

Performance, Embodiment, and Nervous Sympathy in Maria Edgeworth's *Harrington*

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"Diseases of the nerves are essentially disorders of sympathy"

— Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization***I: Gut Feelings**

"I am convinced we have a degree of delight, and that no small one," observes Edmund Burke in his *Enquiry*, "in the real misfortunes and pains of others; for let the affection be what it will in appearance, if it does not make us shun such objects, if on the contrary it induces us to approach them, if it makes us dwell upon them, in this case I conceive we must have a delight or pleasure of some species or other in contemplating objects of this kind."¹ Midway through Maria Edgeworth's novel *Harrington* (1817) we encounter precisely such an object of perverse attraction: a painting titled *The Dentition of the Jew* on auction at Christie's. The image alludes to the tale of a Jew's teeth extracted by King John's order, a punishment that might be specially chosen to express contempt for the Jew's usurious "bite."² Rather than offer a detailed description of the painting, the text presents us with the reaction of the titular Harrington: "the sight struck me with such associated feelings of horror that I started back, exclaiming with vehement gestures, 'I cannot bear it! I cannot bear that picture!'"³ Despite the appalling subject matter and Harrington's understandable disgust, however, the painting attracts attention. In the auction, it becomes the object of a bidding war won, at great cost, by a Jewish gentleman and Harrington's future father-in-law, Mr. Montenero. As Harrington attempts to collect himself, "Mr. Montenero, with the greatest kindness of manner and with friendly presence of mind, said he remembered well having felt actually sick at the sight of certain pictures" (186).

Reflecting on this scene, Jeffrey Cass argues that "*Harrington* employs...painting as an ideological ekphrasis that glosses the novel's symbolic action.... The battle over [*The Dentition*

of the Jew's] ownership between the Jew Montenero and Lady Brantefield externalizes Edgeworth's internal struggles regarding the place and presence of Jews within her own life and thought."⁴ While this moment certainly can function allegorically for problems of appropriation and representation in Edgeworth's *oeuvre* more broadly, it also invites us to consider the complex of pain, sympathy, and embodiment that complicates relationships in the novel, especially between Jews and gentiles. Montenero, by his own admission, struggles to "digest" images of violence—"he remembered well having felt actually sick"—just as Harrington viscerally recoils from *The Dentition of the Jew*. In drawing attention to the mouth, the painting invites us to think more literally about taste and the embodiment of aesthetic judgement. It also invites us to think about Jewish dietary law. Maimonides, in an effort to explain the prohibition on pork in Leviticus, argues that the "habits and...food" of pigs "are very dirty and loathsome."⁵ Is Harrington bonding with his Jewish acquaintance by acquiring something like the gustatory repugnance that, for Maimonides, grounds kosher practices? Has Harrington's turning stomach—the most sensitive and sympathetic organ, according to some physicians of the time—already started to convert?⁶ In feeling something like nausea in this moment, Harrington's taste in art aligns with Montenero's and draws the two closer together at both a cultural and alimentary level.

As this novel makes particularly clear, Harrington's sympathy with—and as we will see later, his mother's antipathy to—Jewish others is both social and physiological. Instead of "changing minds" through reasoned conversation, the text explores how change emerges in the space between affective and emotional resonances, in the subject's reckoning with his or her own nervous system. In the course of so doing, sympathy is revealed as both poison and cure for social and political conflict. Michael Ragussis is surely correct that "[t]he exaggerated poles of Harrington's feelings suggest that...the Jew functions purely as a figure of the imagination, even

as a fetish, and that both of Harrington's responses, whether of dread or desire, are forms of 'Jewish insanity.'" ⁷ Yet the usual approaches to Harrington's "Jewish insanity," including Ruggiss's own, overlook how it takes shape through his body and, specifically, in a pre-reflective, or affective, register. Harrington's is a corporeal as much as an intellectual disorder, one that is, by turns, exacerbated and improved by sympathy. Together with his mother, father, and his romantic interest, Berenice, the text offers us several case studies in the material anatomy of the imagination. Thinking sympathy through anatomy significantly reframes sympathy's social and political implications. That is, the text not only raises questions about how Jewish difference troubles the English state; in its experimentation with how nervous materiality constitutes a subject's world, how the quasi-theatrical performance of the body enacts selfhood, it shifts the ethical and political ground of these problems to what William Connolly calls "the infrasensible dimension of politics." ⁸ This promises a variety of ways to explore class, racial, religious, and cultural difference that go beyond any ideology analysis that remains focused only on forms of reflective consciousness and the repressions thereof. In this novel, ideology shapes not only concepts but bodies themselves, while bodies, in turn, are the nervous ground of the social and political.

In the text's own language, Harrington's confusion of attraction and repulsion stems from his "morbid sensibility" (74), a nervous illness he inherits from his mother. It is a disease Harrington at some level is keen to preserve rather than remedy, and this for at least two reasons. First, he owes to this condition the spontaneous alignment of his tastes with Jewish characters—as noted above, with Mr. Montenero and, discussed below, with Berenice. Harrington's condition predisposes him to feeling the discomfort of those to whom he is attracted, such that this becomes the first movement in the formation of intimacy. Second, it is this visceral discomfort that

ostensibly defends against threats of dissimulation, affectation, and fake feeling. As we will see, Harrington's anti-Semitism is rooted in a confusion of feelings about Jews. This confusion is the fruit of a deliberate lie that, early in his life, takes hold of Harrington's imagination—and also, as it turns out, of his body. It is not surprising, then, that as an adult Harrington is especially concerned to police real from fake feeling. This becomes especially urgent in a text where theatre plays a significant role in the plot: acting extends beyond the stage and, in Harrington's case, even beyond conscious intention. Hence, the peculiar voltage of affects—such as disgust—seem to promise Harrington clarity and authenticity in a world too often emotionally fraudulent. Yet if Harrington's "morbid sensibility" makes the very intertwining of sensoria possible, this does not in fact resolve the problem of authenticity or root sympathy in some sort of pre-political biology. The Gothic plot of the novel exposes how, in fact, even the most earnest performances of the self, even the most somatic harmonies between characters, are delusional. Neither Harrington nor Berenice turn out to be what they seem. As a result, the sympathy between them, despite its physiological manifestation, proves phantasmatic.

II: Faking It and Making It

Harrington's physical aversion to *The Dentition of the Jew* is complicated by the novel's treatment of sympathy and nervous pathology. Written in response to a letter from a young Jewish-American woman, Rachel Mordecai, who criticized Edgeworth's unflattering portrayals of Jews in *Castle Rackrent* (1800), *Belinda* (1801), and *The Absentee* (1812), *Harrington* investigates the origins of the title character's anti-Semitism and his eventual change of heart brought about through sympathetic interactions with several benevolent and respectable Jewish characters, including the unjustly maligned Jacob, the impressive professor Israel Lyons, and most significantly the noble, generous Mr. Montenero, a Spanish Jew, and his lovely daughter, Berenice.⁹

Harrington's eventual attraction to all things Jewish—not least Berenice—reads, however, less like the elimination of anti-Semitism and more like an inversion that preserves the core of affective hostility. At one level, certainly, Harrington's anti-Semitism gives way to philo-Semitism. Yet if these seem like polar opposites, the novel suggests that they are in fact uncanny versions of each other. While the values have inverted, upon his “conversion”—that is, falling in love with Berenice—Harrington is no less obsessive than he ever was. Harrington's attraction to Berenice gathers force, in fact, by recycling his initial revulsion. Rather than merely overcoming his terror and disgust, his interest in Berenice is intensified by the sickness he continues to feel in the company of Jews. And continue to feel sick he does. The mere mention of the old clothes man, Simon, for whom Harrington conceived a phobia years earlier as a child, is enough to cast him “in agonies” (177).

