theorization of vital impersonality emphasizes that, in many eighteenth-century texts, the content of selfhood matters less than its forms. *How* characters or narrators inhabit their bodies or move through their environs – their way of being animated (or not), the motor-traces of their energy or verve, their patterns of movement – might drive the text more than any plot. Form as it relates to character can be an essence and an action, a noun and a verb. We see a blurring between *why* a character acts and *how* he moves: the "how" might not explain the "why," or the "how" might come to *be* the "why": movement for the sake of moving. Yoon Sun Lee has called for greater attention to narratives in which "chains of causality come to matter less" because there is a "surprisingly loose relation" between a character's movement and her "conscious perception, sensation, or cognition."[73] In recent decades, the humanities has turned to theories about distributive agency to find new ways of attending to stories in which "effect and cause alternate position and redound on each other."[74] Rather than assessing narrative events in terms of their causes, we can, to borrow Hannah Arendt's terminology, think in terms of "origin": "a complex, mobile, and heteronomous enjoiner of forces."[75] I suggest that literary scholars can benefit from recent models that build upon Merleau-Ponty's work to theorize what the neuroscientist Daniel N. Stern calls "vitality forms," a way of understanding and narrating experience that

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teaches people to be more aware of the "inferred, subjectively felt force that is experienced as acting 'behind' or 'within'" events or actions.[76] In his seminal study of how mental experience feels like movement, Stern notes that we interpret actions according to three coordinates: the *what* of an act, which our motor neurons are primed to explain (we recognize what a person is doing because we have done or could do the same); the *why* of an act (intention detection centres in our brain experience increased blood flow during determinations of intent and/or goal); and the *how* of a movement, which Stern calls its vitality form.[77] Vitality forms are "not acts, as they have no goal state" but rather describe "the felt experience of force" that is "more form than content."[78] The "felt force" behind an act is not necessarily will, motive, or intention. It can also be an impulse or mood that is difficult to explain in traditional narrative patterns.

It is here, at the intersection between two of my load-bearing concepts – selfhood and form – that we need to rethink the relationship between character and plot in eighteenth-century works of writing. One way to do this, I argue, is to consider those aspects of narratives that make sense less as arcs or chains of causality and more as sensorimotor shapes and contours. As Yury Tynionov insists, "the sensation of form is always the sensation of flow" and, as such, "flow and dynamics may be taken . . . as pure movement."[79] The vehicular it-narrators that I discuss in Chapter 2 contemplate movements that are abstracted from the "what" or "why" of plot and instead strive to capture *how* it feels to rattle through London's pulsing coherences and fragmentations. Vehicle-narratives, like the harlequinade flipbooks that I discuss in Chapter 3, ask what it feels like to experience or embody – or even to *be* – force. Jane Alison points out that the shape of a narrative's motion path is not always an arc, and that "energy in narrative might also flow in smaller waves, wavelets," "a sense of ripple or oscillation, little ups and downs," and that such dispersed patterns of movement might be more true to human experience.[80] Getting rid of the "single crashing wave," that masculo-phallic arc, is a way to open up narrative – both its crafting and its interpretation – to a more inclusive story of movement.[81]

Sensorimotor forms also arise from the author's form*ing* of the text: as Johnson noted, it is not only reading that can be a wanton frolic but also the act of writing. Whereas other studies about the literary aesthetics of motion tend to focus on the experience of the reader or theatregoer who is "along for the ride," this book also considers how writers understood their acts of making or form-ing in terms of a quasi-intentional give-and-take of moving and being moved.[82] The wanton captures both form-as-essence

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and form*ing*-as-action. Recent scholarship has emphasized the relationship between aesthetic form and instrumental practices of forming, what Ruth Mack calls "practical aesthetics" and Zitin names "practical formalism."[83] Eighteenth-century texts instructed artisans and authors how to infuse the objects of their making – from clockwork gears to descriptions of characters' gestures – with contours of movement that both contained and activated a feeling of unrestrained energy and playfulness. Crucially, wantonness is not an aesthetic category that views formlessness as freedom. I agree with Macpherson that the false opposition between formalization and freedom overlooks a long tradition in which "form is understood as itself formless . . . form as a shaping agency rather than a shaped body."[84] Indeed, I doubt that "freedom from form" would make sense to Hogarth, for whom certain shapes are pleasurable *because* a sense of playful freedom arises in the act of tracing the contours of form or in the forming of the contours themselves. Zitin's *Practical Form* suggests that scholars can demystify form by aligning it with mental activity, especially our mind's ability to abstract form from matter and content.[85] Hogarth does not simply locate wanton motion as a formal property of the perceived object; such mazy movement is also a crucial operation or "spring" of the perceiving, creating mind.[86]

