

# **Ruined by Design**

Shaping Novels and Gardens  
in the Culture of Sensibility

**Inger Sigrun Brodey**

# **Ruined by Design**

# Literary Criticism and Cultural Theory

**WILLIAM E. CAIN**, *General Editor*

*For a full list of titles in this series, please visit [www.routledge.com](http://www.routledge.com)*

## **Equity in English Renaissance Literature**

Thomas More and Edmund Spenser  
Andrew J. Majeske

## **“You Factory Folks Who Sing This Rhyme Will Surely Understand”**

Culture, Ideology, and Action in the Gastonia Novels of Myra Page, Grace Lumpkin, and Olive Dargan  
Wes Mantooth

## **“Visionary Dreariness”**

Readings in Romanticism’s  
Quotidian Sublime  
Markus Poetzsch

## **Fighting the Flames**

The Spectacular Performance of Fire at Coney Island  
Lynn Kathleen Sally

## **Idioms of Self-Interest**

Credit, Identity, and Property in English Renaissance Literature  
Jill Phillips Ingram

## **Machine and Metaphor**

The Ethics of Language in American Realism  
Jennifer Carol Cook

## **“Keeping Up Her Geography”**

Women’s Writing and Geocultural Space in Twentieth-Century U.S. Literature and Culture  
Tanya Ann Kennedy

## **Contested Masculinities**

Crises in Colonial Male Identity from Joseph Conrad to Satyajit Ray  
Nalin Jayasena

## **Unsettled Narratives**

The Pacific Writings of Stevenson, Ellis, Melville and London  
David Farrier

## **The Subject of Race in American Science Fiction**

Sharon DeGraw

## **Parsing the City**

Jonson, Middleton, Dekker, and City Comedy’s London as Language  
Heather C. Easterling

## **The Economy of the Short Story in British Periodicals of the 1890s**

Winnie Chan

## **Negotiating the Modern**

Orientalism and Indianness in the Anglophone World  
Amit Ray

## **Novels, Maps, Modernity**

The Spatial Imagination, 1850–2000  
Eric Bulson

## **Novel Notions**

Medical Discourse and the Mapping of the Imagination in Eighteenth-Century English Fiction  
Katherine E. Kickel

**Masculinity and the English Working Class**

Studies in Victorian Autobiography and Fiction  
Ying S. Lee

**Aesthetic Hysteria**

The Great Neurosis in Victorian Melodrama and Contemporary Fiction  
Ankhi Mukherjee

**The Rise of Corporate Publishing and Its Effects on Authorship in Early Twentieth-Century America**

Kim Becnel

**Conspiracy, Revolution, and Terrorism from Victorian Fiction to the Modern Novel**

Adrian S. Wisnicki

**City/Stage/Globe**

Performance and Space in Shakespeare's London  
D.J. Hopkins

**Transatlantic Engagements with the British Eighteenth Century**

Pamela J. Albert

**Race, Immigration, and American Identity in the Fiction of Salman Rushdie, Ralph Ellison, and William Faulkner**

Randy Boyagoda

**Cosmopolitan Culture and Consumerism in Chick Lit**

Caroline J. Smith

**Asian Diaspora Poetry in North America**

Benzi Zhang

**William Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings**

Andrea Elizabeth Donovan

**Zionism and Revolution in European-Jewish Literature**

Laurel Plapp

**Shakespeare and the Cultural Colonization of Ireland**

Robin E. Bates

**Spaces of the Sacred and Profane**

Dickens, Trollope, and the Victorian Cathedral Town  
Elizabeth A. Bridgham

**The Contemporary Anglophone Travel Novel**

The Aesthetics of Self-Fashioning in the Era of Globalization  
Stephen M. Levin

**Literature and Development in North Africa**

The Modernizing Mission  
Perri Giovannucci

**The Tower of London in English Renaissance Drama**

Icon of Opposition  
Kristen Deiter

**Victorian Narrative Technologies in the Middle East**

Cara Murray

**Ruined by Design**

Shaping Novels and Gardens in the Culture of Sensibility  
Inger Sigrun Brodey

# **Ruined by Design**

Shaping Novels and Gardens  
in the Culture of Sensibility

**Inger Sigrun Brodey**

First published 2008  
by Routledge  
270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016

Simultaneously published in the UK  
by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

© 2008 Taylor & Francis

Typeset in Sabon by IBT Global.  
Printed and bound in the United States of America on acid-free paper by IBT Global.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

**Trademark Notice:** Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

Brodey, Inger Sigrun.

Ruined by design : shaping novels and gardens in the culture of sensibility / by Inger Sigrun Brodey.

p. cm.—(Literary criticism and cultural theory)

Includes index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-415-98950-3

ISBN-10: 0-415-98950-7

1. Sentimentalism in literature. 2. English fiction—18th century—History and criticism. 3. French fiction—18th century—History and criticism. 4. German fiction—18th century—History and criticism. 5. Emotions in literature. 6. Sympathy in literature. 7. Gardens in literature. 8. Ruins in literature. 9. Picturesque, The, in literature. 10. Emotions (Philosophy) I. Title.

PR858.S45B76 2008

823'.509353—dc22

2008005413

ISBN10: 0-415-98950 (hbk)

ISBN13: 978-0-415-98950-3 (hbk)

# Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xv
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xxiii
 Introduction: Sensibility and its Discontents	 1
1 Redeeming Ruin	22
2 The Anatomy of Follies	66
3 Reading Ruin	107
4 Constructing Human Ruin	153
 Afterword: The Luxuries of Distress	 197
 <i>Notes</i>	 205
<i>Bibliography</i>	249
<i>Index</i>	261

# List of Figures

1. Frontispiece from François Vernes, *Le Voyageur Sentimental, ou ma promenade à Yverdon* (Paris[?], 1786); Translated into English as *Louis and Nina* in 1789). ©The British Library Board. All Rights Reserved (1578/8641). 3
2. Karl Kuntz, *The Volcano of Wörlitz* (1797). Bildarchiv, Kulturstiftung Dessau Wörlitz. 23
3. “The Postdiluvian Orb” from Thomas Burnet’s *Sacred Theory of the Earth: containing an account of the original of the earth, and of all the general changes which it hath undergone, or is to undergo till the consummation of all things* (London, R.N. for Walter Kettilby, 1697), 101. Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University. 24
4. *Goethe in the Roman Campagna* by J. H. W. Tischbein (1787). Staedelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main, Germany. Photo Credit: Kavalier/Art Resource, N.Y. 31
5. Gothic Ruin at Wimpole, Cambridgeshire. Designed by Sanderson Miller in 1750, erected in 1772. National Trust Photographic Library, Nick Meers. ©NTPL/Nick Meers. 33
6. Entrance to the Garden of Eden from G. B. Andreini, *L’Adamo Sacra Rappresentazione* (Milan: Geronimo Bordonio, 1617). Research Library, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California. 35
7. Illustration of the Garden of Eden from *A Curious Hieroglyphick Bible; or, Select passages in the Old and New Testaments, represented with emblematical figures, for the amusement of youth . . . To which are subjoined, a short account of the lives of the evangelists, and other pieces. Illustrated with nearly five hundred cuts* (Worcester, Massachusetts: Isaiah Thomas, [1784] 1788), 5. Courtesy of the General Research Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. 36



x *List of Figures*

8. "Scene without Picturesque Adornment." Etching and aquatint from William Gilpin's *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty, On Picturesque Travel, and On Sketching Landscape* (London: R. Blamire, 1792), facing page 19. Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University. 37
  
