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# Men, Women, and Not Quite Non-Persons: Derivatization in *Roxana*

Rebecca Anne Barr

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- <sup>1</sup> In his capacious analysis of thing theory, materialism and eighteenth-century fiction, Jonathan Lamb uses Defoe's final novel for his bracing discussion of fictionality and the representation of persons. For Lamb, *Roxana* is a failure. Unlike *Robinson Crusoe*, where, he argues, the eponymous Crusoe successfully abstracts himself in order to tell his story as "an artificial person whose story is imagined before it happens," Defoe's "Protestant Whore" lacks sufficient reflexivity to achieve fictionality (162). As a result "the assumption of personhood never takes place, although it is attempted, and as a consequence the fiction [...] fails" (162).<sup>1</sup> In Lamb's account, *Roxana* lacks the transformative rigor of self-analysis, preferring "an absorbed and uncritical attention," fortifying herself against "self-reproach" – "never seriously represent[ing] herself to herself as a person" (163). Her silence and suppression of the deeper implications of her story and her self are hallmarks of "bad fiction": *Roxana*'s weak conscience consigns it her romance (164). Though Lamb's analysis is trenchant it is also marked by a gendered opprobrium which condemns the novel as an example of the impact of feminine bad faith on artistic achievement. P. N. Furbank argues, by contrast, that *Roxana* is an "indefatigable self-castigator" (2) who lambasts herself for her failure to repent (Furbank 2). The intractable moral problem of Defoe's novel is its testimonial bias, and the ways in which characters are circumscribed within the desires and self-regard of the narrator. This article argues that *Roxana* exemplifies a peculiarly modern mode of "derivatization": a form of "ontological reductionism" in which individuals are diminished to "the reflection, projection, or expression of another being's identity, drives, fears [...] reducible in all ways to the derivatizing subject's existence" (Cahill 32). In this way, the novel's focus on a pathological subjectivity reduces rather than amplifies the possibilities for intersubjective ethics. *Roxana*'s domination of others, her ruthless pursuit of her own social advancement, and her annihilation of bonds of dependency expose the inequities of capitalist society by decoupling power and gender.

## Fools, female masculinity, and derivatization

- 2 Defoe's Roxana has often been proclaimed as a subversive example of a proto-feminist resistance. Shawn Lisa Maurer, for instance, has her as an "amazonian" critic of marriage whose dizzying defence of female freedom takes off the gloss from the moral supplied by the narrator. For Maurer, Roxana's proclaimed identity of a "Man-Woman" (Defoe 171) is a radical appropriation of economic liberty which equates marriage with slavery and the erasure of agency. Repudiating her Dutch Merchant's offer of marriage, the heroine affects an "elevated strain" to avoid admitting her pecuniary motivations:

Woman was a free Agent, as well as a Man, and was born free [...] a Woman gave herself entirely away from herself in Marriage [...women] had the Name of Subjection, without the Thing [...] while a Woman was single, she was Masculine in her politick Capacity; that she has then the full Direction of what she did; that she was a Man in her separated Capacity, to all Intents and Purposes that a Man cou'd be so himself; that she was controul'd by none, because accountable to none, and was in Subjection to none. (147-69)

Often read as a vehement critique of the sexed double-standard, Roxana's denunciation of marriage is also an act of brinkmanship and gender performance. At that moment she is pregnant with the Merchant's child, refusing a marriage which would legitimate their offspring. While such kinds of bodily proof usually terminate narratives, Defoe's protagonist denies the carnal immanence ascribed to women. Roxana exploits her "vicious Liberty" (157) to claim the freedom, and autonomy that she sees as the customary attributes of men. While Roxana's speech may seem like passionate claim to liberation, however, it also appropriates liberal masculinity's tendencies toward a pathological autonomy which derivatises others in order to affirm its own sovereignty.

- 3 Roxana's assumption of masculine traits and her negotiation of a world inimical to independent women are a conscious repudiation of the failed masculinity of her first husband: *she will be the man he never was*. As Stephen Gregg notes

the catalyst for both Moll's and Roxana's descent into crime and vice is the vanity, indolence and superficiality displayed by their first husbands: what propels these domestic households into collapse is the inauthenticity of their hybrid masculinity – a failure of a "complete" manliness. (19)