Ways of Wantoning: A Brief Overview of the Book

This book tells the story of the wanton as an aesthetic category that was crucial to eighteenth-century British letters. In so doing, it refocuses the period's and field's fascination with the abstraction of "selfhood" toward embodied kinetic processes that reveal the fictionality of selfhood altogether. Each chapter focuses on a distinct kind of writing: Chapter 1 on criticism, Chapter 2 on vehicular it-narratives, Chapter 3 on harlequinade flipbook "moveables," Chapter 4 on "eccentric" travel novels, and Chapter 5 on abolition debates. These five groupings share an interest in what Semir Zeki has called "the powerful effect" of experiencing "unpredictability in motion."[87] This unpredictability is crucial to the spectrum of intentionality that I discussed earlier, as characters and narrators struggle to locate the source not only of others' movements but also of their own. In texts by Margaret Cavendish, William Hogarth, Laurence Sterne, Tobias Smollett, and even William Wilberforce, wantonness is often a form of abandonment that is locomotive rather than moral or sexual. Together, this Introduction and Chapter 1 make up Part I: "The Literary Sensorimotor," which argues for the importance of the aesthetics

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of movement to literary history. Part II, "Wanton Forms," comprises Chapters 2 and 3, each of which addresses a specific kind of nimble and irregular plotting that arises from the motions of coach travel and theatrical "fidgets." In Part III, "Sensorimotor Selfhood," Chapters 4 and 5 turn to decorum and social engagement in mid-to-late-century novels that foreground motion-based definitions of both "healthy" norms and racial categories.

Chapter 1 charts the interchangeability of motion and emotion between 1650 and 1780, during which time various thinkers understood movement – be it of spherical atoms or organs of sense – as both the *form* of thought and the ideal *content* of thought. I contend that two major changes in the long eighteenth century brought questions about literary sensorimotor imagery to the fore: first, the blending of classical models of rhetoric with modern philosophical theories about how the mind moves; and second, the proliferation of reproducible printed illustrations. In the first case, criticism by Dennis, Kames, and Johnson promoted sensorimotor models of reading and writing that, even as pamphlets and periodicals increasingly satirized mind-in-motion models in the 1760s and 1770s, continued to wield enormous explanatory power in theories about human agency and creativity. In the second case, I trace the importance of serpentine line illustrations back a century before Hogarth's *Analysis* to Cavendish's 1655 *Philosophical and Physical Opinions*, in which printed line illustrations are both visual cues and embodied motor prompts. Cavendish is thus a previously unacknowledged forerunner to Hogarth; for both authors, the function of printed lines is not only kinetic (an observer's-eye view of deportment) but also, crucially, proprioceptive: line illustrations are motion contours that allow readers to imagine what it would feel like if we were moving. We find echoes of this in our own day: in Alison's 2019 *Meander Spiral Explode*, linear illustrations by the contemporary artist Ethan J. Feuer prompt the reader's imagined movements through space.[88] Chapter 1 concludes with an examination of the famous flourish-line in volume 9 of *Tristram Shandy* and argues that Sterne illustrates how proprioceptive fellow feeling can resist end-oriented narrative plots.

Chapter 2 opens up alternatives to the standard character-centred way of reading eighteenth-century plots and focuses instead on patterns of movement in which accident is more important than substance. Vehicle-narrators in the form of carriages, carts, coaches, and sedan chairs provide a unique perspective from which to explore the spectrum of inadvertent

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conduct in British common law. It-narratives capture another of the meanings of wantonness listed by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*): "moving as if alive."[89] I analyze vehicle-narratives not only from the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries – including Henry Peacham's *Coach and Sedan Pleasantly Disputing* (1636), *Travels of Monsieur Le Post-Chaise* (1753), and *Adventures of a Hackney-Coach* (1781) – but also a rare example from the 1990s: Bruno Latour's *ARAMIS: or the Love of Technology* (1992), in which a Parisian PRT (personal rapid transportation) system narrates as both individual parts (a motor, a computer chip, a chassis) and a whole being. I argue that vehicular narratives challenge the supposed dominance of reading for deep inner character or central plot. Rather than privileging the agency of the individual human subject, a sentient carriage tends to turn people *into* objects: fragile things that bounce, rattle, and break even as they insist on their own power. Hence, character is a faulty explanatory matrix for action and change because people and vehicles move together and fly apart in ways that defy any character-driven causes. Morality doesn't come from the deep character of a passenger or a narrating carriage. Instead, wanton redoundings of agency and causality tend to externalize morality and disperse it across irregular spirals of action.[90]