9. "Scene with Picturesque Adornment." Etching and aquatint from William Gilpin's *Three Essays*, facing page 19. Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University. 38
  
10. "Avenues at Hampton Court" from Johannes Kip's *Britannia Illustrata or views of several of the Queen's Palaces as also of the principal Seats of the Nobility and Gentry of Great Britain, curiously engraven on 80 copper plates* (London: Joseph Smith, [1709] 1724–29). ©The British Library Board. All Rights Reserved (191.g.10–13). 40
  
11. *The Topiary Arcades and George II Column, Hartwell House* (c.1738), by Balthazar Nebot. Courtesy of the Buckinghamshire County Museum collections. 43
  
12. "A View of the South Side of the Ruins at Kew" (1763), by William Chambers. *Plans, elevations, sections, and perspective views of the gardens and buildings at Kew, in Surry* (London: J. Haberkorn, 1763). Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University. 44
  
13. "Rustic Bridge," by Georges-Louis Le Rouge, *Détail des nouveaux jardins à la mode* (Paris: Le Rouge, [1776?-1787?]): Cahier 5: *Traité des édifices, meubles, habits, machines et ustensiles des chinois / gravés*. Research Library, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California. 44
  
14. "Accent Plate III" from John Walker's *Elements of Elocution* (London: T. Cadell, T. Becket, G. Robinson, and J. Dodsley, 1781), facing page I.137. From the copy in the Rare Book Collection, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. 58
  
15. *Transept of Tintern Abbey* (1794), by J. M. W. Turner. Watercolor. V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum. 71
  
16. "Classical Cornice" from Jacques-François Blondel, *Cours D'Architecture, ou Traité de la décoration, distribution & construction des bâtiments; contenant les leçons données en 1750, & les années suivantes* (Paris, Desaint, 1771–77). Courtesy of the General Research Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. 74

17. Design plate from Gabriel Thouin's *Plans raisonnées de toutes les espèces de jardins* (Paris: Madame Huzard [née Vallat la Chapelle], [1820] 1828). Research Library, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California. 77
18. Plan for a Fake Classical Ruin, from C. C. L. Hirschfeld, *Theorie der Gartenkunst* (Leipzig: M. G. Weidemann, [1765] 1779–85), v. 9. General Research Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. 78
19. “Ornamental Cottage and Ruin” from Robert Lugar's *Architectural Sketches for Cottages, Rural Dwellings, and Villas, in the Grecian, Gothic, and Fancy Styles, with PLANS, suitable to persons of Genteel Life and Moderate Fortune* (London: J. Taylor, 1805). ©The British Library Board. All Rights Reserved (C 193 b.52). 79
20. Plot Line from Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (London, Printed for T. Becket and P. A. Dehondt, 1762–1767), 152. Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University. 85
21. Page from the first edition of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (London, printed for the author, 1748), V. 239. Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University. 93
22. “Turris Babel” engraved by C. Decker (based on a drawing by Lievin Cruyl) in Athanasius Kircher, *Turris Babel, sive Archontologia qua primo priscorum post diluvium hominum vita, mores rerumque gestarum magnitudo, secundo Turris fabrica civitatumque extructio, confusio linguarum . . .* (Amsterdam: Janssonio-Waesbergiana, 1679). Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University. 124
23. External perspective of the broken column from Le Rouge, *Detail des nouveaux jardins à la mode*. Research Library, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California. 125
24. Cross-section of the interior of broken column from Le Rouge, *Detail des nouveaux jardins à la mode*. Research Library, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California. 126
25. Elevation of the broken column from Le Rouge, *Detail des nouveaux jardins à la mode*. Research Library, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California. 127

xii *List of Figures*

26. An etching of “the Köhlerhütte at Hohenheim” from Hirschfeld, *Theorie der Gartenkunst*, V. 353. General Research Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. 137
27. Title page from William Combe’s *The Tour of Doctor Syntax, in Search of the Picturesque* (London: Ackermann, 1812). Author’s collection. 140
28. A plan of the Park at Hohenheim from Victor Heideloff, *Ansichten des Herzoglich-Württembergischer Landsitzes Hohenheim, nach der Natur gezeichnet von V. H. und durch kurze Beschreibungen erläutert* (Nürnberg: Frauenholz, 1795). ©The British Library Board. All Rights Reserved (181.h.3). 143
29. “The Theatre of Dionysos in Athens” (1787), by Nicholas Revett. Engraving from James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens* (London: John Haberkorn, 1787), II, ch. 3, pl. I. Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University. 147
30. *Sir George Beaumont and Joseph Farington painting a waterfall* (1777), by Thomas Hearne. Dove Cottage, The Wordsworth Trust. 148
31. *Bramber Castle, Sussex* (1782), by James Lambert. British Library. ©The British Library Board. All Rights Reserved (Additional MS. Burrell, 5677.fol.59). 149
32. *Man of Feeling* (1788), by Thomas Rowlandson. Courtesy of The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University. 159
33. *Sensibility* (1809), engraved by Caroline Watson. Based on George Romney’s 1786 painting of Emma Hart (later Lady Hamilton). © The British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. 185
34. *An Artist Traveling in Wales* (1799), by Thomas Rowlandson. National Museum of Wales, Cardiff. © National Museum of Wales. 188
35. Illustration of Amusements at Rambouillet by Le Rouge, *Détails des nouveaux jardins* (Paris, 1785), XI. Research Library, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California. 189
36. “The Flying Mountains,” a perilous big dipper in Catherine the Great’s garden at Tsarskoe Selo, as illustrated in Frederick Calvert Baltimore, *Gaudia Poetica* (Augustae: litteris Spätianis, 1770). Research Library, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California. 190