- 4 Gregg's central point, that Defoe's male characters demonstrate his interest in "*failures of manliness*" (1), is amplified by the ways in which his female characters are similarly hybrid in their gendering: Roxana's apotheosis of "Man-Woman." Both Moll and Roxana challenge gender norms associated with femininity. Indeed, her denunciation of her first husband attributes him with characteristics usually ascribed to women in the period: he is "a handsome Man, and a good Sportsman [...] a handsome, jolly Fellow [...] [but] otherwise a weak, empty-headed, untaught Creature" (7-8). Easy on the eye, physically capable, uneducated and shallow:

Never, Ladies, marry a Fool: any Husband rather than a Fool; with some other Husbands you may be unhappy, but with a Fool you will be miserable...every thing he says is so empty, a Woman of any sence cannot but be surfeited, and sick of him twenty Times a-day; What is more shocking, than for a Woman to bring a handsome comely Fellow of a Husband into Company, and then be obliged to Blush for him every time she hears him speak? ... hear him talk Nonsense, and be laugh'd at for a Fool. (7-8)

Roxana's disgust at the failed manhood of her first husband is a physicalized rejection: "surfeited and sick of him," blushing with embarrassment at his speech, hyper-conscious of his inadequacy and risibility as a spouse. Roxana's nausea, shame and contempt provide physical indices of the coxcomb's failures but are also powerfully constitutive of her own evolving masculinization. Her defensive dissociation from what she perceives as the "hybrid" masculinity of her husband conforms to Michael Kimmel's description of the gendering of young men who "achieve [...] masculinity by repudiation, dissociation, and then identification [with the male role]" (Kimmel 178).

- 5 Throughout her account of her unhappy first marriage, then, Roxana stresses the insupportable shame of the connection. He is "an unbearable Creature for a Husband" whose incapacity stimulates a complementary silence on her part. "I [...] held my tongue, which was the only Victory I gain'd over him; for when he would talk after his own empty, rattling Way with me [...] I would not answer [...] [and] he would rise up [...] and go away [...] the cheapest Way I had to be delivered" (9). Such taciturnity is the genesis of her gender insubordination. The refusal to engage in chitchat, or to indulge the "empty" discourse of an idiot, reverses the stereotypes of feminine prattle and masculine speech continence. Roxana's withdrawal enrages her emotionally incontinent partner, and releases her from his demands and his presence. But her husband's failure to embody patriarchal authority also disempowers her when her father redirects money intended for her to her elder brother in order to circumvent her foolish spouse. This paternal fail-safe is ruined by market instability when her merchant brother invests the capital in trade and loses it. Thus, through her poor match, she "loses the last Gift of my Father's Bounty, by having a Husband not fit to be trusted" (9). Though abandoned, she caustically rejects reunion as restitution: "I did not see so much Loss in his Parting with me," she says, since "he was the least able to help me, of all the Men in the world" (14-15).
- 6 At the very moment Roxana disavows spousal utility, Amy appears. A kind of queer upgrade from her heterosexual marriage, critics have noted the intensity of their relationship. Christopher Gabbard calls Amy a "sort of female husband" to Roxana (238); Scarlett Bowen notes Amy and Roxana's "queer desire for each other" illuminates "the perversity" of their interdependence: an intimacy pathologized by the novel (47, 48). While Roxana's initial anxiety is for her "dependents," this is swiftly quietened by the pressure of her bodily circumstances and what Elizabeth Straub has called "the terrible parity of mistress and servant" (Straub 96). Focussing on Defoe's exploration of loyalty, insubordination and his anxieties about the violation of rank distinction, Roxana and Amy's relationship is framed by Straub within the context of the "servant problem" debate of the eighteenth century. Straub's analysis focusses on feminine intimacy's "disrupt[ion] of the household's hierarchy," and the ways in which women's relations constitute not merely a "threat to the family" but also an instance of "feminine monstrosity and sexual perversion" (Straub 91, 96). With Amy, Roxana "enters on a new Scene of Life" (25), with one who is as "cunning [...] and as faithful to me, as the Skin to my Back" (25). Roxana's "logic of identification [...] is more precisely a kind of conflation" of bodies, lives, and desires (Macpherson 50). The disharmony and distance of the heterosexual marriage gives way to a queer relation of sinuous interdependency, of psychic and bodily complicity.
- 7 Hamstrung by her financial and legal status as a *feme covert*, Roxana's "womanhood or femininity [is experienced] as a crisis of representation that confronts the heroine with unacceptable life options" (Halberstam 6). Amy's appearance is therefore almost