Harrington's scrambled sympathy comes into focus when he slowly contracts Berenice's sense of disgust upon witnessing a performance of *The Merchant of Venice*. Harrington's attraction to Berenice intensifies in proportion to her revulsion in response to the play. Initially, Harrington is mesmerized by Charles Macklin's performance: “Shylock appeared—I forgot everything but him” (136). However, he soon finds another drama more enthralling: “I heard a soft low sigh near me. I looked and saw the Jewess.... I had for the first time a full view of her face, and of her countenance of great sensibility, painfully, proudly repressed” (136). At her request he places himself “so as to screen her from observation during the whole next act. But now” he confesses,

my pleasure in the play was over. I could no longer enjoy Macklin's incomparable acting; I was so apprehensive of the pain which it must give the young Jewess. At every stroke, characteristic of the skillful actor or the

master poet, I felt a strange mixture of admiration and regret. I almost wished that Shakespeare had not written or Macklin had not acted the part so powerfully. My imagination formed such a strong conception of the pain the Jewess was feeling, and my inverted sympathy, if I may so call it, so overpowered my direct and natural feelings, that at every fresh development of the Jew's villainy I shrunk as though I had myself been a Jew.

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Harrington is moved by Berenice's distress, indeed, is transported into a profound oneness with her: "I now saw and heard the play," he declares, "solely with reference to her feelings" (139). Harrington's "direct and natural feelings" of pleasure in the play and its performance are, in other words, contaminated. The "strange mixture of admiration and regret" anticipates his "inverted sympathy," by which he could mean shifting allegiance from Christian to Jewish characters in the play or, more broadly, that the very source of enjoyment has become a source of discomfort and that his "admiration" for Shakespeare morphs into "regret."¹⁰ But this marks not merely a change in Harrington's feelings: his ambivalence stems from "a kind of conversion" to Judaism.¹¹

This is to take sympathy rather further than that concept normally allows. According to Adam Smith, for instance, sympathy attunes subjects to each other while also stressing the difference in (emotional) repetition:

As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. Though our brother is upon

the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations.¹²

The imagination produces a virtual copy, or narrative, of another's experience. As Vivasvan Soni argues, "it would be a mistake to think that sympathy, for Smith, is an unmediated relation to the feelings of others. Sym-pathy must not be confused with tele-pathy or affective contagion."¹³

And yet precisely such "affective contagion" seems to have infected Harrington. The text suggests he has been grafted onto and shares Berenice's sensorium. His sympathy with her is so intense that he experiences the play "solely with reference to her feelings." He does not merely feel for her but as her—"as though [he] had [himself] been a Jew." In this respect, he embodies a material sympathy of the sort that fascinated earlier thinkers like Kenelm Digby, Francis Bacon, and David Hume, and that evolved into the explanation in the eighteenth century for how bodily organs communicate with each other.¹⁴ So, when Michael Scrivener says that "Harrington sees Shakespeare's play through 'Jewish' eyes" (120) in this moment, we should take that somewhat more than figuratively if not totally literally. With these Jewish eyes, his tastes also begin to mutate. Eventually, when overcome with nausea at the thought of Shylock carving out a pound of Antonio's living flesh, Harrington knows he is in love.

In Harrington's actions and reactions, we confront sympathy's uncanny double. This perverse sympathy lingers below the surface of the prevailing, eighteenth-century understanding of the concept. "In providing a scientific basis for linking 'sense' with 'consensus' . . . the culture of sensibility [in the eighteenth century] promoted an image of society held together by bonds of feeling."¹⁵ For Smith, sympathy is crucial for the formulation of society, for fostering the basic

interest in and underwriting the reality of other minds. Referencing Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* in *Practical Education*, the Edgeworths note that "[n]o theory was ever developed with more ingenious elegance, than that which deduces all our moral sentiments from sympathy. The direct influence of sympathy upon all social beings is sufficiently obvious, and we immediately perceive its necessary connexion with compassion, friendship, and benevolence."¹⁶ Yet the Edgeworths are quick to add qualifications and cautions: "we must at the same time perceive, that a being endowed with the most exquisite sympathy must, without the assistance and education of reason, be, if not equally incapable of social intercourse, far more dangerous to the happiness of society."¹⁷

Thinkers both before and after Smith touched on these dangers, gesturing toward socially adverse potentialities within sympathy—potentialities that are, in *Harrington*, afforded especially bold expression. In "A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm," Anthony Ashley Cooper suggests that "[we] may with good reason call every Passion *Panic* which is rais'd in a Multitude, and convey'd by Aspect, or as it were by Contact, or Sympathy."¹⁸ Sympathy might also be selective or misdirected, as in the case of a child who is more concerned with his caterpillar than his sister.¹⁹ Hume notes, moreover, that sympathy tends to develop between people who are already similar to each other: "We sympathize more with persons contiguous to us, than with persons remote from us: With our acquaintance, than with strangers: With our countrymen, than with foreigners."²⁰ This would seem rather to limit the very extroversion sympathy is supposed to enable. Finally, sympathy might move us to "transgress the boundaries of prudence"—thereby undermining the work of political economy itself—and actually act immorally from a practical-philosophical standpoint.²¹ As Nancy Yousef remarks, it is indeed "disturbing" to find in Hume that while we "cannot help but perceive the other's grief" there are occasions where he insists that we

are “not necessarily moved to respond” and that “sometimes I ought (in the service of justice!) to resist the inclination to respond.”²² Hence, Angelina Del Balzo is right to see expressed in *Har-rington* specifically “an ambivalence about the progressive potential of sympathy” that was pervasive in the writing and thought of the period.²³

The novel also implants sympathy in the body in ways that align with contemporary medical thought. While Smith stresses the imagination’s role in mediating sympathy through representational abstraction, the physician Robert Whytt suggests that sympathy involves a more immediate commingling of nervous systems:

there is a remarkable sympathy, by means of the nerves, between the various parts of the body; and now it appears that there is a still more wonderful sympathy between the nervous system of different persons, whence various motions and morbid symptoms are often transferred from one to another, without any corporeal contact or infection. In these cases, the impression made upon the mind or *sensorium commune* by seeing others in a disordered state, raises, by means of the nerves, such motions or changes in certain parts of the body as to produce similar affections in them: and hence it is, that the sight of only one person vomiting has often excited the same action in others;...and that convulsive disorders are caught by looking on those who are affected with them.²⁴

The operative faculty or power here is not the “imagination” but the “nerves.” While there is no obvious contact between bodies, feeling propagates organically, at a level below consciousness. Whytt’s thinking here about interpersonal sympathy is modelled on his thinking about internal, bodily sympathy.²⁵ In Janis McLarren Caldwell’s words, Whytt traces the movement from “the

theory of physiologic sympathy” to “social sympathy.”²⁶ Physiologic sympathy bypasses cognition, or Smith’s “conceiving” mind. Instead of deliberately figuring oneself in the place of another, a resonance takes hold “between the nervous system of different persons.” Hume also gestures toward this pre-reflective, pre-linguistic communication when, anticipating the Aeolian harp of later Romantic poetry, he writes, “[a]s in strings equally wound up, the motion of the one communicates itself to the rest; so all the affections readily pass from one person to another, and beget correspondent movements in every human creature.”²⁷ Such correspondent movements require no higher-order thinking as they cascade over or penetrate bodies like a physical force.²⁸

The abstraction of Smith’s imagination and the materiality of Whytt’s nerves represent an early stage in the fragmentation of the imagination that has led, in recent years, to critical conflicts. By looking closely at medical, scientific, and philosophical contexts, Richard Sha argues that in these debates the Romantic imagination has been badly misrepresented, even by those who would come to its defense. He demonstrates how materialist and idealist disputes about the nature of the imagination are exacerbated by ignoring the imagination’s ontological complexity in the eighteenth century. More specifically, Sha thinks that if in materialist readings of Romanticism “the imagination has been tarred with the brush of ideological escapism” and aligned with “the immateriality of consciousness,” this characterization stems—ironically—from an inadequate attention to history, a domain typically claimed by “materialists.”²⁹ For instance, that the imagination could be, as John Haygarth argued in 1800, “a cause” and “a cure of disorders of the body,” suggests that for eighteenth and early nineteenth-century thinkers, the imagination is continuous with organic life.³⁰ In Sha’s words, “[b]y failing to give the physiology of the imagination adequate attention, critics have missed how the imagination already has been physiologically imagined as having absorbed the material into the ideal.”³¹