Chapter 3 takes it as axiomatic that no eighteenth-century theatrical form was more hyperkinetic than pantomime. Harlequin's antics are the epitome of wantonness in that they are reckless and racy and flout the narration of a causal sequence. This chapter examines how the debates about acting taken up by Denis Diderot's *Paradox of the Actor* (1773–8) demonstrate that an actor's intentionality – their effort or lack thereof – was central to aesthetic discourses on wantonness. I attend to two prominent concerns in writing about theatre: first, a vexed volitional status in which the hyperactive performer seems to be both moved (like a puppet) and moving (like an actor); and second, a strange aesthetic mix of desire and aversion on the part of spectators who can "catch" excessive motion via sympathetic contagion.[91] Against the backdrop of debates about David Garrick's hyperkineticism, writers noted the difficulty of representing Harlequin's motions on the two-dimensional space of the printed page. Two illustrated print forms attempted to solve this problem: first, new systems of choreographical notation, and second, moveable printed pamphlets called "turn-ups."[92] The unique form of the turn-up flipbook allows the reader to control the plot: to decide how slowly or quickly

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Harlequin's movements and transformations occur, and even in what order they happen. This chapter argues that Robert Sayer's turn-up *Queen Mab, or, The Tricks of Harlequin* (1771) places the reader in a powerful position: they are the cause of a special sense of wantonness that comes from movements that are irregular and illegible as they arise from the narrative sequence. Harlequin's hyperactivity becomes in the turn-up book a form of hyper-*inter*activity, one in which the reader is the prime mover.

Chapter 4 takes as its jumping-off point those debates about deportment that established norms for how people *should* move their bodies. Conduct manuals often defined proper "carriage," "comportment," and "air" in opposition to unusual or eccentric motion. Eccentric deportment complicates not only our attempts to infer the causes of action but also our capacity for fellow feeling. Novels by Laurence Sterne and Tobias Smollett treated eccentric motor disorders – forms of disability in which a person did not move or resigned themself to stasis for long periods of time – as dangerously resistant to sympathy. *Tristram Shandy*'s (1759–67) interpretations of Yorick's contradictory ways of moving through the world engage with David Hume's assertion that even the most whimsical actions prompt observers to infer causal motivations rooted in a person's character.[93] Sterne's novel regards Yorick's disordered mobility as a spectacle in which sensorimotor pleasure is more important than epistemological certainty; and yet, while it is impossible to come to a rational conclusion about Yorick's true motivations, his "wanton sallies" surprisingly point to a gravity that makes him morally complex. Like *Tristram Shandy*, *Humphry Clinker* (1771) is a novel preoccupied with its characters' various motor disorders. Too often, however, critics have read Smollett's thematization of eccentric bodily movement of Bramble, Lismahago, Mackilligut, and others as mere comic relief.[94] I rely on both eighteenth-century debates about consciousness and twenty-first-century concepts of ableism in order to read *Humphry Clinker* as an experiment in crafting a sensorimotor selfhood. Smollett's novel challenges practices of self-observation championed by Lockean philosophy and the Richardsonian novel tradition and ultimately overturns the assumption that the expression of one's interior selfhood is – or should be – the main aim of fiction.

The final chapter, Chapter 5, argues that writers in the long eighteenth century defined racial difference according to bodily movement in the context of Atlantic slaveocracy and Jamaica's Code Noir. Historical theorizations of involuntary motion are crucial to studying the largest

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forced migration in human history, in which more than twelve million Africans were enslaved.[95] The aesthetics of motion also play a crucial role in the history of how whiteness was constructed in both England and the Caribbean.[96] Specifically, writers from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century define white Englishness in opposition to the paradoxical claim that Black and Brown bodies tend to be too "antick" and yet too "languorous." The anonymous 1808 novel *The Woman of Colour* frames racialized movement in terms of "flexible[ness]," which is a way of perceiving and moving through the world that is hyperactive and yet especially vulnerable to being acted upon.[97] When white observers remark upon Olivia Fairfield's bodily movements, they echo the long history of the racialized aesthetics of wanton motion in which Black and Brown bodies are deemed irregular, whether they moved too much or not enough. The novel's aesthetic treatment of Olivia's deportment – her "peculiar" and yet "graceful" manner of walking, her "extraneous action," and her "flexible joints" – functions as a complex exploration of the raced subject's agency and vulnerability in the years immediately before and after the 1806 Foreign Slave Trade Abolition Bill.[98] *The Woman of Colour* challenges racialized aesthetics of motion but nevertheless embraces a form of narcissistic amelioration in which deserving white English gentlemen – and not the biracial heroine – ultimately have the capacity to enact social change.