apparitional in its felicity: a fantasy helpmeet to substitute for the failed masculinity of her first husband.<sup>2</sup> Thus, Terry Castle's seminal psychoanalytic reading of Amy as a projection or extension of Roxana's desires. More recently, Susan Napier has likewise argued that Amy's "precarious existence as a character in her own right" makes her a plausible symptom of Roxana's pathological personality. She is, Napier hypothesizes, "an invention of her mistress [...] to exculpate herself for her crimes" (104). But every character in the novel is similarly precarious. Roxana's sociopathic *brio* reduces all other characters to phantom presences. Her survival depends upon the minimization of subjects other than herself. This inability to recognize any other beyond her own drives, fears, and identity is profoundly disturbing – primarily because this determined refusal of intersubjectivity countervails society's ideals of feminine nurturance.<sup>3</sup> Given the novel's commitment to material reality, and Defoe's thoroughgoing scepticism, Amy's selfless offer to act as a surrogate is indicative not of psychic projection but of derivatization. It reveals her as "not quite a non-person" – she expresses emotions and preferences: her strong opinions, which allow Roxana to call her "the Engine of the Devil," superficially suggest a strong personality (Cahill 33). But despite this, the "raison d'être of [their] dynamic is entirely reducible to the needs and wants" of her Mistress: facets symptomatic of the "stunted, or muted, subjectivity" of derivatization (Cahill 33).

- 8 Amy's value is "her body as *subject*, [not object]...her potential for agency," an active volition which nonetheless displays the minimized nature of her subjectivity (Cahill 35, my emphasis). Thus her labour is peculiarly non-transactional: her service is a gift, she works without wages, her labour a mark of love. Roxana's pleasure in her servant's "Testimony [...] of her violent Affections for her Mistress" (32) stresses Amy's subjective subordination and her lack of reciprocal benefits: despite that loyalty it is ultimately a "bad coin" she is paid in at last. But Amy's status as derivative subject catalyses her mistress's sexual and financial success. She swiftly becomes instrumental in managing Roxana's affairs: a "resolute" (19) and enterprising agent; an intermediary in negotiating the provision of care for her offspring. Amy may be a more effective partner than the brewer but that is because her will is wholly conflated with that of her mistress, unlike her problematically unbidable husband. The remaining dependents are dispersed as "the Misery of her own Circumstances hardened her Heart against her own Flesh and Blood" (19). The claims of consanguinity do not hamper the heroine's thoroughgoing logic of derivatization.
- 9 Amy's service to her mistress's good grace is clear in the landlord's first sexual overtures to Roxana. He self-consciously solicits Amy's approval and complicity in his designs, using her as a conduit to her mistress's good grace: "As I have been a Witness of the uncommon Honesty and Fidelity of Mrs. Amy [...] know she may be trusted with so honest a Design as mine is; for [...] I bear a proportion'd Regard to your Maid too, for her Affection to you" (26-27). While the narrator assures us that Amy is "confounded with Joy" at his declaration, her reactions are somatically ambivalent: "her Colour came and went, and every now and then she blush'd as red as scarlet, and the next Minute look'd as pale as Death" (26). Such vacillations recall Moll Flanders's sexual initiation by the elder brother's money: "my Colour came, and went, at the Sight of the Purse [...] and thus I finish'd my own Destruction" (26). Amy's quasi-eroticized thrill at Roxana's suitor suggests an embodied intersubjectivity: a carnal confusion about boundaries and persons. If Moll's seduction is triangulated between two brothers, Defoe's last novel likewise imagines a curiously diffuse financial foreplay. The "kind offer," a year's rent-free

accommodation, provokes consternation and reflection. While Moll reads her own avarice and desire as the root of evil, Amy's interpretation places the blame on a predatory and dissimulating masculinity. He means to "ask a Favour by and by" (27) since "an abundance of Charity begins in that Vice, and [the landlord knows] [...] that Poverty is the strongest Incentive; a Temptation, against which no Virtue is powerful enough to stand out" (27-28). Whether this is a warning, or a preparative, is unclear in Roxana's murky self-exonerations.