Sha's argument suggests that the recent turn to affect in literary and cultural studies might be more accurately understood as the return of the "physiological imagination." "The turn to affect," says Patricia T. Clough, involves a focus on the "dynamism immanent to bodily matter and matter generally."³² Affects are embodied experiences that do not have the conceptual clarity or definition of emotions. In Rei Terada's words, "by *emotion* we usually mean a psychological, at least minimally interpretive experience whose physiological aspect is *affect*."³³ Akin to drives but with "greater freedom...with respect to object," affects compose and shape our capacity for experiences, for acting and being acted on.³⁴ Hence, affect "is the name we give to those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension."³⁵ While affects operate pre-reflectively, they do not exclude the imagination but rather, in ways that seem to echo Sha's analysis, incorporate a non-conscious imagination into the nervous system itself.³⁶ Hence, for Charles Altieri, "[a]ffects are immediate modes of sensual responsiveness to the world characterized by an accompanying imaginative dimension."³⁷ One result from this is that being moved in certain instances might generate conflicts between embodied affects, measured as "intensity," and interpretive emotions.³⁸

Certainly, Harrington's responses to *The Dentition of the Jew* and *The Merchant of Venice* are intense and visceral. What is strange, though, is how his affective aversions prime his romantic attraction, suggesting that these levels of response are linked though the nature of influence complex, even perverse. Hume, for instance, takes the common-sense view that we love what is attractive and desirable. As he says, "the sensation [of love] is always agreeable."³⁹ Hatred, in diametric opposition, is rooted in feeling "uneasy."⁴⁰ "Tis plain, that, according as the

impression is either pleasant or uneasy, the passion of love or hatred must arise toward the person, who is thus connected to the cause of the impression.”⁴¹ Building on this logic, Smith suggests that disgust renders sympathy impossible or is sympathy’s affective antithesis. “We are,” for example, “disgusted with that clamorous grief, which, without any delicacy, calls upon our compassion with sighs and tears and importunate lamentations.”⁴² Socially and politically, disgust has served as “a means of reinforcing the boundaries between self and ‘contaminating’ others that has perpetuated racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, and misogyny.”⁴³ And yet, as William Ian Miller argues, disgust retains a latent, attracting power: “The disgusting is an insistent feature of the lurid and the sensational, informed as these are by sex, violence, horror, and the violation of norms of modesty and decorum. And even as the disgusting repels, it rarely does so without also capturing our attention.”⁴⁴ Like the perverse interest Burke notes that we have in others’ pain, disgust is a more complex and ambivalent reaction than its immediacy might suggest. Whether understood as a force that organizes appetites or as a force of repression, disgust retains a secret proximity to desire. “Love as we know it involves a very particular relation to certain aspects of the disgusting,” says Miller.⁴⁵ Thus, Harrington’s attraction to Berenice is strangely amplified and intensified by anti-Semitism. His love borrows from his erstwhile abhorrence by just slightly modifying the conditions under which Judaism gives rise to that feeling: Berenice’s traumatization and Harrington’s vicarious experience thereof in the playhouse means that anti-Semitism plays an important part in suturing them together. Their co-suffering is what generates intimacy. Harrington’s bond to her is cinched by the same fibers along which he feels her degradation, and feels it as his own. Ragussis notices this counterintuitive economy of feeling too when he says “Berenice’s pain at the performance apparently provokes a kind of sexual arousal in the hero.”⁴⁶ Love, as a higher-order emotion or passion seems, then, to be out of synch

with affect; and yet affect and emotion prove in this case to be mutually reinforcing.⁴⁷ How does the text make sense of these strange bedfellows?

One reason sickness enhances love for Harrington is because affective resonance lends authenticity to emotion. Harrington makes a persistent effort to police emotion and, specifically, to distinguish real from fake feeling throughout the novel. As with so much of Harrington's personality, this interest stems from his boyhood trauma. Harrington recounts how as a child "about six years old" (69) his nurse, Fowler, invented a story about Simon, the Jewish old-clothes man, in an attempt to "reduce [Harrington] to passive obedience" (70). Simon is cast as a monster who might kidnap and cannibalize Harrington.⁴⁸ Several critics have analyzed this episode, exploring how "Fowler's pedagogy of terror"⁴⁹ warps Harrington's associative imagination and opens a psychological wound he struggles thereafter to remedy.⁵⁰ It is from this nightmare scenario that Harrington's very real anti-Semitism springs. What critics generally do not discuss, however, is how out of this episode also springs Harrington's obsession with distinguishing real from fake. Over time, Harrington shows symptoms of insomnia and anxiety. "Between the effects of real fear, and the exaggerated expression of it to which I had been encouraged, I was now seriously ill," he remarks (76). While Harrington remains tight lipped about Fowler's role in the aetiology of his condition, his "antipathy to the sight or bare idea of a Jew, was talked of by ladies and by gentlemen" (75). In an effort to bring him some relief, Mrs. Harrington pays Simon to leave their street out of his circuit. "For some time I slept quietly," Harrington recalls (79). However, once this agreement becomes public knowledge, "the bounty acted directly as an encouragement to ply the profitable trade, and '*Old clothes! Old clothes!*' was heard again punctually under my window" (80). The political-economic solution backfires once others learn that Mrs. Harrington

will pay Jews to keep away from her son. While initially Harrington assimilates this to his anti-Semitism, he eventually has to make a correction:

Jews I should not call them, though such they appeared to be at the time; we afterwards discovered that they were good Christian beggars, dressed up and daubed for the purpose of looking as frightful and as like the traditional representations and vulgar notions of a malicious, revengeful, ominous-looking Shylock as ever whetted his knife. The figures were well got up; the tone, accent, and action suited to the parts to be played; the stage effect perfect, favoured as it was by the distance at which I saw and wished ever to keep such personages; and as money was given by my mother's orders to these people to send them away, they came the more.

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Harrington's fears are exacerbated by fake Jews. His failure to see through these cliché disguises, to recognize actors playing roles, proves literally costly. Is it a coincidence, then, that as a man Harrington judges others' and his own moral integrity almost exclusively in terms of affectation?

Harrington identifies Lady Anne Mowbray, Mrs. Harrington, and—eventually—his friend and Lady Anne's brother, Lord Mowbray as morally dubious because their self-presentations are obviously, or subsequently prove to be, insincere. Harrington is, for instance, turned off by “the various airs of fashionable affectation which [he] had seen in Lady Anne Mowbray” (160). When Lord Mowbray—who is rather more interested in pretend Jews, such as the actress who plays Jessica (169)—enters into competition with Harrington for Berenice's attention, Harrington stresses his rival's inauthenticity: “Mowbray, happy and confident, went on, secure of victory. He was an excellent actor, and he was now to act falling in love, which he did by such

fine degrees and with a nicety of art which so exquisitely imitated nature, that none but the most suspicious or the most practical could have detected the counterfeit” (207). Mowbray well disguises not only his relative indifference to Berenice but his deep anti-Semitism. “The affectation was skilfully managed with a dash of his own manner,” Harrington laments: “The counterfeit was so exquisite that, notwithstanding my confidence in her father’s penetration and in her talent of discerning what was natural and what was affected, I dreaded lest they should both be imposed upon” (214). “In his chameleonic powers and mastery of artifice,” says Carol Margaret Davidson, Mowbray “assumes the stereotypical role of theatrical Jew.”⁵¹ More than that, though, Mowbray demonstrates the emotional indifference Denis Diderot thinks is crucial in all successful acting. A good actor, writes Diderot, “must have...penetration and no sensibility.... If the actor were full, really full, of feeling, how could he play the same part twice running with the same spirit and success?... If he is himself while he is playing, how is he to stop being himself?”⁵² In order to play anyone, the actor must be no one—much like Keats’s chameleon poet.