37.    *Tales of Wonder* (1802), James Gillray. Calke Abbey, The Harpur Crewe Collection (acquired with the help of the National Heritage Memorial Fund by The National Trust in 1985). ©NTPL/John Hammond. 193
38.    “The Hermitage at Selbourne, Hampshire, with Henry White as the hermit” (1777), by Samuel Hieronymus Grimm. Courtesy of Dunster Castle, The Luttrell Collection (The National Trust), ©NTPL. 198
39.    “Sequence 4 (Bamboo Garden),” in Bernard Tschumi’s *Parc de la Villette*, Paris. Illustration from Bernard Tschumi, *Event-Cities 2* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001). ©2001 Massachusetts Institute of Technology, by permission of The MIT Press. 200

# Preface

Many of us have known 1960s flower children or hippies who in younger days decried those in traditional positions of authority in commerce or academia, only to rise to similar positions of power and authority in the 1980s or '90s. This book explores the culture surrounding a late-eighteenth-century character who is analogous to the ex-hippie in a management position: namely, the "man of feeling" who eschews all appearances of conforming to convention including narrative conventions, yet wishes to narrate his own life with authority. Like the American hippie culture of the 1960s, the European fashion of sensibility in the 1760s also elevated spontaneity over control and bred an idealism that self-consciously defined itself in opposition to commercial interests, conventional institutions, orthodox approaches to religion, militarism, consumerism, materialism, and patriarchal or centralized authority. Both movements claimed to establish a morally superior counter-culture and a morally superior form of 'failure.' The man of feeling was characterized, like the hippie, by embarrassment over conventional measures of success for "men of the world," including discomfort with authority, wealth, and influence.

Yet what of authorship? The culture of sensibility features a wide-spread reconsideration of the nature of the relationship between authorship and authority. Authorship, in mid-to-late eighteenth-century Europe, was still associated with the Enlightenment "man of letters," an elite and traditional source of masculine authority, rather than primarily with the burgeoning self-expression of the middle class. Thus, the "man of feeling" needs to distinguish himself from both the "man of letters" as well as the "man of the world." The result is a perplexing difficulty for the "man of feeling" as he aspires to write, publish, influence, and even express himself or survive in the face of the banal requirements of daily life and unchanging institutional expectations of society, particularly when the aesthetic ideals of sensibility are defined in opposition to the very qualities generally required of authorship, including conscious control, active calculation, or the ability to compose, revise, cohere, complete, or publish. In his pursuit of artlessness, the man of feeling needs to reformulate authorship and the novel in particular in order to tell and publish his story without appearing to wish to do so.

Ultimately the hippie and the man of feeling are both rebels who disdain authority, yet also succumb to its practical benefits. Are their internal tensions and seeming contradictions simply signs of a natural process of maturation or do they signify something more pernicious? This contrast between ideals and reality is paradoxical and even humorous at its best, hypocritical or even dangerous at its worst. When does this dilemma lead to hypocrisy or to an excuse for subterranean exertions of control or authority—a form of Tocquevillian soft tyranny? It can be seductive to laugh at the fallen idealist, and there is something deeply interesting about the revelation of the hypocrisy of a person who has claimed moral superiority. And yet, perhaps it might be important to express ideals even though they are difficult—or impossible—to maintain.

To some extent, one's answers to these questions depend upon one's opinions about the perfectibility of human nature—that is, on “natural goodness” or the existence of “moral sentiments,” much debated issues in Enlightenment moral philosophy. These are some of the ethical dilemmas that continue to concern the man of feeling and others involved in the culture of sensibility in the second half of the eighteenth century in Europe, and they underlie the aesthetic fascination with ruination. The ruin, like the exposed hypocrite, provokes multivalent responses and begs questions about the perfectibility, duration, and import of human achievement, as well as the fate of private ideals in public life.

The rich material and literary manifestations around authenticity and authority within the culture of sensibility offer an unusual response to issues that reappear throughout various moments in history—whether in ancient quarrels between poetry and philosophy, historical tensions between lyric and epic traditions in literature, or aesthetic debates around the relative merits of organicism and mechanism in art. While I return to some more contemporary aesthetic and social examples in the conclusion of this book, the eighteenth-century culture of sensibility provides an interesting locus for conflicts surrounding idealism and the hope for human perfectibility. Amid a bewildering atmosphere of utopian aspirations as well as violent destruction, novelists and landscape architects within the culture of sensibility manage to create structures that simultaneously appeal to anti-authoritarian ideals and love of spontaneity, yet also appease more authoritarian (or pragmatic) impulses, such as the desire to maintain control of their audience's responses. This ambivalence, or insecurity regarding authority, is thus based on conflicted—or perhaps realistically mixed—views of human nature.

There are many ways of interpreting the eighteenth-century fascination with ruins: scholars have read ruins in the light of nation building, of historiography, of the invention of the Gothic, and in connection with romanticism, just to name a few. None of these, however, are the focus of this work. This book describes a structural parallel between the fake ruins or follies popular in the eighteenth-century “English” garden and the purposeful

fragmentation and other innovative literary devices of the novel of sensibility (whose popularity roughly coincides with the follies). Here the focus is to understand the self-conscious aesthetic of the culture of sensibility, where artists, authors, and architects use ruination and fragmentation more generally as an expression of the dilemma described above—that is, ruination expresses an anti-authorian ideal, flaunting the lack of centralized completion and inviting the audience's role in (re)construction. Yet these forms nonetheless reluctantly, implicitly, and paradoxically rely on the presence and authority of monumental institutions and centralized authority and their creators. They give the appearance of allowing freedom of interpretation while taking numerous precautions against faulty readings. I thus argue that the purposeful re-creation of ruin is part of a self-conscious literary and aesthetic mode or fashion at the heart of the culture of sensibility, present from Burke's conception of "obscurity"; to the primal tones of Herder's "wilde Mutter"; to the extravagantly torn and imbedded fragments in novels of sensibility; to laboriously constructed follies in gentlemen's estates; to the voluptuously exposed corpses and gravestones of the fallen fictional men and women of sensibility. The Werthers, Julies, Harleys, and Clarissas all testify to not only the inauthenticity of control but also the moral superiority of ruin: they are popular martyrs to the cause of sensibility.

## SCHOLARSHIP ON SENSIBILITY

The culture of sensibility, which flourished in the second half of the eighteenth century across much of Europe, has recently become a growth industry within eighteenth-century studies. Many works have studied the picturesque, the literature of sensibility, sentimentalism and its roots in new approaches to epistemology and in anatomical theories. Recent scholars have looked at its connections to medicine, science, philosophy, and other domains. In the last decade, critics such as G. J. Barker-Benfield, Barbara Benedict, Stephen Cox, Markman Ellis, Claudia Johnson, John Mullan, Jessica Riskin, Janet Todd, and Ann Jessie Van Sant, have built on earlier insights by R.S. Crane, Samuel Brissenden, Louis Bredvold, and Jean Hagstrum (to mention only select English-speaking critics), and have begun developing and illustrating a broader cultural context for the novel of sensibility. Barker-Benfield, for example, used socio-economic history to show the broader implications and function of the novel of sensibility and was one of the first to legitimate the term "culture of sensibility." Ellis continued the same project, weaving together issues in moral philosophy, theology, commerce, and psychological theory to explore the effects of the culture of sensibility on the eighteenth-century understanding of gender, in particular. Van Sant, in particular, by building intriguing parallels between scientific experimentalism and the novel of sensibility, exposes some of the seemingly sadistic and hypocritical aspects of sensibility in Europe.