- 10 However, Amy's accompanying exclamation cannot be mistaken. That pledge – "I would starve for your sake, I will be a Whore, or any thing, for your sake; why, I would die for you, if I were put to it" (28) – is startling in its self-abnegation. Though it may initially appear to confirm Kristina Straub's claim that "the novel's real, enduring love affair is between Roxana and Amy" and while such "Excess of [same sex] Affection" (28) is indeed inherently queer, neither the intensity of passion nor its subversive form detracts from the ethical harm and real violence of this relationship (93). Were Roxana a male character her treatment of Amy would be legible as abuse. While Straub, Bowen, and others analyse the power dynamics of the two women as signs of Defoe's anxiety about rank insubordination and sexual promiscuity, Amy is *never* Roxana's equal and her fanatical desire to perform her mistress's wishes bespeaks not erotic fixation but a diminished sense of self. Nowhere else in Defoe's work does a female character choose to so surrender her autonomy. Certainly no male character does so. But Amy makes that flamboyant statement of self-sacrifice – "I will be a Whore [...] for you" – when such a choice is purely hypothetical. It is a profession of supererogatory loyalty, a rhetorical act of exculpation for the prostitution that will (Amy believes) inevitably occur. "If you won't consent," says Amy, "tell him you cannot comply with him, but there's Amy [...] she has promis'd me she won't deny you [...] if my doing wou'd save you from being undone [...] he shall [have me] if he will" (39, my emphases). Amy's proposed substitution of maidservant for mistress depends upon Roxana's inability to comply in the first instance: the syntactical stockpiling of conditionals proceeds from a negative she believes impossible. Her surmise is correct: Roxana accedes to the landlord's "Contract in Writing" (42) and becomes his Mistress. Yet interpretations that read Amy and the landlord's intercourse as somehow consensual are misled by the novel's deliberate contraction of the time between her offer, and flirtation with the landlord, and her violation by her mistress. A full "Year and half" (45) elapses between that offer and the episode where Roxana has her lover rape her loyal servant – an assault that Roxana not only engineers but watches, "standing by all the while"(46).
- 11 The apparent occasion for this rape is Amy's wonder at Roxana's failure to conceive in this period: "I warrant you Master wou'd have got me with-Child twice in that time (46) she notes. Amy's ripple of impertinence is a "refusal to act within the bounds of the proscribed relationship," an utterance that "demonstrates aspects of subjectivity that fall outside [the] derivatizer's being" (Cahill 34, 32). Roxana's "scorn, anger and retribution" are swiftly channelled into an act of sexual violence that deliberately overrules Amy's refusal (Cahill 34). And as Cahill notes, "sexual violence is an example par excellence of derivatization [in which] the victim is turned into a derivative of the will of the assailant" (138). An offer made to prevent a loss of honour a year and a half previously does not pertain in this new context. It is astonishing that Amy's refusal might be overlooked, or seen as coy convention: her response to the proposal is a cascade of negatives. "No, says Amy [...] I won't now, now he's all your own [...] No, Madam, no, says Amy, not now he's

yours [...] nay, nay, says Amy [...] No, says she [...] But the Girl said No still” (45-46). Roxana's narration focuses on what the scene reveals about her impaired morality and lack of attachment to her lover. But her lack of empathy for Amy – that person as close as her own skin – is remarkable. Yet Amy is not objectified here: Roxana represents and emphasizes her expressions of unwillingness, repeating the attributives of her reported speech – *says Amy, says she* – so that Amy's non-consent and *subjective* discomfort is palpable: she is not an object. The novel's complex violation of autonomy requires Amy to be a subject, with choice and volition, in order to disregard and mute her preferences. Rae Langton's analysis of “sadistic” heterosexual assault elucidates this dynamic:

It's not that she doesn't *listen* to saying “no” – she *wants* her to say “no.” Here there is violation of a woman's autonomy committed by someone who affirms that autonomy, attributes to her a capacity for choice, and desires precisely to overcome that choice, make her do what she chooses not to do. (Langton 234)<sup>4</sup>

Allowing Amy “to articulate consent or the lack thereof” is indicative of the ways in which “the lack of consent [...] heightens the erotic nature of the encounter” for the narrator (Cahill 33).

