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THE 'LITTLE ARTS' OF AMATORY FICTION:
IDENTITY, PERFORMANCE, AND PROCESS

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Abstract

From its initial publication until the feminist recovery project, amatory fiction was mostly depicted as a popular, but immoral, trivial, and aesthetically underdeveloped genre in comparison to the emergent realist novel. More recently, the genre's feminocentric treatments of gender difference, erotic love, seduction and betrayal have been discussed in terms of their proto-feminism, whilst its thematic explorations of duty and disobedience have been recognised as evidence of the genre's Tory-oriented intervention in partisan politics. Tracing the origins of some of today's critical perspectives on femininity, writing, performativity, and the body, 'The "Little Arts" of Amatory Fiction: Identity, Performance and Process' argues that these texts are characterised not so much by their proto-feminism or political alignments, as by their proto-queer strategies.

The structure of the chapters works from the outside of amatory texts – their reception and their construction in chapters one and two – to their content in chapters three and four, and then back outwards again in the final chapter which considers their lasting influence. The chapters redefine the genre according to its self-conscious and theoretically sophisticated engagements with identity, authorship, materiality, power, and desire, and suggest that such a redefinition serves to widen the pool of amatory texts for consideration. Chapter one explores the interrogation of prescriptive gender constructions in amatory texts and the feminist readings that this interrogation has provoked, suggesting that a reading that attends to the queerness at work in amatory fiction can yield a clearer understanding of the genre's ambiguous ideological position, which goes beyond transgression. Chapter two identifies the ways in which self-conscious textuality, evasive strategies of authorship, and (dis)embodiment function within these texts to posit a constructivist understanding of identity, and as demonstrations of artistry and agency. It argues that identifying amatory fiction according to its play with notions of authorship, rather than as author-based, allows for the inclusion of lesser known writers such as Mary Hearne, writers not traditionally considered amatory, such as Penelope Aubin and Jane Barker, and anonymous and pseudonymous amatory texts, within an amatory canon

traditionally constituted by Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, and Eliza Haywood. Chapter three reads amatory fiction alongside Judith Butler's work on performativity, and charts the way in which amatory fiction experiments with the possibility of disrupting processes of identity construction using masquerade and mimicry, and creating its own discursive forms of repetition and performativity in ways that prefigure Butler. Chapter four examines how amatory texts subject these configurations to the material effects of passion and power, using materialist feminist theory to posit that the body is recognised in these texts as a place of excess beyond the limits of discursive performance. The final chapter outlines the afterlife of amatory fiction, demonstrating the ways in which intertextuality and borrowings are used to create a community of readers and writers working in an amatory tradition both within the early eighteenth century and beyond.

At a time when some scholars are turning away from the popular fiction by women unearthed during the recovery project in favour of revisionist formalist approaches, this work is both crucial and timely, demonstrating amatory fiction as formally innovative, theoretically engaged, and vital both to understandings of the queer eighteenth century, and to genealogies of feminist and queer theories.

Introduction:

The ‘Little Arts’ of Amatory Fiction: Identity, Performance, and Process

Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer. We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. The future is queerness’s domain. Queerness is a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present. The here and now is a prison house.

(José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*)¹

It is from the eccentric positionality occupied by the queer subject that it may become possible to envision a variety of possibilities for reordering the relations among sexual behaviours, erotic identities, constructions of gender, forms of knowledge, regimes of enunciation, logics of representation, modes of self-constitution, and practices of community – for restructuring, that is, the relations among power, truth, and desire.

(David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*)²

It might seem strange to begin a study of an eighteenth-century genre of popular fiction with these two epigraphs about queerness, which is, after all, a seemingly modern phenomenon. But queerness is everywhere in the eighteenth century, and methodologies informed by queerness, that ‘eccentric positionality’ that we can borrow and develop from our literary grandmothers, can shed light on the origins of queering as a practice designed to test the limits of the intelligible and the normative. Characterised by its destabilising properties, its state of becoming and its multiplicity, queerness is inherent in the fluidity and lack of fixity deployed by amatory fiction, its purposeful ambiguity and evasiveness, its intertextuality and its position as at once mainstream and marginal. In its focus on performance, process, and fantasy, on working through the possibilities from within the prison house, amatory fiction provides, as Muñoz puts it, a ‘mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present’, both the present of the amatory writers, and our own present. It allows us to uncover the workings of the machine of intelligibility, to think through the exclusions which constitute the edges of the normative, and to test out redeployments and reformulations of power. This is not to force a

¹ José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), p. 1.

² David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 62.

theoretical lens onto the past, but rather to perform a reading of the past that seeks the origins of present strategies and the possibilities of future restructurings.

What is amatory fiction?

The body of work that I am calling amatory fiction has been accorded a number of labels, which tend to stress either its concern with passion or politics. William Warner, choosing to resituate the rise of the novel narrative within and against the wider context of a burgeoning media culture, characterises ‘the first formula fiction on the market’ as ‘the novels of amorous intrigue’.³ He groups fiction by Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, and Eliza Haywood together in a generic subtype that he claims is ‘critically useful rather than descriptively necessary’ in that it allows him to chart the interactions between high literature and low entertainment.⁴ Whereas Warner focuses on the position and function of this genre within the marketplace, both Toni Bowers and Rachel Carnell are concerned with defining the genre in terms of its political ideologies. Bowers refers to the works of Behn, Manley and Haywood as ‘seduction narratives’ and analyses them alongside texts by Richardson to demonstrate the ways in which the seductions that characterise the genre are actually articulations of evolving Tory ideology.⁵ Carnell notes, however, that in classifying the texts quite loosely as seduction narratives, Bowers does not elucidate the connections between the seduction narratives she examines and the extant genre of political secret history. Behn, Manley and Haywood, Carnell argues, were ‘clearly working against the proliferation of Whig secret histories written in support of the Glorious revolution’, and Manley even explicitly marketed her works as secret histories.⁶ Rebecca Bullard’s monograph, *The Politics of Disclosure: 1674-1725* (2009) examines this relationship between Whig secret histories which sought to expose a culture of deception

³ William B. Warner, *Licensing Entertainment: The Elevation of Novel Reading in Britain, 1684-1750* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. xv. In doing so, he uses Jerry Beasley’s descriptive term. See Beasley, *Novels of the 1740s* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1982), p. 9.

⁴ Warner, p. xiii.

⁵ Toni Bowers, *Force or Fraud: British Seduction Stories and the Problem of Resistance, 1660-1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁶ Rachel Carnell, review of *Force or Fraud*, by Toni Bowers, *Journal of British Studies*, 51 (2012), 442-3 (p. 443). See also Carnell, *Partisan Politics, Narrative Realism, and the Rise of the British Novel* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

inherent to absolute rule in the wake of the Glorious Revolution, and the Tory adoption of the same rhetorical conventions as part of its own attempt to turn public opinion against the Whigs. Her focus is on ‘the authorial strategies that are founded upon the claim to disclose secrets’.⁷ However, to classify these texts solely as, or in relation to, political secret histories risks neglecting the other less partisan concerns that these texts address, namely gender construction, desire, and the act of writing itself.

The first and only book dedicated solely to amatory fiction is Ros Ballaster’s *Seductive Forms: Women’s Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* (1992), and it is Ballaster who provides, I would argue, the most sustainable working definition of the genre, although one that is not without its problems. For Ballaster, the genre is made up of ‘explicitly amorous, politically engaged, and fantasy-oriented fiction’ authored by the three leading Tory women novelists of the early eighteenth century: Behn, Manley and Haywood.⁸ In noting the French influences that the genre draws on (the romance, the *petite histoire* or *nouvelle*, the *chronique scandaleuse*, and the epistolary novel), Ballaster goes some way towards accounting for the heterogeneity of the texts that make up this body of work.⁹ However, despite Ballaster’s attention to this heterogeneity, the term ‘amatory’ doesn’t quite manage to capture the complexity of her argument. She reads amatory fiction as politically engaged, both on a partisan level in terms of Tory ideology and a non-partisan level in terms of the politics of class, gender and sexuality. But the danger is that ‘amatory’ as a term can be used in ways that downplay the genre’s political investments, suggesting instead that its only concerns are love and desire. Moreover, Ballaster’s focus on just three authors also creates an unnecessarily narrow definition of a genre which was actually authored by some men, by other women, and anonymously, for an audience of male and female readers. That being said, ‘amatory fiction’ remains the most useful and inclusive term to date, and Ballaster’s approach best reflects the sort of inquiry that this thesis is making in its concern with the political/theoretical intervention that the genre made into

⁷ Rebecca Bullard, *The Politics of Disclosure, 1674–1725: Secret History Narratives* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2009), p. 11.

⁸ Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women’s Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 10.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-66.

discourses of desire, gender and the body, rather than in establishing its historical situation as partisan or as popular fiction.

What has emerged from scholarly attempts to define the genre is that amatory fiction was an immensely popular early eighteenth-century genre initiated by Behn's *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister* (1684-87). In terms of its political alignments, the genre is mostly Tory-oriented, and concerned with questions of passive obedience, hierarchy, and appropriate resistance to tyranny, although it also draws on libertine philosophy in its concern with desiring bodies and rebellions that nonetheless maintain class hierarchies. It takes influence from seventeenth-century French romance forms, but also from Restoration theatre, from which it draws some of its stock characters. Focusing predominantly on female experience, its thematic content includes, but is not limited to, desire, love, sex, fantasy, seduction, masquerade and intrigue. Its sensationalist treatment of taboo topics including filial disobedience, vow-breaking, extra/pre-marital sex, bigamy, incest and murder contributed to its rejection as scandalous and immoral, but it has been read contrastingly as transgressive and reactionary by modern feminist critics. This thesis is interested in providing a fresh approach to the literary techniques and thematic concerns which characterise the genre, and which I am defining as proto-queer. Unpacking the self-conscious artistry and intertextuality of the genre, and the ways in which it maps out the construction of both identity and the body as processes, and attempts to make space within these processes for change, this thesis posits a new definition of amatory fiction as a precursor to modern poststructuralist, feminist and queer accounts of these phenomena, worked through in terms of portraits, masks, bodies and texts. This intervention is both necessary in terms of widening out the genre of amatory fiction beyond Behn, Manley and Haywood to show that it occupies a less marginal space than has hitherto been accounted for, and also timely in light of the formalist turn championed by a number of prominent eighteenth-century scholars.¹⁰

¹⁰ See, for example, the special issue of *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* edited by John Richetti: 'Form and Formalism in the British Eighteenth-Century Novel', 24 (2011-12).

Recovering the Prostitutes of the Pen

Historicist feminist criticism salvaged amatory fiction from obscurity. The pioneering and seminal work done in the 1980s and 1990s demonstrates some of the important approaches and theoretical paradigms that have been brought to bear on amatory fiction and that enable and underpin this thesis. Much early recovery project scholarship responded to the influential body of work that detailed how the novel came to prominence in the eighteenth century. These accounts began with Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) and continued with Lennard Davis's *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (1983). With their masculinist focus, these critical works solidified the received male canon. However, born out of the women's movement, in the 1980s feminist critics began to consider the crucial role that women writers played in the development of the novel, thereby providing these writers with a new status in literary history. Uncovering the forgotten voices of eighteenth-century women writers became an area of intense interest for feminist scholars, generating a wealth of critical material from the 1980s to the present day and initiating the republication of texts that had been out of print for two to three hundred years. Critics such as Dale Spender sought to celebrate the ways in which amatory writers like Behn challenged patriarchal and hegemonic structures.¹¹ As Toni Bowers has pointed out, the movement gained increased methodological sophistication with the introduction of poststructuralist theories of language and meaning, Marxist theories and Foucauldian cultural critique, which tended to complicate the previous celebratory and biographically-driven criticism by exploring to what extent these works were actually progressive, but also by highlighting the problematic nature of progression itself as a structuring principle. Increased theoretical sophistication in turn led, as Bowers notes, to 'newly multiple, simultaneous, and often identity-driven platforms for analysis'.¹²

Critics were no longer just asking 'who were these women writers and how did they rebel against an oppressive patriarchy that sought to silence them and confine them to the

¹¹ See Dale Spender, *Mothers of the Novel: 100 Good Women Writers before Jane Austen* (London: Pandora, 1986).

¹² Toni Bowers, 'Gender Studies and Eighteenth-Century British Literature', *Literature Compass*, 4 (2007), 935-66 (p. 950).

domestic sphere?'. In addition, they were now asking 'how are these women writers creating and replicating ideology in their works?'; 'how does their position as women link to other identifying factors such as race and class, and how does this translate in their works?'; 'is it still feasible to ask identity questions at all?'. Today, the work being done on amatory fiction encompasses subjects as diverse as biography, desire, love, lesbianism, rape, intertextuality, femininity, the body, politics, religion, nuns, libertinism, masquerade, authorship, transvestism and voyeurism. Furthermore, work is being done across the wide range of genres that amatory writers engaged with, including novels, poetry, drama, periodicals, journals and pamphlets. Eighteenth-century scholars have benefitted from modern scholarly editions of collected works (for example, Janet Todd's seven volume collection of Behn's works); resources such as Mary Ann O'Donnell's 1986 bibliography of Behn and Patrick Spedding's 2004 bibliography of Haywood; and political biographies of both Manley (Carnell, 2008), and Haywood (Kathryn King, 2012).¹³

Nancy Armstrong, Jane Spencer, Janet Todd and Ros Ballaster have all provided crucial feminist interventions in eighteenth-century literary history, which inform and initiate my own treatment of amatory fiction. In *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (1987), Armstrong draws on and combines Marxist notions of class struggle and a Foucauldian understanding of power as operating through discourse, particularly literature, to posit that 'the modern individual was first and foremost a woman'.¹⁴ In doing so, she puts the writer of the domestic novel in control of shaping an emergent middle-class feminine identity, an ideal that is constituted through the act of writing rather than already extant. Whilst her literary focus is on the mid to late century writings of Samuel Richardson and Jane Austen, the conception of writing as a means of agency, and the production of ideology is nonetheless an important model

¹³ See *The Works of Aphra Behn*, ed. by Janet Todd, 7 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1992-96); Mary Ann O'Donnell, *Aphra Behn: An Annotated Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1986); Patrick Spedding, *A Bibliography of Eliza Haywood* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2004); Rachel Carnell, *A Political Biography of Delarivier Manley* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2008); Kathryn R. King, *A Political Biography of Eliza Haywood* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012).

¹⁴ Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 8.

with which to theorise amatory fiction.¹⁵ A year earlier than Armstrong, Spencer published *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* in response to Watt's male-oriented thesis. Spencer argues that as the century progressed, women became more restricted, and this shift is mirrored in literature, in the movement from transgressive amatory fiction to more conservative sentimental and domestic fiction that was complicit in maintaining patriarchal ideology. Her argument is very different from Armstrong's, which shows the writers of domestic fiction empowered by their control over the production of ideology. Spencer sees the movement towards a chaste morality evidenced in the difference between Manley's scandal chronicles and Barker's more conventionally feminine work, whilst Behn, she argues, stands apart from both the later writers because of her aim to legitimise women's writing on any subject, masculine or feminine, and because of her interrogation of the subordination of women's writing to men's. Spencer writes that 'in moving from Behn to Manley we move from a declaration of independence to an attempt to found the woman writer's authority on her femininity'.¹⁶ Such differentiations are certainly valid as Behn, Manley, and Barker had very distinct approaches to their authorship, but to categorise women writers in terms of a teleological progression from liberated to oppressed, from powerful to passive, whereby writers can only be scandalous or chaste, ignores the clear overlaps between seemingly distinct writers. It is partly the aim of this thesis to dislodge the pious/scandalous framework often used to obscure the links between amatory writers, and to shore up narratives of progress that fail to account fully for the extent of amatory fiction's considerable influence beyond Behn, Manley and Haywood. In a similar move to Spencer's, in *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction 1660-1800* (1989), Todd contests Watt's notion of a rise in terms of progression altogether, and adopts a similar framework to Spencer's, aiming to demonstrate the importance of women writers by exploring the development of a female identity within their writing. Her

¹⁵ For other treatments of domesticity and its links to the middle class, see Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Harriet Guest, *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); and Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005).

¹⁶ Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 53.

focus on how these writers expose femininity as a construct is one that remains particularly pertinent to feminist and queer scholarship. Like Spencer, Todd sees a shift in female identity, from the relative sexual liberation of the Restoration to moralistic sentimentality in the mid eighteenth century, and then towards a more enlightened proto-feminist focus on education at the end of the century characterised by writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft. However, Todd complicates the linear structure that Spencer provides us with by demonstrating the foreshadowing and echoing that occurs in women's literature across the century.

Whilst both Spencer's and Todd's work gives a great deal of space to biographical detail, and both have been criticised for this tendency, it seems understandable that writing on practically unknown women would warrant some biographical study, and indeed, recovering the lives and careers of these forgotten women is a laudable feminist goal.¹⁷ In focusing recuperative attention on amatory writers, both Spencer and Todd insist upon the academic relevance of amatory fiction to studies of the novel, and lay the path for the more detailed engagement with the texts of amatory fiction that was to come. Indeed, as Toni Bowers notes, 'it was not until the 1990s that scholars began fully to incorporate into their literary-historical schemes the female writers Spencer [and, I would add, Todd] helped to make visible'.¹⁸ Ballaster's *Seductive Forms*, for example, brings the insights of psychoanalysis to bear on amatory texts, exploring the role of fantasy and female agency and establishing these texts as serious attempts at political engagement, under the cover of frivolous romances. In chapters on individual writers, Ballaster explores the reasons behind Behn's constant claims for the veracity of her stories, and her literary transvestism; Manley's controlled self creation and destabilisation of binary categories; and the use of masquerade in Haywood. All of these writers, according to Ballaster, subvert conventional notions of femininity in their work, doubly transgressing both in the content of their work and the act of writing itself. They capitalise on their sex, she argues,

¹⁷In her later work, *Aphra Behn's Afterlife* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Spencer criticises the biographical tendencies of feminist critics that seek to equate woman and work, demonstrating that feminist literary criticism has moved on significantly from the biographical forms that the early recovery project warranted.

¹⁸Bowers, 'Gender Studies', p. 945.

selling themselves within their work, and thus earning the title ‘prostitute[s] of the pen’.¹⁹ These four monographs, by Armstrong, Spencer, Todd and Ballaster, provide the foundations and many of the tools for my own study. They establish women writers as vital contributors to the literary marketplace, and as worthy of study in their own right. They tease out the links between literature and normative ideologies of class and gender, and they suggest that femininity is a position that can be usefully occupied by writers to comment on and to shape such ideologies. In doing so, these critics lay the groundwork for locating the queer forms that amatory fiction makes use of and that this thesis seeks to illuminate.

Amatory Fiction and the Canon

Whilst the feminist recovery project is certainly not over, it has been successful in drastically expanding a previously closed, androcentric canon with the introduction of formerly marginal women writers. However, in today’s academic climate, it seems that many of the early eighteenth-century texts that have been revived over the last three decades are in danger of being laid to rest once more. John Richetti has criticised Ballaster’s work in *Seductive Forms* as a “revisionist feminist” interpretation’, claiming that she ‘rubs our noses in traditional literary history’s inability to account for the popularity of narratives that are nowadays nothing less than unreadable’.²⁰ In a 2005 article, Richetti argues that amatory fiction, having fulfilled its purpose as nothing more than the ‘fertilising muck’ from which the great male-authored works of the 1720s to 1740s grew, is now defunct. The feminist criticism of the 1980s, he argues, recovered writers such as Behn, Manley, and Haywood just as he did in his *Popular Fiction Before Richardson* (1969), solely as a means of performing what he terms ‘literary sociology’. Richetti refers to new historicist methodologies that seek to situate literature within and as part of wider historical processes, but his article is nostalgic for an earlier focus on ‘formal tensions [...] the irony and ambiguity that in those days were seen as the marks of literature at its most profound

¹⁹ Ballaster, p. 29.

²⁰ John Richetti, review of *Seductive Forms*, by Ros Ballaster, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 25 (1995), 289-91 (p. 289).

and valuable'.²¹ Richetti rejects the idea that amatory fiction could possibly have any inherent value, and argues that this backward-looking, formulaic genre is insignificant when compared to works by Henry Fielding and Daniel Defoe, who, with their specifically male access to a formal education and the public sphere, are able to display 'a superior socio-cultural fullness and density' within their texts.²² In doing so, he implies that historicist feminist criticism, whilst yielding interesting and historically useful facts, has nothing to do with the more intellectually robust search for lasting literary value. Ultimately, he suggests abandoning the study of amatory fiction and other writings by women, and in doing so, as Carnell notes, 'protests against two decades of [feminist] scholarship more focused on political and cultural history than on aesthetic and formalist analysis'.²³

He is not alone in expressing such sentiments. Even some feminist critics who have taken part in and greatly contributed to the recovery project to date now argue that the literary world requires a new, refined canon based on a new, more selective criticism. For these critics, it seems that the unruliness of the recovery project, with its growing mass of new material, is in need of refinement.²⁴ For example, Paula Backscheider concedes that 'it is problematic [...] to defend the quality of women's works by an aesthetic now recognised as hierarchically gendered and historically constructed' but claims that doing so is nonetheless 'an illuminating exercise'.²⁵ Her study of eighteenth-century women poets aims to represent only the best and most important women writers, who qualify as 'candidate[s] for canonicity'.²⁶ Backscheider claims that by taking on this task of selection, she is moving away from the tired consensus that women poets must be included in the canon to the actual work of choosing which are worthy. In a similar vein, Susan Staves notes the tension between choosing the appropriate texts for a literary

²¹ John Richetti, 'An Emerging New Canon of the British Eighteenth-Century novel: Feminist Criticism, the Means of Cultural Production, and the Question of Value', in *A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century English Novel and Culture*, ed. by Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 365-82 (p. 367).

²² *Ibid.*, p. 370.

²³ Carnell, *Partisan Politics*, p. 1.

²⁴ In this way, we might note that the recovery project itself is a body in the process of becoming, and formalist anxieties testify to the threat of such unruly bodies.

²⁵ Paula R. Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and their Poetry: Inventing Agency, Inventing Genre* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), p. 16.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24

canon, or abolishing a canon altogether, and settles herself firmly in the former camp, writing:

It cannot be a sin against feminism to say that some women wrote well and others wrote badly, that some were intelligent, reflective, and original, others dull, unreflective, and formulaic [...] I do not see why a person like me who has spent the better part of forty years immersed in Restoration and eighteenth-century British literature and history should not be capable of some useful discrimination between a good eighteenth-century poem and a bad one.²⁷

Like Richetti, Staves accuses feminist criticism of over-praising mediocre work, suggesting that the ‘abjuration of evaluative criticism is [...] a product of a lingering womanly reluctance to claim any authority, no matter how useful, well-earned, or justified’.²⁸ The implication is that in choosing to value the political rather than the aesthetic, feminists undermine their own progressive aims by failing to challenge the passive role in defining culture that patriarchal society has assigned them. Staves criticises the recovery project for blurring the disciplinary lines between social history and literature, and proposes a return to aesthetic and formal merit as a principle of selection in literature’s primary task: canon formation. But as Mary Eagleton notes, in a female canon,

the very approach which has always seemed to find the majority of women writers lacking is transposed, uncritically, to a separate female tradition, and the humanist ethic which supports that approach is accepted as basically valid, only in need of extending its franchise.²⁹

In other words, Staves’s brand of feminist criticism fails to appreciate the extent to which the frameworks she is deploying have previously, and might still continue to serve a masculinist agenda.

In 2002, Jean Marsden warned against feminist scholarship’s tendency to privilege modern concerns in reading eighteenth-century texts and its emphasis on similarity across the centuries rather than difference. Marsden claims that feminist criticism makes its own ideological value judgements in choosing to privilege only those writers whose works responded to feminist interrogation or anticipated feminist concerns, and notes that ‘ignoring

²⁷ Susan Staves, *A Literary History of Women’s Writing in Britain, 1660-1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8, p. 5.