Sensibility as a movement or “culture” requires, I would argue, a treatment that is both interdisciplinary and international. This study also incorporates French and German texts, allowing for the fact that the culture of sensibility defied national as well as disciplinary boundaries. Sensibility was in fact one of the earliest pan-European fashions, necessitating a consideration of multiple European cultures.

This work also builds upon what Ellis refers to as “the mutually informing nature of philosophy, theology, science and political economy in the eighteenth century”; in this volume, the disciplinary boundaries of the “culture of sensibility” (Barker-Benfield’s term) are expanded to encompass landscape gardening and architecture, as well as the philosophy of language. I will include evidence not only from philosophers and theorists, but also from pattern books, how-to manuals, and popular rhetorical guides. By pursuing the cultural significance of paradoxical constructions in architecture as well as literature, this book develops the narrative strategies that identify the novel of sensibility by drawing upon a broader context of landscape gardening, philosophy of language, and moral philosophy. In relation to many contemporary accounts of the culture of sensibility, this study will have less emphasis on economics, science, and political history, and more attention to individual novels, landscape gardening, landscape architecture, and popular guidebooks concerning language and rhetoric.

In many ways, the cross-disciplinary comparisons that I have suggested here are reminiscent of the “history of ideas” approaches of J. G. A. Pocock or Arthur O. Lovejoy, approaches that have come under fire from recent critics of sensibility. Markman Ellis, for example, despite his own contribution to a broader cultural context for the “novel of sensibility,” also indicates a suspicion of the “history of ideas” approach. Ellis makes the point that although the history of ideas approach has lent importance to the study of sentimental texts by linking them with the canonical texts of eighteenth-century ethical philosophy, it has also compromised our understanding of sensibility in a number of ways. For Ellis, these include: (1) the failure to treat the significance of the act of *reading* novels of sensibility, (2) the disregard for generic differences, such as the literary character of the novels, and (3) the tendency to treat literature primarily as a tool for disseminating philosophical ideas, thereby attributing both historical priority and causal influence to philosophy. Critics such as Ellis and Barker-Benfield therefore react against traditional intellectual history in favor of cultural history or cultural studies, expanding their ‘texts’ to include chamber pots, undergarments, and conduct books. This is appropriate since sensibility was both high culture and cult, philosophy and fad, and morally ambivalent, as Mullan, Van Sant and others have shown. By interweaving a range of disciplines representing both “high” and “low” culture—namely, landscape gardening, grammar books, the novel, and other elements of material culture, as well as moral philosophy and philosophy of language, the current study hopes to move beyond argument based on New Historical homology



to suggest a broader web of meaning (to borrow from Clifford Geertz) that helps give coherence to the culture of sensibility.

Many of those recent critics who have attempted cross-disciplinary studies of the mid-to-late eighteenth century without the context of a culture of sensibility have experienced difficulty accounting for the surprising similarities among the disciplines they are studying, even when those similarities are precisely the point of their study. Ann Jessie Van Sant, for example, in her comparison of the psychological model of sensibility with the novel, apologetically claims no more than “analogy” and a surprising “coincidence between the rhetoric of pathos and scientific presentation.” While it is indeed difficult to avoid similar terminology, analogy may ultimately fall short in describing the relation between these modes of thought, and could be understood as an anachronism, since an analogy requires a paradigmatic and disciplinary separation not historically characteristic of eighteenth-century thought.

One might ask what is the particular relevance that drives the interest in sensibility for scholars today. Sensibility is arguably the most revealing of cultural movements in the second half of the eighteenth century. It was a hugely innovative time period for narrative forms—especially the young genre that we (somewhat anachronistically) name the novel—and also provides a treasure trove for the psychoanalytic and gender issues that have come to the forefront of literary criticism in the past two decades.

While portraying a new type of self-conscious, feminized, and highly idealized male hero, sensibility is also deeply involved with sadistic sides of human nature. For example, its aesthetic relies on the innate curiosity, if not pleasure, one feels in response to others’ suffering. Men and women of sensibility take additional pleasure in witnessing and recounting scenes of suffering in order to prove their own worth and ability to sympathize. When combined with the gendered studies of sensibility or sentimentalism, one cannot help but be astonished by the importance of female suffering in the late eighteenth century—the assumption that young, beautiful women are somehow particularly “interesting” and attractive when they are in distress. Ultimately, the cultural fascination with ruination involves the active pursuit of human suffering and ruin in order to achieve its aesthetic objectives.

## DEFENDING SENSIBILITY

However one refers to or defines the most popular European literary taste of the second half of the eighteenth century, the literature of this period has not fared equally well in the hands of critics. The term ‘Preromanticism’ itself is vaguely derogatory; it suggests a *pseudo*-Romanticism, inferior content, or a period not worthy of the name of what succeeded and surpassed it: “a trough between two creative waves,” in D. J. Enright’s words, or the “the swamps between the Augustan and Romantic heights,” according to

Janet Todd.<sup>1</sup> Partly because of the tendency toward definition by hindsight, the mid-to-late eighteenth century writings associated with the culture of sensibility have not generally been afforded a great deal of respect. Even Jerome McGann, elsewhere a defender of the literature of sensibility, confesses that “so far as high culture is concerned . . . these traditions remain something of an embarrassment.”<sup>2</sup>

While attracting unparalleled scholarly interest in the last decade, the literature of sensibility oddly also remains a source of scholarly embarrassment. In fact, it has become a tradition for studies of sentimentalism or sensibility to begin with an apology for the quality of the literature that they treat. This treatment does not merely occur in modern times among readers who tire of sensibility’s lachrymose exhibitions of virtue in distress. Dr. Johnson, for example, whose literary prominence overlapped with the culture of sensibility, complained of “the fashionable whine of sensibility.” And indeed, the literature of sensibility consistently emphasizes excess over moderation: façades of exquisitely melancholy and chaste tears loosely cover a materialism and an eroticism that can be slapstick, hypocritical, or even sadistic in nature. Its internal tensions propel it to extremes and to hypocrisy, rather than to moderation or even to the resignation offered by aporia. These characteristics underlie some of the most interesting and revelatory aspects of sensibility, however, which have generated psychoanalytic insights as well as important contributions to gender studies. Yet perhaps some of the provocative features of sensibility also provide the foundation for contemporary scholarly embarrassment and defensiveness regarding the subject matter. Scholars habitually distance themselves from this literature, just as the fictional editors in the novels effectively serve to distance the authors from the most histrionic characters. Many literary historians who write about sensibility through the lenses of Romanticism have considered it lacking in luster, particularly in contrast to the magnificent periods that flank it: the bright and sparkling reign of neoclassical or Enlightenment prose and the darker splendor of Romantic verse.