For Harrington, precisely what makes Mowbray convincing—though, ultimately, his plot is unsuccessful—is what makes him morally bankrupt. When puzzled at Montenero’s displeasure with him in one instance, Harrington wonders whether Montenero suspects Harrington of insincerity. This would be, for Harrington, deeply distressing since, above all, “what [Harrington] most detested” was “the affectation of taste, sensibility and enthusiasm” (175). In *Practical Education*, the Edgeworths articulate a similar sentiment, imagining how in response to “falsehood and affectation” one might justifiably be “disgusted.”⁵³ So, when called by Montenero to look a second time at *The Dentition of the Jew*, Harrington “immediately approached, resolved to stand the sight, that I might not be suspected of affectation” (190). If more even than wrong actions it

is false displays of feeling that Harrington “most detested,” it is unsurprising that he holds emotional transparency as the key index of ethical behavior. It is precisely this quality in Berenice with which Harrington is repeatedly impressed. On a tour of the mint, “what chiefly pleased” Harrington was “the *sincerity* of her attention” and “the judicious *proportion* of the admiration she expressed” (178-9). Berenice’s feelings are measured to her moment and her expression of feeling is equal to her actual experience, rather than fashionably hyperbolic. Indeed, what seems most to please Harrington in his initial meeting with Berenice in the playhouse is how she deliberately resists a display of feeling that might be deemed theatrical:

I saw the struggle to repress her emotion was often the utmost she could endure; and at last I saw, or fancied I saw, that she grew so pale, that, as she closed her eyes at the same instant, I was certain she was going to faint.... She did not faint; she struggled against it, and it was evident that there was no affectation in the case, but on the contrary, an anxious desire not to give trouble and a great dread of exposing herself to public observation. (139-40)

Berenice here stands in stark contrast to Lady Ann Mowbray, Lord Mowbray, and even an earlier version of Harrington himself. For while Fowler’s stories were the root of Harrington’s “Jewish insanity,” he admits to nursing these fears, to affecting even greater anxiety than he did have, and bringing on, as a result, an actual phobia (118). Harrington as a child “grew vain of [his] fears” and indulged in “affectation and exaggeration” to the point where he “really often did not know the difference between [his] own feelings, and the descriptions [he] heard given of what [he] felt” (75-6). Against his will, or by force of circumstances, and with “no intention to deceive, at least not originally,” Harrington fakes himself into a real psychological and social

conflict: “it was a medical, it was a metaphysical wonder, it was an *idiosyncrasy*, corporeal or mental or both” (75). Berenice thus represents the ideal of emotional integrity toward which the reformed Harrington strives.

Yet Harrington’s feelings are deeply ironic: his sympathy and identity with Berenice is, ultimately, phantasmatic. For the plot of the novel does not only concern Harrington’s reformation—or, rather, the inversion of his anti-Semitism through extreme sympathy. It also traces Harrington’s relationship with Lord Mowbray, a relationship complicated by conspiracies and betrayals. Mowbray, son of Lady de Brantefield, descends from a conspicuously anti-Semitic family. One reason for Lady de Brantefield’s interest in the aforementioned *Dentition of the Jew*, for instance, is that it “will be a companion to the old family picture of the Jew and Sir Josseline” (184). Indeed, the auction itself is something of a ruse: Mowbray, unbeknownst to either Montenero or his mother, is the painting’s seller. He has brought it to auction and to his mother’s attention in order to extract money from her—but also to needle Harrington. This scheming anticipates Mowbray’s more elaborate misrepresentation of Harrington to the Monteneros. That is, Mowbray has woven a narrative around Harrington that casts Harrington’s sincere enthusiasm for art and history as well as his love for Berenice as traces of the nervous disorder from which he suffered in childhood and never fully recovered. Thus, when Montenero refers to “an obstacle” (288) between Berenice and Harrington preventing their marriage, Harrington mistakes this for the difference in religious persuasion: “A difference of religion would be a most formidable objection, I grant,” says Montenero, “but we need not enter upon that subject. That is not the obstacle to which I allude” (289). Montenero is concerned, rather, that Harrington is mentally un-

stable; Mowbray, manipulating Fowler and an apothecary, causes Montenero to read Harrington's intense affection for his daughter as proof that he continues to suffer "*strange fits*" and "*extraordinary illnesses*," or put simply that Harrington still suffers from "*insanity*" (285, 284).

What this means, then, is that Harrington—in complete ignorance—has been cast within a sort of drama. What is more, the affective, embodied aversions Harrington shares with Mr. Montenero and Berenice do not dispel but, rather, reinforce the illusion. Indeed, in behaving as sincerely as possible, insisting upon his sincerity, and casting artifice as utterly detestable, Harrington becomes a complete and profoundly convincing actor. Where Montenero and Berenice can see through the excellent counterfeit that is Mowbray and remain immune to Macklin's power—Mowbray, again confusing the authentic and artificial, calls Macklin the "real, original Jew of Venice" (114)!—they are totally convinced by Harrington's flawless performance as "insane." Harrington's imitation of madness is masterful, even perhaps graceful, like Heinrich von Kleist's marionette, precisely because the role is performed unconsciously, mechanically. Harrington's aversion to artifice means he seamlessly inhabits the role in which he is cast. In this way, Harrington becomes the consummate actor though not, as Diderot recommends, through a sentiment bypass but rather through pure, unreflective coincidence with his role. "A sure way to act in a cramped, mean style, is to play one's own character," says Diderot.⁵⁴ Harrington, however, does not commit the error of playing himself because there is no double awareness. Instead, he is the absolute embodiment of the method Konstantin Stanislavski would invent toward the end of the nineteenth century: Harrington is acting without acting.

The irony that Harrington, who is obsessed with authentic displays of emotion, proves to be the center of a drama constructed around him is heightened by the late revelation that Bere-

nice is, in fact, an English Protestant, not a Spanish Jew. As her father explains in the denouement, “her mother was a Christian, and according to the promise to Mrs. Montenero, Berenice has been bred in her faith: a Christian—a Protestant” (290). “Berenice’s suddenly disclosed Christianity is a way of converting her,” says Ragussis.⁵⁵ More than that, though, it also produces a powerful, analeptic reaction wherein we must reassess the moment of Harrington’s ostensible conversion to Judaism in the theatre, where he seems grafted onto Berenice’s sensorium and to experience a transformation when his sympathy is “inverted” by this contact. Moreover, Harrington’s love for Berenice is predicated on her ostensible authenticity, such that the removal of the obstacle posed by conflicting faiths would seem to introduce another, even greater obstacle, namely, Berenice’s capacity for dissimulation. The person with whom he sympathizes so powerfully and so physiologically proves not to be what she seems, suggesting that his claim to transcend sympathy and telepathically to feel as her, sees him resonate with a phantom of his own conjuring. The very difference from Harrington that Berenice embodies, the difference he ostensibly overcomes through hyper-sympathy, proves to be a figment of his imagination summoned by her performance. The discovery that Harrington and Berenice share the same faith thus casts them apart, into two different categories of dissimulation: Berenice joins those pseudo-Jewish characters (Christian beggars, Charles Macklin) who are aware of the gap between role and true identity. In contrast to these false fakes stands Harrington: a real fake whose identity coincides so entirely with his character that he is both the best and the worst actor alive. Thus, what Kleist says of dance might be said of Harrington’s acting: “grace returns after knowledge has gone through the world of the infinite, in that it appears to best advantage in that human bodily structure that has no consciousness at all—or has infinite consciousness—that is, in the mechanical

puppet, or in the God.”⁵⁶ Harrington, as Mowbray’s mechanical puppet, is a sublime forgery: an anti-Semite converted to Judaism through his transformative sympathy with... a Christian.