²⁹ Mary Eagleton, *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 4.

difference in favour of sexual solidarity lays us open to charges of essentialism'.³⁰ Recognising the dangers of presentism, Marsden prescribes a continuation of the recovery project alongside a careful scrutiny of our own work and ourselves, a search for difference as well as similarity, and a recognition that many women writers may have more in common with their male counterparts than with other women. Ashley Tauchert exemplifies such critical scrutiny in her book *Against Transgression* (2008), in which she argues that seeking transgression has become a mainstream, reactionary critical move: 'Like the fumes of the automobile and heavy industry which befoul the atmosphere, transgression poisons our critical sensibilities.'³¹ And indeed, transgression, so crucial to feminist readings, is one of the terms that most requires scrutiny here. Productive readings of amatory fiction must not necessarily be against transgression, but must certainly go beyond transgression.

The future of women's studies, feminist criticism and gender studies in eighteenth-century literature is a topic that has attracted increasing debate: the first issue of the fiftieth volume of the journal, *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*, published in 2010, was a collection of articles dedicated to a discussion of the future of feminist theory in eighteenth-century studies. Many of these essays critique the sort of formalist aesthetic value judgements that Richetti, Bakscheider and Staves herald but also claim that feminist criticism itself has, to its detriment, retrospectively applied political judgements which have narrowed down what might otherwise be a much more inclusive area of study. For example, Laura J. Rosenthal argues that feminist readings have achieved breadth of material but not depth of analysis in terms of bodies of work by women that address non-feminist concerns. She thus aligns herself with Marsden's earlier point about the narrow focus of feminist criticism, which continues to frame women writers 'in ways that do not necessarily account for their full significance'.³² Rosenthal's suggestion that we need to recover from recovery does not necessarily indicate a break from the excellent foundation work that has been done, or a

³⁰ Jean Marsden, 'Beyond Recovery: Feminism and the Future of Eighteenth-Century Literary Studies', *Feminist Studies*, 28 (2002), 657-62 (p. 661).

³¹ Ashley Tauchert, *Against Transgression* (Malden MA: Blackwell, 2008), p. 2.

³² Laura J. Rosenthal, 'Introduction: Recovering from Recovery', *Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*, 50 (2009), 1-11 (p. 2).

regression back to what went before, but rather a need for fresh engagement with some of the texts that have been discovered: 'We will have made significant progress,' Rosenthal writes, 'when an even fuller scope of the impact, engagements, and intellectual propositions of women writers significantly exceeds the paradigms that allowed us to take them seriously in the first place.'³³

The importance of traditional feminist theory cannot be underestimated, however. Ellen Pollak claims that feminist theory and eighteenth-century studies are now completely interdependent, arguing that

what is at stake in talking about the future of feminist theory in eighteenth-century studies is not just the future of feminist theory but the future of eighteenth-century studies as well [...] The two go together, and they feed each other reciprocally.³⁴

Pollak is therefore concerned about the diminishing importance of feminism in academic circles, and its mainstreaming as a concern no longer worthy of explicit attention. She rejects this absorption of feminism, arguing that criticism should expand and complicate rather than attempt to bypass certain issues, and that the disappearance of feminism as a topic from conference panels demonstrates not so much that we have moved forward from identity politics but that feminism has suffered a loss of academic capital and is now seen as outdated. It seems perhaps that Pollak's anxiety is reflective of the wider antagonism set up between queer and feminist methodologies, between the discursive and the material. As Janice McLaughlin explains, 'queer writers explore the deconstruction and fluidity of transient identities and feminists explore the materiality of the body and the things done to women's bodies such as rape and violence'.³⁵ I would argue that what Pollak is identifying need not mark the disappearance of feminist concerns, but rather a reformulation of the terms of inquiry. The linguistic turn privileged discursive construction, but recent developments in materialist theory, which are characterised by a wariness of the discursive, demonstrate that the tensions between

³³ Ibid., p. 10.

³⁴ Ellen Pollak, 'The Future of Feminist Theory in Eighteenth-Century Studies', *Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*, 50 (2009), 12-20 (p. 16).

³⁵ Janice McLaughlin, Mark E. Casey and Diane Richardson, 'Introduction: At the Intersections of Feminist and Queer Debates', in *Intersections Between Feminist and Queer Theory*, ed. by Diane Richardson, Janice McLaughlin and Mark E. Casey (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 1-18 (p. 3).

feminist and queer approaches continue to provoke productive conversation, rather than silence. It is this conversation that provides the basis for the methodology that I employ in this thesis.

Becomings: Women, Portraits, Masks, Bodies and Texts

Despite the many feminist critics who contest the assertions of critics such as Richetti, it seems that both sides of the debate are in agreement that something new now needs to emerge from the recovery project. But rather than turning away from amatory fiction altogether, in this thesis I will suggest that there are other ways of examining the genre, which include a focus on its fluid techniques and manoeuvres, and a queering of the terms of value to consider what ideological functions amatory formulae might serve. As such, this thesis is a response to Richetti's call for attention to form, which nonetheless attends to and builds upon the insights of historicist feminist accounts of amatory fiction. I argue that amatory fiction foreshadows feminist and queer theories that situate both gender and the body as processes of ongoing construction, and that it should therefore be recognised as at the origin of these movements.

Chapter one provides an overview of feminist historicist contexts and readings of amatory fiction in order to discuss and open up some of the main concerns of the thesis, and to suggest why these approaches are no longer wholly adequate. I examine amatory fiction as offering a critique of prescriptive gender via its keen awareness of gender as constructed. Sections on lovesickness and gender, and victimhood and agency seek to demonstrate that both passion and power are peculiarly ungendered in amatory fiction, whilst the final section seeks to outline queer alternatives to heteronormativity in amatory fiction. The chapter argues that both the content and the form of amatory fiction demonstrate an ideological recognition of queerness that criticism focused solely on gender transgression inevitably finds disappointing. Ultimately, amatory fiction is not just about gender, but rather is about wider questions of identity construction, authorship, performance, desire and the body.

Chapter two focuses on narrative voice and artistry, and demonstrates amatory fiction's self-conscious engagement with criticism that conflated authorial body and text. It outlines some of these criticisms and suggests that they stem from a set of anxieties about the emerging

commercial literary marketplace. Reading Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688) as a particularly clear example of amatory writers' engagement with authorship, I aim to show how amatory writers are claiming agency and craftsmanship via processes of layering and distancing. I argue that far from being simplistic, amatory fictions open up complex webs of ideas and engage in a deliberate politics of refusing meaning and identity, alongside providing a sustained commentary on the labour of writing. The chapter also provides a critique of the author-centred criticism based on eighteenth-century conceptions of text and body that ultimately led to the omission from the amatory canon of texts by lesser known writers such as Mary Hearne and Mary Davys, anonymous writers, and writers not traditionally considered amatory such as Penelope Aubin and Jane Barker.

Chapter three explores the masquerade ball as an institution that provoked considerable anxiety amongst eighteenth-century moralists and explores a variety of contemporary reactions, before moving on to consider modern theoretical understandings of the function of masquerade and its relationship to gender identity, examining the arguments of Joan Riviere, Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler. The chapter focuses on masquerade in Haywood's *The Masqueraders* (1724-25) and *Fantomina* (1725) to demonstrate how, in its treatment of the gaps between acting and being and what Ballaster refers to as 'the heroinizing of artifice and fictional duplicity', amatory fiction uses certain formulae to replicate the processes that constitute identity through repetition, and should therefore be recognised as proto-queer.³⁶ In addition to charting these processes, amatory fiction troubles them by repeating certain acts (e.g. seduction) with subtle differences, and thus uses its circular plots to at once demonstrate the workings of the discursive machine, and to map out the possibilities for disrupting such workings.

Chapter four examines how the body fits into amatory fiction's understanding of identity as discursive formation by exploring examples of the reassertion of the body that often occur at the end of amatory texts. It argues, through readings of Haywood's *Love in Excess* (1719) and the anonymous novel, *The Prude* (1724-25), that the body is discursively constituted by passion and punishment, but that amatory fiction also gestures to a materiality beyond

³⁶ Ballaster, p. 3.

discourse, where matter is itself conceived of as in a constant state of becoming. Passion is a destabilising element in amatory fiction, which plays out in display and concealment upon the suffering body, and amatory texts demonstrate how this destabilising potential is disciplined by repressive discourses which also takes place on and through the body. As such, the chapter demonstrates the ways in which the interaction between generative and repressive discourses results in the materialisation of the body. It also uses the insights provided by materialist feminists including Elizabeth Grosz, Vicki Kirby and Karen Barad to examine the moments where the body is recognised as in excess of the discursive, where language fails or where matter self-replicates, in order to posit the body as itself constituted by process. Ultimately, the chapter seeks to map out the interactions between textuality and materiality, and to show how, in amatory fiction, the two are both taking place in a conversation oriented around and dictated by repeated processes.

Chapter five demonstrates that, contrary to much critical opinion, amatory fiction enjoyed a rich afterlife, and that its legacies, in terms of plots, ideologies, and the destabilising processes it outlines, are far reaching, evidenced by the multiple directions and adaptations that a focus on intertextuality unearths. The chapter pursues the afterlife of Behn's *The Wandering Beauty* (1698) through adaptations by Arthur Blackmore, Jane Barker and Sarah Scott, focusing on the techniques that the rest of the thesis outlines in order to provide a clear line of influence which stretches far beyond these writers, to Samuel Richardson, Charlotte Lennox, Charlotte Charke, Jane Austen, Mary Wollstonecraft, and even beyond that to Gothic fiction and sensation fiction. I argue that both the narrative of the rise of the novel, and the pious/scandalous framework that has been retrospectively applied to writers who actually bear considerable similarities to one another, are unsustainable in light of these lines of influence, which instead provide a picture of the eighteenth-century literary scene as one deeply saturated with amatory fiction's queer techniques.

As a whole, the thesis provides a re-examination of amatory fiction which continues working within the tradition of the recovery project in its attempt to introduce lesser known writers into considerations of amatory fiction, and in its attempt to map out the wider influences

of the genre within its own time period and on later fiction. But it also attempts to recover amatory fiction's queerness. As I suggested in the opening paragraph, this is not an imposition of queer theory upon the past, but rather a location of queerness within the past. It unearths, in amatory fiction, a recognition of the queer processes entailed by the construction of identity, and a deliberate and carefully executed deployment of queer techniques in the construction of fiction. In arguing that amatory fiction is already working through the issues raised by power relations, performativity, desire, and the material, this thesis posits the genre as a queer intervention in normative discourse, as a thinking-through of alternative possibilities of social being.

‘How wretched is our Sex’:

Problematising Gender Difference and Agency

Why are we not like Man [...] inconstant, changing, and hunting after Pleasure in every Shape? – Or, if our Sex, more pure, and more refined, disdains a Happiness so gross, why have we not Strength of Reason too, to enable us to *scorn* what is no longer *worthy* our *Esteem*?

(Eliza Haywood, *The British Recluse*, 1722)¹

Customs of countries change even Nature herself [...] The women are taught by the lives of the men to live up to all their vices and are become almost as inconstant; and ’tis but modesty that makes the difference and hardly inclination; so depraved the nicest appetites grow in time by bad examples.

(Aphra Behn, *The History of the Nun*, 1689)²

On first acquaintance, amatory fiction appears to depend upon essentialist gender differences between men and women, viewing these inherent differences as the source of a double standard that leaves women at a disadvantage. Amatory novellas often present the reader with the familiar trope of virtue in distress, whereby rakish and predatory men successfully prey on innocent, trusting women. Male desire is constituted as aggressive, and quickly satisfied, whereas female desire is passive and lasting. Eliza Haywood’s *The British Recluse* (1722) sees the two heroines, Belinda and Cleomira, realise in the course of their developing friendship that they are both victims of the same man’s inconstancy. In sharing their stories, they return again and again to the idea that women are, by nature, likely to end up as victims of men’s fickle desires. The first epigraph above is taken from a conversation between the two women.

Cleomira sets up an opposition between the constant but irrational woman, and the impulsive, hedonistic man, positing a difference in the capacity for reasoning as the cause of behavioural differences: women’s refinement should mean that they do not seek ‘gross’ pleasures, but their

¹ Eliza Haywood, *The British Recluse, or, The Secret History of Cleomira, Suppos’d Dead. A Novel*, repr. in *Popular Fiction by Women, 1660-1730: An Anthology*, ed. by Paula R. Backscheider and John J. Richetti, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 152-224 (pp. 160-61). All subsequent references are to this edition.

² Aphra Behn, *The History of the Nun; or, The Fair Vow-Breaker*, repr. in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, ed. by Janet Todd, 7 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1992-96), III: *The Fair Jilt and Other Short Stories* (1995), 205-58 (p. 212). All subsequent references are to this edition

lack of reason leaves them more susceptible to strong passion than men. In a letter to her seducer, Lysander, Cleomira talks of ‘*a Passion, which if the Strength of Reason in your Sex keeps you from being too deeply touched with, is too impetuous for the Weakness of mine to resist*’.³ Reason and passion are pitted against one another, but the gendering of reason as a male attribute results in women’s inability to resist emotions that leave them helpless and subject to male power, as half-willing conquests who are then abandoned. In another letter, Cleomira blames Lysander’s inconstancy on ‘*that cursed Mutability of Temper, which damns half your Sex, as fond Belief and Tenderness does ours*’.⁴ In doing so, she makes another claim for inherent differences in the psychologies of men and women as the cause of her misfortunes: the effect of male ‘Mutability’ on women is exacerbated by their own willingness to believe appearances that correspond to their desires. This gullibility, and its connection to wider themes of appearance and reality, are concerns which Haywood revisits throughout her writing career. Paula Backscheider, for instance, notes that Haywood’s ‘most frequent admonitions to both sexes are about illusions’, with several heroines admitting that their lover’s artifice is partially enabled by their own desire to believe.⁵

Earlier in the novel however, before Cleomira has become disillusioned with Lysander’s inattentiveness, she suggests another reason for her strength of passion:

*You have a thousand Opportunities of diverting your Thoughts; Business – Variety of Entertainments – while I, of much the softer Sex, and consequently susceptible of a deeper Impression, have nothing to do but to indulge a Passion, which in the beginning seems delectable.*⁶

Whilst the essentialist gender differentiation is still there in the notion of women as ‘the softer Sex’, Cleomira’s confinement to the private, domestic sphere allows her to dwell on her feelings. Quite simply, she has ‘nothing [else] to do’. Ironically then, it is Cleomira’s adherence to correct codes of feminine behaviour that ultimately results in her ruin. The restrictions of feminine domesticity result in an inability to control desire and to negotiate a masculinist public

³ Haywood, *The British Recluse*, p. 185.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

⁵ Paula R. Backscheider, ‘The Story of Eliza Haywood’s Novels: Caveats and Questions’, in *The Passionate Fictions of Eliza Haywood: Essays on Her Life and Work*, ed. by Kirsten T. Saxton and Rebecca P. Boccicchio (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), pp. 19-47 (p. 31).

⁶ Haywood, *The British Recluse*, p. 174.

world driven by lust and interest. Indeed, the commonplace idea that women who are totally removed from society, such as nuns, are more susceptible to very forceful and destructive passions than women who have experience of the world is one that is often articulated by amatory fiction, with many amatory novellas beginning within the convent walls.⁷ Alongside the reiteration of hegemonic ideas about female reason, or lack thereof, another discourse is being established which suggests that differences between the sexes are culturally constructed, enforced and maintained. An awareness of the implications of women's seclusion from public life works to trouble the ways in which innate differences are privileged elsewhere in the tale.

Thirty-three years earlier than Haywood's *British Recluse*, Behn begins *The History of the Nun* (1689) with a similar assertion that 'without all dispute women are by nature more constant than men'.⁸ However, in the second epigraph quoted above, Behn goes on to claim that once free from domestic confinement, and exposed to male example, women become corrupted, and more like men in their desires. She establishes the power of 'Customs' over 'Nature', demonstrating the potential for societal norms and codes of behaviour to change and ultimately to constitute the natural. Gendered behaviour is cast as something which can be learnt, and which can be adopted. By implication, there is a pre-gendered subject who adheres to certain gendered forms of behaviour which are subject to change, and which are checked by custom (modesty), rather than nature. Behn's fictional female libertines demonstrate that women are able to act out masculine appetites just as well as men. Haywood makes the same point in *Reflections of the Various Effects of Love* (1726). Having established that most of the time women love without reserve, whereas men retain a concern for interest and ambition (again based on custom) which renders them more careful, Haywood notes that

there are some Exceptions to this general Rule, there have been Men, and still are some who think nothing too great a Price to purchase the Gratification of their Desires, nor to reward the Tenderness which makes them happy; and to that End will run the greatest Hazards in Fortune, Life, and Reputation: And there are also some Women whose Pride, Ambition, or Revenge, has influenc'd them to Actions

⁷ See Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 100-101. Stories involving nuns include Behn's *History of the Nun* (1689), which was later rewritten by Jane Barker in *A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies* (1726), and Behn's *The Nun* (1697), as well as Haywood's *The Masqueraders* (1724), and *Fantomina* (1725).

⁸ Behn, *The History of the Nun*, p. 211.

the very Reverse of Disinterestedness; but when any Instances of this kind happen, the Sexes seem to have exchange'd Natures, and both to be the Contradiction of themselves.⁹

The implication here is that gender characteristics ('Nature') are attributes to be 'exchange'd' rather than always being tied to a particular sex. In *The New Atalantis* (1709), Delarivier Manley employs a similar move, framing gender difference in the language of the innate but actually insinuating that it is custom that creates such difference:

The same unaccountable thing that cools the Swain, most warms the Nymph: Enjoyment (the death of Love in all Mankind) gives Birth to new Fondness, and doting Extasies in the Women: they begin later, *with-held by Modesty*, and by a very ill tim'd Oeconomy, take up their Fondness exactly where their Lover leaves it.¹⁰ (My emphasis)

It appears that this is a statement about the differences between men, who tire quickly after sex, and women, who grow fonder for it. However, the phrase, 'withheld by modesty', suggests that actually what leaves women constant longer than men has more to do with societal dictates than inclination. In Manley's example, an ungendered desire potentially pre-exists its gendered expressions. In all of these examples more widely, the writers appear to uphold hegemonic ideas about femininity as innate whilst subtly troubling such ideas through an examination of the competing forces of desire, power, and societal structures.

The rest of this chapter takes its cue from feminist scholarship's attention to the treatment of gender difference in amatory fiction, and the ways in which it is used to problematise prescriptive and stereotypical forms of femininity. But rather than stress the genre's proto-feminism, I want to explore the way in which amatory fiction is taking part in a queering of these forms of femininity. I argue that the genre casts uncertainty on an idealised form of female virtue by introducing the suggestion of inauthenticity, and stressing the ultimate ascendancy of appearances over reality. In this way, the genre opens up identity as a space for performance, albeit within certain socially regulated confines. Moreover, amatory fiction de-

⁹ Eliza Haywood, *Reflections on the Various Effects of Love*, repr. in *Selected Works of Eliza Haywood*, ed. by Alexander Pettit, 6 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2000), I, 73-122 (p. 85). All subsequent references are to this edition.

¹⁰ Delarivier Manley, *The New Atalantis*, repr. in *The Selected Works of Delarivier Manley*, ed. by Rachel Carnell and Ruth Herman, 5 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2005), II, 139. All subsequent references are to this edition.

sexes the power positions that it plays with and androgynises desire, as well as sometimes exploring alternatives to marriage through female libertinism, and female community. My aim is to introduce some of the important considerations of this thesis: constructivism, power relations, and appearances. However, I am not so much concerned here with arguing the case that amatory fiction is conservative or radical. What I am interested in is the way in which amatory fiction is deploying an understanding of the queer as a space in between or outside gender, and adopting or making visible this position in its treatment of gender difference. As Mary Eagleton establishes, with reference to Shoshana Felman and Gayatri Spivak, in an introductory essay on 'Finding a Female Tradition': 'the problem is not only who is speaking and how she is speaking but to whom is she speaking and on behalf of whom is she speaking?'.¹¹ At the beginning of the recovery project, the identity of the speaker was foremost. More recent feminist scholars have often, in casting amatory fiction as proto-feminist, discussed who amatory fiction might be speaking for: the desiring woman, the fallen woman, the writing woman. This chapter works with discussions of the politics of amatory fiction, but is also concerned with the 'how she is speaking', and concludes that queerness constitutes the method.

'Inclination still at War with Virtue': Keeping Up Appearances¹²

Amatory writers undermine notions of gender difference by pointing out their construction, but also by referring to the difficulty of reconciling prescriptive femininity with a world in which it leads only to destruction. Manley's stories of corrupted innocence take part in this attempt to render clear the incompatibility of ideal femininity with the actual positioning of women in society. In a much-studied inset narrative in *The New Atalantis*, the worldly Countess advises the naive Charlot that when a woman stops thinking of her interest (reputation) in favour of a passion, 'contempt and sorrow [are] sure to be her companions'.¹³ In highlighting the same tension between reason and passion as Haywood, Manley, like other amatory writers, recognises the denial of female desire enforced by the alignment of female virtue with reputation. This

¹¹ Mary Eagleton, *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 6.

¹² Haywood, *The British Recluse*, p. 208.

¹³ Manley, p. 40.

alignment is represented particularly clearly by Wetenhall Wilkes in his 1740 'Dissertation on Chastity':

If wanton dreams be remembered with pleasure, that, which before was involuntary, and therefore innocent, becomes a voluntary and sinful transgression of this virtue. Chastity is so essential and natural to your sex, that every declination from it is a proportionable receding from womanhood. An immodest woman is a kind of monster, distorted from its proper form.¹⁴

Essentially, conduct literature such as this casts consciously desiring women as monstrously unfeminine but also betrays an awareness of involuntary female desire and an anxiety about its management, implying that chastity is not necessarily women's natural state. The denial of female desire via the privileging of virtue/reputation is a denial that many amatory fictions seek to disrupt, by exploiting the reliance of reputation on appearance. As such, it is not the desire itself, but the expression of it, which becomes dangerous. Manley provides a harsh satire on the damaging restrictions which supposedly feminine traits such as openness and sincerity place upon women. In addition to Charlot's story, in which she is corrupted and seduced by her guardian, Manley writes another inset narrative about a young woman named Urania that plays on the sensationalism surrounding incest. Deborah Ross calls this episode 'a disturbing example of the martyrdom Manley's heroines undergo'.¹⁵ Kept from society and poorly educated by her aunt and guardian, in order to prevent her competing with her female cousins in the marriage market, Urania becomes involved in an incestuous relationship with the only man she is familiar with, her twin brother Polydore. Manley turns a storyline often associated with the dangers of seclusion and of reading romance to her political advantage, using it to critique female competition and abuses of power as symptoms of Whiggish greed. As Ellen Pollak notes, 'from a Tory point of view, the Baroness [Urania's guardian] displays all the distinguishing features of a Whig lust for power. [...] Abandoning family loyalty in favor of sororal competition, she ultimately prevents her sister's children from producing legitimate heirs'.¹⁶ Urania and

¹⁴ Wetenhall Wilkes, *A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady* (Dublin: the author, 1740), p. 77.

¹⁵ Deborah Ross, *The Excellence of Falsehood: Romance, Realism, and Women's Contribution to the Novel* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), p. 63.

¹⁶ Ellen Pollak, *Incest and the English Novel, 1684-1814* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 104.

Polydore's illicit relationship results in their exposure and her illegitimate pregnancy and willing death during childbirth. In addition to scoring political points, Manley also draws attention to the fallacy of the myth of femininity in its virgin/whore form, which, in this tale at least, to embody is to die, or to disgrace oneself.

We hear that Urania possessed:

that plebeian vice, sincerity, so unfashionable, nay destructive, to the sex, that whatever woman wore too much of it must certainly run the hazard of the world's opinion, who never looked after what was really good, but only after what appeared so.¹⁷

Beneath the sardonic tone is an attack on a myopic society that, on the one hand, demands that women embody sensibility, sincerity, and openness, but, on the other hand, fails to distinguish between appearance and reality. Urania is an innocent, ill-equipped to deal with a world that asks for female readability but that refuses to accept the female desire that such genuine readability must inevitably betray. Urania and her twin Polydore are set up in opposition to their coquettish cousin, Harriat, a hypocrite who pretends to virtue but is actually malicious and self-serving. Harriat understands the importance and the necessity of dissimulation as a means to control one's reputation:

Oh how necessary was Dissimulation! how it bought Opinion! 'Twas like a Veil to the Face, concealed all that one wouldn't have disclosed to vulgar Eyes, and entirely at one's own pleasure and discretion, when to wear or when to lay aside.¹⁸

The clash between sincerity and dissimulation, the real and the constructed is one, I shall argue, which is really at the core of amatory fiction. Ross argues that in this instance, Manley is dramatising the conflict between Urania's romance-inflected code of behaviour and Harriat's realist approach to the world, and that she is ultimately more sympathetic to Urania's 'Golden Age innocence', than to Harriat's degraded modernity.¹⁹ She claims that the incestuous twins are cast as morally superior to the gossipy Harriat, and that Urania's self destruction in childbirth is an example of internalised discipline meant to elicit sympathy: 'Manley wishes the reader to feel that Urania has died because she is too good for this world, although she has

¹⁷ Manley, pp. 142-43.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 143.