To be easy or loose in one's movements is to be unrestrained by self-consciousness, and the upshot of such intuitive or thoughtless action can run the gamut from terrifying to exquisite. As an aesthetic category, wantonness exists somewhere between these two poles, between the terrors of wanton cruelty and the beauties of perfect grace. As Johnson's *Dictionary* reminds us, wantonness contains both the irregular and the nimble. One can move in ways that are heedless and nevertheless adroit, and the result is something altogether different from the sublime, the beautiful, the novel, or the ridiculous. The wanton might participate in aspects of each of these categories but cannot ultimately be reduced to any of them. *Wanton Motion* focuses on aesthetic and social experiences that fall between the cracks. In doing so, I aim to show how when we rethink our long-held assumptions about certain binaries (attached versus detached, intentional versus unintentional, end-oriented versus roundabout) we might learn something new about eighteenth-century plots and characters and about the special role of the sensorimotor in the literary.

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Notes

1. Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, ed. Hugh Lawson-Tancred (London: Penguin, 1991), 165, 121–35. See also Sara Newman, "Aristotle's Notion of 'Bringing-Before-the-Eyes': Its Contributions to Aristotelian and Contemporary Conceptualizations of Metaphor, Style, and Audience," *Rhetorica* 20, no.1 (2002): 1–23; and Laura Gaylong, "Puttenham's Enargeia and Energeia: New Twists for Old Terms," *Philological Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (1981): 20–40. From the Roman schools to the Renaissance, Cynthia Hall has argued, *enargeia* was associated primarily with the "imitation of actions," the mimetic representation of activity and motion that aimed to arouse an emotional response. Cynthia Wall, *The Prose of Things: Transformations of Description in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006), 17–18.
2. Elaine Scarry, *Dreaming by the Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 35. Scarry links the ease with which spherical shapes "roll and wheel through the mind with great ease" to the ancient Aristotelian belief that the mind was composed of spherical atoms (*Dreaming*, 198). See also Sara Landreth, "'Set His Image in Motion': John Dennis and Early Eighteenth-Century Motion Imagery" *Eighteenth-Century Life* 40, no. 1 (2016): 61. Starr has shown how Cavendish and Behn found in the irregular aesthetics of motion of Lucretius and Ovid a proto-feminist mode that celebrates the ways that women's "Braines work usually in a Fantasticall motion." See G. Gabrielle Starr, "Cavendish, Aesthetics, and the Anti-Platonic Line," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39, no. 3 (2006): 301. The "Braines" quote is from Cavendish's 1653 "To All Noble, and Worthy Ladies," in "Margaret Cavendish's Poems and Fancies: A Digital Critical Edition," ed. Liza Blake (https://library2.utm.utoronto.ca/poemsandfancies/).
3. Friedrich Schiller, "On Grace and Dignity," trans. George Gregory, in *Fredrich Schiller: Poet of Freedom*, ed. Helga Zepp-LaRouche (New York: New Benjamin Franklin House, 1985), 136.
4. Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, ed. Ian Campbell Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 59.
5. Johnson, *The Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language* (London: J. and P. Knapton and Co., 1747), 22–3. Johnson's *Plan* makes the case for a systemized approach to definitions: first, the most familiar current usage; next, figurative meanings; then, the "poetical" or literary meaning. Such "sort [ing]" is especially crucial, Johnson suggests, with a word like *wanton*, which has "a poetical sense [that] differs from that which is in common use" (*Plan*, 25).
6. Johnson, *Plan*, 23. Johnson's example of the wanton in its poetical connotation of "irregular motion" misquotes Milton: "In wanton ringlets curl'd her hair." Milton's description of Eve's hair reads: "She . . . / her unadorned golden tresses wore / dishevell'd, but in wanton ringlets wav'd / As the Vine curls her tendrils" (book IV, lines 304–7), in John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler, 2nd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 239.