III: “Morbidity Sensibility”

Harrington is played, so to speak, not only by Mowbray and Berenice; his own nervous anatomy also turns against his sense of identity and works to undermine his efforts at perfect transparency, that is, his efforts to present himself only as he is. Again, entirely bypassing will or consciousness, Harrington is transformed into an actor at the level of his material, organic constitution. As several eighteenth-century physicians note, nervous illnesses prove difficult to diagnose because they present themselves through the mediation of specific organs, making it hard to determine whether the organ itself is diseased. Whytt agrees with his predecessor, Thomas Sydenham: “As the sagacious Sydenham has justly observed, that the shapes of *proteus*, or the colours of the *chamaeleon*, are not more numerous and inconstant, than the variations of the hypochondriac and hysteric disease; so those morbid symptoms which have been commonly called *nervous* are so many, so various, and so irregular, that it would be extremely hard, either rightly to describe, or fully to enumerate them.”⁵⁷ Is a stomach ache the result of indigestion brought about by stress in the alimentary canal? Or, is it the result of hypochondriasis, a nervous affection of a stomach ache? The pain itself is real in either case. What is different is its source. This source, however, is masked by the fact that the same nerves that, when working properly, receive, mediate, and communicate pain in different parts of the body, might themselves begin actively generating the experience independently from any disorder in the organs the nerves link together. Hence, confusingly, “[a]ll diseases may, in some sense, be called affections of the nervous system, because in almost every disease the nerves are more or less hurt.”⁵⁸

Michel Foucault also cites Sydenham in his discussion of the emergence of madness from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century thought about nervous illness: “Hysteria thus appears as the most real and the most deceptive of diseases; real because it is based upon a movement of the animal spirits; illusory as well, because it generates symptoms that seem provoked by a disorder inherent in the organs, whereas they are only the formation, at the level of these organs, of a central or rather general disorder.”⁵⁹ Whytt must have in mind the same passage of Sydenham’s to which Foucault points⁶⁰:

This disease is not more remarkable for its frequency, than for the numerous forms under which it appears, resembling most of the distempers wherewith mankind are afflicted. For in whatever part of the body it be seated, it immediately produces such symptoms as are peculiar thereto; so that unless the physician be a person of judgement and penetration, he will be mistaken, and suppose such symptoms to arise from some essential disease of this or that particular part, and not from the *hysterical passion*.⁶¹

Whytt attempts to distinguish nervous disease from “some essential disease of this or that particular part” by reserving the concept of “nervous illness” for a set of behavioral responses to types of pain. A pain can be identified as nervous if it generates not just local discomfort but also an emotional supplement. Hence, “[a]n obstruction in the coats of the stomach, or other hypochondriac *viscera*, is not, strictly speaking, a nervous disease; but if the nerves of these parts are so changed from their natural state, that low spirits, melancholy, or madness, are the consequence of this obstruction, then these symptoms deserve the name of *nervous*.”⁶² A disorder is “nervous” when it involves an emotional or intellectual disturbance that cannot be accounted for by the up-

set of the organ alone. Indeed, the implication is that the nerves themselves, acting autonomously, imitating a local discomfort, are responsible for generating psychological problems. Psychology thus emerges as nerves minus organs, or where nerves switch from the passive mediation to the active generation of experiences. Hence, nervous illness is “a ruse of the body,” is a trick where the body pre-reflectively or unconsciously doubles and then plays itself.⁶³ It requires a sagacious physician indeed to detect such imposture. So it is no wonder that Harrington fails to see this in himself. Indeed, what Diderot says is the actor’s talent reads like a description of nervous derangement: effective acting consists of “knowing well the outward symptoms of the soul we borrow, of addressing ourselves to the sensations of those who hear and see us, of *deceiving them by the imitation of these symptoms*.”⁶⁴ If some performers have acting in their blood, Harrington has it in his nerves.

While terms such as “hysteria,” “hypochondria,” and “nervous” occupy center stage for Sydenham, Whytt, and Foucault, Edgeworth herself offers a different, though related, term. Two characters in *Harrington* are explicitly diagnosed with “morbid sensibility.” The phrase is significant precisely because it is used by Edgeworth sparingly and, it seems, strategically, to link together characters who are in almost every way antipathetic: Mrs. Harrington and Berenice Montenero. Before looking at how the term is deployed in the novel and the significance of joining these characters in this way, it is profitable to track its use in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century medical discourse. What, exactly, was “morbid sensibility” for medical science in the period? On the one hand, it seems to describe a deadening of sensation. For instance, John Stevenson’s *A Practical Treatise on the Morbid Sensibility of the Eye, Commonly Called Weakness of Sight* (1810) makes quite clear that “morbid sensibility” in this instance refers to “the effect of exhausted nervous energy” leading to an “excessive weakness of sight.”⁶⁵ The term describes a

deficiency in the nerve that leads to a diminished capacity for sensation: vision deteriorates. On the other hand, the term is also deployed in nearly the opposite way. For James Adair, for instance, “morbid sensibility” is a precondition that disposes a subject to nervous disorders:

though persons of an irritable habit are said to have a peculiar predisposition to nervous defects, yet by care and management, they may be preserved from them: but morbid sensibility, as a praeternatural predisposing cause, is really a disease, though this and other similar causes are called predisposing; because they exist in the body, and are therefore to be distinguished from the occasional causes or non-naturals, and also from the proximate cause or disease itself, which consists of predisposing and occasional causes combined.⁶⁶

John Aitken agrees when he says that the “proximate cause” of hysteria is “a condition of the nerves giving morbid sensibility.”⁶⁷ In other words, morbid sensibility in these instances refers to a nervous system that is hyperactive, that is at risk of overreacting to stimuli like the lunatics mentioned in Wollstonecraft’s *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria*: “so active was their imagination, that every new object which accidentally struck their senses, awoke to phrenzy their restless passions.”⁶⁸ Robert Bree, in a similar vein, takes morbid sensibility to be a form of excessive sensitivity that is also dangerously retentive and self-amplifying. In *A Practical Inquiry into Disordered Respiration* (1797) what Bree calls “the morbid sensibility or irritability of the body” encrypts “convulsive motions” so that they “return at intervals after the original excitement of them had been removed,”⁶⁹ recalling the intermittent agony of Coleridge’s *Ancient Mariner*.⁷⁰ Paradoxically, then, morbid sensibility names a capacity to feel that is so heightened it can persist well beyond the removal of a stimulus.

Edgeworth seems largely to follow this second group of physicians, though she inflects the concept in her own way, linking it to the reception and production of antisocial attitudes. “You see, I hope, my dear father,” says Berenice, “that I am curing myself of that *morbid sensibility*, that excessive susceptibility to the opinion of others, with which you used to reproach me. I have had some good lessons and you have had some good trials of me since we came to England” (212). Berenice admits to the fault of social sensitivity; in Mrs. Coates’s words, she is “a little touchy on the Jewish chapter” (182). While sensitivity is a sign of refinement, class, and civilization, it also renders one vulnerable to emotional wounds and nervous self-sabotage. Hence, for Thomas Totter, insensitivity is correlated both with health and primitive life.⁷¹ Oddly, as social and cultural refinement increases, subjects become more fragile.⁷² In a sense, then, Montenero advises Berenice to disclaim refinement in order better to cope with the often toxic “opinion of others”: “with her feeling heart and strong affection for those she loves, no wonder she has often suffered, especially on my account, since we came to England; and she has become, to a fault, tender and susceptible on this point” (145). Like nerves so surcharged that they turn against the body, Berenice’s hyper-impressionability recasts sympathy as the conduit through which English society consolidates its body at the expense of hers.

Matters are more complicated with Mrs. Harrington. Harrington relates that his “mother was a woman of weak health, delicate nerves, and a kind of morbid sensibility which [he] often heard her deplore as a misfortune, but which [he] observed everybody about her admired as a grace” (74). Mrs. Harrington’s overactive nervous system leads her to formulate what she calls “*presentiments*” or prophetic anticipations: “I dreamed last night—but I know you won’t listen to dreams—I have a *presentiment*—but you have no faith in *presentiments*” (150-1). The term itself

is curious since it seems to designate a feeling that precedes feeling. That is, a pre-sentiment suggests that a feeling is imminent, and that we experience that imminence immediately. Yet since presentiments also preview the specific feeling to come—the anticipation is evaluative, is “a good” or “a bad” feeling—it is as if a presentiment gives one the future feeling early. The appetizer is actually the meal. Where morbid sensibility for Bree made possible feeling’s uncanny return from the past, Mrs. Harrington’s senses are so heightened that she can feel, ahead of time, an emotion or experience that has yet to arrive from the future. Thus, once she learns of Harrington’s interest in the Monteneros, a “dangerous impression” of them comes to her through presentiment (151).