¹⁹ Ross, p. 63.

committed incest, suicide, and murder'.²⁰ John Richetti also argues that Manley is making an argument in which 'the acquired and the artificial are despised as shallow and insincere next to the inborn and the natural'.²¹ But I would argue that moral judgments aside, Manley problematises sincerity as much, if not more, than cunning and manipulation. Urania dies, after all, whereas Harriat slips off into the countryside to deliver her own illegitimate child.²² There is no real place in the world for Urania, and a femininity based on sensibility and vulnerability results in erasure, abjection, and death. Thus, masquerading and manipulating, whilst not perhaps morally preferable, are the only options open to pragmatic women, and the tale becomes, perhaps reluctantly, subversively didactic.

In addition to providing a critique of prescriptive femininity, the impossibility of Urania's survival also functions, alongside the characterisation of the Baroness as a corrupt and self-serving authority figure, to criticise another aspect of Whig ideology: the notion of natural goodness. In referring to Urania's sincerity as 'plebeian', Manley allows her to stand for the sort of naive Whiggish sensibility that leads to her downfall, and Pollak notes that her withheld cries during labour, and her stillborn child 'stand as figures both for her faith in the power and innocence of a pure interiority and for the tragic consequences such faith incurs'.²³ Natural goodness is rendered impossible in a Hobbesian world, and Whigs are malicious in propagating ideology that proves fatal to women such as Urania. To argue that Manley privileges sincerity over masquerade, or vice versa, is to miss the point that both femininities are ultimately being used to score political points against Whiggish ideology, and that both are problematised. Rather than being consciously reactionary or subversive, Manley is drawing attention to the overarching patriarchal structures which demand normative femininity but also enforce masquerade as the only means by which to appear to conform to such demands. As Ross notes, Manley was 'point[ing] out a sexual double standard without trying to start a revolution [...]

²⁰ Ibid., p. 64.

²¹ John J. Richetti, *Popular Fiction Before Richardson: Narrative Patterns, 1700-1739* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 135-36.

²² Harriat becomes pregnant after she is seduced in an act of revenge for her exposure of another illicit affair.

²³ Pollak, p. 105.

working subversively within the system'.²⁴ Prescriptive femininity creates the need for women to dissemble, and to hide their desire in order to maintain reputation. However, this also creates an opportunity for women to act on their desires without discovery, by the same means. In other words, in having to embody virtue constantly, women are taught the art of dissimulation, and so are handed the tools to transgress by society's failed attempt to sufficiently define femininity in terms that are realisable. Normativity thus carries within itself, and in fact originates, the seeds of its own undoing. It becomes impossible to separate fact from fiction, to differentiate between the mask of virtue and virtue itself, and this ambiguity at the heart of notions of femininity is foregrounded in amatory fiction's treatment of female readability and female agency.

Playing with Poison: Sex, Gender and Lovesickness

In this section, I continue the exploration of gender difference by briefly considering the scientific context in terms of distinctions between sex and gender, as a potential means to theorise amatory fiction's treatment of gender and power. Firstly, I aim to demonstrate how these contexts come to bear in amatory fiction's descriptions of lovesickness, before moving on to consider instances of victimhood in the following section. Lovesickness, I argue, continues to play on the ambiguity engendered by the appearance/reality distinction that amatory fiction is so fascinated by. In emphasising the difficulty of discerning between genuine lovesickness and performed lovesickness, amatory fiction destabilises the romance conventions that it uses, introducing an element of the theatrical into the behaviour of its characters. It also situates desire as un-gendered in its original effects, and charts the process whereby these original effects are channelled into gendered behaviour not necessarily based upon sex, but rather upon hierarchical relations of power.

In his 1990 book *Making Sex*, Thomas Laqueur argued that 'sometime in the eighteenth century, sex as we know it was invented'.²⁵ His argument charts the movement from what he calls the 'one-sex' model based on the theories of Aristotle, Galen, and, to a lesser extent,

²⁴ Ross, p. 65.

²⁵ Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 6.

Hippocrates, to the ‘two-sex’ model that we are familiar with today, and he situates this movement in the last two decades of the eighteenth century. In the one-sex model, men and women are only conceived of as different in hierarchical degree; they are situated on a vertical axis. After the shift, he claims, men and women become entirely separate, oppositional entities: ‘an anatomy and physiology of incommensurability replaced a metaphysics of hierarchy in the representation of woman in relation to man’.²⁶ Whilst it is beyond the scope of this chapter to give anything like a coherent or complete account of such changes in medico-philosophical thinking, and whilst Laqueur’s meta-narrative has been problematised by many scholars since its inception, it is nonetheless useful for two reasons.²⁷ The first is Laqueur’s attention to the role of culture in shaping the natural, his adherence to a constructivist account not only of gender, but also of sex. He argues that:

Christian and pagan notions of the body coexisted, as did the various incompatible doctrines of the seed, of generation, and of corporeal homologies, because different communities asked different things of the flesh. [...] It is a sign of modernity to ask for a single, consistent biology as the source and foundation of masculinity and femininity.²⁸

Laqueur’s insight that sex itself is ‘made’, or subject to cultural and political forces is an important one for this thesis, which examines the ways in which identities – narrative, gendered,

²⁶ Ibid., p. 6

²⁷ Whilst some scholars, such as Dror Wahrman and Karen Harvey, agree that such a shift did occur, but argue over the timings and the results (Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), especially pp. 7-44, and Harvey, *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century: Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 78-101), others take issue with Laqueur’s partial use of source material, arguing that the one-sex model never existed in the form he imagines. See, for example, Katherine Park and Robert A. Nye, ‘Destiny is Anatomy’, review of *Making Sex* by Thomas Laqueur, *New Republic*, 18 February 1991, pp. 53-57. Joan Cadden’s *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) provides a corrective to Laqueur’s work in its attention to the diversity of medieval accounts of sexual difference, as opposed to the sort of monolithic reading that Laqueur imposes. See also Katherine Park, ‘Cadden, Laqueur, and the “One-Sex Body”’, *Medieval Feminist Forum*, 46.1 (2010), 96-100. Likewise, Helen King provides evidence for the sixteenth-century arguments for gynaecology as a separate branch of medicine long before the nineteenth-century, the point at which other critics situate the emergence of such sex-specific medical practices: see, ‘The Mathematics of sex: one to two, or two to one?’, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, 3rd ser., 2 (2005), 47-58. Elaine Hobby criticises Laqueur’s one-sex model as ‘too simpleminded’ in her introduction to Jane Sharp’s *The Midwives Book or the Whole Art of Midwifry Discovered* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. xxviii-xxix, n. 38. For alternative, but related narratives which consider the role of class in determining sexual/gender difference and patriarchy, see Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) and Michael McKeon, ‘Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England, 1660-1760’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 28 (1995), 295-322.

²⁸ Laqueur, p. 61.

but also bodily – are constructed and understood by amatory writers.²⁹ The impact of discursive understandings on the physical is explored further in chapter four but is worth foregrounding here because of the way in which Laqueur posits differential power relations as prior to understandings of sexual difference in the one-sex model. This is something that, as we shall see, is present in amatory fiction alongside a play with gendered expression that also works to negate a fixed connection between sex and gender.

Dror Wahrman situates the shift that Laqueur talks about earlier, at the beginning of the eighteenth century and concentrates on what this shift might mean for gender, rather than for sex. He argues that we can read the transformation of sex/gender systems in, for example, the gap between seventeenth-century fascination with hermaphrodites and transformations of sex, and eighteenth-century depictions of gender play, as in the case of the Chevalier D'Eon.³⁰ For Wahrman, the grounding of sex as natural separates innate sex from constructed gender. Whereas for Laqueur, the movement of one-sex to two-sex was simply another way of implementing and fixing gendered hierarchies, Wahrman argues that fixing sex in biology freed up gender:

While eighteenth-century sex had already acquired the putative uncompromising rigidity of biology, eighteenth-century gender was still allowed some of the fluidity and versatility of culture. The consequent autonomy of gender from the dictates of sex, it can then be suggested, created *a space for play*, that is, a space for imaginable dissonances of gender over (supposedly) stable sexual bodies.³¹

I would argue that amatory fiction, situated in the midst of a transformative period for understandings of sex and gender, is recognising gender as constructed, but it also, as I go on to explore in later chapters, problematises notions of the body as a stable or static entity. What this means for this chapter, however, is that differences between men and women might be read not as based in sex, gender, or the capacity to experience desire, but rather in differential power relations, which can be subject to manipulation.

The second benefit of Laqueur's study, then, is that it allows us to situate amatory fiction during this time of transition in sex/gender systems, which, whilst not perhaps as linear

²⁹ Ibid., p. ix.

³⁰ Wahrman, p. 44.

³¹ Ibid., p. 43.

or as defined as Laqueur would have it, can nonetheless usefully inform us about some of the apparent contradictions in these texts, such as the one laid out above in the clash between innate and constructed gender. In the one sex model, Laqueur claims that rather than a base-superstructure relationship of sex to gender as we have today, gender formed the base, and sex was secondary. As Meryl Altman and Keith Nightenhelser explain:

for the ancients, sex was socially constructed, gender “naturally” given – for example, through an insistence that hierarchical relations between men and women, as between free men and slaves, were eternal, immutable truths to be actualized in social roles, not in anatomical structures.³²

As Laqueur argues, ‘whether between men or between women, the issue is not the identity of sex but the difference in status between partners and precisely what was done to whom’.³³ In other words, the issue is hierarchy, or power, which, whilst gendered in the abstract, is not, in amatory fiction, specifically tied to sex. As Janet Todd has noted, in *The New Atalantis*, the sexes are not simply divided between male predators and protectors and female virgins or whores; rather, ‘both sexes divide into the naive and the manipulative and their stories evolve accordingly’.³⁴

Lovesickness demonstrates quite clearly the ways in which both men and women take up power positions that do not always correspond to their sex. Passion opens up a space for playing with gender in two ways. Firstly, it creates universally accessible signs of desire that both men and women can experience or deploy. Secondly, it opens up the possibilities of knowingness and performance, which, in terms of feminist criticism, can be read as another strategy by which to critique dominant prescriptions for feminine transparency. As Lesel Dawson notes, ‘while desire may be instinctive, its expression is bound up in culturally determined forms’.³⁵ In her book on lovesickness, Dawson posits four different, but interrelated ways in which lovesickness was conceptualised in the early modern period: as a humoral imbalance; as a primarily mental

³² Meryl Altman and Keith Nightenhelser, review of *Making Sex* by Thomas Laqueur, *Postmodern Culture*, 2. 3 (1992) <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/postmodern_culture/v002/2.3r_altman.html> [accessed 27 August 2014]

³³ Laqueur, p. 53.

³⁴ Janet Todd, ‘Life After Sex: the Fictional Autobiography of Delarivier Manley’, *Women’s Studies*, 15 (1988), 43-55 (p. 49).

³⁵ Lesel Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 34.

malady; as a desire for sex driven by an excess of blood or sperm; or as an infection contracted through gazing.³⁶ She analyses the ways in which these varied and sometimes conflicting aetiologies played out in early-modern literature, but many of them are also evident in amatory descriptions of love as the translation of sensory inputs into internalised mental images, and the frequently used idea of love as infection or poison taken in through the eyes.

The narrator of Haywood's *Reflections*, to give one example, talks of love as 'the Impression of a new Idea', which, whilst ostensibly referring to a mental event, also gestures towards medical understandings of the physiological basis for obsession: the brain is literally stamped with the image of the loved one, which then becomes their reality, just as a page is printed with words, which create a reality for the reader.³⁷ In *The British Recluse*, Belinda talks of being unaware of the danger of entertaining Lysander:

I knew not the meaning of nor once imagined that from the Wit and Beauty of this lovely Unknown I had drawn in an Infection at my Eyes and Ears, which mixing with my whole Mass of Blood, was to poison all the Quiet of my future Days.³⁸

Positing desire as an infection works to absolve female characters of responsibility for their actions, and situates the blame for their transgressions in their own innocence and ignorance. When Isabella is shown a picture of her beloved Henault in Behn's *The History of the Nun*, she turns pale and then blushes, unable to hide her disorder from her friend Katterina, who identifies her 'cruel disease' as love, 'a disease, which must, she knew, either end in her death, or destruction'.³⁹

But it is not just women who are subjected to the poison of involuntary desire. Arthur Blackamore, who ought, I will argue in chapter five, to be considered an amatory writer, describes the beginnings of an obsessive love in a male character, Mundus, as follows:

That Cupid's *Shaft* was sunk so deep into his *Breast*, and the fatal *Poison* had got so much the *Ascendant* over him, that his *Faculties* were gone, his

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 19-27.

³⁷ Haywood, *Reflections*, p. 90.

³⁸ Haywood, *The British Recluse*, p. 203.

³⁹ Behn, *The History of the Nun*, p. 222, p. 224.

Reason totally eclips'd, and had left no Room for *Thought*, except that one,
Viz. How he might come to enjoy *Her*.⁴⁰

Like Haywood, he aligns passion and poison, although his description is considerably more violent; he talks of 'the *Blow* [which] had been so *Irresistible* and *Quick*, that *Lightning* was not more'.⁴¹ Mundus is, at first, emasculated by his passion. He is penetrated by 'Cupid's *Shaft*', and he suffers both paralysis of the senses as the mental image of Paulina takes over, and a loss of that most masculine of attributes: reason. However, Blackamore is quick to re-member him, so to speak, and to reassert his active masculinity by channelling his lovesickness into a focus on seducing Paulina, which he eventually does, in disguise. The difference, then, lies not in the experience of desire, which, for both Belinda and Mundus, is couched in similar terms, but in the response to it in active or passive terms.

These active or passive responses also manifest in the signals of passion: panting and gazing, or fainting and blushing remain open to both men and women. Both men and women, for example, fall into lovesick fevers. But whereas Behn's Constantia (*Agnes de Castro* [1688]), Manley's Charlot (*The New Atalantis*), and Haywood's Violetta (*Love in Excess* [1719]), all die, Behn's Villenoy (*The History of the Nun*) and Jane Barker's Bosvil (*Love Intrigues* [1713]) both survive their illnesses. In Bosvil's case, readers are left wondering, with Galesia, whether his illness was lovesickness at all, an attempt to force Galesia into visiting him, a test of her feelings for him, despair at her outward coldness, or merely a common cold. He recovers and marries another, although Galesia is assured by a confidante that he continues to love her. Galesia's subjective account, whilst documenting her inner thoughts, which 'play'd at Racket' in considering the possibilities, also prevents closure in the form of a definite explanation for Bosvil's behaviour.⁴² Behn creates the same ambiguity around male motive, but in Villenoy's case, it is more explicitly to do with the authenticity of his illness than the cause. Despairing to

⁴⁰ Arthur Blackamore, *The Perfidious Brethren, or, the Religious Triumvirate Display'd in Three Ecclesiastical Novels* (London: T. Bickerton, W. Meadows and J. Brotherton, and A. Dodd, 1720), pp. 26-27.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁴² Jane Barker, *Love Intrigues: or, the History of the Amours of Bosvil and Galesia*, repr. in *The Galesia Trilogy and Selected Manuscript Poems of Jane Barker*, ed. by Carol Shiner Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 1-47 (p. 43). All subsequent references are to this edition.

find the heroine, Isabella, cold to his advances, his relatives attempt to persuade her against taking Holy Orders, assuring her that:

*Villenoys was dying, and dying Adoring her; that nothing could save his Life, but her kind Eyes turn'd upon the fainting Lover; a Lover, that could breath nothing, but her Name in Sighs; and find satisfaction in nothing, but weeping, and crying out, I dye for Isabella!*⁴³

She goes to him, and his recovery prompts her elopement with him from the convent. But whilst this could be a genuine investment in romance tropes, Behn also leaves open the possibility that Villenoys is manipulating Isabella's sympathies, playing on her own familiarity with, and belief in, such tropes.

Dawson argues that:

whereas contemporary readers interpret [lovers'] declarations of physical suffering as formulaic metaphors, [...] the early modern subject understood the lover's melancholy to be a dangerous physical illness [...] which could inflame the body, take possession of the mind, and overthrow an individual's rational self-control.⁴⁴

This remains, to some extent, true in amatory fiction, although the genre exploits the ways in which the authenticity of these performances is sometimes ambiguous; amatory texts both employ and subvert familiar depictions of lovesickness. From the examples given above, it would seem that men have understood how to perform lovesickness, whereas women's experience is genuine; men perform, and women die. But women, as Behn claims, are 'taught by the lives of the men' and, I would add, by amatory fictions themselves.⁴⁵

Dying women, like the trope of love as infection, are used to critique prescriptive femininity, whilst also appearing to conform to a conservatism that punishes female desire. For example, *Reflections* includes one inset tale, taken almost word-for-word from Nahum Tate's *A Present for the Ladies* (1692), which tells of a young prince falling in love with his patron's virtuous young wife.⁴⁶ He declares himself to her but she threatens to tell her husband, so he goes travelling in a bid to forget her. He returns to find her dying, having hidden her love for

⁴³ Behn, *The History of the Nun*, p. 218.

⁴⁴ Dawson, p. 12.

⁴⁵ Behn, *The History of the Nun*, p. 212.

⁴⁶ See Alexander Pettit, Margaret Case Croskery and Anna C. Patchias (eds), *Fantomina and Other Works* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2004), p. 126, n.1. Also see Appendix C: 'A Source for *Reflections on the Various Effects of Love: Nahum Tate, A Present for the Ladies: Being an Historical Account of Several Illustrious Persons of the Female Sex* (1692; 2nd ed., 1693)', pp. 272-80.

him: *'I dye for you, said she, too charming Prince! which I have now confest, because I have therewith spoke my last. [...] she fetch'd a deep Sigh and immediately expir'd'*.⁴⁷ The internal conflict between desire and duty is destructive in this instance, but although this conflict results in her death, the reader is left with the distinct impression that Haywood takes a less laudatory view of such overzealous adherence to virtuous self-sacrifice than Tate. '[T]he Softness of her Nature' and 'an equal Share of Virtue' make for a deadly combination, and Haywood blames both in turn for the lady's death.⁴⁸ In *The New Atalantis*, Manley employs a similar story in the inset narrative of Madam St Amant. She is a model wife to her husband, but esteems him rather than loves him, and falls in love with his friend, the Baron de Mezeray. She begins to suffer from 'a sort of languishing melancholy [which] made her days and nights uneasy to her', to the point where a doctor is called for, as 'she refuged under the title of vapours, a distemper all new and perplexitive'.⁴⁹ She is apparently innocent of the source of her disorder until she is enlightened by her more worldly cousin Berintha. However, the word 'refuged' implies an unconscious manipulation of both the doctor and her husband, whose ignorance of the cause of her illness prompt them into allowing her more time with the Baron, the only person who can ease her symptoms. Eventually, she admits her desire to her husband after Berintha spreads rumours about her relationship with the Baron. She assures him she has never acted on her desires, and will not do so even after her husband's death. True to her word, she dies a widow, 'giving the world a very singular proof of love and constancy, though the enemies of the sex do not fail to interpret it thus, *Cross a woman in her will and you will take away her life'*.⁵⁰ As with many of Manley's inset narratives, she offers two interpretations: the straightforward one, which is invested in championing female innocence and honour, and the societal one which takes a more cynical view. The tale as a whole serves to critique marriages of interest as 'the

⁴⁷ Haywood, *Reflections*, p. 95.

⁴⁸ Haywood, *Reflections*, p. 95.

⁴⁹ Manley, p. 62.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

true reason that we seldom see people of condition fortunate in their marriages’, and also demonstrates once again how adhering to prescriptive femininity can prove fatal.⁵¹

Amatory adoptions of early-modern ideologies and tropes thus demonstrate the writers drawing on a collective understanding of romance signs (the swoon, the nosebleed, the fever), but adapting these signs in order to critique conduct book femininity. Innocence and readability come under scrutiny, and authenticity becomes associated with ruin, whereas performance becomes a way to survive, and even to work towards agency. Paula Backscheider claims that Haywood writes novels as an alternative to conduct literature, a way in which to provide experience for the inexperienced. She argues that ‘what experience taught women above all was the need for self control, and Haywood ties the two together expertly [...] admonishing women to be independent and self-controlled’.⁵² I would argue that actually what is being taught in some cases is how to create and maintain the illusion of virtuous femininity that allows for this independence. Amatory fiction is teaching its readers how to recognise and perhaps hide their own symptoms of passion, but also how to manipulate those symptoms to their own advantage, how to use them to signify desire without breaching decorum. Bodily readability becomes, like letters in amatory fiction, another tool for dissimulation and authorship for those women who understand hegemonic expectations of femininity.

Rebecca P. Bocchicchio has explored women’s somatic reactions in Haywood’s *The British Recluse*, by examining the prevalence of hysteria – a typically ‘female disease’ – in Haywood’s texts. Bocchicchio argues that far from adhering to the popular medical view of women as naturally hysteric, or posing hysterical attacks as a necessarily disabling affliction for women, as Ballaster, following Catherine Clément, would have it, hysteria actually enables women to have the best of both worlds: to fulfil their desires but at the same time to remain blameless.⁵³ She suggests that whilst both Belinda and Cleomira have been subject to these disempowering moments when seduced, brought on largely by shame, these two women are far

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 65

⁵² Backscheider, ‘The Story of Eliza Haywood’s Novels’, in *Passionate Fictions*, ed. by Saxton and Bocchicchio, pp. 35-36.

⁵³ See Ballaster, *Seductive Forms*, pp. 171-74.

from hysterical, and that in relating their reactions to seduction they actually reclaim control of their representations.⁵⁴ The inability to conceal one's panting heart and languishing eyes in amatory fiction is therefore not a universal female trait, but rather an outlet for women's desire, a means by which to communicate it. Bocchicchio writes that Haywood's 'hysterics wear their hysteria like a mask', and that this allows Haywood to explore 'the ways in which "female" (a desiring creature) and "feminine" (the inability to act on, or even show that desire) conflict'.⁵⁵

We can see this purposeful adoption of passivity in Behn's *The Dumb Virgin*, in which Maria is unwittingly seduced by her brother:

Maria finding nothing to divert her, goes down to her Father's Library, to ease her melancholy by reading. She was in the same loose Habit in which she appeared at the Window, her distraction of thought not permitting her care in dressing herself; she enter'd whilst *Dangerfield's* Thoughts were bent by a full contemplation of her Idea, insomuch that his surprize represented her as a Phantom only, created by the strength of his fancy; her depth of Thought had cast down her eyes, in a fix'd posture so low, that she discover'd not *Dangerfield*, till she stood close where he sat, but then so sudden an appearance of what she so lov'd, struck so violently on her Spirits, that she fell in a swoon, and fell directly into *Dangerfield's* Arms; this soon wakened him from his dream of happiness, to a reality of bliss, he found his Phantom turn'd into the most charming piece of flesh and blood that ever was.⁵⁶

Both Maria and Dangerfield are experiencing symptoms of lovesickness: she is melancholy; he is mentally fixated to the near exclusion of sensory reality. Maria's inability to speak means, as Ballaster notes, that her body is the only means she has for signification. Maria 'is nothing but the possibility, the place, the sign of relations among men'.⁵⁷ For Dangerfield, she is a phantom or a piece of flesh and blood, without subjectivity. But as in Belinda and Cleomira's cases, her swoon can also be read as a means of fulfilling her own desire but remaining blameless. As such, although the plot eventually condemns her unwittingly incestuous desire, it also provides a brief and subtle lesson to readers in how familiar tropes can be adopted and manipulated to subtly claim agency.