Sensibility has received especially negative treatment at the hands of critics in relation to Romanticism. In this context, critics frequently use such terms as “half-hearted” or “weak” to describe sensibility. Marilyn Butler describes sensibility as a “weak trial run for Romanticism”; D. J. Enright writes that “between the self-assured work of the Augustans and the energetic and diverse movements of the Romantic revival came a period of half-hearted, characterless writing.”<sup>3</sup> Marshall Brown describes Preromanticism as “a problem, rather than an ambition,” while Robert W. Jones echoes Barbara Benedict’s suggestion that sensibility is best understood, “not as a confidently accepted cultural norm, but as an anxiously attended-to set of problems.”<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Markman Ellis’ English politics of sensibility are “the politics of an emerging middle class,” eager to demonstrate its own liberality and progressive munificence in issues such as the anti-slavery movement, yet “unwilling to engage with revolutionary change.”<sup>5</sup> These

phrases (“weak,” “half-hearted,” “characterless,” “problem,” “anxiously attended,” etc.) all suggest in different ways that critics have been struck by a weakness or deficiency in sensibility: it may be again that the seemingly half-hearted revolutionary spirit of the failed man of feeling may be overly reminiscent of the suit-clad hippie in a management position—the sense of disappointment that revolutionary ideals were not accompanied by an equally impressive commitment to action. Indeed, sensibility seems to promote the idea that defeat is somehow a prerequisite for true feeling.

This book can be seen as a rumination upon the cost and limits of a cultural ideal that rests upon the admiration for ruin—whether that ruin is geological, architectural, narrative, or personal. By exploring some of the contradictory impulses at the heart of the culture of sensibility—impulses that lead to the creation of innovative narrative and architectural structures—I hope to illuminate some of the insights that the culture of sensibility offers, even to contemporary audiences, wary of its sudden excesses.

# Acknowledgments

I have presented parts of the book in a range of formats, as the central theses evolved. My first attempt at comparing the follies and authors of the culture of sensibility won the award for the best non-plenary paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwestern American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, where Thomas Bonnell kindly encouraged its further development. The hallmarks of sensibility mentioned in the Introduction are treated more extensively in my essay “Preromanticism, or Sensibility: Defining Ambivalences.”<sup>6</sup> The Jane Austen sections draw on two published articles and one book essay.<sup>7</sup> I have also had the opportunity to test my ideas in a variety of public fora, particularly the 2003 Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation Lecture in the Liberal Arts at Simon-Fraser University, entitled “The Architecture of Distress: Jane Austen, Follies, and the Cult of Sensibility” and a plenary address at the 2001 Annual General Meeting of the Jane Austen Society of North America, entitled “Entertaining Grief: Jane Austen and the ‘Luxury of Distress.’” I thank June Sturrock and Kimberly Brangwin, the respective organizers of these conferences, who encouraged me in developing, expanding, and synthesizing these ideas and thus indirectly helped me complete this book.

I have been very fortunate in the generous support of academic and private organizations that have helped to fund this research, beginning with a five-year Mellon Fellowship in the Humanities from the Woodrow Wilson Foundation to pursue my Ph.D. at the University of Chicago. The American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies helped me, not only with the award mentioned above, but also with a Ruth and Gwin J. Kolb Annual Travel Grant for research at the British Library and the British Museum. The Earhart Foundation helped me on two occasions, first with an Earhart Foundation Dissertation Fellowship, and later with an Earhart Foundation Research Fellowship Grant. And finally, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill generously provided a Spray-Randolph Faculty Fellowship as well as an Arts and Sciences Junior Sabbatical for the completion of this project.

My thanks extend to many more individuals than I can mention here, but particularly to those who have provided helpful advice and who have

read or listened to ideas about much earlier versions of the project: Douglas Den Uyl, Denise Despres, Timothy Fuller, Gwin Kolb, Françoise Meltzer, Charles Rosen, Barbara Maria Stafford, Stuart Tave, Stuart Warner, and Anthony Yu. Saul Bellow, Gwin Kolb, and Wayne Booth did not live to see its completion, but were each very helpful to me in its inception.

Several friends have been helpful both in suggesting additional resources and in encouraging me not to allow this book to remain a fragment, purposefully or not. These friends include: Katharine De Baun, Francis DuVigne, Russ Geoffrey, Susanne Grumman, Joän Pawelski, Astrida Orle Tantillo, and especially Debra Romanick Baldwin, whose critical eye is ever a blessing. In the words of E. B. White, “it is not often that someone comes along who is a true friend and a good writer,” yet Debra, in particular, is both.

Of my current colleagues at UNC-Chapel Hill, I would particularly like to thank Jan Bardsley, Marsha Collins, Lilian R. Furst, Darryl Gless, William Harmon, Edward Donald Kennedy, James Peacock, and James Thompson—all of whom have read parts of the manuscript and have been very supportive of this project, along with the rest of my colleagues in Comparative Literature and Asian Studies.

On an even more practical note, this manuscript would never have been completed without the Medici on 57<sup>th</sup> Street in Chicago; the Wallingford Tully’s in Seattle; Strong’s Coffee Shop, Foster’s Market, and Three Cups in Chapel Hill; nor without help from Breanne Goss, Diana Pitt, Dustin Mengelkof, and Emily Bunner. Jessamine Hyatt and Diana Pitt also provided valuable assistance in checking my translations, and Rasmi Simhan was invaluable in helping with the illustrations and permissions. Lori Harris heroically created the index, and Erica Wetter, Liz Levine, and Eleanor Chan made the final steps of publication proceed (nearly) painlessly.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, whose support enabled me to gain confidence in my intellectual pursuits, and whose dedication to symmetry and order helped shape my sense of aesthetics. My husband and children have given me additional appreciation for qualities associated with the culture of sensibility, including the beauties of disorder and irregularity. To paraphrase Jane Austen, having experienced order early in life, I learned to appreciate disorder later.

This volume is dedicated to Benjamin, who has endured many of the pains of this project and who proves that it is possible to have both sensibility and an M.D.