Harrington describes that his mother’s “nervous state...inclined her now to a variety of superstitious feelings—to a belief in *presentiments* and presages, omens and dreams, added to her original belief in sympathies and antipathies” (111). For his mother, sympathies and antipathies are constitutional dispositions. Hence, he hopes that his formation of “a natural sympathy with the race of Israel” might convince his mother that his “early prejudice” could be “no natural antipathy” (111). Harrington is not allergic to Judaism, he insists. Yet he is unable, through a demonstration of his reformed feelings, to gain Mrs. Harrington’s support for his attachment to the Monteneros because her presentiments function at three different levels to forestall sympathy. Presentiment, at the level of the physical body, takes form as nervous disease—as hysteria, hypochondria, vapors, and the like. In these cases, the nervous system generates experiences, producing feeling before, or simply without, sensation. Rather than a system that reacts to, organizes, and makes sense of empirical data, the diseased nervous system feels in advance of experience, thus inventing what it registers. Presentiment at the level of the social body takes shape as prejudice. Prejudice—literally, to judge in advance—once again sees feeling run ahead of fact

or to produce its own facts. Finally, narrative presentiment might be construed as prophecy, the attempt to speak in advance of historical events to come. In Mrs. Harrington these dimensions of presentiment coalesce in her nervous, prejudicial “prophecies of evil” (231) that then drive her effort to dictate with whom Harrington will or will not socialize: “Montenero! Can you think of nothing but Mr. Montenero, whom you’ve never seen and never will see?” she shouts (129). Mrs. Harrington’s prejudice is thus woven into her body; her racism is as physiological as it is ideological—indeed, the two seem hardly separable.

Mrs. Harrington’s “morbid sensibility” is the physiological basis for her “presentiments,” biologizing her anti-Semitic pre-judgment, or prejudice. Her pre-judgment of the Monteneros is somatically encrypted. This is not to suggest that her attitude is natural or inevitable, though. What it does mean is that instead of “changing her mind,” Harrington has to induce her to change her entire way of feeling, has to convince her to change her tastes and habits. Morbid sensibility thus joins a “host of concepts like ‘predisposition,’ ‘arousal,’ and ‘influence’ [that] allowed physiologists to have their material entities and to allow for change.”⁷³ If she could alter her environment and thus her nervous system, she might find herself free from the damage she experiences anticipating disasters. For hers is a weirdly self-fulfilling hysteria in which she experiences racial and cultural difference as a “presentiment,” a bad feeling of a bad feeling to come, that manages to be both hypothetical and actual, or that manages to arrive in and as its mere anticipation. That her feelings must originate from her own overactive nervous system becomes clear in the novel’s late twist. If Berenice is not, in fact, Jewish but a Spanish Christian, this discovery unmasks hyper-sympathy as auto-affection: Mrs. Harrington has been feeling only herself.

Testifying to the political significance of the text's nervous sympathies, the novel's resolution is, finally, managed through an affective recalibration of the possible. Most readers, understandably, express disappointment with the text's retreat from a genuinely progressive conclusion in which differences of faith are set aside in the name of love. "Berenice's 'conversion' in *Harrington* may be a sign of Edgeworth's submission to the ruling ideology," says Ragussis.⁷⁴ For Tessone, "it is exactly Edgeworth's inability—indeed, failure—to resist this ideologically inflected commitment to inheritance that makes *Harrington*'s unfortunate ending qualify, in Edgeworth's own words, as 'an Irish blunder, which, with the best intentions, I could not avoid.'"⁷⁵ Judith Page argues, similarly, that "while her stated purpose [with *Harrington*] is to present Jews and Judaism in a favorable light and thus to educate her readership in greater toleration and benevolence, [Edgeworth] also, it seems, wants to appease or pacify her Christian audience."⁷⁶ At the level of plot, these objections make sense. However, such readings overlook the sympathetic symmetry between the theatre house episode in which *Harrington* inhabits Berenice and the financial collapse—or the threat thereof—that frames the conclusion of the romance narrative. It is this crisis that reconfigures what is politically and ideologically possible or impossible by working on characters' nerves.

The drama in the final chapters of the text centers on an economic anxiety that returns us to questions of simulation and dissimulation. Indeed, the attempt to resolve the novel's conflicts by, as it were, reconciling accounts such that *Harrington* and Berenice can marry proves strikingly inadequate. The financial anxiety that is supposed to absorb—and thus render fungible—racial and cultural tensions stems from the sudden death of Alderman Coates. Coates, we learn, is in significant debt to several creditors, all of whom descend on Baldwin's bank in—to recall Shaftesbury's term—a great "panic": "it was feared that Baldwin's bank would not stand the run

made on it” (255). This is distressing for the Harringtons because Mr. Harrington has just deposited at this bank a large sum from a recent property sale. While Mr. Harrington heads to the bank, his wife descants on the physiological implications of this potential setback: “*this* would be ruin; and everything that vexes him of late brings on directly a fit of the gout—and then you know what his temper is! Heaven knows what I had to go through with my nerves and my delicate health during this last fit, which came on the very day after we left you and lasted six weeks, and which he sets down to your account, Harrington, and to the account of your Jewess” (255). The danger to the bank account exacerbates physical symptoms for which Harrington is held accountable, as the original irritant. Over the course of several hours, Harrington relates how his mother’s and his own “anxiety and impatience rose to the highest pitch” (257). In this state of heightened sensitivity, they receive his father’s strange report: “He opened [the door], and advanced towards us without uttering one syllable. ‘All’s lost—and all’s safe,’ said my father” (257). This paradoxical assertion neatly summarizes a shift in Mr. Harrington’s feelings, one that will, in turn, shift the ground of the Harringtons’ relation to the Monteneros.

While being urged by Baldwin not to attempt to withdraw his recent deposit as this would certainly exhaust the bank’s resources, Mr. Montenero steps in, offering to insure Mr. Harrington’s funds by pledging the value of his art collection to the bank. This, together with his willingness to cover additional debts to the bank itself incurred by the Coates family, means Montenero effectively underwrites the bank. Subtly retuning us to the novel’s key inter-text, this episode revises the socio-economic hostility in *The Merchant of Venice*. Where Shylock demands payment in flesh despite the offer of double or triple his original loan, Montenero willingly risks his fortune to sooth the nerves of others.

What is of particular interest, though, is how this resolution, while still clumsy for relying on a Jewish *deus ex machina*, invites us to think about the intersection of illness, finance, and affect. While a full analysis would need to be grounded in Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776), in the limited context of *Harrington*, these elements coalesce in the concept of "credit". That is, in explanation of his paradoxical assertion that "all's lost and all's safe," Mr. Harrington explains that while the fortune is safe his credit has been compromised. "'But if you have not lost your fortune,'" says Mrs. Harrington, "'you have not lost your credit, I presume.' 'I have a character as a gentleman, Mrs. Harrington.' 'Of course.' 'A character for consistency, Mrs. Harrington, to preserve'" (257). His "credit," here, become a metaphor for the trait of consistency, specifically his political dogmatism and reputation for anti-Semitism. It is this consistency that has been undermined by his dealings with Montenero via the bank: "Then I can tell you, Mrs. Harrington, your nerves have a great deal to bear yet. What will your nerves feel, madam? What will your enthusiasm say, sir, when I tell you, that I have lost my heart to—a Jewess?" (258).

Mr. Harrington's sympathy with the Monteneros is cast in language that blends together finance, character, and feeling. Love manifests itself in and as an economic setback; his altered orientation to the Monteneros is a product of transpersonal economic forces recalibrating his sense of credibility, forces that he realizes will bear directly on his wife's nerves. Instead of changing his mind through contemplation or rational reflection on Montenero's generosity, the novel persistently imagines this changing relationship in terms of forces that operate sub-consciously, corporeally, even ontologically (insofar as Mr. Harrington's identity has been redefined). Whereas in the theatre house, Harrington's sympathy circulated through nervous telepathy, through a commingling of morbid sensibilities, in this final episode, sympathy circulates through economic and financial media that bypass reason or reflection, striking, rather, at the

heart of nervous feeling. What, then, does this say about the capacity for sympathy to ameliorate social and political tensions, to overcome prejudice, or to transcend religious difference? How does the physiological form of sympathy transform the body's nervous activity into a political theatre?