In amatory fiction, sex/gender configurations are exploited in order to problematise

⁵⁴ Rebecca P. Bocchicchio, "'Blushing, Trembling, and Incapable of Defense:': The Hysterics of *The British Recluse*", in *Passionate Fictions*, ed. by Saxton and Bocchicchio, pp. 95-114 (p. 111, p. 105).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 98, p. 105.

⁵⁶ Behn, *The Dumb Virgin: or, The Force of Imagination. A Novel*, repr. in *Works*, ed. by Todd, III, 335-60 (p. 352).

⁵⁷ Ballaster, *Seductive Forms*, p. 88.

gender prescriptions. Desire is posited as universal, and the un-gendered signs of desire work to erode gender difference based on sex and instead foreground power in the construction of relationships. Lovesickness in amatory fiction works to critique the lack of power afforded to women by demands that they be readable, innocent, and physically fragile. In introducing an element of doubt as to the authenticity of certain lovesick forms of behaviour, amatory fiction plays with notions of knowingness, manipulation, performance and power, and teaches its readers how to do so too, how to actively make use of the very societal dictates that cast them as passive.

Victims and Transgressors: The Question of Agency

This section explores the ways in which knowingness, performance and power come to bear on the question of agency, which has provided the focus for many feminist critics eager either to claim amatory fiction as proto-feminist, or to reject it as deeply reactionary. By setting up the terms of the debates over femininity into which amatory fiction interjects, both in misogynist and conduct book depictions of women, and then by examining the ways in which two amatory heroines trouble these depictions by self-consciously experimenting with them, I will demonstrate how amatory writers unpick the reasoning behind stereotypical femininities, showing them to be unsustainable and incompatible with female survival. In its treatments of victimhood, transgression, power, and the spaces between these positions, amatory fiction exposes the gendered double standard, but the uncertain results of their heroines' experimentations do not quite demonstrate the strong claims to agency with which some feminist critics have imbued these tales.

Whilst I have argued that the writers of amatory fiction privilege the role of culturally constructed gender differences over innate ones, the continued reliance on reductive and stereotypical feminine traits in some amatory texts has left them open to charges of anti-feminism, or even misogyny. Susan Staves, for example, dismisses Manley's play *The Royal Mischief* as 'pathetic and misogynistic' and bemoans the 'stereotypical passion' of Haywood's

heroines.⁵⁸ Likewise, Jane Spencer and Ros Ballaster criticise Haywood for her inability to imagine genuine female agency free from the dictates of uncontrollable passion and deferred heterosexual romance.⁵⁹ Amatory narrators often depict women as gossipy, overly curious, self-contradictory, sometimes malicious and narcissistic. In *The History of the Nun*, we hear that ‘*Katterina* [...] (as a Woman) was naturally curious to pry farther, tho’ Discretion should have made her been silent’; in *The Unfortunate Happy Lady* (1698), Behn writes that ‘our Sex seldom wants matter of Tattle’; and in *The Unfortunate Bride* (1698), she asserts that ‘’tis the humour of our Sex, to deny most eagerly those Grants to Lovers, for which most tenderly we sigh; so contradictory are we to our selves’.⁶⁰ In Manley’s *New Atalantis*, upon hearing a distressed woman scream, Virtue asks, ‘Do you think, my dear Astrea, that ’twould be difficult to decide whether my Lady Intelligence be agitated by a principle of curiosity or charity?’.⁶¹ The implication is that their guide and narrator is acting on a desire for gossip at the expense of other women, rather than out of compassion. As a writer of scandal fiction who viciously attacks other women, Manley might be thought by this barbed comment to be making a confession of guilt. Aligned with her narrator here, Manley expresses little female solidarity with women on the wrong side of the political spectrum. Later, the same distressed woman they heard screaming, Elonora [*sic*], laments: ‘how few of us [women] have true principles and how much fewer make use of even those we have?’.⁶²

In addition to being cast as meddlesome, talkative, perversely contrary, self-interested and unprincipled, many women in amatory fiction are repeatedly and persistently victimised. The frequent invocation of the helpless woman, unable to resist the sexual advances of her eager lover appears to draw influence from misogynistic libertine literature that stresses male potency

⁵⁸ Susan Staves, *A Literary History of Women’s Writing in Britain, 1660-1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 113, p. 193.

⁵⁹ Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 117; Ballaster, *Seductive Forms*, pp. 181-92. *The British Recluse* would seem to contradict this accusation, with the two female protagonists retiring into the country together at the end of the text.

⁶⁰ Behn, *The History of the Nun*, p. 222; Behn, *The Unfortunate Happy Lady, A True History*, repr. in *Works*, ed. by Todd, III, 361-87 (p. 369); Behn, *The Unfortunate Bride, or, The Blind Lady a Beauty*, repr. in *Works*, ed. by Todd, III, 321-34, (p. 327).

⁶¹ Manley, p. 162.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 179.

at the expense of female victims.⁶³ In *The New Atalantis*, Manley catalogues the ruin of a number of innocent young women by predatory men, including a pseudo-autobiographical version of herself. She creates, as Janet Todd argues, a ‘communal fall’, which renders innocence impossible in her fictional Atalantis.⁶⁴ Haywood’s novels too, are full of seduced and/or banished women: Cleomira and Belinda in *The British Recluse*; the eponymous heroines of *Fantomina* and *Lasselia* (1724); Amena in *Love in Excess*, who is dispatched to a nunnery as a precautionary measure to avoid ruin, to name but a few. The ubiquity of female victimhood, female ruin, and female banishment in amatory fiction seems to sit uneasily with interpretations that stress the genre’s proto-feminism, particularly given that the erotic portrayal of seduction and, more disturbingly, rape scenes, could serve to titillate audiences. In the dedication to *Lasselia*, Haywood writes a fairly typical justification for the inclusion of such seduction scenes:

*My Design in writing this little Novel (as well as those I have formerly publish’d) being only to remind the unthinking Part of the World, how dangerous it is to give way to Passion, will, I hope, excuse the too great Warmth, which may perhaps, appear in some particular Pages.*⁶⁵

But it is surely ‘Warmth’, as much as moral instruction, that sells, and Haywood’s capacity to write of physical passion, of heroines ‘trembling and panting, ’twixt Desire and Fear’ certainly formed a significant part of her self-marketing strategy.⁶⁶

Todd has argued that the ‘narrative of female distress following defloration’ becomes a comforting way for male libertine writers such as Robert Gould and John Wilmot to assert male authority in the face of a disruptive and threatening female sexuality.⁶⁷ Their poetry betrays an anxiety that, as Alexander Pope put it, ‘ev’ry woman is at heart a rake’.⁶⁸ As such, it takes part in the discourse surrounding the transparency that didactic fiction urges women to exemplify and amatory fiction urges women to exploit. In his satirical poem, ‘The Female Rake: or,

⁶³ Behn memorably challenged such depictions in her own libertine poem ‘The Disappointment’, a poem about erectile dysfunction.

⁶⁴ ‘Life After Sex’, p. 48.

⁶⁵ Eliza Haywood, *Lasselia: or, The Self Abandon’d. A Novel* (London: D. Browne and S. Chapman, 1724), p. vi.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁶⁷ Todd, ‘Life After Sex’, p. 43.

⁶⁸ Alexander Pope, ‘Epistle to a Lady’, repr. in *Alexander Pope: Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Robin Sowerby (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 158-65 (p. 163, l. 216).

Modern Fine Lady' (1736), Joseph Dorman mocks the aging coquette, Sylvia, with the lines 'Till Time had stol'n the Light'ning from her Eyes, | *Sylvia*, was never known to Moralize', attacking the hypocrisy of women who only condemn immoral behaviour once they can no longer take part in it themselves.⁶⁹ Dorman gives a number of examples of promiscuous women, such as Ametra, who treats 'her Fav'rites, as she uses Cloaths; | Wears them while fresh, and while they please the Eye, | Then for her Woman's use, she throws them by'.⁷⁰ Whilst perhaps tongue-in-cheek, this depiction manifests fears about rapacious female consumption, both material (reminiscent of Pope's Belinda in *The Rape of the Lock*, 1712, 1714, 1717), and sexual too. Dorman's depiction of coquettes and female rakes reverses the complaints of Haywood's heroines by complaining about the objectification of men by fickle women. It also hints at the potentially Sapphic implications of the sharing of lovers between women, and the erosion of class boundaries engendered by such sharing. But the main anxiety that underpins this and other similar satires is one about appearances, perhaps best exemplified by Dorman's line: 'And she is virtuous, who was never caught'.⁷¹ Statements such as these demonstrate an acute awareness that virtuous femininity might be a mere façade. In indicating that feminine attributes such as innocence and bodily readability can easily be mimicked by women, amatory writers engage with these same anxieties, but rather than providing a critique on the women who adopt such methods, amatory fiction exploits the titillating possibilities of such mimicry whilst also seeking to justify such behaviour as the result of restrictive and unrealistic expectations placed on women.

Such expectations are most explicit in conduct books. But the conduct book constructions of women as compliant, passive, and silent are riddled with contradictions. To give one example, George Savile, Marquis of Halifax wrote the best known conduct manual of the early eighteenth century, *The Lady's New-Year's Gift: or, Advice to a Daughter* (1688). In an attempt to render women's subjugation in marriage more acceptable to them, he firstly

⁶⁹ Joseph Dorman, *The Female Rake: or, Modern Fine Lady. An Epistle from Libertina to Sylvia* (London: J. Wilford, 1735), p. 3.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* p. 4.

stresses compliance as a natural feminine attribute. But he goes on to assure his female readers that: ‘You have more strength in your *Looks*, than we have in our *Laws*; and more power by your *Tears*, than we have by our *Arguments*.’⁷² The implication is that compliance, although natural, cannot be truly pleasing to women, and must therefore be ‘tricked up’ as dominance. On the one hand, conduct books seek to explain femininity as innate and natural, but on the other hand, their very existence as manuals of feminine behaviour gives the lie to the innate femininity they seek to create. And it is made clear that getting femininity right requires a careful balancing act. Wetenhall Wilkes, after a discussion of the importance of chastity, warns against ‘an affected Modesty; which, instead of exalting your Character, will raise a fresh Attention of the Public to observe and censure your Conduct. *The Part of Virtue may be over-acted*’ (my emphasis).⁷³ Where one draws the line between the genuine and the feigned, acting and over-acting, remains an unacknowledged problem for such writers. Whilst the ideal woman of the conduct book appears to sit in opposition to Dorman’s female rake, the female rake nonetheless remains an abject spectre constituting the outside against which conduct books seek their definition of femininity; both depictions of women work from the same set of stereotypes.

The clash of these two inter-reliant paradigms of femininity, the virgin and the virago, creates a peculiarly fertile backdrop against which amatory fiction argues for its own constructions of femininity, attempting to critique a world which dooms virgins and celebrates hypocrites, but also suggesting survival strategies with which to cope in such a world. Amatory fiction’s woman is one who can negotiate between the restrictive stereotypes of femininity available to her. Those who survive, and who are allowed to experience desire, are those who seek control over their own images and their own representations. Amatory fiction is thus reshaping the familiar femininities found in conduct literature and misogynistic poetry. In the movement of some heroines from victims to victors, it can be read as reclaiming and reworking female victimhood, destabilising the division between virgin and whore, victim and victor.

I want to turn now to two examples of this movement from victimhood to relative

⁷² George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, *The Lady’s New-Year’s Gift: or, Advice to a Daughter*, (London: Randal Taylor, 1688), p. 28.

⁷³ Wilkes, p. 76.

independence: Behn's Silvia (*Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister*), and Haywood's Fantomina. Amatory fiction is, I argue, authoring heroines whose manipulation of stereotypical femininities provides a critique of those stereotypes, and the society that prescribes them. These heroines work towards agency, but their agency is limited because it so often originates in victimhood and is based around the fulfilment of male desire, which proves problematic for feminist readings of the texts. The female rake is not a simple reversal of the male rake, because she begins as a victim. Rather, she demonstrates process, identity in becoming, power in a constant state of deployment. Agency is something beyond this process, worked towards but never completed. I suggest then that rather than reading these heroines simply as examples of liberated femininity, we pay attention to their fluidity and adaptability, and the methods via which this fluidity is obtained. These heroines work within the unknown spaces between the stereotypes of femininity, and in doing so, recognise gender difference as constructed and open to manipulation, and learn to exploit ideals of feminine innocence and transparency, in order to disrupt the power relations that once victimised them.

Behn's three-part novel *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* was based on the scandalous elopement of Henrietta Berkeley (Silvia) with her brother-in-law, the libertine Ford Lord Grey (Philander), and also includes an allegorical account of the failed rebellion of Charles II's illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth (Cesario). In both narratives, Behn is interested in questions of female power, how it is achieved and maintained, and its political and moral consequences. Her heady mix of sex and politics is a novel of process; it works from an epistolary to a third-person form, from the earnestness of love letters to the more cynical remove of narration at a distance. The heroine, Silvia, undergoes a similar process of development, from innocent virgin to female rake living off her wits and her ability to seduce men out of their money, as much as their breeches. She takes four lovers over the course of the novel, and many more, the reader is led to suppose, after the close of the text. Just after losing her virginity, Silvia looks back, in a letter to Philander, on

the time, the blest innocent time, when but to think I lov'd *Philander* wou'd have cover'd my face with shame, [...] have made me Tremble, Blush, and bend my guilty Eyes to Earth [...] though now I am grown bold in Love [...] Oh, that I

shou'd not dy with shame to own it – yet see (I say) how from one soft degree to another, I do not only confess the shamefull truth, but act it too; what, with a Brother – Oh Heavens! a crime so monstrous and so new – but by all thy Love, by those surprising joys so lately experienc'd – I never will – no, no, I never can – repent it: Oh, incorrigible passion, oh hardned love! at least I might have some remorse, some sighing after my poor departed honour; but why shou'd I dissemble with the Powers divine, that know the secrets of a Soul doom'd to eternal Love?⁷⁴

At this point in the narrative, Silvia takes stock of her transformation from a painfully modest embodiment of conduct book virtue to a ruined woman, who has committed an incestuous act with her brother-in-law. But as in many amatory fictions, the strength of her passion, coupled with her awareness of wrongdoing and her inability to stop herself, is used to justify her act and her lack of remorse. Her refusal to 'dissemble with the Powers divine' and the authenticity of her love allow her to retain some of the innocence she once had, despite having lost her virtue. As such, Behn works to provide a critique of societal opinion that would damn her heroine for events beyond her control. Silvia is still an ingénue at this point, unaware of the world that awaits her after Philander's inconstancy, a world which will necessitate the dissimulation that she eschews here. She talks of 'hardned love', which comes to seem ironic given her later, truly hardened actions, in which love no longer seems to play any part.

When they elope to Holland, dissimulation quickly becomes absolutely crucial to survival. Philander orchestrates Silvia's sham marriage to his manservant, Brilljard, in order to prevent her being forcibly returned to her family, and she is disguised as a boy to ensure her safe passage out of England. In Holland, the threesome is offered shelter and hospitality by Octavio, one of the more virtuous characters in the novel. Philander's political affiliations lead him to flee soon after, and he quickly loses interest in Silvia in favour of Octavio's married sister, Calista. Meanwhile, Silvia is left to negotiate the machinations of Brilljard, who attempts to exercise his privileges as a husband, and the attentions of Octavio, who falls in love with her. Despite her marriage, Silvia beds Octavio but is then imprisoned by his uncle, Sebastian, who plans on alienating her from Octavio and then marrying her himself. Silvia and Octavio orchestrate her escape and Sebastian is killed. Philander's return prompts Silvia to seduce him

⁷⁴ Aphra Behn, *Love-Letters Between A Nobleman and his Sister*, repr. in *Works*, ed. by Todd, II (1993), 88. All subsequent references are to this edition.

despite having learnt of his infidelities, but her attempts to maintain simultaneous relationships with both Philander and Octavio backfire. She cannot help but pursue Philander out of pride and vanity, but she also returns periodically to Octavio, promising constancy. After one such promise, she elopes with Philander, but having given birth to a child and drifted into unhappiness, she seduces Brilljard in return for his assistance in getting back to Octavio. The class transgression that was once so horrifying to her is now a means to an end that she is willing to take. Octavio has, in the meantime, joined a monastery. Turning her attention to a new lover, Alonzo, Silvia promises gullible Octavio she will retire from public life in return for his fortune, but then deploys this money in crafting a disguise by which she seduces Alonzo, and eventually ruins him with the help of Brilljard. Over the course of the novel, Silvia plays out different identities for different men: she is faithful mistress to Philander, who remains ignorant of her exploits; Brilljard is her accomplice in artifice; she is a project to reform for Octavio; and she is a seductress, mistress of disguise to Alonzo.

As Janet Todd has written, Silvia ‘is forced to play the feminine role, becomes an object, then learns to understand her potentially active role in this economy of desire’.⁷⁵ What begins as a passionate love for her seducer, and morphs into an exercise in maintaining her reputation and keeping her suitors interested, ends up being a perverse game in which Silvia manipulates herself into more and more complex situations, from which she must then extricate herself. Learning from Philander, but also reacting to a world in which no man can envisage her as anything other than an object of desire, she plays out the stereotypes whilst existing in transit between them, negotiating and mastering the new terrain of constantly shifting power dynamics into which she is thrown. Her ‘desire for perversity, for transgression, almost for the label of whore’, is part of what Todd identifies as an addiction that ‘takes her quite outside society with its fixed notions of class and gender’.⁷⁶ The space into which she enters is, I argue, a queer space in which identity is far from static.

Despite her spectacular moral fall, we are invited to sympathise with Silvia, recalling

⁷⁵ Janet Todd (ed.), introduction to *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*, by Aphra Behn (London: Penguin, 1996), p. xxiv.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xxiv, p. xxx.

Behn's warning in *The History of the Nun* that 'women are taught by the lives of men'. There are other examples in Behn's fiction in which a less sympathetic heroine is nonetheless excused for her behaviour. In *The Fair Jilt* (1688), for example, Miranda is described as 'vain enough to glory in her Conquest, and make it her business to wound'.⁷⁷ Her attempted seduction of a young friar leads to his wrongful imprisonment after she accuses him of rape, and at this point, she is described as 'that wicked Woman; whose Life had not been so exemplary for Vertue, not to have given the World a thousand Suspicions of her Lewdness and Prostitution'.⁷⁸ In the second part of the text, she attempts to have her younger sister killed first by her manservant and then by her husband, in order to avoid paying her dowry. Both times, the attempts are thwarted, and the attempted murderers are sentenced to death. Her husband survives his execution and the couple are reunited and forgiven by Alcidiana, Miranda's sister. Her happy ending is ambiguously justified with the sentence: 'They say *Miranda* has been very penitent for her Life past'.⁷⁹ Behn's reversal of the gendered norms of the seduction narrative renders clear the sexual double standard that allows men to sacrifice women to their desires by having her heroine adopt the position of power in this tale, and get away with it. Behn's *Isabella* (*The History of the Nun*) is also excused for bigamy and the murder of both husbands as follows:

While she was in Prison, she was always at Prayers, and very Chearful and Easie, [...] exhorting daily, the Young, and the Fair, that came perpetually to visit her, never to break a Vow, for that was first the Ruine of her, and she never since prosper'd.⁸⁰

We are told that 'She was generally Lamented, and Honourably Bury'd' despite her crimes.⁸¹

Behn's focus is not upon *Isabella*'s sins, but the circumstances that led to them in the first place, namely the coercion of a young woman into taking vows despite her state of immaturity and naivety.

Silvia's reliance upon her sexual desirability is brought on firstly by a justified desire for revenge upon a faithless lover, prompting an abandonment of possible security with Octavio,

⁷⁷ Behn, *The Fair Jilt; or, The History of Prince Tarquin and Miranda*, (1688), reprinted in *Works*, ed. by Todd, III, 1-48 (p. 11).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁸⁰ Behn, *The History of the Nun*, p. 257.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

but secondly by necessity, both of which serve to mitigate if not justify her behaviour. She exists in a world in which women can trade only in their marriageability, or, once ruined, their bodies. As such, Silvia's agency, inasmuch as we can describe it as agency, is predicated upon her victimhood. Necessity negates agency, and renders feminist readings of Silvia as an emancipated woman highly problematic. Silvia's motives are often unclear; her desire is often uncertain. What is clear, however, is Silvia's at least temporary power, particularly in her relationship with Octavio. I am differentiating power from agency thus: agency is the ability to act according to one's own volition; power is the situation of a subject above an object, and can only exist in relation. Whilst Silvia's agency is limited, she learns, over the course of the novel, how best to capitalise on the available positions within the existing structures of power. This is not a novel in which men always dominate and women always submit, but rather is a novel that charts changing power dynamics that have little to do with biological sex.

In an early love letter, Philander writes to Silvia 'Glorious Woman! was born for command and Dominion' over men, drawing on the same rhetoric as Wilkes in assuring women of their power in order to prompt their submission.⁸² But we also hear that Silvia 'lov'd to see Adorers at her Feet [...] She naturally lov'd Power and Dominion; and it was her Maxim, that never any Woman was displeas'd to find she could beget Desire'.⁸³ She spends the novel struggling to maintain this dominion, but is most successful with Octavio. The relationship between Silvia and Octavio is one in which traditional gender roles are reversed; learning from Philander, she is inconstant and deceitful to the faithful and believing Octavio, who retires to a monastery when he despairs of retrieving her. Theirs is a typical amatory tale, but one in which the position of power is taken up by a woman. When she attempts to seduce him, Silvia surrounds herself with historical precedents, classical representations of men disarmed by women: her embroidered couch depicts 'Armida who is dressing the sleeping warrior up in wreaths of Flowers, while a hundred little Loves are playing with his gilded Armour'.⁸⁴ This scene is one that is replicated in other amatory fictions in two ways. The first is in terms of the

⁸² Behn, *Love-Letters*, p. 44.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

careful arrangement of an artificial scene to look natural, used by Manley and Haywood when their heroines arrange themselves so as to invite male desire. The second is in the depiction of a female power that emasculates or de-genders men, drawing them towards an androgynous state of passion and away from their socially prescribed public duties. Octavio neglects his state duties, preferring to be with Silvia. Likewise Cesario jeopardises his rebellion, his ambitions dulled by his love for Hermione, who uses witchcraft to maintain his affection. In *The New Atalantis*, Manley uses a classical allusion of Venus disrobing Mars after a battle to provide a satirical portrait of the Earl of Torrington, leader of William of Orange's fleets who failed to prevent a French advance, supposedly due to his involvement with a woman.⁸⁵ So it is clear that strong amatory heroines possess the power to destabilise traditional gender relations, and also to impact upon a political world that they are, at least explicitly, excluded from. *Love-Letters* is a novel in which 'masculine', meaning conquest and domination, is not necessarily a predicate of male, and 'femininity', meaning softness and constancy, does not necessarily originate from women. Silvia, still promising her fidelity to a believing Philander, ends the novel in a position of uncertain power, and if anything her tale represents a recognition of the fragility and changeability of power relations in an unstable world.