# Introduction

## Sensibility and its Discontents

Sensibility of soul, which is rightly described as the source of morality, gives one a kind of wisdom concerning matters of virtue . . . People of sensibility . . . can fall into errors which Men of the world would not commit; but these are greatly outweighed by the amount of good that they do.

—Chevalier Louis de Jaucourt<sup>1</sup>

—Dear sensibility! source inexhausted of all that's precious in our joys, or costly in our sorrows! . . . Eternal fountain of our feelings!—this is thy divinity which stirs within me—that I feel some generous joys and generous cares beyond myself—all comes from thee, great—great SENSORIUM of the world!

—Laurence Sterne

The word ‘sensibility’ had a glorious past. It is largely gone from our vocabulary today, where we use the word to mean little more than ‘emotional viewpoint’; however, during the latter half of the eighteenth century, sensibility could inspire enthusiastic encomia and designate the essential spark of life, virtue, and humanity. Both epigraphs above describe the “man of feeling” and his overriding virtue, sensibility: one is an entry in Denis Diderot’s *Encyclopédie* (1765), the other a soliloquy by Parson Yorick in Laurence Sterne’s novel *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy by Mr. Yorick* (1768). In both cases, the authors equate the ability to feel deeply with a virtue surpassing any achieved through discipline or reason, even if (or perhaps *especially* if) it leads to ridicule in the eyes of the world. It designates a moral superiority defined in opposition to more traditional mores and societal standards of success.

In these passages, then, as univocal as they may at first appear, one can see the conflicting impulses of the culture of sensibility at work. We see the joyful and optimistic assertion of natural virtue—even a natural virtue with a basis in the human body—yet also a sadness based on the reception that such virtue receives in society, where sentimental actions are interpreted as

## 2 *Ruined by Design*

“errors.” In other words, there is the hope, on the one hand, of universal access to sensibility and the euphoric description of the “source inexhaustible of all that’s precious,” effectively denying any necessity for other sources of virtue. At the same time, there is also the disturbing evidence that the majority not only lack “generous” feeling but also misunderstand those who possess it. As the passages suggest, this internal tension does not tend to lead to moderation in the culture of sensibility; in fact, it frequently leads to defensiveness or self-righteous declarations.

It is not only the external world that lacks sensibility: the second passage reveals a second underlying fear that “generous cares beyond myself” are difficult to achieve, even for the man of feeling himself—a fear that altruism cannot actually exist in the face of human solipsism. Sterne’s phrase “beyond myself,” spoken by Parson Yorick, exhibits the defensive tone of sensibility—suggesting both the general absence of “generous cares” and sensibility’s foundational insecurity. It is thus defensive optimism that frequently leads to sensibility’s characteristically demonstrative outbursts of enthusiasm. Conveniently, sensibility’s totemic tears express both joy and sadness and thus provide the single most common signifier of virtue within the culture of sensibility. The bi-valence of tears and sensibility’s penchant for tragicomedy enable authors to avoid taking a stand on the difficult issue of just how natural, how powerful, and how pervasive such generous care for others actually is.

The same impulses that shape sensibility’s unremitting portrayal of virtue in distress, as well as its weeping, high-blown expressions of sentimentalism in passages such as those above, also inform the aesthetic and ethical position that shaped much of the literary art and material culture of the late eighteenth century. As a direct “sensorium,” or private, spontaneous source of morality requiring no education or other external sanction, sensibility provided a way of justifying the individual’s independence from the authority of reason and lack of need for centralized political power, as well as justifying a liberation from social and ethical norms. Yet the concept of sensibility grew to entail precise norms of its own—as well as a moral and aesthetic, if not political, authority of its own—that permeated Europe during the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

## PLACING SENSIBILITY

The exaggerated pathos of sentimental literature invites theatrical displays of streaming tears and drenched handkerchiefs and seems to warrant the epithet “*cult* of sensibility,” a derogatory term sometimes used to refer to the literary, artistic, and philosophical culture surrounding the “man of feeling” in the latter half of the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> The term “cult” both indicates the extreme devotion of adherents to the aesthetic surrounding sensibility, and simultaneously marks it as a secret and seemingly arbitrary sign system



Figure 1



#### 4 *Ruined by Design*

to which adherents pay homage. Figure 1, for example, a frontispiece from a novel of sensibility, written in French, which imitates Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey*, includes many of the most common signifiers of sensibility: rags, beauty, a tear-drenched handkerchief, and a "philanthropic posture" on the part of the traveler who witnesses a tearful, bittersweet scene. The prospective reader of François Vernes' *Le Voyageur Sentimental* (1786) therefore knows from the frontispiece alone the philosophical, moral, and aesthetic position that the novel espouses. The caption, "Ô Rousseau! Ô Richardson, où êtes-vous?" [Oh, Rousseau! Oh, Richardson, where are you?] suggests that the names of these authors of the culture of sensibility have received cult status, so that their names alone can function as signs of sensibility even *within* the fictions. The devotion to sensibility and its signs can perhaps be measured by the number of poems and paintings entitled "Sensibility" that appeared in the second half of the century as well.

Beyond placing sensibility in the second half of the eighteenth century, there has been little agreement about the exact dates to attach to the cultural movement, apart from saying that it is "linked to both the Enlightenment and Romanticism but distinct from them."<sup>4</sup> Geographically diffuse and lacking a specific manifesto or concrete set of goals, the culture of sensibility may indeed seem overly amorphous to deserve a single epithet; Northrop Frye's term "the Age of Sensibility," more recently resurrected by Jessica Riskin, may appear to oversimplify the issues of periodicization. Many scholars have used terms like the culture of sensibility (G. J. Barker-Benfield), the counter-culture of sensibility (Syndy M. Conger), the cult of sensibility (Janet Todd), or simply spoken of sensibility as a single movement for the purposes of argument (Louis Bredvold).<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, there are scholars who are engaged in extending the earlier boundary to accommodate what they view as central features or exemplars of sensibility: such scholars have described sensibility as a subset of Enlightenment, including Riskin's recent work on medical discourse in sensibility, where she convincingly argues that French and American Enlightenment thought was imbued with the language and philosophy of sensibility. Other scholars, on the other hand, are engaged in extending the later boundary, not only those who prefer the term Preromanticism to sensibility, but also scholars such as Julie Ellison, who has claimed that Romanticism itself is an episode within sensibility. For the purposes of this study, I have focused on literary texts and other artifacts constructed between 1750 and 1800 to allow for samples of sensibility at its prime, as well as a glimpse of its subsequent decay.