The embodiment of feeling as affect might seem to offer an escape from the deceptions of prejudice or ideology. Harrington's visceral sympathy with Mr. Montenero and Berenice appears, initially, as a corrective to the anti-Semitic attitudes with which Harrington is poisoned as a child. Economic anxiety seems, similarly, to spur a revolution in the feelings of Mr. and Mrs. Harrington. The body appears to deliver a materiality and a reality that puts characters in touch with a pre-political logic of sense. For instance, Harrington ostensibly discovers that his body is philo-Semitic, even actually Jewish, in spite of his ancestry and original prejudice. However, what we see instead is that biology offers no such stable ground. The body is radically nervous, and nerves are by no means neutral, pre-political media for the propagation of feelings. Instead, we discover bodies that, in their autonomic, non-conscious operation—in their very anatomy—are already performing certain kinds of identities. These identities take shape outside of the subject's self-consciousness and, to a degree, beyond deliberate self-stylization. Again, Harrington's ironic performance as insane is delivered non-consciously. Embodied identities are, then, not simply scripted biologically but produced through the warp and woof of an imagination enfolded in the nervous system itself. Instead of serving as the immutable material substrate for a mutable person understood, primarily, in psychological terms, the body is constantly performing itself and performing the self. This collapses the dualism that persists in any analysis of identity, politics, or culture focused on epistemology—on what or how subjects know. Instead, as *Har-*

rington suggests, in late eighteenth-century literature and thought, sympathy invents its own theory of affect, one that emerges most forcefully through nervous illnesses that blur the boundaries of body and mind.

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¹ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. Adam Phillips (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), 1.14; 42.

² In a discussion of the “bloody myths” surrounding Jews in the middle ages, Carol Margaret Davidson notes that the oft-deployed “biting’ image gave a sense of immediacy to Jewish usury by effectively linking the personal and the political: the act of ‘biting’ the body was linked to that of putting the economic bite on the body politic. It was perhaps this metaphor that underpinned the popular and grotesque act of the dentition of the Jews in the early Middle Ages. In a disturbing act of displacement, King John and subsequent English rulers of the House of Plantagenet punished wealthy, ‘usurious’ Jews by extorting large sums of money from them. The bloody process of dentition, which involved removing one of the Jewish victim’s teeth every day until he handed over a stipulated sum...was a popular extortion method.” Carol Margaret Davidson, *Antisemitism and British Gothic Literature* (New York: Palgrave, 2004), 43-4.

³ Maria Edgeworth, *Harrington*. ed. Susan Manly (Peterborough: Broadview, 2004), 186. Cited hereafter parenthetically in the text.

⁴ Jeffrey Cass, “Edgeworth, Maria,” in *The Encyclopedia of Romantic Literature*, ed. Fred Burwick, Nancy Moore Goslee, and Diane Long Hovelner (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 1.379.

⁵ Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, quoted in Mary Douglass, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966), 32.

⁶ “The stomach is the part by which the most part of substances introduced to the interior parts of the body generally pass; and it is endued with a peculiar sensibility, which renders it ready to be affected by every substance entering into it that is active with respect to the human body.” William Cullen, *A Treatise of the Materia Medica* (Edinburgh: Charles Elliot; London: C. Elliot and T. Kay, 1789), 1.123-4. The “human stomach is an organ endued by nature, with the most complex properties of any in the body; and forming a *center* of sympathy between our corporeal and mental parts, of more exquisite qualifications than even the brain itself.” Thomas Trotter, *A View of the Nervous Temperament* (Newcastle: Edw. Walker, 1807), 203.

⁷ Michael Ragussis, *Figures of Conversion: "The Jewish Question" and England's National Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 65.

⁸ William Connolly, "The Complexity of Intention," *Critical Inquiry* 37, no. 4 (2011): 796.

⁹ As Natasha Tessone notes, the name "Harrington" may allude to James Harrington, author of *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, who in 1656 proposed a scheme to gift Ireland to the Jews since "[t]o receive the Jews after any other manner into a commonwealth were to maim it for they of all nations never incorporate but, taking up the room of a limb, are of no use or office unto a body, while they suck the nourishment which would sustain a natural and useful member" (in Tessone 439). Natasha Tessone, "'Homage to the Empty Armour': Maria Edgeworth's *Harrington* and the Pathology of National Heritage," *English Literary History* 75, no. 2 (2008): 439-69. See also Michael Scriviner's discussion of James Harrington in the context of English philo-Semitism in *Jewish Representation in British Literature 1780-1840: After Shylock* (New York: Palgrave, 2011), 42-3.

¹⁰ See Del Balzo, 698.

¹¹ Michael Ragussis, *Theatrical Nation: Jews and Other Outlandish Englishmen in Georgian Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 157.

¹² Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 1.1.1; 11.

¹³ Vivasvan Soni, *Mourning Happiness: Narrative and the Politics of Modernity* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2010), 299. As Ragussis says "for Smith, the act of sympathy is an act of identification that many commentators have described as theatrical, for it is a kind of role-playing. According to Smith, as spectators we become the sufferer by an act of imagination in which 'we place ourselves in his situation,...we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him...by changing places in fancy with the sufferer'" (*Theatrical*, 159). The sympathizer's relationship to the other and her or his pain is hypothetical ("we enter as it were into his body"), not actual. In the context of Harrington this is an important detail precisely because Harrington does transcend analogy—or claims to have done—making his relationship to Berenice into something more than sympathetic. Natasha Tessone's

comments apropos Harrington's reactions to the painting Sir Josseline going to the Holy Land and the historical objects housed in the Tower of London also suggest that Harrington experiences—or thinks he experiences—pain not sympathetically but telepathically: while “Harrington's response to the spectacle of the tortured Jew” in Sir Josseline seems to be “an exercise in sympathy,” in fact “Harrington's body refuses to cooperate in this scenario, showing the signs of a mind affected by what Burke saw as real pain, real terror that ‘press[es] too close’ and poses an immanent threat to the observer of the spectacle of torture” (445-6).

¹⁴ “It is an usual observation, that if the body of one murdered be brought before the murderer, the wounds will bleed afresh. Some do affirm, that the dead body, upon the presence of the murderer, hath opened the eyes.” *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath (London: Longmans, 1870), 2:660, quoted in Peter Melville Logan, *Nerves and Narratives: A Cultural History of Hysteria in 19th-Century British Prose* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1997), 115.

¹⁵ Noel Jackson, *Science and Sensation in Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008), 146.

¹⁶ Edgeworth, Maria and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Practical Education* (London: J. Johnson, 1798), 1.265.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.266.

¹⁸ Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftsbury. *A Letter concerning enthusiasm, to my Lord ****** (London: J. Morphew, 1708), 24.

¹⁹ Edgeworth and Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 1.283.

²⁰ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 3.3.1; 581.

²¹ Ildiko Csengi, *Sympathy, Sensibility, and the Literature of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave, 2012), 39.

²² Nancy Yousef, “Wordsworth, Sentimentalism, and the Defiance of Sympathy,” *European Romantic Review* 17, no. 2 (2006): 209.

²³ Angelina Del Balzo, “‘The Feelings of Others’: Sympathy and Anti-Semitism in Maria Edgeworth's *Harrington*,” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 31, no. 4 (2019): 687.

²⁴ Robert Whytt, *Observations on the Nature, Causes, and Cure of those Disorders which have been commonly called Nervous, Hypochondriac, or Hysteric: To which are prefixed some Remarks on the Sympathy of the Nerves*. (3rd ed., Edinburgh: Becket et al, 1767), 213-14. William Cullen also notes this phenomenon: “This sympathy or consent, as it is called, of the several parts of the body, is in general very well known to physicians.” *A Treatise of the Materia Medica*, (Edinburgh: Charles Elliot; London: C. Elliot and T. Kay, 1789), 1.59

²⁵ Whytt is, in turn, influenced on this point by Thomas Willis (1621-75), for whom “the nerves became the anatomical source for sympathetic correspondence and ‘consensus’ in the body.” Nima Bassiri, “The Brain and the Unconscious Soul in Eighteenth-Century Nervous Physiology: Robert Whytt’s *Sensorium Commune*,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 74.3 (2013): 441.

²⁶ Janis McLarren Caldwell, *Literature and Medicine in Nineteenth-Century Britain: From Mary Shelley to George Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 29.

²⁷ Hume, 3.1.3; 575-6.