A similarly fraught depiction of the emergence of a female libertine from victimhood comes in Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina*. The novella begins with its heroine disguising herself as a prostitute in order to attract the attentions of Beauplaisir. Failing to understand the implications of this disguise, she is raped:

She had now gone too far to retreat: – *He* was bold; – he was resolute: *she* tearful, – confused, altogether unprepared to resist in such Encounters, and rendered more so by the extreme Liking she had to him. – Shocked, however, at the Apprehension of really losing her Honour, she struggled all she could, and was just going to reveal the whole Secret of her Name and Quality, when the Thoughts of the Liberty he had taken with her, and those he still continued to prosecute, prevented her, which representing the Danger of being exposed, and the whole Affair made a Theme for public Ridicule. – Thus much, indeed, she told him, that she was a Virgin, and had assumed this Manner of Behaviour only to engage him. But that he little regarded, or if he had, would have been far from obliging to desist – nay, in the present burning Eagerness of Desire, 'tis probable, that had he been acquainted both with who and what she really was, the Knowledge of her Birth would not have influenced him with Respect sufficient to have curbed the wild Exuberance of his

⁸⁵ Manley, p. 10.

luxurious Wishes, or made him in that longing, – that impatient Moment, change the Form of his Addresses. In fine, she was undone; and he gained a Victory, so highly rapturous, that had he know over whom, scarce could he have triumphed more.⁸⁶

The beginning of the tale thus sees its heroine reduced to an even more extreme state of victimhood than the heroines who are seduced. The stock trope of the innocent, weak woman versus the potent, desiring man is deployed, and the scene is notable for the semi-pornographic references to the ‘burning Eagerness’, ‘luxurious wishes’ and rapture of *Beauplaisir*, achieved at the expense of a tearful victim, and regardless of her virginity, birth or reputation. But the trope of the woman unable, through lack of reason or understanding, fully to hide or control her desire is also drawn on here. The heroine’s ‘extreme liking’ for *Beauplaisir* complicates this scene. It problematises dangerous prescriptions for feminine behaviour which require that the willingness to be seduced is always masked by a show of resistance. For how might one tell the difference between the inauthentic resistance of a desiring woman and the genuine resistance of a frightened victim? In implicitly posing this question, the scene renders clear the disturbing consequences of a society obsessed with appearance, before going on to suggest ways of subverting this obsession with appearance.

Like *Silvia*, *Fantomina* is forced quickly to develop a means of managing her own representation. The text does not dwell on male predation but instead focuses on *Fantomina*’s reaction to her initial victimisation. After she is raped, the heroine works through another four disguises in order to continually seduce *Beauplaisir*. Margaret Case Croskery has argued that this movement is Haywood’s attempt to explode the ‘victor/vanquish’d paradigm’.⁸⁷ *Fantomina*’s rape, she argues, leads her to a Lacanian moment of self realisation and enables the creation of increasingly sophisticated disguises, the mastery of self as other: ‘This moment marks the heroine’s embryonic realisation that her control over her own desire depends upon a presentation of self that capitalises upon an ostensible, not an actual, loss of agency.’⁸⁸ Her

⁸⁶ Eliza Haywood, *Fantomina*, repr. in *Fantomina and Other Works*, ed. by Pettit, Croskery and Patchias, pp. 41-71 (p. 46). All subsequent references are to this edition.

⁸⁷ Margaret Case Croskery, ‘Masquing Desire: The Politics of Passion in Eliza Haywood’s *Fantomina*’, in *Passionate Fictions*, ed. by Saxton and Bocchicchio, pp. 69-94 (p. 76).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

subsequent disguises represent an array of different femininities and, like Silvia, her self-creation is a demonstration of a fluid and adaptable identity. However, the question of her agency is again problematic in that her actions are all oriented around this ostensible submission to Beauplaisir; her pleasure is constituted by his pleasure. Like Silvia's with Philander, Fantomina's obsession with Beauplaisir plays out like an addiction, but unlike her predecessor, Fantomina remains entirely faithful to Beauplaisir. To some extent Haywood uses this fact to ameliorate the actions of her heroine, but Fantomina's constancy also works to subvert the prescription that women be loyal by making clear that to be so would involve simultaneously embodying all of the paradoxical versions of the feminine that men have created: the virgin, the whore, the mistress, the servant, the widow and the mystery.

The events of the novella after the rape see Fantomina working towards ever-elusive agency. Her disguises represent her growing mastery of dissimulation, but also see her working her way up through the social classes, a dynamic that corresponds with the increasing amount of power she exercises over Beauplaisir in each seduction. Notably, her power to act out this array of different social classes stems from her nobility, and the links between class and power are solidified rather than subverted, as in many other amatory texts. When the unnamed heroine becomes Fantomina, she admits the failure of her first disguise to Beauplaisir, but fearing for her reputation, she has the foresight to create another disguise to cover it. Her 'Name and Quality' are cast off in favour of the more vague and adaptable narrative 'that she was a Virgin, and had assumed this Manner of Behaviour only to engage him'.⁸⁹ In the second scene of seduction, Beauplaisir's mastery becomes, as Croskery notes, a 'fantasy created by the fiction of [Fantomina's] disguise' because Fantomina is the heroine's self-conscious projection.⁹⁰ In introducing a knowledge imbalance into their relationship, Haywood destabilises the power balance between them although Fantomina's position as a mistress soon to be abandoned and forgotten gestures towards the same fragility of female power as Behn's Silvia does. As a servant, Fantomina continues to play the submissive part, becoming Celia, another male fantasy

⁸⁹ Haywood, *Fantomina*, p. 46.

⁹⁰ Croskery, 'Masquing Desire', p. 83.

in her embodiment of a pastoral ideal. She remains in a hierarchical relationship of submission to Beauplaisir in terms of class, as well as gender. Easily understanding the amatory codes upon which Beauplaisir's desire is predicated, Fantomina manipulates them as deftly as she does the sartorial ones; she looks and acts the part. Her skill is emphasised by her appropriation of rural dialect as well as dress – 'O Law, Sir! What must I do for all this?' – and by the narrator's assertion, that the thoroughness of her disguise made it 'impossible for her to be known or taken for any other than what she seemed'.⁹¹ But her easy capitulation to Beauplaisir results in his swift loss of interest.

In her next disguise as a widow, Fantomina gains from exercising a greater measure of restraint, and begins to understand how she can play out and thus master male fantasies of feminine virtue. In doing this, we see her moving away from a treatment of the relationship whereby she is victimised, subservient and endlessly available for sex, to a temporary withdrawal of availability based on a subversion of the behavioural management learned from conduct books. By deferring the moment of climax, she engages Beauplaisir in an altogether different mode of courtship based on the interpretation of signs of hidden desire, rather than on the tearful resistance of Fantomina or the easy-going compliance of Celia. He does not 'urge his Passion directly to [Widow Bloomer], but by a thousand little softening Artifices, which he well knew how to use, [gives] her leave to guess he [is] enamoured'.⁹² When they arrive at an inn, they are both aware of their mutual inclination for one another, but propriety dictates that Fantomina signal her willingness by fainting, a way in which she can make her body available whilst maintaining, at least in Beauplaisir's eyes, her reputation. In this way, the selective hysteria that Boccicchio calls attention to is used by Fantomina as a self-conscious tool to fulfil her desire.

In her final disguise, as Incognita, the heroine is arguably at her most powerful. In masking herself, she becomes a blank canvas, and makes her position as the possessor of knowledge which is withheld from Beauplaisir explicit for the first time in the narrative. She

⁹¹ Haywood, *Fantomina*, p. 52, p. 53.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 56.

embodies the mystery of the feminine, the unknowable. As Croskery argues, Incognita finally ‘calls Beauplaisir’s attention to the fact that he might be objectified by his own desires in a way that she is not’.⁹³ The result is that he flees the house, flees the queerness of Fantomina’s in-betweenness, unable to process an identity that refuses to signify in a familiar feminine form. Her withheld identity leaves him ‘so much out of Humour [...] at the Disappointment of his curiosity, that he resolve[s] never to make a second Visit’.⁹⁴ Fantomina’s most daring disguise is closest to what we know of her initial, undisclosed identity but also represents her method of occupying a space which exposes stereotypes of femininity for what they are: performed fictions and blank canvases.

Although Fantomina remains successful in concealing her identity from her lover, she cannot conceal her pregnancy, and she is found out by her newly appearing mother after she goes into labour during a ball. An astounded Beauplaisir is exonerated of blame by Fantomina’s mother, who dispatches Fantomina to a nunnery. At the end of the novel, the reversal of power structures that Fantomina has effected through her disguises is exposed to Beauplaisir and his position as an unknowing participant in what we might read as his objectification is made clear to him. Because the heroine’s transgression is kept secret, her banishment, according to Croskery, suggests ‘not a conclusion, but a sequel’, given that many tales of amatory fiction begin in convents.⁹⁵ Indeed, the inclusion of the pornographic work *Venus in the Cloister* in a recent collection of Haywood’s writings further complicates the assumption that Fantomina’s exploits end with her removal to a monastery by demonstrating the contemporary associations between monastic life and sexual transgression.⁹⁶ Ros Ballaster also notes that

the conclusion of *Fantomina* is one of the least melancholy of Haywood’s endings. [...] This heroine suffers none of the psychological torment that leads so many of her counterparts [...] to the grave. The story of *Fantomina* offers a challenge to the

⁹³ Croskery, ‘Masquing Desire’, p. 88.

⁹⁴ Haywood, *Fantomina*, p. 67.

⁹⁵ Croskery, ‘Masquing Desire’, pp. 91-92.

⁹⁶ See Pettitt, Croskery and Patchias (eds.), *Fantomina and Other Works*, p. 24 and Appendix B: ‘Eighteenth-Century Pornography: Jean Barrin(?), *Venus in the Cloister; or, The Nun in Her Smock* (1724)’, pp. 258-71. This pornographic text, published by Edmund Curll, had, according to Terry Castle, ‘given new currency to old notions regarding the hypersexuality of nuns and priests’. *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), p. 40.

conventional plot structure and gendered subject positions of the amatory tale.⁹⁷

I would argue that in fact, many amatory fictions explore alternatives to the conventional alignments of maleness with power and femaleness with weakness, and that when they do examine female victimhood, it is often through a critical lens, rather than simply for titillation. Fantomina's machinations, like Silvia's, demonstrate that positions of power achieved through the creation of knowledge imbalances, are open to both men and women. Other critics such as Croskery and Patchias also refute the characterisation of *Fantomina* as just another typical story of the persecuted maiden, and celebratory readings of the text stress the novella's resistance to 'conventional categories of sexual pursuit, sexual tragedy, or sexual victory'.⁹⁸

However, there are also serious limitations to *Fantomina*'s radicalism. Like Silvia in *Love-Letters*, Fantomina is enabled by her ruin to perform, and by performing to exploit, fictions of femininity in order to live a life that is not predicated on the total absence of desire. Ballaster argues that the novella is part of 'Haywood's attempt to "plot" a way out of the negative opposition of the unfortunate mistress and the mistress of artifice, proffering in its place the model of a female experimentation with amatory codes'.⁹⁹ But the experimentation is, in this case, limited to self-objectification which ultimately benefits one man. Just as necessity negates Silvia's agency, Fantomina's constancy to a man who continues to victimise and mistreat her negates her agency by rendering her motives unclear. Is this a revenge narrative, or is it an example of what Freud refers to as repetition compulsion, the repetition of a trauma in order to gain mastery over it, or does Fantomina truly desire Beauplaisir? Whilst we can chart shifting power relations in the novel, we cannot be sure about agency if we take agency to be a question of volition. Is this a liberatory text? Yes, to a limited extent, but as I go on to argue in chapter three, this text has much more to say about the process of identity construction than it does about female agency, and, as such, readings that search for the queerness of understandings

⁹⁷ Ballaster, *Seductive Forms*, p. 192.

⁹⁸ Pettit, Croskery and Patchias (eds.), p. 25. Cf., for example, Richetti, *Popular Fiction Before Richardson*, where Richetti claims that Haywood 'repeated [...] the fable of persecuted innocence, exploiting over and over again the same erotic-pathetic clichés and the same rhetoric of love's power and the tragic and compulsive dramatic universe it implies' (pp. 207-208).

⁹⁹ Ballaster, *Seductive Forms*, p. 181.

of identity in the text yield more than feminist readings focused on ascertaining the extent to which this is a transgressive or reactionary text.

Jacqueline Pearson writes that 'Behn's fictional worlds are inhabited both by exaggeratedly powerful and exaggeratedly powerless women', and the same might be said of other amatory fictions too.¹⁰⁰ That the transition can occur from powerlessness to power, via the use of knowledge and performance, considerably disrupts associations of femininity with weakness and is suggestive of a more fluid conception of gender identity based on changeable organisations of power. Behn's short tale, *The Nun*, tells the story of Ardelia, whose inconstancy to three lovers results in all of their deaths, and also her own. The narrator interrupts the narrative to exclaim, 'Ah! how wretched is our Sex, in being the unhappy Occasion of so many fatal Mischiefs ev'n between the Dearest Friends!'¹⁰¹ In casting the woman as the 'Occasion' of narrative action, Behn situates her heroine as both the helpless cause of male competition, and the powerful manipulator of male desire. The wretchedness of women is, in amatory texts, easily translated into power, but it is a power that remains deeply problematic for feminist readings. Suffice to say that amatory depictions of the movement from victim to victor (albeit on uncertain, problematic and temporary terms) demonstrate the critique and subversion of essentialist definitions of female identity, and suggest how a familiarity with these essentialist definitions and an ability to manipulate them can be used to gain power.

Female Communities: Unaccountable Femininities

So far, this chapter has explored the ways in which amatory fiction recognises and plays on gender as constructed and performed in order to examine reformulations of traditional (gendered) power structures in terms of heterosexual relationships. The final section of this chapter examines some of the other alternatives that the genre offers to these power structures, in terms of female solitude, female relationships, and female community. I argue that depictions

¹⁰⁰ Jacqueline Pearson, 'Gender and Narrative in the Fiction of Aphra Behn (Concluded)', *The Review of English Studies*, 42 (1991), 179-190 (p. 179).

¹⁰¹ Aphra Behn, *The Nun; or, The Perjur'd Beauty* (1697), repr. in *Works*, ed. by Todd, III, 292-311 (p. 306).

of intellectual communities such as in Jane Barker's Galesia trilogy (*Love Intrigues*, 1713; *A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies*, 1723; and *The Lining of the Patch-Work Screen*, 1726), which privilege female creativity and artistry, work to construct writing as an alternative to the hegemonic trajectory of women's lives.¹⁰² This is a concern that continues into chapter two in an exploration of the crafting of narrative voice in amatory fiction, and is revisited again in chapter five, when I examine the influence of amatory writers on Sarah Scott, who was associated with, although not part of, the bluestocking circle in the mid to late eighteenth century. In addition to women writers, amatory fiction also sometimes depicts platonic female friendships, female cooperation, and female retirement as alternatives to married life, and to the female competition that characterises so many interactions between women in amatory texts. Some writers choose to capitalise on the more suggestive, titillating aspects of these female friendships, and others, such as Manley, explicitly describe and comment upon lesbian communities. What this section aims to demonstrate is that in addition to queering ways of understanding the relationships between sex, gender and power, amatory fiction is also exploring queer, sometimes even utopian, alternatives to the very structure of the romance-influenced narrative.

Jane Barker in particular advocates a variety of unconventional substitutes to married life in her Galesia trilogy. As an unmarried woman, Barker's pseudo-autobiographical narrator, Galesia, seems particularly keen to stress the ways in which women can acceptably live outside of the heterosexual norm. For Barker, a Catholic, the austere solitude of the convent is something to be celebrated as a morally admirable option, rather than sensationalised, or satirised as the origin of scandalous behaviour, as it is in the works of Behn and Haywood, and indeed in pornographic texts. In *The History of the Nun*, Behn warns against an unthinking retirement into the convent, writing that: 'the young Beauty [...] who dedicates herself to the service of God, ought, first, very well to consider the Self-denial she is going to put upon her Youth, her fickle faithless deceiving Youth', and claiming that a retirement without due

¹⁰² Throughout this thesis, I treat Barker as an amatory writer because she is heavily reliant on the techniques that are integral to the amatory genre, particularly a self-conscious textuality that experiments with formations of gender and genre.

consideration causes an ‘abundance of Mischiefs and Miseries’.¹⁰³ Galesia, however, holds a different opinion. When her brother returns from France, we hear that:

he frequently entertain’d [her] with Descriptions of Places, and Customs of *France*, in particular, Convents, and their Way of Living, which [she] so admir’d, that [she] wish’d for such Places in *England*; which, if there had been, ’tis certain [she] had then become a Nun, and under a holy Veil bury’d all Thoughts of *Bosvil*.¹⁰⁴

For Galesia, the solace of the convent offers a potential way to recover from her rejection by Bosvil, but with no convents in England, she turns to education and poetry instead. Having stressed her original desire to adhere to the expected amatory codes by which rejected or shamed women retreat to the convent, Galesia trespasses, with a show of reluctance, upon the ‘masculine’ domains of classics, medicine and creative composition. By constructing herself as a poet, situating herself amongst a group of male scholars, and exchanging verse with them, Galesia presents an alternative to the paradigm of female submission to male authority, positing a different type of male-female relationship, ‘vertuous and innocent: No Flear or Grimace tending to Lewdness, or cunning Artifice [...] But pure and candid, such as might be amongst the Celestial Inhabitants’.¹⁰⁵ Galesia’s lack of sexual transgression is used to mask her claim to a stereotypically masculine identity: the scholar. However, the implications in terms of sex/gender divisions are the same as in many other amatory fictions: namely, that masculine and feminine attributes are available to both men and women, and are not tied to sex. The idea that gender relations might drastically change if men and women were given equal educational opportunities is one that is championed in the early eighteenth century by Mary Astell (*A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest*, 1694) and in the late eighteenth century by Catharine Macaulay (*Letters on Education*, 1790). Vivien Jones claims that Macaulay’s voice is an isolated one, advocating chastity, and a rational education as a means to destroy the basis of gender difference.¹⁰⁶ I would argue that Barker is effectively arguing for the same thing through her evocation of a platonic learned community.

¹⁰³ Behn, *The History of the Nun*, p. 212, p. 213.

¹⁰⁴ Barker, *Love Intrigues*, p. 36.

¹⁰⁵ Jane Barker, *A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies*, repr. in *The Galesia Trilogy*, ed. by Shiner Wilson, pp. 49-173 (p. 95).

¹⁰⁶ Vivien Jones (ed.), *Women in the Eighteenth-Century: Constructions of Femininity* (London: Routledge, 1990) p. 101.

Toni Bowers has noted that Barker ‘seems to have considered poetry to be an almost monastic vow, at once a commitment to virginity and a kind of marriage contract, [but] a sacred and costly calling’.¹⁰⁷ This conception of writing is apparent in *Love Intrigues*, when Barker writes that her muses say to her ‘We will [...] assist thy Flight, | Till thou reach fair Orinda’s Height, | If thou can’st this World’s Folly slight.’¹⁰⁸ The choice between an intellectual life and a sexual one is not framed as an easy one, but chastity, Barker argues, is a safeguard against male cruelty and abandonment. In the poem ‘To my *Indifferent Lover*, who complain’d of my *Indifferency*’, Galesia writes disdainfully about the type of men who claim many amatory heroines as their prey, concluding: ‘Yet there’s a Kindness in this feign’d Amour, | It teaches me, ne’er to believe Man more’.¹⁰⁹ Rather than try to interpret appearances and risk joining other fallen amatory heroines, Galesia chooses to opt out of the game entirely. Nonetheless, her disappointment that her marriage plans are repeatedly thwarted by a number of unsuitable matches is clear when she admits ‘it is a Grief extreamly hard to bear, to find ones self thus abandoned, in the Flower of Youth’, and this disappointment works to undermine her self-construction as heroically and primarily committed to poetry.¹¹⁰ Although her solutions differ from alternatives to marriage in other amatory texts, which typically include living as a mistress, seeking revenge on seducers, or, less controversially, retirement from society with a female companion, Barker’s Galesia trilogy is still, as Kathryn King argues, ‘an attempt to renarrate the exemplary female life [albeit] around the idea of celibacy and the single life’, as opposed to around the manipulation of power positions.¹¹¹

The trope of female community is apparent on a structural level in many amatory texts, which carry on the romance tradition whereby inset narratives allow characters to relate their tales to one another. Jane Barker’s generic innovation in *A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies* and *The Lining of the Patch Work Screen* makes use of a framework that emphasises the aspects

¹⁰⁷ Toni Bowers, ‘Jacobite Difference and the Poetry of Jane Barker’, *ELH* 64 (1997), 857-69 (p. 860).

¹⁰⁸ Barker, *Love Intrigues*, p. 14.

¹⁰⁹ Barker, *A Patch-Work Screen*, p. 106.

¹¹⁰ Barker, *Love Intrigues*, p. 29.

¹¹¹ Kathryn R. King, ‘The Unaccountable Wife and Other Tales of Female Desire in Jane Barker’s *A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies*’, *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*, 35 (1994), 155-172 (p. 157).

of community found in the dialogic form of other amatory fictions. The creation of a patchwork of fictional and non-fictional material, character biography and author autobiography, oral and written traditions, provides the means to tell a number of stories through different narrative voices. Galesia foreshadows the actions of periodical authors such as Haywood in *The Female Spectator* (April 1744 to May 1746) by bringing together a number of different sources, ostensibly from different speakers and writers. She compares the bringing together of these disparate elements to ‘the Clashing of Atoms, which at last united to compose this glorious Fabrick of the UNIVERSE’.¹¹² Her combination of masculine scientific language and feminine domestic method allows her text to mediate between the two in an attempt to create a microcosm of the wider world. The mixing of previously gendered languages, when added to the sense of multiple authors, and of narratives within narratives is particularly interesting in Barker’s novels, because the patchwork metaphor she employs foreshadows the much later feminist fascination with the reclamation of women’s pursuits such as needlework and patchwork as a means by which to create a unified community amongst the oppressed.

Galesia’s notions of female community are not dissimilar to the community created by Haywood for Belinda and Cleomira in *The British Recluse*. Rejected by the same man, these two women form a close bond through the relation of their tales. Their future connection is apparent from the moment of the first meeting, which is described as ‘something particular for Persons of the same Sex; each found, at first sights, so much to admire in the other that it kept both from speaking for some Moments’.¹¹³ The language of their first meeting is reminiscent of the language used in amatory fiction’s courtship scenes, the heroine momentarily incapacitated by the unfamiliar sensation of desire. The sharing of their stories draws them closer, and we hear that, eventually, ‘Belinda quitted her Chamber, being desired by the RECLUSE to take part of her Bed.’¹¹⁴ At the very end of the story, the two women retire into the country together, where ‘they still live in a perfect Tranquility, happy in the real Friendship of each other, despising the uncertain *Pleasures* and free from all the *Hurries* and *Disquiets* which attend the

¹¹² Barker, *A Patch-Work Screen*, p. 52.

¹¹³ Haywood, *The British Recluse*, p. 159.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

Gaieties of the Town'.¹¹⁵ Hans Turley has argued that the friendship of these two women is purposely suggestive, leaving readers to decide whether Haywood is celebrating chastity and female friendship, or suggesting that such friendship might provide a sexualised substitute to a heterosexual relationship. Turley has also likened the seclusion of Cleomira and Belinda in the countryside to the isolation of Mary Hearne's characters Amaryllis and Calista (*The Female Deserters*, 1719).¹¹⁶ Hearne's relatively unknown text is an amatory novella that provides a sequel to her earlier work *The Lover's Week* (1718). It follows Amaryllis, who has run away to be with her lover into the countryside, and her friendship with her neighbour Calista, who has done the same thing. Amaryllis and Calista are happy in their seclusion, and content with their choices, making these novels unusual in their failure to explore the negative consequences of seduction.

Bocchicchio has suggested that the ending of *The British Recluse* is not a satisfying solution, arguing that such a retreat is not a choice, but rather a necessity for these ruined women, and that their lasting love for Lysander renders their withdrawal from society 'an evasion rather than a solution'.¹¹⁷ Ballaster is in agreement when she claims that it is only 'away from the presence of men, and without the possibility of either retrieving the lost lover, that the friendship is allowed credence'.¹¹⁸ Likewise, the friendship of Hearne's Amaryllis and Calista is one based around their position in terms of the men who have seduced them. In a world in which female competition is rife, these examples of female friendship and cooperation are rare, at least within the narratives themselves rather than as structuring devices. As with Silvia's and Fantomina's precarious power positions, readings of these alternative female relationships as utopian is problematic due to their unstable positions within masculinist structures, and the fact that female cooperation is often prompted by victimisation, abandonment or neglect. This is the case even in more active examples of female cooperation. In Haywood's *The City Jilt*, for example, Glicera is seduced by Philadore, but then works with his wife Helena, and other

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 224.

¹¹⁶ Hans Turley, 'The Anomalous Fiction of Mary Hearne', *Studies in the Novel*, 30 (1998), 139-149 (pp. 147-148).

¹¹⁷ Bocchicchio, "Blushing, Trembling, and Incapable of Defense", p. 112.