- 12 As Dawn Nawrot observes, *Roxana* chooses to “vilify an inept and corrupt mistress rather than a libertine master [...] narrating rape as a crime perpetrated by an immoral woman” (565). It thus foreshadows similar scenarios found in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740-42) and *Clarissa* (1748), in which male acts of violation (attempted and completed, respectively) are displaced onto “unnatural” women. While Nawrot's analysis rightly identifies *Roxana*'s gendered transposition of moral censure, the effects of its psychopathology are quite distinct. If *Roxana*'s narration derivativizes Amy, the landlord is effectively objectified throughout the episode, only gaining subjective attributes in its aftermath. While *Roxana* interprets the escapade as a sign of her degeneration, its coding suggests a dizzying exercise of power. Her rank status and her power turn the landlord into a thing: the bodily syntax of violation becomes transitive, as a male accomplice violates a female dependent. *Pamela*'s similar bedchamber episode sees a cross-dressing Mr B attempt to ravish Pamela abetted by the “masculine” Mrs Jewkes. Richardson's novel focuses on Mrs Jewkes as provocateur, representing her as a co-aggressor who treats Pamela as an object to be held down and violated. While Mr B trembles with anticipation, Jewkes urges him not to “give up such an Opportunity as this” and jeers at his lack of sexual experience (189). Though Mrs Jewkes is both insubordinate and diabolically active here, *Pamela*'s gender and rank norms waver but are not overturned. Mr B resumes control: unlike *Roxana*'s landlord, he does not obey the commands of a woman and goes no further once Pamela faints. After the episode, he affirms, “I am master of myself, and my own resolution, I will not attempt to force you to any thing again” (190). Cahill's theory of derivativization clarifies Mr B's assaults on the heroine as acts of ethically problematic derivativization rather than pure objectification (Turner). *Pamela*'s master presumes and desires her as a derivativized subject; “not quite a non-person” whose limited assent to his privileged desires is nonetheless required to confirm his masculine superiority.<sup>5</sup>
- 13 While *Pamela*'s first-person narration generates critical consideration, granting her the status of the “good victim,” Amy's conflation with *Roxana* and her subsequent aggressive amorality have generally excluded her from sympathetic consideration. But both are subject to episodes of sexual violence that follow contractual negotiation. In *Pamela*, Mr B has submitted an extensive list of “Proposals [...] to make her a vile kept Mistress,” which he attests show “what a Value [he] sets upon the Free-will of a Person already in my Power”:

a power that he will use if she does not agree (173, 176, my emphasis). Pamela's detailed refutation detaches her body from her agency, stating that if he proceeds her "Will bore no Part in her Violation" (176). In *Roxana*, the landlord's written contract of cohabitation and financial support is augmented by a silk-purse of three-score guineas, caresses, and protestations of love. Roxana's attempt at deferral is brushed away by the landlord's smiles: a sign of unjust sex. Negotiation over heterosexual contracts gets rerouted in both novels into episodes of physical violence which restage and amplify the relative inequity of consent: these acts of coercion are both different from, and yet related to, the "free-will" solicited in contract. Thus both novels undercut the notional autonomy contract seems to confer on women by insisting on "the intersubjective vulnerability of the body-as-subject" and on women's particular susceptibility to such violence (Cahill 33).

- 14 Yet *Roxana* degrades not only her maidservant – a virgin until this point – but also the landlord. He too is humiliated, goaded to get the wench with child, his manhood challenged – "try what you can with your Maid." The frozen girl "let me do what I wou'd," Roxana says, then "lay still, and let him do what he wou'd" (46, 47: my emphases). Amy's subjectivity is stunted in this scenario: one of its side-effects being to render her unmarriedable – unlike Richardson's heroine, there will be no reward for Amy's maidenhead – and she will remain a perpetual accessory to her mistress. But the male actor is a mere extension of Roxana's domineering will. Amy weeps and bemoans her loss afterward but he too is overcome by self-disgust: angry at this "vile Action" (47) and incapable of countenancing Amy's presence. As Cahill notes, "derivatized men lose their masculinity [...] becoming constructed as [...] lesser men and therefore as lesser persons (but never [...] as potential objects of violence in the way that sexualized women are)" (Cahill 78). The child the landlord unwillingly fathers on Amy confirms not virility but emasculation – the offspring not of male lust but of complicity in Roxana's violence. As "the Wife of his Aversion" (47), Amy's continued presence in the household emblemizes the landlord's subordination by his Mistress: his rage against the servant symptomatic of his impotence and sexual disempowerment. The permutations of *Roxana's* rape, then, can only be fully understood within a grid of sexual difference and power that accounts for both Amy's subjective presence and the shame and debasement of the male character.

## The Quaker, Susan, the Story of *Roxana*

- 15 If Amy is *Roxana's* most spectacular example of derivatization, she is not its sole instance. In the penultimate movements of the novel, Amy is dispatched to the continent on a reconnaissance mission on the whereabouts and fortunes of her Mistress's first husband (a casualty of war); the prince (a casualty of conscience); and the Dutch Merchant, who has journeyed to England to search for Roxana and their son. During this absence, Roxana locates another subject to stand in place of Amy. She is smitten by the Quaker: "a most courteous, obliging, well-mannerly Person [...] the most agreeable Conversation that [she] ever met with [...] I was pleas'd and delighted with her Company" (210-11). A serial monogamist in matters heterosexual and homoerotic, Roxana's interest in the Quaker is characterised by projection and conflation. Unsupported by an incompetent and absent husband, and with four children to feed, there are circumstantial echoes of Roxana's early predicament. "Was it possible I cou'd think of this poor desolate Woman [...] and not be touch'd in an uncommon Manner [...] [and] without remembering my own Condition? [...] These were the Original Springs [...] from whence my Affectionate