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7. The entry on the noun-form of *wanton* begins with a rare note on etymological controversy – one of few such interventions in the *Dictionary* – that derides earlier lexicographers who have mindlessly perpetuated the "want one" tale. "Wanton" in Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (London: W. Strahan, 1755). Johnson gives Stephen Skinner credit for doubting the "want one" etymology; Skinner suggests that *wanton* is linked to a notion of imagining and desiring "lightly," as well as "to roll" and "to turn around" (*Deducere a Belg. Waenen (Opinari, Imaginari,) qui sc. multa sibi imaginatur, multa leviter Cupit, Vel a Wendtelen, (Volvere, Circumager, Versare) qui fc. prae Lascivia se huc illuc circumagit*). Author's translation: "To derive from the Belgian Waenen (to think, to imagine) who imagines many things for himself, desires many things lightly, Or from Wendtelen, (to revolve, to revolve, to turn), who, because of lust, moves from here to there." See "Wanton," in Stephen Skinner, *Etymologicon Linguae Anglicanae* (1671), Wiley Digital Archives: The Royal College of Physicians, www.wileydigitalarchives.com/royal-college-of-physicians/.
8. William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, ed. Ronald Paulson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 32–3.
9. Hogarth, *Analysis*, 105, 34.
10. Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, Vol. 1, ed. Peter Jones (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005), 179.
11. Paul Souriau, *The Aesthetics of Movement*, trans. and ed. Manon Souriau (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983), 90. Souriau uses the example of a bird "capriciously meandering in space" in "lovely curves"; this "varied movement" is so pleasing because it does not suggest "the idea of a means to an end." If, however, the birdwatcher (using binoculars, perhaps) discovers that the bird is "not [moving] for pleasure but to gobble up a fly," they then "sees its flight as less graceful."
12. Robert Herrick, *Hesperides, or, The Works Both Humane & Divine of Robert Herrick, Esq.* (London: J. Williams and F. Egelsfeld, 1648), 29. Herrick's "Delight in Disorder" also captures the *OED* definition of *wanton* as "an object moving as if alive." See *OED*, s.v. "wanton," 4c, www.oed.com. All references to *OED* are to the online version.
13. Souriau argues that when we "become mannered" "the charm is broken" and if one appears "too attentive to" one's own movements, this produces "a constraint unpleasant to observe" (*Aesthetics*, 92–3).
14. Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 33. See also Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale, ed. Constantin Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 94–7.
15. Johnson, *Dictionary*, s.v. "Buxom," "To Chamber," "Coltish," "Disport," "Dissolute," "Flourish," "To Foot," "Frisk," "To Game," "Giddiness," "Giglet," "Lascivious," "To Loll," "Loose," "Lubricity," "Luxuriance," "Minx," "Petulant," "Play," "Rantipole," "Riggish," "Riotous," "Roguish," "Ruttish," "Skittish," "To Smerk," "To Snicker," "Toyish," "Wasteful."

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Abigail Zitin's point that "delimited self-abandon ... makes wantonness central to Hogarth's thought" also supports my reading of Johnson's sense of *wanton*. See Zitin, "Wantonness: Milton, Hogarth, and *The Analysis of Beauty*," *Differences*, 27, no. 1 (2016): 36. For more on abandonment in the non-sexual sense, see also Zitin, *Practical Form: Abstraction, Technique, and Beauty in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020), 140–3, 211.

16. Johnson, *Dictionary*, s.v. "To Wanton." The quotation is from *Paradise Lost* V.294–6.
17. Ricks argues that although "The wantonness of Eden" and the "mazie" "error" of its river *hints* at the future "error" of Adam and Eve, before the Fall it can only be "wandering (not error)" (110). The same is true of the "lapsing" streams in Eden, which are "falling (not the Fall)." Stanley Fish echoes Ricks when he discusses the ways that Milton uses "wanton" as both innocent and dissipated at the same time. See Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); and Christoper Ricks, *Milton's Grand Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 110, 112.
18. John Dennis, *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, 2 vols., ed. Edward Niles Hooker (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1939), 1.216–18.
19. Dennis, *Critical*, 1.217.
20. Dennis, *Critical*, 1.217–18.
21. Johnson, *Dictionary*, 4–6.
22. Johnson, *Plan*, 28–9.
23. Herrick, *Hesperides*, 1.
24. For more on alternative reading practices during the eighteenth century, see Natalie M. Phillips, *Distraction: Problems of Attention in Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 12, 196, and Joseph Drury, *Novel Machines: Technology and Narrative Form in Enlightenment Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 108–42.
25. Johnson, *Plan*, 15.
26. Johnson, *Plan*, 1–2, 13, 20.
27. Johnson, *Plan*, 14.
28. Johnson, *Plan*, 14.
29. Johnson, *Plan*, 27.
30. Hogarth, *Analysis*, 33.
31. Kevis Goodman, *Pathologies of Motion: Historical Thinking in Medicine, Aesthetics, and Poetics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2023), 114. Goodman argues that nostalgia with its "tenacious attachment" was one such concept. Goodman explores in detail the "ambivalent analogy" between refined aesthetic "taste" and baser physical "appetite" (128). As I discuss in Chapter 1, while Goodman does not discuss wantonness in this regard, the wanton's refusal to resolve the tension between attachment and detachment echoes what Goodman describes as Schiller's "oscillating balance" in aesthetic experience (142).