¹¹⁸ Ballaster, *Seductive Forms*, p. 186.

female friends to swindle several men out of their money and revenge herself against Philadore.

Some amatory novellas do try and envisage a world beyond the heteronormative though, providing depictions of close female bonds that we might today define as lesbian.¹¹⁹ Jane Barker's story of 'The Unaccountable Wife' in *A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies* and Delarivier Manley's depiction of the all-female cabal in *The New Atalantis* both provide intriguing glimpses into the treatment of same-sex desire and relationships by women writers at this time. In 'The Unaccountable Wife', one of the servants regularly becomes pregnant by her master but rather than casting her out, his wife waits on this servant hand and foot, 'leaving this vile Strumpet in Bed with her Husband; for they lay all Three together every Night'.¹²⁰ The husband eventually tires of the maid, unwilling to support the children she continues to bear, but finds he cannot persuade his wife to part with her. When he finally sends the servant away, the wife leaves with her. After the husband dies, his wife continues to refuse accommodation offered by friends and relations, preferring to stay with the maid and the maid's children, 'insomuch, that being reduc'd to Poverty, she begg'd in the Streets to support them'.¹²¹ Even the Queen cannot persuade her to abandon her servant with offers of a pension. The only explanation attempted for this story is that 'this poor Creature was under some Spell or Inchantment, or she could never have persisted, in so strange a manner, to oppose her Husband, and all her nearest Friends, and even her *Sovereign*'.¹²² Anyone familiar with the works of other amatory writers though, could clearly identify this seemingly irrational and disobedient behaviour with the symptoms of love. Despite the ambivalent reception of this tale by Galesia's circle, we can read the story as one that unsettles expected gender codes by highlighting a same-sex relationship and placing it, in this case, in a superior position to the heterosexual relationship. Kathryn King writes that 'the phallic nexus – imagined to be primary, compelling, and all-explanatory – gives way to the female bond', and therefore the text 'contains the beginnings of a critique of patriarchal culture's blindness to forms of female desire which exist

¹¹⁹ I use the term 'lesbian' here cautiously, and mainly for brevity in order to refer to eighteenth-century same-sex desire.

¹²⁰ Barker, *A Patch-Work Screen*, p. 145.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 149.

apart from procreation or the desiring male'.¹²³ In this sense, the text fits in with the amatory project in its interrogation of the gendering of desire. As in *The British Recluse*, retirement is posited as some sort of alternative to the other amatory destinies that women might expect, and, as King has noted, 'the wife's refusal of the heterosexual order stages [...] an extreme version of the more hesitant sexual withdrawal enacted by Galesia in the core narrative'.¹²⁴

Manley's treatment of lesbianism is much more explicit than Barker's, and her descriptions of the mystery and unaccountability of the cabal constitute a mocking invocation of authorial innocence, rather than signifying any real difficulty in articulating what occurs in the cabal. What for Barker is truly 'unaccountable', is, for Manley, something worthy of many pages of description. Upon seeing a group of raucous women in a coach, Intelligence informs her audience that the cabal is:

A sect (however innocent in it self) that does not fail from meeting its share of censure from the world. Alas! what can they do? How unfortunate are women? If they seek their diversion out of themselves and include the other sex, they must be criminal? If in themselves (as those of the new Cabal), still they are criminal? Though censurers must carry their imaginations a much greater length than I am able to do mine, to explain this hypothesis with success.¹²⁵

The protestation of innocence on Intelligence's part is underwritten by her detailed description of the machinations of this 'secret' all-female sect, which is ruled over predominantly by widows and unmarried women, and characterised by 'uncommon happiness', where 'mutual love bestows all things in common'.¹²⁶ We hear of members cross-dressing, hiring female prostitutes, and ruining themselves by lavishing gifts upon their female lovers in the cabal. David Michael Robinson argues that, despite affirmative feminist readings of the idyllic cabal from critics such as Janet Todd, and more equivocal assertions of the passage's conflicted idealism and misogyny from Ros Ballaster, Emma Donoghue and Elizabeth Wahl, Manley's description is actually firmly anti-lesbian.¹²⁷ For Manley, Robinson argues, lesbianism becomes a satirical target by which she can protect heterosexual women and defend herself against

¹²³ King, 'The Unaccountable Wife', p. 165, p. 167.

¹²⁴ Ibid. p. 160.

¹²⁵ Manley, p. 154.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 154, p. 161.

¹²⁷ David Michael Robinson, "'For How Can They Be Guilty?': Lesbian and Bisexual Women in Manley's *New Atalantis*", *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 23 (2001), 187-220 (pp. 189-90).

charges of man-hating in the rest of *The New Atalantis*.¹²⁸ Astrea states ‘if only tender friendship, inviolable and sincere, be the regard, what can be more meritorious or a truer emblem of their happiness above?’.¹²⁹ But, she goes on to warn that if strict modesty is not adhered to, these women invite laughter and satire from men, ‘who arbitrarily decide that woman was only created [...] to adorn the husband’s reign, perfect his happiness, and propagate the kind’.¹³⁰ It is a double-edged warning: women should adhere to modesty to avoid censure from men. But in her stress on the arbitrariness of male constructions of female roles, which Robinson overlooks, Astrea suggests that it is exactly such censure, and the narrow roles that women are expected to fulfil, as trophies, wives and wombs, that renders heterosexuality unpalatable to women. As in Barker’s story, and despite the satirical edge to her description and a seeming condemnation of lesbian behaviour, Manley once again offers an alternative to the oscillation between victimhood and power engendered by heterosexual relationships, and the existence of the cabal at all demonstrates a thriving lesbian community that did indeed operate outside of the heterosexual norm.

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This chapter has opened up some of the concerns of this thesis by examining the ways in which amatory fiction engages with questions of gender, power, desire and performance. I started by demonstrating a tension in amatory fiction’s depictions of gender difference between essentialist generalisations about male and female natures, and an understanding of gender as constructed. The latter, I argued, provides a means through which amatory writers could critique the restrictive forms of femininity available to amatory heroines, and women more widely. This critique has provided the focus for many feminist investigations of the genre, which I hoped to add to by unpacking the method of the critique, as a queer method, with its play on authenticity, appearance and performance. I argued that power positions and desire are posited as open to

¹²⁸ Ibid. pp. 187-220, particularly pp. 199-200, p. 204, and p. 208.

¹²⁹ Manley, p. 161.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 161.

both men and women in amatory fiction, and whilst its provision of alternatives to normative femininities in the form of female libertines and female communities makes the genre of obvious interest to critics searching for proto-feminist impulses, it also renders it queer.

I examined the ways in which amatory writers make apparent the impossibility of achieving the sort of prescribed feminine identities found in conduct literature, and how they document the forced masquerade that such prescriptions necessitate for survival. In response to this necessary dissimulation, amatory fiction harnesses the artificiality of identity and suggests ways in which playing on this artificiality can afford amatory heroines a degree of power. My examination of lovesickness provided an example of the way that amatory texts open up desire and power positions to both sexes. Thus, whilst depictions of lovesickness engage in the same criticism of ideal femininities that I identified earlier in the chapter, they also provide a deeper interrogation of notions of difference based on sex.

The examples taken from conduct books and satirical poetry, served to demonstrate that the virgin/whore binary that is so apparent in the contrasting images of women produced by these two types of fiction has its roots in the same anxieties about appearance. My readings of Behn's *Silvia* and Haywood's *Fantomina* identified the ways in which amatory writers are exploiting these anxieties by destabilising balances of knowledge. In doing so, these writers problematise rigid definitions of femininity and instead posit identity as a fluctuating process, in which one can transition from victimhood to power, and back again. Unlike some feminist interpretations of this power though, I argue that its origins in victimhood, and its fragility mean that it does not constitute agency for amatory heroines, who often remain entrapped in a patriarchal system that they can stretch the edges of, or reshape, but not escape. The final examination of alternatives to heteronormative romance codes explored the presentation, in amatory fiction, of education, retirement, and female community as ways out of the power play that characterises heterosexual relationships in amatory worlds. The idea of female community constituted by writing informs the following chapter, in which I consider narrative voice, artistry and self-conscious textuality as methods by which amatory writers, unlike their libertine heroines, are able to claim agency for themselves.

In short, this chapter has argued that contrasting ideas of gender as innate and constructed are both present in amatory fiction, but that constructivism is used to critique prescriptive femininity. Amatory fiction is engaged in a recognition of power and passion as independent of sex; of victimhood, like power, as a temporary state; and of identity more widely as queer, in constant flux, indefinite. As such, amatory fiction queers hegemonic structures of difference but also searches for alternatives to these hegemonic structures in community, in friendship, and in the form of the text.

'The Pictures of the Pen':

The Queer Art of Amatory Authorship

I would have her Mind, her Person, her Manner describ'd to me; I would have you paint her with as masterly an Hand, as she has painted others, that I may know her perfectly before I see her.

(Delarivier Manley, *The Adventures of Rivella*, 1714)¹

Hold still, we're going to do your portrait, so that you can begin looking like it right away.

(Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', 1975)²

'Do Her Eyes love as well as Her Pen?' Chevalier D'Aumont asks Sir Charles Lovemore, as the latter begins his account of Rivella.³ The recreation of the pseudo-autobiographical heroine in the conversation between these two men is predicated on D'Aumont's assumption that the passionate text is the product of the passionate body, and that the woman and the text are ultimately the same thing. As Susan Friedman notes, gendered analogies between writing, biology, and, I would add, sexuality, have been commonplace throughout literary history: the pen is a metaphorical penis, but to write can be to seduce a reader, or to conceive, gestate, and birth a text. The woman's generative capacity in particular provokes a neurotic desire in some male writing to neutralise the potential power of female (re)production by aligning the female body with literary worthlessness. Women's (pro)creativity is cast as 'a mindless, unconscious, uncontrolled act of the body' in opposition to cerebral male creative genius.⁴ Alexander Pope provides a notable example of the way in which the conflation between body and text amounts to a gynophobic separation of procreativity from creativity. In *The Dunciad* (first published in

¹ Delarivier Manley, *The Adventures of Rivella*, repr. in *The Selected Works of Delarivier Manley*, ed. by Rachel Carnell and Ruth Herman, 5 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2005), IV, 1-58 (p. 8). All subsequent references are to this edition.

² Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', trans. by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs* 1 (1976), 875-93 (p. 892).

³ Manley, *Rivella*, p. 10.

⁴ Susan Stanford Friedman, 'Creativity and the Childbirth Metaphor: Gender Difference in Literary Discourse', *Feminist Studies*, 13 (1987), 49-82 (p. 65).

1728), the goddess Dulness presides over Britain, and is infamously held accountable by Pope for the degraded state of British literary culture.⁵ She is described as follows:

Daughter of Chaos and eternal Night:
Fate in their dotage this fair Ideot gave,
Gross as her sire, and as her mother grave,
Laborious, heavy, busy, bold, and blind,
She rul'd, in native Anarchy, the mind.⁶

Pope stresses that Dulness, as 'the Great Mother', is actively working to self-replicate, creating more and more Dunces, which 'in each she marks her Image full exprest'.⁷ His note to the above lines warns that Dulness

is not to be taken contractedly for mere Stupidity, but in the enlarged sense of the word, for all Slowness of Apprehension, Shortness of Sight, or imperfect Sense of things. [Dulness is] a ruling principle not inert, but turning topsy-turvy the Understanding, and inducing an Anarchy or confused State of Mind.⁸

For Pope, the childbirth metaphor proves a particularly fruitful means by which to personify the drive behind a commercial marketplace that he saw engaged in perpetual acts of formulaic reproduction, devoid of creativity or meaning.⁹ But there is also, within the note, a recognition of the destabilising qualities of these reproductions, a fear that they might lead to an 'imperfect Sense of things', or turn the understanding 'topsy-turvy'. As we shall see in the following chapters, this capacity for ambiguity is precisely the queerness that amatory formulae exploited, and Pope's anxiety about the breakdown of the knowable boundaries and categories established by Enlightenment thought renders his choice of a metaphor in which one body becomes two all the more appropriate.

Dulness affects both male and female Grub Street writers, and indeed most of the targets of Pope's satire are men. Indeed, Valerie Rumbold notes that 'women's writing, though objectively so important among the cultural trends which Pope decries, is effectively

⁵ There are four principal versions of *The Dunciad*: the original 1728 poem, the revised *Dunciad Variorum* (1729), *The New Dunciad* (1742), which was an additional book designed as a sequel to the original, and *the Dunciad in Four Books* (1743).

⁶ Alexander Pope, *The Dunciad in Four Books*, ed. by Valerie Rumbold, 2nd edn (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2009), p. 99, Book I, ll. 12-16. All subsequent references are to this edition.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 114, Book I. l. 107.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 99, n. 15.

⁹ Pope's thinking reflects contemporary medical debates over women's generative capacity within reproduction. See Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 35-43.

marginalized' in favour of associating femininity with sexuality and bodily excess.¹⁰ But his grotesque depictions of the female body and of motherhood nonetheless signal a misogynist fear of female (pro)creativity and power which goes beyond the mocking portrayal of the mostly male writers in the poem. Aligning motherhood, the imagery of death, and the financially-motivated formation of poetry or drama from 'nameless Somethings', Pope asserts, once again, the incompatibility of procreativity and creativity:

How hints, like spawn, scarce quick in embryo lie,
How new-born nonsense first is taught to cry,
Maggots half-form'd in rhyme exactly meet,
And learn to crawl upon poetic feet.¹¹

The hack poets and playwrights bear and nurture children in the form of nonsense books that contain half-formed ideas only. The image of crawling maggots, where maggot has the double meaning of both larvae and ideas, situates the birth of this type of literature alongside death: the death of true creativity. Pope's infamous portrayal of Eliza Haywood in Book II casts her as another monstrous mother, with 'two babes of love close clinging to her waist', which could just as easily be novels as children.¹² Both, in this case, are illegitimate. Ros Ballaster has noted that Pope's depictions of Haywood's 'majestic size', 'cow-like-udders', and 'ox-like eyes' demonstrate the association of romance writers with 'the female body as a grotesque "dilation" and inversion of narrative teleology and linguistic order.'¹³ As Rumbold writes, for Pope:

The promiscuous woman's refusal to know her place has become symbol not only of female writing, but also of writing by the dunces [...] It is an allusion far more effective than anything that can be said directly about bad writers because it draws on conviction about the duties and limitations of women far more emotive than beliefs about writing.¹⁴

The essentialism of body/text confluences is thus deployed as a rhetorical tool. We can read D'Aumont's and Lovemore's treatment of Rivella as an articulation that prefigures

¹⁰ Valerie Rumbold, 'Cut the Caterwauling: Women Writers (Not) in Pope's *Dunciads*', *The Review of English Studies* 52 (2001), 524-39 (p. 539). She notes that across Pope's *Dunciads*, only five women are consistently attacked in all of them (pp. 524-5), and discusses Pope's omission from the published *Dunciad* of a section drafted in manuscript attacking women writers as an act of marginalization that refuses women writers any position in the literary world.

¹¹ Pope, *The Dunciad*, p. 106, Book I. l. 56, pp. 106-07, Book I, ll. 59-62.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 172, Book II, l. 158.

¹³ Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), p. 167. For the depiction of Haywood, see Pope, *The Dunciad*, p. 173, Book II, ll. 163-64.

¹⁴ Valerie Rumbold, *Women's Place in Pope's World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 166.

Pope's later alignment of body and text, and that functions in similar, but less explicit ways. Although apparently celebratory, the reduction of Rivella's writing to an expression of the attractions of her person serves an implicitly neutralising purpose.

Whilst Pope plays on the threat of the unruly female body, Manley's narrator trivialises it.

It is an account of such conflations, and the strategies by which amatory writers react to and negotiate them that forms the first part of this chapter. I examine the discourses that connect authorship and femininity in the early eighteenth century, and that allow hostile critics to draw aesthetic conclusions about amatory texts from moral judgments of amatory writers. But I also explore the reactions of amatory writers to charges of immorality and bad writing, played out through mimicry, evasion, and claims to artistry. *Rivella*, for example, is typical of such reactions. Commissioned by Edmund Curll but written to prevent the publication of a potentially hostile biography of Manley by Charles Gildon, Manley's defensive strategy is clear throughout the text. She creates a highly fictionalised self-portrait that at once provides the expected salacious details, but also works to undermine the authenticity of those details by distancing author from subject. Indeed, Katherine Zelinsky notes that *Rivella* is 'a playful testimony to the uncertainty of origins and the unreliability of sources.'¹⁵ The claim that the text is a translation from French, a story passed verbally from Lovemore to D'Aumont, and then to the translator-publisher, situates the tale at least three removes from Rivella herself, gesturing towards its citational, second-hand nature and the potential unreliability of its representations. *Rivella* thereby rehearses the masculine approach of the narrator to its heroine through D'Aumont's voice, but the text itself subtly avoids the biographical urge to fix an elusive female subject. As such, *Rivella* performs a dual act of mimicry and evasion. Manley's narrative transvestism allows her to comment on the ways in which women are painted by men whilst also drawing attention to her own skill as a writer.

Manley's ironic deployment of her two male narrators' desires in *Rivella*, and the playful humour with which she writes, went largely unnoticed in early recovery-project

¹⁵ Katherine Zelinsky (ed.), introduction to *The Adventures of Rivella*, by Delariver Manley (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1999), p. 18.

criticism eager to align the author with Rivella, or Delia (from *The New Atalantis* [1709]). Fidelis Morgan's biography of Manley, *A Woman of No Character* (1986), for instance, intersperses historical fact, Manley's letters, and excerpts from *Rivella* and *The New Atalantis* as though the latter were factual, and in doing so overlooks the play on veracity in Manley's prose. Instead, Morgan attempts to impose the same biographical fixity on textuality that hostile eighteenth-century critics had done and thus similarly conflates text and body in such a way as to undermine Manley's claims to creative artistry. The knowing critique that informs the narrative voices of Lovemore and D'Aumont is forgotten as their interpretations are afforded precedence over Manley's own masterly brushstrokes.¹⁶ Indeed, as we saw in the introduction, body/text confluences continue to proliferate into the twentieth century, and Pope's alignment between monstrous bodies and literary inferiority is preserved in the narrative of the rise of the novel, and the rejection of female precursors to Richardson as dull writers of unimaginative formula fiction.

In examining the dialogue between critics and writers as both parties struggle for control of the portrait of the professional female author, I focus on amatory writers' proto-postmodern play with body, text, presence, absence, distance and layering. In doing so, this chapter initiates the approach that informs the next two chapters, in which I explore the correspondences between amatory and modern treatments of identity, discourse, and the body. The second part of this chapter turns to consider how this shift in focus might affect the ways in which we characterise amatory fiction. Whilst paying attention to amatory strategies of evasiveness and self-conscious textuality renders clear the claims to agency and artistry in these texts, it also uncovers a wider intertextual community based not upon particular women, but upon these strategic experimentations with form and narrative voice. I suggest that a focus on these strategies, as opposed to author-based criticism that risks reiterating damaging eighteenth-century confluences of body and text, considerably increases the scope of the amatory genre by

¹⁶ Jacqueline Pearson criticises Maureen Duffy and Angeline Goreau for similar treatments of Behn, arguing that they perform 'naively literalist reading[s] in taking *Oroonoko* and even *The Fair Jilt* and other tales quite simply as self-revelation, as direct autobiography'. 'Gender and Narrative in the Fiction of Aphra Behn', *The Review of English Studies*, n.s., 42 (1991), 40-56 (p. 41).

making room for anonymous and lesser known texts. This is an approach that the intertextuality of amatory fiction urges; the repetitions of certain plots and the playfulness and ambiguity of the genre is epitomised by, but not limited to Aphra Behn, Manley, and Eliza Haywood. Thus instead of a tidy body of work, we should see amatory fiction as an organic, unruly genre, with considerable reach. This argument also informs my final chapter, which examines the influence of amatory techniques into the midcentury. Overall, this chapter argues that body/text confluences continue to result in limited pictures of the artistry of amatory writers, of the queerness of their strategies, and of the scope of the genre.

‘Tis not fit for the Ladys’: The Sexuality of the Text

As we have seen, during the early eighteenth century, both praise and criticism of amatory writers was framed in terms of the interrelationship between the text and the body that produced it. This section examines the way in which body/text confluences functioned to deny ability and agency to amatory writers, and to downplay the disruptive implications of amatory experimentation with forms of gendered writing.

The anonymous prefatory poem attached to the second part of Eliza Haywood’s *Love in Excess* (1719) celebrates the author as ‘a champion for the sex’, but frames this acclamation solely in her ability to produce in her readers ‘that fire / YOUR words alone can paint! YOUR looks inspire!’.¹⁷ Richard Savage’s poem prefacing the same novel likewise asserts that ‘what beauty ne’er could melt, thy touches fire’, working to create Haywood as a writer whose capacity to instill desire was as much a part of her person as her pen.¹⁸ But the seemingly celebratory terms in which these two writers spoke of Haywood were also used to attack amatory writers on moral grounds. When criticism was levelled at amatory writers during the eighteenth century, it almost certainly related to their own amatory exploits, as much as the salacious content of their novels. And as writers who lived in non-normative marital states, who made a living by selling their texts, and who were keen to harness the destabilising power of

¹⁷ Eliza Haywood, *Love in Excess; or, the Fatal Enquiry*, ed. by David Oakleaf, 2nd edn (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2000), p. 83. All subsequent references are to this edition.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p 82.

their own writing, they were easy targets for such conflation. But more than a reaction to the women themselves, criticism of amatory writers that reduces text to body is indicative of wider reactions to a surge in print during the eighteenth century, framed in gendered terms. As Clifford Siskin argues, ‘the new technology of writing gazed self-reflexively on its own unknown potential: a large part of what people wrote and how they wrote had to do with often discomfiting expectations regarding the productive power of writing’.¹⁹ This anxiety is evident in Pope’s use of the childbirth metaphor to critique what he sees as the feminisation and proliferation of the commercial world of print.

Other writers equated writing, particularly women’s writing, and prostitution, as a means of denying agency to certain forms of writing. Robert Gould’s 1709 poem *The Poetess, A Satyr*, makes just such a conflation:

Yet *Hackney Writers*; when their Verse did fail
To get ‘em Brandy, Bread and Cheese, and Ale,
Their Wants by Prostitution were supply’d;
Shew but a *Tester*, you might up and ride:
For *Punk* and *Poetess* agree so Pat,
You cannot well be *This*, and not be *That*.²⁰

Although this satire is aimed at women aspiring to write poetry, the sentiments seem all the more applicable to women writing in prose for money in a marketplace that catered for, or indeed created, a corrupted popular taste. Worried about the audacity of this new breed of women writers, Gould asks, ‘What has this Age produc’d from Female Pens, | But an Obsceneness that out-strides the Men’s?’²¹, demonstrating playful but nonetheless telling outrage about the negation of traditional gender roles and propriety posed by the professional female author.²¹

Long before Pope penned *The Dunciad* and Gould complained about women writers’ obscenity, Aphra Behn countered anxieties about the woman writer’s personal and textual

¹⁹ Clifford Siskin, *The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain, 1700-1830* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 3.

²⁰ Robert Gould, *The Poetess A Satyr, Being a Reply to Silvia’s Revenge*. Repr. in *The Works of Mr. Robert Gould*, 2 vols (London: W. Lewis, 1709), II, 16-17.

²¹ *Ibid.*, II, 24.

immorality in the preface to her play, *The Luckey [sic] Chance* (1686). In her spirited

‘Vindication of this Comedy’, she argues:

Nothing makes [the critics] so through-stitcht an Enemy as a full Third Day, that’s Crime enough to load [the play] with all manner of Infamy; and when they can no other way prevail with the Town, they charge it with the old never failing Scandal – that ‘tis not fit for the Ladys: As if [...] the Ladys were oblig’d to hear Indecencys only from their Pens and Plays; [...] I make a Challenge to any Person of common Sense and Reason [...] any unprejudic’d Person that knows not the Author, to read any of my Comedys and compare ‘em with others of this Age, and if they find one Word that can offend the chastest Ear, I will submit to all their peevisish Cavills; but Right or Wrong they must be Criminal because a Woman’s.²²

For Behn, accusations of immorality stem from male anxiety about the success of women writers and their jealous desperation to halt this success. She lampoons the double standard that accepts coarseness in male writing without comment, but that censures women for daring to write at all, regardless of the content. Catherine Gallagher has suggested that in complaining about her unfair treatment, Behn was simply playing the part of a persecuted woman writer. With no evidence that Behn’s career was adversely affected by the prejudice she identifies, Gallagher argues that ‘one might justifiably suspect that the author’s complaints and her adversaries’ insults were pieces of an elaborate rhetorical interaction that dictated the very terms in which she was conceived’.²³ Behn’s self-construction as a victim of Whig criticism, according to Gallagher, demonstrated the effectiveness and vigour of her own Toryism, and marked her out as a particularly politically effective writer. Such masking of agency (in this instance, political agency) beneath a façade of victimhood is characteristic of Behn’s adept manipulation of traditional gender and power roles.