Thoughts were mov'd" (252-53). Given her inability to feel for others, this is indeed an "uncommon" sensation: but Roxana's sympathy is merely the ghost of self-pity. Her behaviour too recalls the material seduction of the landlord, as she bestows presents "to fix this new Acquaintance" (212) in a friendship which is also a process of assimilation and instrumentalisation, with Roxana adopting the Quaker's distinctive speech markers (213) and wearing her clothing. Amy calls this new masquerade "a perfect Disguise" which makes her look "quite another-Body" (211) but it also conveys Roxana's inability to countenance alterity, and her uncanny derivatization of women. Providing money for the Quaker separates her economically from her Husband, granting her a life's maintenance "distinct from any of the Effects" (252) of her spouse and creates an emotional obligation that leaves the Quaker "sobbing like a child that had been whipp'd" (253) into Roxana's neck. The Quaker's friendship allows Roxana to recast her past helplessness as present plenitude and power, but (like the landlord) she means to "ask a Favour by and by." The Quaker is thus instrumentalized as a spy, a character witness, and a defence against the encroachments of her daughter Susan.

- 16 Such generosity contrasts with her coldness toward her son with the Dutch Merchant, born only two years previous. This infant, tenderly cared for by his father, is of little interest to Roxana: "I had not the same Concern for it, tho' it was the Child of my own Body; nor had I ever the hearty affectionate Love to the Child, that he had [...] I often wish'd it wou'd go quietly out of the world" (263). Roxana's syntax produces an eerie distancing which becomes a confession of depraved indifference. Her supplementary account of the jeweller's son conveys the ontological inferiority she ascribes to her male offspring in particular. She provides for his education and business in the Indies, going so far as to arrange a match and sending him a bride. But when he questions the suitability of the young woman, Roxana withdraws the 2000 l. she has promised: when he does decide to marry the young woman his mother retains the dowry as a punishment for his perceived disobedience. Roxana's *female* children, however, produce thrills of uncanny similarity. Her sensation as kissing Susan, who is "[her] own name" (205) is profoundly auto-erotic: a frisson at encountering her "own Child; [her] own Flesh and blood" (277), a double.
- 17 Roxana's heterosexual relations are subsumable into her personal and social aspirations, characterized by instrumentalization. "If I cou'd but see [the Dutch merchant]," she muses, "I cou'd yet Master him" (214). All her male partners retain an utilitarian fungibility, exemplified in Roxana's final "romantic" vacillation between the Dutch Merchant and her prince. "I had," she claims, "an inexpressible Affection remaining for [the prince's] Person [...] in losing him, I forever lost the Prospect of all the Gayety and Glory, that had made such an Impression upon my Imagination" (236). Yet the "person" of the Prince remains obscure despite her erotic insinuations. He symbolizes nostalgia for rank privilege and titles; the glamour of luxury and sensuality still tangible and tempting to a woman at midlife. His character, however, is more flimsy than the "habit of the Turkish Princess" (176) he purchases for her and that becomes her avatar. Yet the memory of the Prince produces a "strange Elevation upon [her] Mind [...] a violent Fermentation in [her] Blood [...] a kind of Fever" (234-35), a frenzy for a title. She covets two: a Baronet's wife in England and a Countess in Holland: "Money purchas'd Titles of Honour [...] tho' Money cou'd not give Principles of Honour, they must come by Birth and Blood [...] [though] Titles sometimes assist to elevate the Soul and to infuse generous Principles into the Mind" (240), her husband promises. Roxana's final debauch is a dream

of dual sovereignty through marriage: a form of subjective sublimation, which will strike out her previous names.