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32. Zitin, "Wantonness," 27–8.
33. Anthony Ashley Cooper, Lord Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, Vol. 2, ed. Douglas den Uyl (Indianapolis: Liberty, 2001), 47–8.
34. Mary Poovey, "Aesthetics and Political Economy in the Eighteenth Century," in George Levine, ed., *Aesthetics and Ideology* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 97. See also Goodman, who describes both how Shaftesbury frames "taste of beauty" as "the antithesis of . . . attachments that are too literal and local" and how Addison follows this in his insistence that the pleasures of the imagination are "not so gross as those of sense, nor so refined as understanding" (*Pathologies*, 124–7). See Addison, "Spectator 411," in *The Spectator*, 5 vols, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 3:537.
35. Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, ed. Wolfgang Leidhold (Indianapolis: Liberty, 2004), 148–9.
36. Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 148–9. Hutcheson suggests that while many Britons assume that "hair colour" is a sign of wantonness (he does not say which colour), observing actions and deportment rather than static physical features is a better way to recognize the ways that wantonness is incompatible with beauty.
37. Hogarth, *Analysis*, 19, 27–8. Hogarth includes Francis Hutcheson as a "natural philosopher" who is guilty of the same mistake as Shaftesbury (116).
38. Hogarth, *Analysis*, 33.
39. Hogarth, *Analysis*, 116. Hogarth echoes Francis Hutcheson's celebration of "Uniformity Amidst Variety" in his 1725 *Inquiry*, 28–41.
40. See Johnson, *Dictionary*, "superficial" and *OED*, s.v. "superficial," 3.a, 3.c, 5.
41. Peter De Bolla, "Mediation and the Division of Labour," in Clifford Siskin and William Warner, eds., *This Is Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 89–90. De Bolla's example is the concept of "value," which for Adam Smith appears in both the aesthetic and the economic.
42. Alva Noë, *Action in Perception* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 93.
43. Two notable exceptions are Carmen Faye Mathes, *Poetic Form and Romantic Provocation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2023), 93–11, where Mathes discusses proprioception in the context of Coleridge's poetics; and Amanda Auerbach's "Getting Lost: Proprioception and Thinking in the Gothic Novel," *European Romantic Review*, 31, no. 2 (2020): 157–76.
44. Scarry argues that the verbal arts "continually engage us in moving images" and details five ways in which this happens: radiant ignition, rarity, addition and subtraction, stretching/folding/tilting, and floral supposition (*Dreaming*, 35). Scarry's theories draw upon J. J. Gibson's articulation of "kinetic occlusion": when one surface passes in front of another, causing the lower surface to disappear and then reappear, this specifies durability and continuity. James J. Gibson, "What Gives Rise to the Perception of Motion?" *Psychological Review* 75, no. 4 (1968): 335–46.
45. See G. Gabrielle Starr, *Feeling Beauty: The Neuroscience of Aesthetic Experience* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 80–2, 97.

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46. See Zitin, *Practical*, 105–8. Zitin argues that "the pursuit of narrative closure . . . is unlike the eye's diversion by (and into) abstract spatial complexity" because "narrative pleasure is thoroughly end-directed" in "contrast" to the "hypothetically infinite" "pleasure associated with the perception of formal intricacy" (*Practical*, 107–8). Elsewhere, Zitin describes wanton action as "single-mindedness, full commitment to one thing to the exclusion of all others" ("Wantonness," 28). Zitin relies on the *OED*'s definition of wantonness as "headlong" (*Practical*, 140–1) but does not address Samuel Johnson's extended discussion of wantonness in his 1747 *Plan*, which, I argue, shows that headlong movement does not necessarily imply commitment or presence of mind.
47. *OED*, s.v. "reck."
48. Aristotle, *Physics, Vol. 1: Books 1–4*, trans. P. H. Wicksteed and F. M. Cornford (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 151–3. Quoted in Ross Hamilton, *Accident: A Philosophical and Literary History* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007), 17.
49. See Hamilton, *Accident*, 16–17.
50. Paul H. Robinson, "A Brief History of Distinctions in Criminal Culpability," *The Hastings Law Journal* 31, no. 4 (1980): 841–2.
51. Geoffrey C. Rapp, "The Wreckage of Recklessness," *Washington University Law Review* 86, no. 1 (2008): 122, 133, 152.
52. M.W., Jr., "Those Weasel Words: 'Wilful and Wanton'," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 92, no. 4 (1944): 431–46.
53. Rapp, "Wreckage," 170. Fixing this, according to Rapp, would require the courts to catch up with twenty-first-century neuroscience and acknowledge that there is often a "fluid and dynamic relationship between conscious and unconscious processes" ("Wreckage," 163n368, 120).
54. Colin Dayan, "Who Gets to Be Wanton?," in *The Law Is a White Dog: How Legal Rituals Make and Unmake Persons* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 177–208.
55. Jonathan Kramnick, *Actions and Objects from Hobbes to Richardson* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 5–6.
56. Goodman, *Pathologies*, 129.
57. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1962), 124. This is, for Merleau-Ponty, a way that we might "leave behind" "the dualism of consciousness and body which we thought we had left behind" and also, I argue, a way that we might explore the fraught ways that dualism and monism play out in eighteenth-century aesthetic theories (123).
58. Because "consciousness projects itself into the physical world and has a body" we can "understand motility as basic intentionality" (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, 121).
59. Darwin's prime example of this is, notably, writing: a young boy first learns to form the parts of the individual letters m-a-n consciously and carefully, but gradually the word *man* "becomes to his hand . . . one movement." Erasmus