Her claims for the innocence of her play also mask a more fundamental claim to a literary competence which she recognises as frustrated by gender prescriptions. She insists that her play will not offend, whilst also lamenting that ‘such Masculine Strokes in [her], must not be allow’d’.²⁴ Despite not being allowed, those ‘Masculine Strokes’ formed part of Behn’s

²² Aphra Behn, *The Luckey Chance*, repr. in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, ed. by Janet Todd, 7 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1992-96), VII: *The Plays of Aphra Behn (1682-96)* (1996), 209-84, (p. 215). All subsequent are to this edition.

²³ Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 6-8.

²⁴ Behn, *The Luckey Chance*, p. 215, p. 215, p. 216.

writing persona: her plays were no less bawdy than those of her male contemporaries. She admits and promptly excuses this bawdiness ('the least and most Excusable fault in the Men writers') in the preface to her comedy, *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678), asserting that she is forced by circumstance to write to please and claiming that 'this way of writing' is 'a way which even I despise as much below me'.²⁵ In doing so, she plays down her claims to masculine writing talent, which are most evident when she talks about writing poetry, instead constructing herself as reluctantly transgressive. But by speaking of 'my Masculine Part the Poet in me', Behn implies that even if poetry was accepted as a masculine pursuit, this gendering of talent was meaningless because it could legitimately and authentically exist in a woman.²⁶ As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, Behn's statements take part in a strategic fragmentation of gender roles. Whilst they could be read as proto-feminist recognitions of gender oppression, they also divorce sex from gender and allow Behn to occupy a space between, in which the entire spectrum of power positions remains open to her.²⁷ Her challenge, at the end of the passage, 'to any Person of common Sense and Reason [...] any unprejudic'd Person that knows not the Author', recognises the prejudice that accompanies knowledge about the author as woman, prejudice which enforces one gender, with all of its related restrictions, onto a potentially multi-gendered subjectivity. It is a recognition that comes to bear later in this chapter, when I argue that decentring the amatory writer makes us more alert to the genre as a carefully constructed conversation about reading, writing, identity and textuality.

The destabilising implications of Behn's assertions about gender and writing were not explicitly acknowledged by Behn's detractors, and it was her refusal to adhere to prescriptive ideals of femininity that provided the main focus for their censure. In his 1737 imitations of Horace, Pope writes the well known couplet: 'the stage how loosely does Astrea tread, | Who fairly puts all Characters to bed'.²⁸ He suggests that in composing what he terms 'obscene' plays, Behn acts on the same stage as her characters. They are extensions of her, their loose

²⁵ Aphra Behn, *Sir Patient Fancy: A Comedy*, repr. in *Works*, ed. by Todd, V (1996), pp. 1-82 (p. 5).

²⁶ Behn, *The Luckey Chance*, p. 217.

²⁷ For a reading of Behn's experimentation with gendered writing selves, see Ballaster, *Seductive Forms*, pp. 71-76.

²⁸ Alexander Pope, *The First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace* (London: T. Cooper, 1737), p. 17.

behaviour a demonstration of her loose morals. Janet Todd has suggested that Behn shocked the nation with her lewdness, but that she ‘also failed in a proper sense of literary privacy [by] stoutly declar[ing] that she was writing for fame’.²⁹ Whilst Penelope Aubin prefaces her work with the assertion that ‘I do not write for Bread, nor am I vain or fond of Applause; but I am very ambitious to gain the Esteem of those who honour Virtue’, Behn openly admits both writing for money and enjoying fame.³⁰ In the preface to *Sir Patient Fancy*, Behn famously asserts that she is ‘forced to write for bread and not ashamed to owne it’.³¹ Her sentiment is reiterated but altered in the hands of the journalist Ned Ward, whereby it becomes considerably more apologetic:

the condition of an author is much like that of a strumpet ... and if the reason be required why wee betake ourselves to so scandalous a profession as whoring or pamphleteering, the same excusive answer will serve us both, viz. That the unhappy circumstances of a narrow fortune hath forced us to do that for our subsistence which we are much ashamed of.³²

Both Ward and Behn address the criticism of their positions as commercial writers by excusing faults on the grounds of circumstances. But Behn’s tone is defiant, and she cannily manipulates the anxieties around the woman writer’s public appearance, simultaneously acting out victimhood as the author-whore, and asserting her freedom from gendered power structures. In the preface to *The Luckey Chance*, she exclaims, ‘I value Fame as much as if I had been born a *Hero*’ asserting an unfeminine desire for recognition which sits at odds with her excuses for the bawdiness of her work as driven by necessity.³³

Despite being granted the prestigious honour of a burial in Westminster Abbey, and the continuing influence of her writing on both male and female authors throughout the eighteenth century, Behn’s ambition often resulted in ridicule. In an attempt to neutralise the ways in which she problematised established gender constructions, as we saw in the previous chapter, Behn was frequently depicted as a desiring, hyper-sexualised woman, concerned only with love and

²⁹ Janet Todd, *The Critical Fortunes of Aphra Behn* (Columbia SC: Camden House, 1998), p. 2.

³⁰ Penelope Aubin, *A Collection of Entertaining Histories and Novels, Designed to Promote the Cause of Virtue and Honour*, 3 vols (London: D. Midwinter et. al., 1739), III, vi.

³¹ Behn, *Sir Patient Fancy*, p. 217.

³² Paul Hyland (ed.), introduction to *The London Spy*, by Ned Ward (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues Press, 1993), p. xix.

³³ Behn, *Sir Patient Fancy*, p. 217.

passion, in both her life and her fiction. In May, 1738, for example, *The Gentleman's Magazine* published 'The Apotheosis of Milton', in which Behn is portrayed as petitioning an assembly of canonical poets, including Chaucer and Dryden, to be allowed to join their ranks:

Observe that Lady dressed in the loose *Robe de Chambre* with her Neck and Breasts bare; how much Fire in her Eye! What a passionate Expression in her Motions! And how much Assurance in her Features! Observe what an Indignant Look she bestows on the President [Chaucer], who is telling her, *that none of her Sex has any Right to a Seat there*. How she throws her Eyes about, to see if she can find out any one of the Assembly who inclines to take her Part. No! not one stirs; they who are enclined [sic] in her favour are overawed, and the rest shake their Heads; and now she flings out of the Assembly.³⁴

Such a description serves both to re-feminise Behn and to infantilise her. Her bawdy plays and her amatory fictions are mapped onto her improperly attired body, recast as loose robes, bare breasts, and hysterical, irrational behaviour. Whilst Behn in this passage does not embody anything like acceptable femininity, she certainly is not masculinised, and we can see her alignment with the jilted mistress or the prostitute. But as we saw above, this was only one of the roles that Behn played in her self-construction. The familiar conflation works to downplay the political and aesthetic import of Behn's work by erasing the 'masculine' characteristics that she asserted in her writing, and also by erasing the ways in which she unpicked the relationship between gender, talent, and power. In the passage, the status quo is belligerently reasserted when Chaucer tells her that 'none of her Sex has any right to a seat there'. As we shall see, this picture constituted the lasting impression of Aphra Behn for many years, as a bawdy writer of frivolous, highly immoral love stories, rather than anything more serious. Even from Behn's elegist we hear the sentiment, 'twas pity that she practis'd what she taught'.³⁵ The portrait is painted, and Behn, unable to escape her sexualised status and despite her own protestations, begins looking like it right away.

A brief genealogy of Behn criticism will demonstrate the long trajectory and continuing presence of criticism which, because of its concern with Behn's person, continues to overlook

³⁴ 'The Apotheosis of Milton. A Vision', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 8 (1738), 469. This piece, although once attributed to Samuel Johnson, is now supposed to be the work of William Guthrie. See Paul J. Korshin, *Typologies in England, 1650-1820* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 72, n. 64.

³⁵ *An Elegy Upon the Death of Mrs. A. Behn; The Incomparable Astrea. By a Young Lady of Quality* (London: E. J, 1689).

the complexity and agility of her experimentation with self-constructions. The conflation of sexual and textual output meant that Behn's reputation declined during the second half of the eighteenth century and the Victorian period. In 1785, Clara Reeve, admitting that she might be thought partial to Behn's writing because both were women, wrote of her: 'There are strong marks of Genius in all this lady's works, but unhappily, there are some parts of them, very improper to be read by, or recommended to virtuous minds, and especially to youth.'³⁶ By the mid nineteenth century, censure of Behn as a Restoration writer belonging to a less refined, less civilised era had become considerably more vehement. An article in *The Morning Post* in November 1862 refers to Behn as 'a bad woman, who wrote bad books', adding, 'the less we say about her the better'.³⁷ Dr. John Doran, who was briefly editor of both the *Athenaeum* and *Notes and Queries*, wrote a similar piece in the *Manchester Times* two years later, claiming that whilst Behn 'might have been an honour to womanhood; she was its disgrace'. He went on to add that 'there is no one that equals this woman in downright nastiness', denouncing her as 'a mere harlot, who danced through uncleanness'.³⁸ An article published in the *Glasgow Herald* in 1889 on the 'hygienic' uses of the imagination likened Behn's writings to a dangerous disease or 'moral plague'.³⁹ Also focusing on unhealthy bodies of fiction and their potentially devastating effects on healthy minds, a writer in *The Bury and Norwich Post* in 1898 claimed Behn's writings were 'disfigured by impurity of tone'.⁴⁰ The monstrous female body that we find in Pope's *Dunciad* reappears here in the depiction of immoral texts intimately connected to the immoral body which produced them, and threatening, like Dulness, to expand and to infect.

Other amatory writers were recast as immoral in very similar ways for the same neutralising purpose; their work was posited as either dangerous to young readers, or, more often, denied consideration on the grounds that it was simply of inferior merit. A prank played on Mary Davys in July 1731 in *The Grub-Street Journal* took the form of a letter pretending to

³⁶ Clara Reeve, *The Progress of Romance through Times, Countries, and Manners, With Remarks on the Good and Bad Effects of It, on Them Respectively; In a Course of Evening Conversations*, 2 vols (London: W. Keymer, 1785), I, 117-18.

³⁷ 'English Women of Letters', *The Morning Post*, 7 November 7 1862, p. 3.

³⁸ Dr. John Doran, 'Mrs. Behn, The Dramatist', *Manchester Times*, 17 September 1864, p. 300.

³⁹ 'The British Medical Association', *Glasgow Herald*, 17 August 1889, p. 9.

⁴⁰ 'The World of Women', *The Bury and Norwich Post, and Suffolk Standard*, 21 June 1898, p. 2.

be from her, and is constructed in similar terms to the depiction of Behn in 'The Apotheosis of Milton'. Petitioning to join not poets, but Grub Street hacks, the letter echoes Manley's description of Rivella when its writer boasts of being 'a perfect Mistress in the finesses of Love'.⁴¹ The predictable alignments between 'bawdy Novels' and prostitution are also apparent in the suggestion that the popularity of Davys's Cambridge coffeehouse is due to the fact that it also doubles as a brothel.⁴² Davys was quick to write a sarcastic reply, and it remains clear that if Pope – a contributor to the journal – did have any part in writing this letter, he certainly didn't think of Davys as occupying quite the same place as Haywood; he even subscribed to some of her work, including *The Reform'd Coquet* (1724).⁴³ But the example nonetheless shows the fundamental irreconcilability at this time, at least to some male authors, of feminine propriety, a public voice, competence, and independence.

Delarivier Manley's novels, although immensely popular at the time of publication, lost much of their interest from the late eighteenth century as a consequence of their historically-specific contexts and allusions. Once stripped of their referents in society, Manley's tales were cast as pornographic in a way that diminished their unruly political implications. Paula McDowell suggests that it was not Manley's sexual outrageousness that provoked alarm in contemporaries such as Addison, Steele and Swift, but rather her 'demonstration of new possibilities for female political agency through print'.⁴⁴ But by the late eighteenth century, Manley's important political interventions were, as Reeve put it, 'sinking gradually into oblivion'.⁴⁵ Reeve is able to dismiss her novels as 'much inferior' to Behn's, writing, 'I am sorry to say they were once in fashion, which obliges me to mention them, otherwise I had rather be spared the pain of disgracing an Author of my own sex.'⁴⁶

⁴¹ 'From the PEGASUS in Grub-street To Mr. Bavius, *Secretary to the Grub street Society*', *The Grub Street Journal*, 15 July 1731, repr. in *The Reform'd Coquet, or, Memoirs of Amoranda; Familiar Letters Betwixt a Gentleman and a Lady; The Accomplish'd Rake; or, Modern Fine Gentleman*, by Mary Davys, ed. by Martha Bowden (Kentucky: Kentucky University Press, 1999), p 227.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 227-28. For a discussion of this letter, and Davys's response, see Bowden's introduction, p. xxii.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. xxii.

⁴⁴ Paula McDowell, *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace 1678-1730* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 273.

⁴⁵ Reeve, I, p. 119.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, I, p. 119.

Whilst Haywood is mentioned by Reeve alongside Behn and Manley as ‘of the same class’, she is spared the full extent of Reeve’s disdain ‘because she repented of her faults, and employed the latter part of her life in expiating the offences of the former’.⁴⁷ Eliza Haywood’s wily ‘conversion’, despite having been much contested in recent years, secured her safety from Reeve’s denunciation, who instead surmised that Haywood had been temporarily seduced by her predecessors, Behn and Manley, into writing amatory novellas in her early career.⁴⁸ Later critics merely brushed Haywood aside, with Virginia Woolf taking her cue from George Whicher’s *The Life and Romances of Mrs. Eliza Haywood* (1916), to argue that Haywood was a ‘writer of no importance’ and that ‘people who write books do not necessarily add anything to the history of literature’.⁴⁹ Woolf had better things, of course, to say about Aphra Behn, but despite providing a sympathetic commentary, she still notes the ‘shady and amorous’ nature of the author.⁵⁰ Concerns such as Reeve’s over the immorality of Behn’s work and Behn’s person are translated into a slightly different framework that posits her texts as aesthetically, as well as morally, questionable. ‘Aphra Behn proved that money could be made by writing at the sacrifice, perhaps, of certain agreeable qualities’, Woolf writes, admitting outright that whilst Behn ‘had to work on equal terms with men [... t]he importance of that fact outweighs anything she actually wrote’.⁵¹ And so what John Richetti terms ‘literary sociology’ is born: a focus on the historical conditions of writing which, he argues, has little to say about the writing itself.⁵²

⁴⁷ Ibid., I, p. 120.

⁴⁸ For other arguments that identify a divide between Haywood’s early amatory and later domestic fictions see Deborah J. Nestor, ‘Virtue Rarely Rewarded: Ideological Subversion and Narrative Form in Haywood’s Later Fiction’, *SEL*, 34 (1994), 579-98; Karen Hollis, ‘Eliza Haywood and the Gender of Print’, *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*, 38 (1997), 43-62; and Susan Staves, *A Literary History of Women’s Writing in Britain, 1660-1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 10. For alternative re-evaluations of the differences between Haywood’s early and later writing, see Paula R. Backscheider, ‘The Story of Eliza Haywood’s Novels: Caveats and Questions’, in *The Passionate Fictions of Eliza Haywood: Essays on Her Life and Work*, ed. by Kirsten T. Saxton and Rebecca P. Bocchicchio (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), pp. 19-47; Kathryn R. King, ‘New Contexts for Early Novels by Women: The Case of Eliza Haywood, Aaron Hill and the Hillarians, 1719-25’, in *A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century English Novel and Culture*, ed. by Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia (Malden MA: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 261-75; and Leah Orr, ‘The Basis for Attribution in the Canon of Eliza Haywood’, *The Library*, 12 (2011), 335-75.

⁴⁹ Virginia Woolf, ‘A Scribbling Dame’, review of *The Life and Romances of Mrs. Eliza Haywood* by George Frisbie Whicher, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 17 February 1916, p. 78.

⁵⁰ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own* (London: Grafton, 1977), p. 72.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 71, p. 70.

⁵² John Richetti, ‘An Emerging New Canon of the British Eighteenth-Century novel: Feminist Criticism, the Means of Cultural Production, and the Question of Value’, in *A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century*

Both the childbirth metaphor and the author-prostitute metaphor were used to work through anxieties about the political and creative potential of the woman writer, and operated by conflating the transgressive female text and the transgressive female body to enable criticisms on both moral and aesthetic grounds. In 1993, bemoaning the usurpation of curricula built around canonical authors by writers who used to be marginal or obscure, Harold Bloom refers to Behn as a ‘fourth-rate playwright’.⁵³ The terms in which he depicts Behn look back to Pope’s dismissal of her poetry in ‘Peri Bathous: Or, the Art of Sinking in Poetry’ (1727), as an example of ‘Florid Style’ unworthy of attention.⁵⁴ Richetti’s rejection of the ‘unreadable’ amatory genre as repetitive formula fiction, valuable only in mapping the genealogy of the rise of the novel, of which it is merely a formally and ideologically incomplete predecessor, again looks back to Pope’s disdain for the ‘new-born nonsense’ of the popular literary marketplace. Whilst it seems that the overall shift from eighteenth-century criticism such as Reeve’s to modern criticism such as Richetti’s has been a shift from moral to aesthetic concerns, this is not a teleological process, but rather the construction of a discursive field around amatory writers which has remained relatively unaltered, partly because of those women writers’ engagements with the very terms used to denigrate them. Aphra Behn comes to seem prophetic when she writes that:

the Ladies [or critics in this case] taking up any Scandal on Trust from some conceited Sparks, who will in spite of Nature be *Wits* and *Beaus*; then scatter it for Authentick all over the Town and Court, poisoning of others Judgement with their false Notions.⁵⁵

Amatory texts, in all their myriad interpretive possibility are lost, substituted for a hydra of derogatory criticism which is maintained, reiterated and developed, transformed and strengthened with each repetition.

The Scribbler’s Moral Code

English Novel and Culture, ed. by Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 365-82 (p. 367).

⁵³ Harold Bloom, ‘Dumbing Down American Readers’, *Boston Globe*, 24 September 2003 <http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2003/09/24/dumbing_down_american_readers/> [accessed 13 December 2011]

⁵⁴ Alexander Pope, *The Works of Alexander Pope Esq*, 9 vols (London: A. Millar, 1757), VI, 204. Pope goes on to misquote Behn’s lines.

⁵⁵ Behn, *The Luckey Chance*, p. 215.

Despite its reputation as immoral or titillating, amatory fiction goes to great lengths to construct its own moral code, particularly with regards to the treatment and manipulation of letters, through both writing and reading practices. The self-conscious way in which amatory writers mimic, co-opt and displace criticism hostile to the potentially corrupting effects of their own genre is the first of three amatory techniques that I outline in the following three sections. I argue here that the displacement of discourses about dangerous reading onto unrealistic romances or pornographic texts, and the focus on the men who provide this material to innocent women, as opposed to those who author the material, enables amatory writers to set up a seductive but also educational relationship with their readers, which places the blame for female ruin on the failure of normative femininity adequately to reflect the reality of female experience.

The vital role of letters within the seduction narrative represents a tacit acceptance of the moralist's criticism, which presents certain types of reading, particularly of letters and of novels, as potentially destructive.⁵⁶ In 1688, George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, warned his readers of the flattery that young women must guard against, writing that 'as *strong perfumes* are seldom used but when they are necessary to smother an unwelcome *scent*; so *Excess of good words*, leave room to believe they are strewed to cover something which is to gain admittance under a Disguise'.⁵⁷ And indeed, the threat of 'good words' was abetted by the loosening effects of excessive novel reading. This anxiety was reflected in many of the conduct manuals of the time. For example, a translation from a French mother's advice to her children warned that 'the reading of Romances is still far more pernicious [than poetry]: I wou'd not wish you to make great use of them; they very much corrupt the Mind'.⁵⁸ Wetenhall Wilkes gave the same advice nineteen years later, reasoning that

Novels, Plays, Romances and Poems must be read sparingly and with Caution; lest such Parts of them, as are not strictly tied down to sedateness, should inculcate

⁵⁶ See Jacqueline Pearson, *Women's Reading in Britain 1750-1835: A Dangerous Recreation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

⁵⁷ George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, *The Ladies New Years Gift: or, Advice to a Daughter* (London: Randal Taylor, 1688), p. 112. This particular conduct manual was reissued many times over the eighteenth century. It was in its fifteenth edition by 1765, and was printed right up until 1791, attesting to a widespread and lasting popularity.

⁵⁸ Anne Thérèse de Marguenat de Courcelles, Marquise de Lambert, *Advice from a Mother to her Son and Daughter. Written originally in French by the Marchioness de Lamber and just publish'd with great Approbation at Paris. Done into English by a Gentleman* (London: Thomas Worrall, 1729), p. 112.

such Light, over-gay Notions as might by unperceiv'd Degrees soften and mislead the Understanding.⁵⁹

And in 1762, Lady Sarah Pennington put it very clearly:

by drawing characters that never exist in life, by representing persons and things in a false and extravagant light, and by a series of improbable causes bringing on impossible events, [novels and romances] are apt to give a romantic turn to the mind, that is often productive of great errors in judgement, and fatal mistakes in conduct. Of this I have seen frequent instances, and therefore advise you never to meddle with this tribe of scribblers.⁶⁰

It is easy to imagine how such thinking, coupled with the body/text connotations that I outlined earlier, was applied to amatory 'scribblers', who were cast as seducers of their female readership and providers of material that acted as a preparative to love.

As a means of addressing criticism about the potentially corrupting nature of amatory fiction, amatory narrators uphold, rather than refute, the idea that reading might be dangerous, but their rearticulation of this idea shifts the focus of the debate onto other genres. In *The New Atalantis*, for example, Manley's autobiographical character Delia is dispatched

to an old out-of-fashion Aunt, full of the *Heroick Stiffness* of her own Times, [who] would read Books of *Chivalry* and *Romances* [which] infected [Delia] and made [her] fancy every Stranger that [she] saw, in what Habit soever, some disguis'd *Prince* or *Lover*.⁶¹

When her rakish cousin-guardian declares himself her lover, we hear from Delia that: 'he answer'd something to the Character I had found in those Books, that had poyson'd and deluded my dawning Reason'.⁶² Thus the seed of, and excuse for, her bigamous marriage is located in her reading. The recognition of the dangers of unschooled reading practices is one that marks women's writing throughout the eighteenth century. In Haywood's *Love in Excess*, Melliora is, like Manley's Charlot, found reading Ovid, after D'Elmont berates her for reading philosophy, whilst in her novel *The Mercenary Lover* (1726), Clitander attempts to seduce Althea using

⁵⁹ Wetenhall Wilkes, *A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady* (Dublin: the author, 1740), p. 105.

⁶⁰ Lady Sarah Pennington, *Instructions for a Young Lady, in every Sphere and Period of Life* (Edinburgh: Alex Donaldson, 1762), pp. 45-46.

⁶¹ Delarivier Manley, *The New Atalantis*, repr. in *The Selected Works of Delarivier Manley*, ed. by Rachel Carnell and Ruth Herman, 5 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2005), II, 255. All subsequent references are to this edition.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 255.