In Germany, Preromantic movements in music have been separated into "Sturm und Drang" (represented by artists such as Joseph Haydn) and the "Empfindsamer Stil" (represented by artists such as C. P. E. Bach). There is a similarly complex relationship between "Sturm und Drang," the "Früh Romantik," "Empfindsamkeit," and the Jena school of Romanticism in literature and philosophy. While it will not be a goal of this volume to untangle this web of movements, most scholars would name the "Sturm und Drang"

or “Storm and Stress” movement as the most conspicuous manifestation of Preromanticism in German literature, featuring the extremely influential *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* [*The Sorrows of Young Werther*] by Goethe (1774).<sup>6</sup> In France, Preromanticism also has numerous manifestations, including “Sensibilité,” the *roman sensible*, and the *comédie larmoyante*, exerting influence over French literary styles in both the novel and theater.<sup>7</sup> In English literature, Preromantic manifestations include both sensibility and the Gothic (or Gothick)—largely overlapping, yet seemingly distinguishable movements.<sup>8</sup> In fact, the novel of sensibility postulated here encompasses the literature which Patricia Meyer Spacks divides into two groups in her recent book, *Novel Beginnings*: the novel of consciousness and the novel of sentiment. It is not possible here to distinguish between these many Preromantic cousins, nor is it a central purpose to establish the culture of sensibility in relation to the broader historical movement of Romanticism; instead this study will focus on sensibility, primarily in the English novel of 1750–1800, but also as sensibility is manifested in the prose fiction of French “Sensibilité” and of German “Sturm und Drang.” Representative novelists include Laurence Sterne, Henry Mackenzie, Charlotte and Henry Brooke, Charlotte Smith, Frances Sheridan, and Mary Wollstonecraft in England and Scotland; Johann W. Goethe, Jean Paul (Johann Paul Friedrich Richter), E. T. A. Hoffman, Wilhelm Heinse, and Karl Philipp Moritz in Germany; and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, l’abbé Prévost, Jean-François Marmontel, and Bernardin de Saint Pierre in France.

If it is true that from mid-century to the 1770s, the culture of sensibility was predominantly shaped by the novel of the time, then it is also the case that it was largely shaped by *foreign* novels in translation. In the recent *Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era*, for example, Gary Kelly argues that it was the translation into English of Rousseau, Prévost, and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (among others) that spurred sensibility in England, while Robert J. Frail argues that it was the translation of Defoe and Richardson (along with the poets Thomson and Young) into French that spurred Preromanticism in France. In fact, as French “Anglomanie” intensified after 1750, English novels appeared by the hundreds and such frenchified English novels were often called “le genre triste.”<sup>9</sup> François Vernes’ *Le Voyageur Sentimental* (1786) exemplifies this cultural ebb and flow: a clear imitation of Laurence Sterne’s *A Sentimental Journey* (1768), it was first published in France, then translated into English, and became popular in England as *Louis and Nina* (1789).<sup>10</sup> As novels of sensibility swept Europe in the 1760s and 1770s at the height of the movement, Werther and Julie became household names in England, and Clarissa and Yorick became familiar presences in Germany and France, as well as in England. Within the literature of sensibility, the dominant genres tended to be poetry, drama, and especially the budding novel. Interestingly, most literary studies of sensibility have focused on poetry, neglecting the innovations shaping narrative prose during the eighteenth century.

One of the most apparent features of the eighteenth-century novel is the experimentation with fragmentation: one can readily find novels ending mid-sentence, “fragments” published by fictional editors, radical experimentation with typography and the printing press, and the generally episodic character of plots in the first half of the century. Fragmentation takes on a new tone in the second half of the century, when the culture of sensibility starts defining narrative closure and even plot-driven engagement as antithetical to sensibility. The reader of Mackenzie’s *Man of Feeling*, for example, is taught that readers of sensibility are expected to differentiate themselves from those who “may have expected the intricacies of a novel”: instead of being driven by an anticipation of the resolution of intricate plots, the reader of sensibility will be satisfied with “mutilated passages” or “a few incidents in a life undistinguished, except by some features of the heart.”<sup>11</sup> In novels of sensibility, the basic narrative unit changes to the episode or fragment—the discrete image, tableau, or situation that evokes feeling rather than eliciting a desire for sustained narrative or closure. The structural manifestations of sensibility in the novel thus include the non-narrative features that purposely create gaps and fissures for readers to fill.

The other most apparent arena for experimentation in the novel is the role of the narrator and its relation to the author’s voice. The increased use of the self-conscious narrator is particularly significant for understanding the growing self-reflexivity and concerns about the difficulties of self-representation that helped shape narrative techniques of the literature of sensibility, including first-person narratives, imbedded letters, fictionalized memoirs, self-conscious narrators, imbedded tableaux, and content with a deeper psychological edge. Basically, the idea of authorial omniscience becomes inimical to sensibility; such omniscience, as a form of inauthentic control or central authority, ceases to carry either credibility or prestige. The skepticism surrounding omniscience elicits further literary innovation, particularly in narrative prose rather than lyric poetry or drama.<sup>12</sup> For example, authors experiment with ways of distancing the story from the seeming artifice of the narrator; at times the paradoxical technique is to highlight artifice for the sake of achieving a shared sense of authenticity. Unlike lyric poetry, where there tends to be less distinction between narrating and experiencing voices—less distinction between the personae of protagonist, narrator, and implied author—the novel invites the performance of a theater of self-consciousness, suitable to the self-reflexive nature of sensibility.<sup>13</sup>

As McGann describes it, sensibility is “a momentous cultural shift whose terms . . . all but founded the novel, and . . . produced an upheaval in the way poetry was conceived and written.”<sup>14</sup> This is however not a new opinion: scholars as diverse as Arthur Lovejoy, Erwin Panofsky, Christopher Hussey, M. H. Abrams, Martin Battestin, Michel Foucault, Charles Rosen, and Charles Taylor, have all located a highly significant aesthetic and philosophical watershed at the midpoint of the eighteenth century. Although the interpretations of this shift vary, all these authors describe the movement

away from a confidence in neoclassical symmetry and order towards a new interest in asymmetry and irregularity, whether this be manifested in the growing importance of the passions and autobiography in moral philosophy and conceptions of the self; the vogue for the English garden across Europe; the renewed interest in mountains, cliffs, and fossils; chromaticism and dissonance in music; or the growing importance of spectatorship and acting, even in theology. In the aesthetic terms of Edmund Burke, or of landscape gardening, sensibility is involved more with the serpentine curves and studied irregularity of the picturesque than with the awe-inspiring and precipitous sublime: it does not yet open up the realm of the monstrous, characteristic of Romanticism *per se*.<sup>15</sup>

The developments in the novel thus relate to concurrent trends in moral philosophy, philosophy of language, and aesthetics. The rise of empiricism, the growing distrust of unaided reason, the elevation of the passions—especially as guides to moral behavior, and a new faith in the natural goodness of mankind, as well as an increasing emphasis on the faculties of sympathy and imagination—combined to shape the drastically new moral self which accompanied sensibility. Each of these features reflects an underlying philosophical insecurity that is expressed in a number of ways: in the contradictory assertions of optimism and pessimism, in odd combinations of radicalism and conservatism, and in ambivalence about whether order and system are fundamentally desirable and necessary or destructive forces in their own right.