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Darwin, *Zoonomia, or, The Laws of Organic Life*, Vol. 1 (London: J. Johnson, 1794), 60.

60. Darwin, *Zoonomia*, 40–1. Goodman describes how Darwin's model of causality attempts to capture "the wayward motions of human volition" by allowing for "volition-with" and "volition without consciousness" as well as "involuntary-voluntary or automatic-voluntary motions" (*Pathologies*, 172, 180). While Goodman does not link Darwin's involuntary-voluntariness to wantonness, I argue that the theorization of "discharges of desire . . . that outpace 'restraint' or 'deliberation'" that she describes is part of a long tradition of aesthetic and legal struggles with how to narrate the complexities of intentionality and the limits of self-awareness (*Pathologies*, 157–9). Goodman argues that the "ambiguity of [Darwin's] 'volition' that sometimes seems voluntary . . . and most often remains altogether uncertain" influenced the poetry of both Wordsworth and Coleridge (*Pathologies*, 164).
61. Hogarth, *Analysis*, 107. Such habitation required that Hogarth's readers chalk a copy of one of his serpentine line illustrations (he recommends plate II.120) and commit to daily practice sessions in moving their hands and arms.
62. Souriau, *Aesthetics*, 93.
63. Souriau, *Aesthetics*, 88–92. See also Zitin's point that even Eve's most "wanton" ringlet "is the product of an action, and behind it is an intention" (Zitin, "Wantonness," 38).
64. Souriau, *Aesthetics*, 88. This "something more" recalls Hogarth's "*il poco piu*," by which he refers to the aesthetic quality of habituated mastery of movement: "the little more that is expected in the hand of a master" (*Analysis*, 56–9).
65. See Sara Landreth, "Hannah More's Clockwork Christians," *Eighteenth-Century Theory and Interpretation* 61, no. 2 (2020): 212–16. Sandra Macpherson builds upon Deirdre Lynch's work in order to promote a "feminist . . . embrace" of the habituated and the superficial. See Macpherson, "A Little Formalism," *English Literary History* 82, no. 2 (2015): 387–8.
66. Anonymous, *The Woman of Colour: A Tale*, ed. Lyndon Dominique (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2008), 75, 107, 111, 113, 118, 165.
67. Deidre Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 13.
68. Sandra Macpherson, *Harm's Way: Tragic Responsibility and the Novel Form* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 174, 23. Macpherson points out that "impersonality" can be "a way of escaping norms of particularity that are especially oppressive to women and queers" (19).
69. Macpherson, *Harm's Way*, 15, 4. Macpherson cites Michael McKeon's understanding of modernity as a separation of self and society that "proceeds from . . . the interior" (3). See McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 717. See also Zitin, who reads Hogarth's focus on deportment as part of his democratizing tendencies and notes that "a feminist approach to Hogarth might be articulated in terms of spatial orientation rather than ontology" (*Practical*, 118–20).