²⁸ Compare Del Balzo’s description of Hume’s sympathy as something that “operates contagiously, as a non-cognitive physical process located in the body” (688). Indeed, something like “physiologic sympathy” is formulated by non-medical thinkers on the topic. For instance, Jean-Jacques Rousseau says “pitié est...elle qui nous porte sans réflexion au secours de ceux que nous voyons souffrir.” *Discours sur l’origine et les fondemens de l’inégalité parmi les hommes* (Amsterdam: M. M. Rey, 1755), 74. Burke writes that it is via sympathy “that poetry, painting, and other affecting arts, transfuse their passions from one breast to another” (1.13; 41); as the OED indicates, the word “transfuse” had been used in English as early as 1667 to describe the transfer of blood from one body to another, lending to Burke’s passage a physiological connotation. The point, then, is not that physicians invented physiological sympathy but that there is a potentiality in the concept that is realized with new force in eighteenth-century medical discourse.

²⁹ Richard Sha, “Toward a Physiology of the Romantic Imagination,” *Configurations* 17, no. 3 (2009): 198, 199. See also his important reassessment of Romantic materialism and materiality in “John Keats and Some Versions of Materiality,” *Romanticism: The Journal of Romantic Culture and Criticism* 20, no. 3 (2014): 233-145.

³⁰ John Haygarth, *Of the Imagination, as a Cause and as a Cure of Disorders of the Body; exemplified by Fictitious Tractors, and Epidemical Convulsions* (Bath: R. Cruttwell, 1800). Edgeworth met Haygarth in 1818. See her letter, to Mrs. Ruxton, 8 September 1818, in *Maria Edgeworth: Letters from England 1813-1844*, ed. Christina Colvin (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 83.

³¹ Sha, "Physiology," 199.

³² Patricia T. Clough, "The Affective Turn: Political Economy, Biomedica, and Bodies," in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham: Duke UP, 2010), 207.

³³ Rei Terada, *Feeling in Theory: Emotion after the "Death of the Subject"* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 2001), 4.

³⁴ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke UP, 2003), 18.

³⁵ Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, "An Inventory of Shimmers," in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Gregg and Seigworth (Durham: Duke UP, 2010), 1. Original emphasis.

³⁶ See Richard Sha, *Imagination and Science in Romanticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2018).

³⁷ Charles Altieri, *The Particulars of Rapture: An Aesthetics of the Affects* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2003), 2.

³⁸ Intensity is central to Brian Massumi's concept of affect. He says "the strength or duration of the image's effect could be called its *intensity*" and that, in turn, intensity can "be equated with affect." Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke UP, 2002), 24, 27.

³⁹ Hume, 2.2.1; 331.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.2.2; 333.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 2.2.2; 338.

⁴² Smith 1.1.5; 29.

⁴³ Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 2005), 338-9.

⁴⁴ William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1997), x.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 20.

⁴⁶ Ragussis, *Theatrical*, 158.

⁴⁷ Jonathan Dollimore's discussion of how sexual desire can intensify itself by incorporating disgust is focused on anal eroticism. Yet, his analysis might offer insight into how Harrington's desire for Berenice is strengthened by a residual anti-Semitism: "at one moment desire finds, in what was once disgusting, a pleasure whose intensity it could never have known without that history of disgust; at another moment desire gives way to a revulsion the more intense because its history is grounded in the very desire it displaces" (59). Harrington's radical identification with Berenice and his terror at Simon's reappearance in the synagogue late in the novel suggest just such a ratcheting up of *both* attracting *and* averting passions despite what seems to be a narrative about subordinating passion to reason. Jonathan Dollimore, "Sexual Disgust," *Oxford Literary Review*, Vol. 20, No. 1/2, *Beyond Redemption: The Work of Leo Bersani* (1998): 47-77.

⁴⁸ "Harrington's phantasmagoric primal scene is nothing short of a Gothic gem that graphically dramatizes the bogey of the Blood Libel that continues to haunt enlightened England" (Davidson 10).

⁴⁹ Tessone, 465 n16.

⁵⁰ Michael Ragussis says this early episode emphasizes "the pathogenetic effect of a critical scene of childhood" and stands, thus, as "an early Romantic harbinger of Freud" (*Figures*, 65). Peter Melville Logan adds that "Harrington describes the origin of his disorder in the first chapter, using the language of physiological psychology. In the tale's opening scene, he is six years old, an age of delicacy and impressionability because of the small size of nervous fibers in the child's body" (112). There is also a larger story here about sexual disgust and desire that would have to include a discussion of Georges Bataille's *Eroticism*, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White's *Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, and Jonathan Dollimore's "Sexual Disgust," referenced above, as each of these works explores how disgust both formulates and invites the transgression of boundaries. See, Georges Bataille, *Eroticism: Death and Sensuality*, trans. Mary Dalwood (London: Boyars, 1987); Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London: Methuen, 1986).

⁵¹ Davidson, 50.

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- ⁵² Denis Diderot, *The Paradox of Acting* [c. 1773/1830], trans. Walter Pollock (London: Chatto & Windus, 1883), 7-8.
- ⁵³ Edgeworth and Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 256.
- ⁵⁴ Diderot, 49.
- ⁵⁵ Ragussis, *Figures*, 77.
- ⁵⁶ Heinrich von Kleist, "On the Marionette Theatre," trans. Thomas G. Neumiller, *The Drama Review* 16.3 (1972): 26.
- ⁵⁷ Whytt, 95.
- ⁵⁸ Whytt, 92.
- ⁵⁹ Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage, 1988), 148.
- ⁶⁰ Foucault is reading a French translation, *Medecine Pratique de Sydenham* (1784). I quote the relevant passage from Sydenham's complete works, in English.
- ⁶¹ Thomas Sydenham, *An Epistle from Dr Tho. Sydenham to Dr Wm. Cole; treating of the Small-pox and hysteric Diseases* [1681-2], in *The Entire Works of Dr Thomas Sydenham, newly made English from the originals*, ed. John Swan (London: Cave, 1763), 410-11.
- ⁶² Whytt, 94.
- ⁶³ Foucault, 148.
- ⁶⁴ Diderot, 74. Emphasis added.
- ⁶⁵ John Stevenson, *A Practical Treatise on the Morbid Sensibility of the Eye, Commonly Called Weakness of Sight* (2nd edition, London: Longman et al, 1813), 29, 61.
- ⁶⁶ James Makittrick Adair, *Commentaries on the Principles and Practice of Physic. Illustrated by Pathological Tables and Practical Cases. Being An Attempt, on a New Plan, to connect the several Branches of Medicine, and to*

place the Practice of it on a rational and solid Foundation. To which is prefixed, An Essay on the Education and Duties of Medical Men (London: T. Becket and Co.; Edinburgh: J. Balfour, 1772), 42-3.

⁶⁷ John Aitken, *Principles of midwifery, or puerperal medicine* (Edinburgh: Sold at the Edinburgh Lying-in Hospital, for the Benefit of that Charity, 1784), 62.

⁶⁸ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Mary, A Fiction and The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria*, ed. Michelle Faubert (Peterborough: Broadview, 2012), 171.

⁶⁹ Robert Bree, *A Practical Inquiry into Disordered Respiration*, 2nd ed. (London: Swinney and Hawkings, 1800), 148.

⁷⁰ “Irritability, in common language, merely denotes an excessive or ill-governed degree of sensibility” (Edgeworth and Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 269). Such irritability or excessive sensibility is especially dangerous since, for Kant, passions are precisely emotions that persist beyond what ought to be a relatively short interval. “Emotion,” he says, “is like an intoxicant which one has to sleep off, although it is followed by a headache; but passion is looks upon as an illness having resulted from swallowing poison” (157). Hence, passions are “not merely pragmatically pernicious, but also morally reprehensible” because under their sway the subject relinquishes “freedom and self-control” (174). Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Victor Lyle Dowdell, ed. Hans H. Rudnick (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996). On organic irritability as a form of life, see Anthony Ashley-Cooper, First Earl of Shaftesbury (1621-83), Albrecht von Haller (1708-77), and John Brown (1735-88).

⁷¹ See Logan’s reading of Trotter’s *A View of the Nervous Temperament* (1807) in *Nerves and Narratives*, 26.

⁷² Logan, 34-5.

⁷³ Sha, “Physiology,” 207.

⁷⁴ Ragussis, *Figures*, 79.

⁷⁵ Tessone, 462.

⁷⁶ Judith Page, *Imperfect Sympathies: Jews and Judaism in British Romantic Literature and Culture* (New York: Palgrave, 2004), 141.