- 18 The return of Susan disturbs Roxana's fantasy of rank ascension. Though she has only “broken Fragments of Stories” (269), Susan's sharpest shard is Roxana's name, something with the power to prevent her acquisition of a title. In this novel of story-telling and deceit, the greatest mortification is to be told. Sitting with Susan and the Quaker, Roxana is
- Oblig'd to sit and hear her tell all the Story of *Roxana*, that is to say, of myself, and not know at the same Time, whether she was in earnest or in jest; whether she knew me, or no; or [...] whether I was to be expos'd, or not expos'd (284-85).
- 19 Such powerlessness and alienation is tortuous to a narrator who, like Moll Flanders, has some claim to be the “greatest Artist of [her] time” (214). Lamb asserts that Roxana's “habit of experiencing herself as a reflected thing” makes the confrontation with her “objective self” insuperably painful (Lamb 163). Yet Roxana finds her daughter's story a mix of pleasing praise and hypothesis, its agony arising from the sudden insecurity of her auto-narrated self as *subject*: “I must forever have been made this Girl's Vassal [...] *the very Thought filled me with Horror*” (280). As Jesse Molesworth notes, “allowing children to become full-fledged characters means relinquishing narrative freedom” (497) and Amy's virulent defensiveness about Roxana's “true history” confirms narrative's power: “If I thought she knew one title of your History, I wou'd dispatch her if she were my own Daughter a thousand Times” (270).
- 20 While her daughter's desire for her mother to own her ought to be a sympathetic quest, it is represented as an almost supernatural pursuit, in which Susan is a kind of uncanny doppelgänger. She “haunted me like an Evil Spirit” (310). The frightful persistence of the young woman – coincidentally turning up on board the ship *Roxana* is taking for Holland; her bloodhound trailing of Roxana through the countryside; her grisly smile and implicit threat as she reveals that she knows Roxana and her husband's names and address; her “haunting” of the Quaker's house – foreshadows the desperate pursuit in Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794) and the supernatural appearances of Gil-Martin in *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824).<sup>6</sup> With Susan's appearance, the novel shifts into gothic mode. Susan's obsession should not be confused with a sentimental or filial longing. Her desire to be “owned” by her mother is more accurately a desire to own the mother: to fix her into a purely embodied and relational state. Susan's means of prosecuting her accusation are those of circumstantial detail, names and addresses, of intensely reproduced memories and events, specificity of place and name, of clothing and texture, of hearsay and backstairs gossip uncovering irrefutable coincidences: the strategies, that is, of formal realism.<sup>7</sup> Only personal testimony, and possible partiality to her benefactress, dissuades the Quaker from believing this affecting young woman (Welsh). Susan's refusal to be derivatized and emotionally marginalised is part of the novel's unsettling generic transformation, from the veracity of a dominating subject to an objective world whose powerful truths are distributed between heterogeneous subjects.
- 21 Despite Susan's evidentiary strength, her pursuit appears almost quixotic. She tells the Quaker that she will “take so much *Knight-Errantry* upon her” (308) in her quest to force her mother to own her: a consecration of the self that spurns the “serial subjectivity” of Defoe's previous characters in favour of a singular integrity across time and space (Kietzman 677). Susan's aspirations for relational feeling are a fatal anomaly in this novel: the trope of a sentimental romance anchored by verisimilitude. This fantasy of a

powerful, beautiful, and impenetrable woman is a dream of completeness: the mother as a fetish which will complete the self. It is Susan who introduces this “ideal self” that so unsettles: the figure who Terry Castle has called “the other self [...] asleep at the centre of the fiction” (Castle 83, 89). If Amy is an extension of her own will, and “To have fall’n upon *Amy*, had been to have murther’d myself” (302), Susan's disappearance silences a subjectivity whose desires conflict with Roxana's narrative fantasy.

- 22 Many critics note the outpouring of guilt following Susan's disappearance and presumed murder by Amy, but few register the encounter with Roxana's “other daughter” (329) which occurs only paragraphs before her final obscure allusions to the “Course of Calamities” that attends her move to Holland. The odd hurried conclusion, is, in Molesworth's words an “incisive and troubling critique of literary realism, gesturing to the inadequacy of narrative to account for human experience” (494). Sending the Quaker to the Spitalfields family who had cared for Susan and her sister, Roxana improves the provision for this younger child and contrives to see her, restaging her previous maternal encounter:

What a Surprise it was to me, to see my Child; how it work'd upon my Affections; with what infinite Struggle I master'd a strong Inclination that I had to discover myself to her [...] the Girl was the very Counterpart of myself, only much handsomer; and how sweetly and modestly she behav'd [...] I resolv'd to do more for her, than I had appointed by *Amy*, and *the like* (329).