Taken in this context, the remarkable innovations in narrative form show how the ruin as dominant motif of the period affected the history of the novel as well as many other aspects of material culture.<sup>16</sup> Just as authors of novels of sensibility develop a new cluster of narrative techniques that are suitable for embracing ruination and working against traditional narrative authority located in an omniscient narrator, landscapers of the gardens of sensibility also develop similar strategies to engage their viewers. Gardens have their own narratives, their own syntax, as we will see, and as taste in narration changes, the new aesthetic affects both art forms. The central purpose of this book is thus to illustrate a structural parallel between the shape of the novel of sensibility and the shape of the landscape architecture of the English garden—both of which reveal a similar ambivalence regarding the nature and necessity of externalized authority. By connecting the visual and verbal landscapes of sensibility and positing a “rhetoric of ruins” that applies to the novel of sensibility as well as to the so-called English landscape garden, this book will show not only that viewing a ruined tower or a melancholy object in an English garden shares emotional effect, dynamic, and structural strategies with the act of reading a novel of sensibility, but also that these similarities stem from a common drive to *fragment* works of art.

Completion and explicit authority or control were rendered not only suspect and aesthetically displeasing, but also morally inferior by the fundamental philosophical stance of the culture of sensibility. This framework helps us understand the development of the curiously truncated,

artificial ruins, called follies, that started appearing in pleasure gardens all over northern and central Europe, as well as the remarkably innovative narrative strategies developed by novelists of sensibility that include multiple frames of fictional editorship. Purposeful ruination, therefore, is one prominent technique within the culture of sensibility that shaped composition in both literature and landscape gardening. Both architects and authors addressed twin goals: to create a “publishable,” coherent monument or volume and also to fragment their creation. They thereby both mask the creator’s role and evoke greater emotional participation in the reader or viewer, appealing to insecurity and contradictory impulses through their paradoxical constructions.

This simultaneous optimism and pessimism regarding human possibilities results in important literary and architectural experimentation during the culture of sensibility. Ambivalence takes on new importance in this context, particularly ambivalence regarding the possibilities of human enterprise. The new structures—fragmented narratives imbedded with multiple tableaux and multiple fictitious editors on the one hand, and fictitiously ruined buildings called follies or fabriques on the other—represent optimism and pessimism in a way that appears mutually contradictory.

The novel of sensibility and the folly thus share a number of traits and purposes that will inform the argument of the subsequent chapters. They both reflect the attempt to imbue ruination with moral superiority that is portrayed in Chapter One, as well as a cultural mistrust of language itself—whether of its abuse or of its natural inadequacies. Both structures also appeal to the contradictory desires for monumentalism and for ruination that become the subject of Chapter Two; they also reflect an ambivalence regarding the authority to construct and about authorship in general; and they involve a pretense about their original (fictitious) discovery, rather than purposeful construction. Understood from a literary perspective, both structures reflect a societal preference for a myriad of non-narrative and anti-narrative techniques that can temper narrative drives and involve readers and spectators in an active role, completing and interpreting the fragments as co-authors or co-architects—the subject of Chapter Three. We also consider how each structure paradoxically develops an elaborate pedagogy of its own, teaching readers and viewers how to see and to feel. A common thread among these shared traits is the philosophical insecurity of the culture of sensibility—trustful in theory yet suspicious in practice—even of the motives of its own adherents (and readers). Finally, in Chapter Four, we consider the social cost of this purposeful ruination when it includes human ruin and gives aesthetic preference to women in distress. Before proceeding to the structure of the folly and the novel of sensibility, however, it is important to describe the role of the “picturesque” in establishing changing cultural and aesthetic expectations of the landscape garden, the characteristic psychology of the man of feeling who inhabits both the English garden and the novel of sensibility, and the challenges of narrating sensibility.

## COMPOSING THE PICTURESQUE

Whereas twentieth- or twenty-first-century critics would think of landscape gardening, philosophy, and novel writing as very separate realms of discourse, involving different agents, this was generally far from the case in the eighteenth-century. Alexander Pope's gardening style influenced subsequent garden design as much or more than his poetry influenced future poetry; Adam Smith, in addition to achieving fame across Britain and Europe for his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, also subscribed to the newest publications of William Chambers on oriental gardening and spoke about gardening and architecture styles in his lectures; Capability Brown, one of the most well-known commercial landscape gardeners, conversed with Hannah More, poetess of sensibility, about the similarity of their arts and respective "compositions"; Jane Austen read the writings of William Gilpin, popularizer of the picturesque style of drawing and traveling, and featured contemporary debate over landscape gardening in her juvenilia and novels; and historian-politician Horace Walpole was at least as well known for his thoughts on gardening and his own architectural follies as he was for his political opinions. In short, novels, poets, philosophers, and politicians in the second half of the eighteenth century showed great interest in and knowledge of landscape gardening, and landscape gardeners conversed with poets, philosophers, and kings in their turn, widely published illustrated plans of their gardens, writing influential and popular treatises, and affording a common topic of conversation among the middle classes, regardless of whether the conversants could afford the landscapers' expensive services.

In a remarkable passage, the landscaper Lancelot "Capability" Brown reports a conversation with Hannah More, poetess of sensibility, about the similarities between their art forms. Brown, one of the most well-known landscapers in the "English" style that dominated England and Europe during the mid-to-late eighteenth-century, describes his art in terms of authorship and punctuation. Rather than referring to God's having composed landscape in authoring the Book of Nature, Brown says that he himself 'composes' a landscape much as More would a verse or a sentence: "Now there, said he, pointing his finger, I make a comma, and there, pointing to another part (where an interruption is desirable to break the view) a parenthesis—now a full stop, and then I begin another subject."<sup>17</sup> Elsewhere Brown writes that he has a "Capability" of improving landscape to tell a story just as authors shape individual scenes in a novel.<sup>18</sup> Brown's comments attribute to gardens a syntax and narrative; he assumes the viewer's active participation and expectations that are capable of punctuation and fragmentation.

Although Pope had claimed that the word 'picturesque' was first adopted from the French, modern scholarship has shown that it first came to English through the Italian language and Italian painters, and achieved its full meaning in England circa 1740. Christopher Hussey, an early historian of the picturesque aesthetic, describes the designation as follows: "The relation of all