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70. Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670–1820* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), xxi, xxiv, cited in Macpherson, *Harm's Way*, 199n69. Lynch, *Economy*, 13. I would add to this Stephanie Insley Hershinow's argument: "character functions in the early novel as a site of suspended possibility rather than as a catalyst for development." See Hershinow, *Born Yesterday: Inexperience and the Early Realist Novel* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019), 4.
71. Kramnick, *Actions*, 10.
72. Heather Love, "Close but Not Deep: Literary Ethics and the Descriptive Turn," *New Literary History* 41, no. 2 (2010): 375, 378.
73. Yoon Sun Lee, "Vection, Vertigo, and the Historical Novel," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 52, no. 2 (2019): 183, 180. Lee cites Walter Scott's "highly detailed accounts of the sensation of motion" as an alternative kind of plotting, one interested in "a phenomenological horizon rather than a causal sequence." While Lee is primarily interested in nineteenth-century novels, I argue that this surprising looseness is part of a longer eighteenth-century history of how wanton causality defines selfhood.
74. Bennett, *Vibrant*, 33.
75. Hannah Arendt, "On the Nature of Totalitarianism," in *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1994), 319. Quoted in Bennett, *Vibrant*, 33.
76. Daniel N. Stern, *Forms of Vitality: Exploring Dynamic Experience in Psychology, the Arts, Psychotherapy, and Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 22. Stern identifies five key parts of the human experience of vitality – a "fundamental dynamic pentad" – consisting of movement, force, time, space, and directionality. Directionality is not, crucially, the same as intentionality, although the two are often linked (4). Stern places a special weight on "the fascinating problem of dynamic experience in prose and poetry" and "rhetoric" (77).
77. Stern, *Forms*, 21.
78. Stern, *Forms*, 8.
79. Yury Tynianov, *The Problem of Verse Language* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1981), 33. Cited in Goodman, *Pathologies*, 15.
80. Jane Alison, *Meander, Spiral, Explode: Design and Pattern in Narrative* (New York: Catapult, 2019), 95–6.
81. Alison, *Meander*, 6.
82. On theatregoers "catching" contagious movement from the stage, see Daniel Larlham, "The Felt Truth of Mimetic Experience: Motions of the Soul and the Kinetics of Passion in the Eighteenth-Century Theatre," *Eighteenth Century Theory and Interpretation* 53, no. 4 (2012): 432–54.
83. See Ruth Mack, "Hogarth's Practical Aesthetics," in Mary Helen McMurran and Alison Conway, eds., *Mind, Body, Motion, Matter: Eighteenth-Century British and French Literary Perspectives* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 21; and Zitin, *Practical*, 1.
84. Macpherson, "Little," 388.

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85. Zitin, *Practical*, 170–1.
86. Hogarth, *Analysis*, 32.
87. Zeki calls on future studies to explore why and how most humans experience "such a powerful effect" when experiencing "unpredictability in motion" in, for example, tongues of fire or the waves of the sea. Semir Zeki, *Inner Vision: An Exploration of Art and the Brain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 159.
88. Alison, *Meander*, 94, 116, 142, 177.
89. *OED*, s.v. "wanton," 4.c.
90. Here I find useful Jane Bennett's synthesis of models of distributive agency, which does not read intentionality as a central thrust but rather as a swarm of vitalities. See Bennett, *Vibrant*, 32.
91. See Julie Park's work on acting and puppetry in *The Self and It: Novel Objects and Mimetic Subjects in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 161–88.
92. Robert Sayer, *Queen Mab, or, The Tricks of Harlequin* (London: R. Sayer, 1771). I am indebted to the expertise of the Osborne Collection's rare book librarians, especially Martha C. Scott and Leslie McGrath, for their help with accessing their collection of undigitized turn-ups at the Lillian H. Smith branch of the Toronto Public Library. As I discuss in Chapter 3, the Osborne Collection's copy of *Queen Mab* has significant and unique variations that make it unlike any digitized version available from, among others, Yale's Beinecke Library.
93. My own take on Hume and Sterne is indebted to Christina Lupton's "Tristram Shandy, David Hume, and Epistemological Fiction," *Philosophy and Literature* 27, no. 1 (2003): 98–115.
94. One notable exception is Joanne Lewis, "Death and the Comic Marriage: Lismahago in Harlequin Skeleton," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 18, no. 1 (1988): 405–17.
95. Twelve million is only an estimate, as Estella Carpi and Portia Owusu emphasize in "Slavery, Lived Realities, and the Decolonisation of Forced Migration Histories: An Interview with Dr Portia Owusu," *Migration Studies* 10, no. 1 (2022): 89.
96. Only a handful of scholars have addressed the racial logics of the aesthetics of motion. I read the racialized "flexibleness" of both Olivia and her enslaved mother, Marcia, alongside Rey Chow's theorization of "automatization," Sianne Ngai's "animatedness," and Love's work on gesture and dehumanization. See Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 67–70; Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 100; Love, "Close," 375–80.
97. Anon, *Woman of Colour*, 111.
98. Anon, *Woman of Colour*, 83, 111, 113.

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