Is this pleasure at witnessing her “counterpart” a reassurance after the murder of her “own name” (205): a substitution which will cover the “Hole in the Heart” (44) of her “Grimace and Deceit [...] and mere Manage” (300) and Susan's murder? If *Roxana's* dynamic of derivatization relies on a successfully achieved ontological reductionism, the appearance of the “other daughter” as an improved copy of the self – handsome, demure, a desirable – is a scrap of fictional hope. Despite the absence of a second volume, Roxana's unnamed second daughter gestures at her fantasy of repetition and continuation – a game of retelling the self until it is a perfect fiction, integral and inviolable, and can conform all subjects to its infinite imaginative emplotment. Roxana's desperate energy propels her toward a darkening horizon of possibilities in the novel's final paragraphs, where she and Amy are bound together in their misery and crime. That dawning sense of culpability – “the Injury, done on that poor Girl, by us both” (330) – augurs what Macpherson calls “tragic model of responsibility [...] [prompted] by encountering the embodied material effect that is her daughter Susan” (58). While Roxana's asymmetric relations confirm her power, her failure to see other subjects as ontologically distinct ultimately becomes a destructive incapacity to see herself as separate from those she has manipulated: from Amy, from the Quaker, from Susan. The death of Susan represents the foreclosure of intersubjective connection, and the ill effects of instrumental human relations on seemingly autonomous agents. Roxana's suppressed struggle “to discover herself” to her other daughter is the terminal throes of her own stunted subjectivity.

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## NOTES

1. This assessment of the novel contrasts with evaluations which see an artistic development in this final work : Maddox 684 and Richetti Chapter 9.
2. *Roxana* is written during a period where Defoe returns to the meaning and morality of the spirit world and the nature of evil. See Lamb 165-68 and John Mullan's introduction to *The Political History of the Devil* (1726).
3. Some feminist critics have denounced Roxana's maternal failures in ways that confirm essentialist ideal of motherhood. See Shapiro.
4. Italics in original: I have altered the pronouns in order emphasise my application of the analysis.
5. Cahill argues that derivatization *per se* is morally neutral and must be assessed by individual context. Her rejection of a dualist approach to subjectivity and her emphasis on the profoundly carnal nature of identity also helps unstick what is often read as Pamela's contradictory behaviour (adorning and beautifying her body in the fashion-plate sections, then refusing Mr B's presumptive sexual advances): derivatization clarifies Pamela's desire to be considered as a sexually attractive object as being compatible with, and expressive of, individual subjectivity and sexuality rather than solely as a reflection of Mr B's heterosexual fantasy of a "pretty Story in Romance" (*Pamela* 29).
6. Godwin reread and drew on *Roxana*, particularly the episode where she denies her daughter: "it made a strong impression on me as a boy, and [...] though otherwise coarsely written, somewhat a favourite with me" (Quoted in O'Shaughnessy 133).
7. For the seminal definition of formal realism see Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* and also *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 12.2-3 (2000) "Reconsidering the Rise of the Novel".

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## ABSTRACTS

This article argues that Roxana exemplifies a peculiarly modern mode of “derivatization”: a form of “ontological reductionism” articulated by Ann J. Cahill in which individuals are diminished to “the reflection, projection, or expression of another being’s identity, drives, fears [...] reducible in all ways to the derivatizing subject’s existence”. The essay analyses the novel’s representation of secondary characters’ stunted subjectivities and the protagonist’s exploitation of their body, agency, and consent. Reading the sexual assault on Amy as an example of Roxana’s pleasure in overriding subjective autonomy and a violent expression of her “separated capacity”, the article shows how the novel explores the social and subjective self-harm of such instrumental approaches. The article suggests that not only does derivatization characterize all of Roxana’s relations, including those with men, but that its ethical harms are also the ultimate cause of her tragically reduced selfhood.

Cet article démontre que Roxana illustre une modalité étonnamment moderne de « dérivatisation » : ce concept développé par Ann J. Cahill consiste en une forme de « réductionnisme ontologique » dans lequel les individus sont réduits « au reflet, à la projection ou à l’expression de l’identité, des désirs, des peurs d’un autre être [...] et peuvent ainsi être diminués jusqu’à ce que leur fonctionnement corresponde en tout point à celui du sujet qui dérivatise ». La démonstration porte sur la représentation des personnages secondaires de Roxana comme des sujets atrophiés et sur l’exploitation par l’héroïne de leur corps, de leur capacité à agir et de leur consentement. En interprétant l’agression sexuelle sur la personne d’Amy comme un exemple du plaisir qu’éprouve Roxana à nier l’autonomie du sujet et de l’expression violente de sa « capacité séparée », l’auteur analyse la manière dont le roman interroge l’automutilation sociale et subjective liées à ces formes d’instrumentalisation. Ainsi, non seulement la dérivatisation caractérise toutes les relations de Roxana, y compris celles avec les hommes, mais l’article vise à montrer que ces effets destructeurs sur un plan éthique sont aussi la cause ultime de l’identité tragiquement réduite de l’héroïne.

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