Ovid and Rochester's works.⁶³ Later in the eighteenth century the trope is popularised most notably in Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752), which depicts its heroine as obsessed with 'senseless Fictions; which at once vitiate the Mind, and pervert the Understanding', whilst the heroine of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria* (1798) blames the 'romantic turn' of her thoughts, engendered by a love of reading, for her marriage to the abusive George Venables.⁶⁴

Remaining true to the same constructivism that they bring to considerations of gender, however, amatory writers, like their literary descendents, draw attention to the role of both the provider and the reader of literature, the clash between knowing and naïve subjectivities, as opposed to positing the texts themselves as inherently corrupting. Amatory fiction constructs itself as an alternative to conduct fiction's imperative to submit, and the seducer's persuasions to yield. Manley's fiction employs, in several guises, the familiar story of a predatory man attempting to facilitate his seduction of an impressionable young woman using either erotic or romantic literature. The narrator of *Rivella*, Lovemore, admits: 'I had used to please my self in talking Romantick Stories to [Rivella], and with furnishing her with Books of that Strain.'⁶⁵ Whilst the astute heroine escapes ruin and Lovemore is rendered ridiculous, reading plays a crucial part in the corruption of other female characters, such as Charlot in *The New Atalantis*. Charlot's guardian, the Duke, first introduces his ward to Ovid, before allowing her free perusal of his pornographic collection, 'to shew her, that there were Pleasures her Sex were born for, and which she might consequently long to taste!'.⁶⁶ The ostensible point is that

[t]here are Books dangerous to the Community of Mankind; abominable for Virgins, and destructive to Youth; such as explain the Mysteries of Nature, the congregated Pleasures of *Venus*, the full Delights of mutual Lovers, and which rather ought to pass the Fire than the Press.⁶⁷

⁶³ See Haywood, *Love in Excess*, pp. 107-108 and Haywood, *The Mercenary Lover: or, The Unfortunate Heiress* (London: N. Dobb, 1728), pp. 14-15.

⁶⁴ Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote Or The Adventures of Arabella*, ed. by Margaret Dalziel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 374. Mary Wollstonecraft, *Mary and The Wrongs of Woman*, ed. by Gary Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 115.

⁶⁵ Manley, *Rivella*, p. 14.

⁶⁶ Manley, *The New Atalantis*. p. 44.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

But Manley's knowing reference to the content of the erotic and pornographic material subverts the familiar warning that reading is dangerous by demonstrating that naivety, and characters that know how to manipulate naivety, are more so. Manley's own knowingness implies that she has at least heard of, if not read, these pornographic texts and survived, and that she imagines her readers have too. Indeed, the Duke's grooming of his ward arguably begins much earlier, in his concern that Charlot be educated, during her childhood, according to traditional ideas of feminine virtue. Whether conscious on his part or not, her sheltered upbringing leaves her ill-equipped to deal with his abrupt alteration of her literary curriculum. And it is innocence rather than a knowledge of Ovid that leaves her ruined and eventually dead.

The spectrum of readers provided by Charlot, Delia, and Rivella, demonstrates that amatory fiction is engaged in a reformulation of what didactic literature should do: namely, to teach its readers how to anticipate and interpret a reality in which men are potential seducers rather than potential husbands, and in which control of text amounts to power. Able both to read correctly, and to write too, Rivella is an example of the power of language beyond the power of virtue or chastity, and she becomes 'the only Person of her Sex that knows how to *Live*'.⁶⁸ Rivella points to an ethical element, common to amatory works more generally, which is often overlooked in favour of readings that stress the immorality or subversive nature of these texts. As Kathryn King points out, for example, Haywood's reputation as an immoral writer is 'abetted by present-day desires to give her an appealingly unconventional history'.⁶⁹ Ballaster is undoubtedly right to see Haywood's novels as substitutes for women's action in the world, as enablers of fantasy rather than instigators of transgressive behaviour. She argues that:

Haywood's romance plots are not offered to the female readers as simple models for female strategies of resistance in the 'real' world of heterosexual exchange, but as substitutes in themselves for that world. The act of making fiction, the seduction of female reader by female writer, is offered as a substitute in and of itself for the disappointments of heterosexual love.⁷⁰

But in offering this potentially queer communion between writer and reader, amatory fiction is also engaged in education. Seeing the interaction between amatory writer and reader solely in

⁶⁸ Manley, *Rivella*, p. 58.

⁶⁹ Kathryn R. King, *A Political Biography of Eliza Haywood* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012), p.5.

⁷⁰ Ballaster, *Seductive Forms*, p. 194.

terms of seduction and fantasy risks reiterating that conflation of body and text that continues to be so damaging to considerations of amatory fiction on aesthetic grounds. Instead, we ought to see amatory fiction as teaching theories of reading and writing: reading texts and reading the world; writing texts and writing the self. These are strategies for, and examples of, the manipulation of text and body, survival by trial and error.

One way in which amatory writers provide and develop such strategies is through their adoption of multiple narrative voices. Manley's *New Atalantis* is constructed as a dialogue between three narrators, Astrea, Virtue and Intelligence, whilst Haywood's *The Tea Table* (1725), which presages her later periodicals, records the conversation between an unknown 'I' and four other characters, of different genders and moral persuasions. In both of these examples, the conversation of the speakers provides a commentary on the amatory material of the inset narratives, and brings a variety of moral and critical interpretations into close proximity. The result is a more nuanced form of instruction for its readership than the dryness of conduct fiction. As Alexander Pettit has pointed out, in *The Tea Table*, the strict moral code of the hostess, Amiana, and her four companions, is constructed in opposition to the characters (fops, hypochondriacs and vicious gossips), who intrude into their conversation at various points in the narrative. Pettit argues that 'by allowing a series of challenges to Amiana's moral voice [...] Haywood decenters moral authority and thereby suggests the flexibility of moral categories that she elsewhere presents as rigid'.⁷¹ Haywood's multiple narrators allow her to have it all ways: to titillate with amatory fiction; to condemn the vices of the city; to mock such condemnation; to write in varying registers and from various gendered perspectives about the pains of love; and to comment upon her own 'sort' of fiction. In this way Haywood consciously circumvents criticism that would collapse her transgressive body into her transgressive text, by refusing singularity of either voice or of moral dictate within her own work.

Is there a Woman in this Text?

⁷¹ Alexander Pettit, 'Adventures in Pornographic Places: Eliza Haywood's *Tea-Table* and the Decentring of Moral Argument,' *Papers on Language and Literature*, 38 (2002): 244-69 (p. 245).

At a conference in 1999, Germaine Greer said of Aphra Behn:

I have a feeling very often that the membrane that surrounds Aphra Behn is about to part, and she will be there [...] We tend to create our own Aphra Behn; she has left us a space to do that.⁷²

In making such a claim, she articulates the tendency of recovery project feminist critics to want to reconstruct the woman, to use Angeline Goreau's term.⁷³ But it is the *space* of which Greer speaks which interests me in this section. This is not to erase the writer entirely, but rather to examine the ways that amatory writers recreate the instability of identity by deploying an excess of text, at the heart of which lies a productive emptiness that both hostile and, more recently, feminist criticism have sought to fill. The amatory, like the Barthesian text, is, 'a tissue of signs, an imitation that is lost, infinitely deferred'.⁷⁴ In this section, I explore a second reaction to body/text connotations that manifests in the construction of narrative voice. I argue that we ought to read the multi-vocal layers and distancing techniques deployed within amatory texts as a means by which amatory writers evade monolithic alignments of their bodies with their texts. Rather than a clear picture of the woman writer, what amatory fiction produces are fragmented and sometimes contradictory narrative voices that revel in their own disembodiment.

My analysis is informed both by Nancy K. Miller's notion of 'overreading' and by Catherine Gallagher's conception of the 'nobodiness' of eighteenth-century women's authorship. These may at first seem like oppositional theories: Miller is interested in 'the embodiment in writing of a gendered subjectivity', directly situating herself against the poststructuralist decentering of the subject, whilst Gallagher is interested in the disembodiment of the writing subject.⁷⁵ But I argue that Miller's methodology gives rise to Gallagher's conclusion about amatory texts, which prefigure postmodern conceptions of textual indeterminacy much more than they yield coherent female authors. Miller outlines her

⁷² Notes transcribed from the roundtable discussion of the 1999 Aphra Behn conference at the Sorbonne, in *Aphra Behn (1640-1689): Identity, Alterity, Ambiguity*, ed. by Mary Ann O'Donnell, Bernard Dhuicq and Guyonne Leduc (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000), p. 281

⁷³ See Angeline Goreau, *Reconstructing Aphra: A Social Biography of Aphra Behn* (New York: Dial Press, 1980).

⁷⁴ Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image, Music, Text*, ed. and trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), pp. 142-48 (p. 147).

⁷⁵ Nancy K. Miller, 'Arachnologies: The Woman, The Text, and the Critic', in *The Poetics of Gender*, ed. by Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 272.

prescription for overreading as ‘a focus on the moments in the narrative which by their representation of writing itself might be said to figure the production of the female artist’.⁷⁶ In applying this methodology to the self-conscious multiple narrative voices in amatory fiction, I argue that the ‘signature’ that Miller searches for, ‘the place of production that marks the spinner’s attachment to her web’, is precisely the ambiguity and evasiveness that Gallagher identifies.⁷⁷ Gallagher argues that ‘the disembodiment of the writer in the standardised, multiplied, and widely disseminated text was the condition of her appearance as an *author*’.⁷⁸ There is no one body with which to conflate the text. Instead, she suggests that ‘to concentrate on the elusiveness of amatory authors, instead of bemoaning and searching for their positive identities, is to practice a different sort of literary history.’⁷⁹ The woman writer, once committed to writing, whether her own or another’s, is permanently disembodied, replaced by signifiers. Gallagher’s study explores the implications of this disembodiment, and the way in which the literary text, existing as both a material object and an ideational concept, can be mapped onto our understandings of femininity. Her recognition of eighteenth-century women writers’ fascination with the ‘flickering ontological effect of signification’ informs my focus on the formal and ideological connections that characterise the amatory genre, as opposed to the women who developed it.⁸⁰ In attending to the ways in which coherent authorial selves are fractured into processes of text, into functions, we are able to reassess the particular ways in which amatory writers were claiming skill and agency.

Oroonoko (1688), Behn’s tale of an enslaved African prince whom she comes to know whilst living in a Surinam colony during her youth, is a novella about royalty, heroism, and cruelty. But it is also very much a novella about writing. It is not traditionally considered amatory, although the inset narrative detailing the hero’s life before slavery in Coramantien and his romance with Imoinda, exhibits a number of amatory characteristics: aristocratic characters; court intrigue; the influence of heroic romance; the treatment of a tyrannical authority figure;

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 274-74.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 287.

⁷⁸ Gallagher, p. 62.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. xvii.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. xxiv.

the breaching of an all-female space by the hero (the seraglio stands in for the more familiar nunnery in this instance); and so on. For the purposes of this reading, however, the novella offers a particularly palpable example of the multiplication and diffusion of the author across the text, and can thus provide us with a lens through which to read the multiple narrative voices in dialogue that we find occurring between narrators in Manley's *New Atalantis*, Haywood's *The Tea Table*, and Jane Barker's *Patchwork Screen for the Ladies* (1723) and its *Lining* (1726), to give just a few examples. In a more narrow sense, we can also see this diffusion as a product of and continuation of the epistolary form's requirement of more than one writing subjectivity, evidenced in the exchanges of letters within amatory texts.⁸¹

Moira Ferguson has visualised *Oroonoko*'s narrator as 'a Behn projection', claiming that, due mainly to the time gap and age difference between the two, author and narrator have different perspectives on events. Whilst the narrator is consumed by the romance of Oroonoko's story, and with his character, Behn as author, as 'grand-mistress' of her text, is able to rework the tale to promote a Royalist agenda. In doing so, she 'sabotages her own youthful views with her later ones in a form of self-conflict'.⁸² Laura Rosenthal further complicates the model of narrative voice in *Oroonoko*, arguing that we can account for the stylistic differences between the Coramantien and Surinam episodes as expressions of Oroonoko's relation and Behn's respectively. Whilst Oroonoko relates through the heroic and romance paradigms through which he sees the world, Behn's more worldly narrator takes a more realist approach to her depiction of an emergent capitalist society in Surinam. Despite the differences in style, however, she notes that 'their conflicts parallel each other, almost like heroic and fallen versions of the same kind of story'.⁸³ She also, however, notes the reliance on a 'semi-omniscient' source at moments when no characters in the text could have witnessed and related events, claiming that these moments 'point to a distinction, albeit a subtle and unstable one, between the young narrator,

⁸¹ The multiple subjectivities of the epistolary narrative are particularly clear in later eighteenth-century epistolary fictions, such as Pierre Choderlos de Laclous' *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (1782).

⁸² Moira Ferguson, 'Oroonoko: Birth of a Paradigm', *New Literary History*, 23 (1992), 339-59 (p.339).

⁸³ Laura J. Rosenthal, 'Oroonoko: reception, ideology, and narrative strategy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, ed. by Derek Hughes and Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 151-165 (p. 160).

and the author who tells her story'.⁸⁴ I would argue that there are not two, but at least three ostensible 'Behns' involved in the making of *Oroonoko*: the author Aphra Behn, as an entity outside the text; the narrator, who stands in for the author, but cannot be interchangeable with her; and the character who acts in the story itself, long before it is narrated. Behn as author is doubly disembodied, in her renderings as both narrator and character. The narrator, speaking at a temporal remove from the Behn-character who acts in the story, is able to comment on and excuse her earlier self's behaviour, whilst the disembodied author beyond the text remains a spectre, a gap into which we can project Royalist, or other ideological readings of the text which the narrator's inclusions and silences imply.

Each rendering also fulfils a number of different functions within the text, which are not always in harmony. As a character, Behn is a spectator of events, an eye-witness, as well as a listener, a student of her colonial surroundings and thus a model for female readership. But she also plays an active role as colonialist, as European, and as instructor and 'mistress' to the hero and heroine. As a narrator, Behn is a mediator between author and character, negotiating between fact and fiction and occupying a peculiar space, like the literary text itself, between the materiality of the author and the fictionality of the character. The narrator is a promoter, in the sense of being an idealised and fictionalised version of the author, and also in terms of her direct and celebratory references to Behn's other works.⁸⁵ In her role as imparter of specialised knowledge she has some continuity with the Behn-character, who translates a foreign culture and way of life to Oroonoko and Imoinda, in the same way that the narrator translates events in Coramantien and Surinam for her readers. And lastly, the narrator acts in the capacity of writer-storyteller. It is here that the ideological conflicts between different modes of storytelling become most apparent: partisan political writing, popular romance or amatory fiction, and travel writing collide, resulting in a text that engenders multiple signficatory possibilities.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁸⁵ For example, Behn's narrator promotes her position as playwright via her association with Dryden when she says 'I had a Set of these [feathers] presented to me, and I gave 'em to the King's Theatre, and it was the Dress of the *Indian Queen*, infinitely admir'd by Persons of Quality; and were unimitable [*sic*].' Gesturing beyond the text itself, the narrator stakes a claim for her own position as a unique contributor to the stage, both in terms of plays themselves and exotic artefacts. *Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave. A True History*, repr. in *Works*, ed. by Todd, III: *The Fair Jilt and Other Short Stories* (1995), pp. 50-119. All subsequent references are to this edition.

I want to explore one of these collisions, between the royalist and commercial impulses of the text, in order to demonstrate the ways in which such multiple signficatory possibilities are created and work to obscure a definite authorial origin. Readings of *Oroonoko* as a Royalist text argue that Oroonoko is aligned with the Stuart kings, and that the text functions as an endorsement of innate nobility and natural class hierarchies. Anita Pacheco, for example, argues that *Oroonoko* is about the supremacy of royal blood and that the hero's nobility is privileged above his blackness, while Laura Brown reads Oroonoko as representing the executed Charles I, and thus acting as a warning of the consequences of violating the natural order directed towards a population unsettled by James II's flagrant Catholicism.⁸⁶ In a Royalist text, the Behn-character's relationship to the hero ought necessarily to be one of subservience, and the Behn-narrator's one of both admiration and sympathy. We see such sympathy in the narrator's silent disapproval of the actions of her fellow Europeans. When Oroonoko is first kidnapped, for example, she writes, 'Some have commended this Act, as brave, in the Captain; but I will spare my Sence of it, and leave it to my Reader, to judge as he pleases.'⁸⁷ Her invitation of her audience's disapproval sets up a mutuality of opinion between narrator and reader based upon the recognition of the injustice of Oroonoko's enslavement, although it is a recognition of unjust class transgression rather than, as some have argued, a recognition of the immorality of the African slave trade.⁸⁸ Oroonoko never fully transforms into Caesar, the name given to him as a slave, and upon first seeing the hero, the narrator notes that '[t]he Royal Youth appear'd in spight of the Slave' (p. 88). The royalism of the text is ventriloquised by Oroonoko himself in another rendering of narrative voice, when the narrator tells us that Oroonoko 'had heard of the late Civil Wars in *England*, and the deplorable Death of our great Monarch; and wou'd discourse of it with all the Sense, and Abhorrence of the Injustice imaginable' (p. 62). Even

⁸⁶ Anita Pacheco, 'Royalism and Honor in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*,' *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 34 (1994), 491-506. Laura Brown, *Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 57-58. Cf. Rosenthal, who argues that Behn renders clear the vulnerability of royal absolutism in her depiction of Coramantien, and that her text serves as much as an elegy for the end of a historical era (i.e. Stuart rule), as a combination of romance and realist styles (especially pp. 157-161).

⁸⁷ Behn, *Oroonoko*, p. 83. All subsequent references are given parenthetically within the text.

⁸⁸ See Goreau, p. 289, and also see Ferguson, '*Oroonoko*: Birth of a Paradigm', pp. 340-48 for a critique of arguments by early recovery-project scholars who read *Oroonoko* as an anti-slavery precursor to later abolitionist texts.

after his failed rebellion and subsequent execution, Oroonoko's remains are 'frightful Spectacles of a mangl'd King' (p. 118).

However, the narrator's reverence for the hero is undermined by her eagerness both to create a suitably sensational story for audiences hungry for the exotic, and to forge her own identity at the expense of Oroonoko and Imoinda, who are both objectified, fetishised and eventually dismembered for their white readership. Both characters are situated in a position of liminality between two narrative modes: as romance characters and as commodities. In his reading of Oroonoko as a pet, Srinivas Aravamudan argues that the novella is 'an authorial act of self-portraiture that transcreates the ideology [of paintings depicting slaves as pets to royal mistresses] into literary form'.⁸⁹ Cast as an aesthetic, erotic object, Oroonoko is used by the narrator as a means by which she can construct her own status and authority as mistress to, and of, the slave king. She writes that Oroonoko:

lik'd the Company of us Women much above the Men [...] we all had the Liberty of Speech with him, especially my self, whom he call'd his *Great Mistress*; and indeed my Word wou'd go a great way with him.

(p. 93)

She stresses her specialist knowledge of the hero, frequently repeating 'I have often heard him say', and making use of, as Jane Spencer argues, her position as outsider observer to flit between identification with, superiority over, and alienation from, the hero (p. 64).⁹⁰ She demonstrates the same familiarity with her colonial surroundings, and her knowledge of the customs of foreign countries lends further weight to the authority of her story, as well as an additional narrative mode, namely travel writing. As school-mistress to both Oroonoko and Imoinda, the Behn-character's choice of curriculum reflects the ambiguity of her relationship to the hero and heroine. She entertains Oroonoko with 'the Lives the Romans, and great Men', and Imoinda with tales of nuns, which could well be a gesture to Behn's other amatory fictions (p. 93). Janet Todd has suggested the potentially

⁸⁹ Srinivas Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans: Colonialism and Agency, 1688-1740* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 34.

⁹⁰ Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 101.

subversive implications of this particular curriculum.⁹¹ The reader is left uncertain as to whether the Behn character is working on behalf of her fellow Europeans to placate her royal slave, or whether it is her provision of exemplary heroes, vow-breakers and murderers that eventually prompts her students' rebellion.

The narrator, whilst gaining in status from proximity to the hero, also downplays her complicity in Oroonoko's demise. The Behn-character is conveniently absent from the scenes in which Oroonoko is whipped and executed, having fled out of fear during the rebellion, and having left before his execution to preserve her health, 'being [...] but Sickly, and very apt to fall into Fits of dangerous Illness upon any extraordinary Melancholy' (p. 117). After the failure of his rebellion, we hear that Oroonoko 'rip'd up his own Belly; and took his Bowels, and pull'd 'em out, with what Strength he cou'd' (p. 116). The formerly assimilated prince with a European education becomes a threatening Other, closer to the indigenous population who also practise self-mutilation, than to the Europeans. His increasingly violent behaviour towards the end of the novella serves to stress his dangerous nature in an attempt to excuse the Behn-character's failure to intervene. It takes the introduction of another narrative voice to render explicit the complicity of the Behn character. As Rosenthal notes, one of Behn's 'most prominent technical accomplishment[s] is the subtle shift in narrative perspective indirectly through different characters'; she 'introduces a narrator within a narrator'.⁹² During Oroonoko's rallying speech at the beginning of the slave rebellion, his speech is paraphrased to begin with, but soon slips into direct speech:

And why, said he, my dear Friends and Fellow-sufferers, shou'd we be Slaves to an unknown People? Have they Vanquish'd us Nobly in Fight? Have they Won us in Honourable Battel? And are we, by the chance of War, become their Slaves? This wou'd not anger a Noble Heart, this wou'd not animate a Souldiers Soul; no, but we are Bought and Sold like Apes, or Monkeys, to be the Sport of Women, Fools and Cowards; and the Support of Rogues, Runagades, that have abandon'd their own Countries for Rapin [sic], Murders, Thefts and Villanies.

(p. 105)

⁹¹ Behn, *Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave. A True History*, ed. by Janet Todd (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 89, n. 85.

⁹² Rosenthal, pp. 156-57, p. 157.

Once again, the hero is used to ventriloquise a high heroic code. But the voice of the hero also contradicts the narrator's assertions that Oroonoko enjoyed the company of the women that he accuses here of objectifying and emasculating their slaves. In introducing Oroonoko's own viewpoint, however fictionally or briefly, Behn undermines the authority of her narrator, situating her in competition with the hero. The multiple narrative voices ensure that the text carries within itself a confession of guilt, as well as a detailed self-construction.⁹³

The schizophrenic characterisation of Oroonoko, as royalty, as commodity, and as competition, is thus a result of divergent narrative roles, which are working out the collisions between ideological integrity, commercial requirements, and authorial self-construction. Rather than simple autobiography, this work creates its own complex system of signs, made up of various renderings of the 'author self', to use Gallagher's term.⁹⁴ From one text, we can then expand this system to consider the myriad narrators and personae across Behn's entire body of prose fiction, including her authorial interventions both within the text and in the prefatory and paratextual material. And the expansion continues when we take into account her work in other genres, her playwriting and poetry, and her creation of Astrea, a classical pseudonym with which she had a long-lasting association. As a result of such considerations, we begin to see that in *Oroonoko* and elsewhere, any hope for a unified, homogenous and linear narrator, with a clear connection to 'Aphra Behn' is immediately thwarted by her deliberate evasiveness.

Gallagher argues that the disembodiment of narrative voice is a form of empowering self-ownership which manifests in Behn's work in two different ways. As author-whore, trading in her own persona, Gallagher argues, Behn engages in an act of self-alienation, creating a split between 'the obliging playwright and the withholding private person, the woman's body and her

⁹³ The narrator also usurps Imoinda's position as heroine, which has provided the focus of a great deal of feminist criticism. See, for example, Aravamudan, pp. 29-70; Moira Ferguson, 'Transmuting *Othello*: Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*', in *Cross-Cultural Performances: Differences in Women's Re-Visions of Shakespeare*, ed. by Marianne Novy (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 15-49; Ros Ballaster, 'New Hystericism: Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*: The Body, the Text, and the Feminist Critic', in *New Feminist Discourses: Critical Essays on Theories and Texts*, ed. by Isobel Armstrong (London: Routledge 1992), pp. 283-95; Susan Andrade, 'White Skin, Black Masks: Colonialism and the Sexual Politics of *Oroonoko*', *Cultural Critique*, 27 (1994), 189-214; and Felicity Nussbaum, *The Limits of the Human: Fictions of Anomaly, Race, and Gender in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 151-88.

⁹⁴ Gallagher, p. xix.

self'.⁹⁵ It is a strategy we find repeated in Manley's creation of *Rivella*. As author-sovereign, through being nowhere physically, Behn is also disseminated everywhere textually. Just as Oroonoko's literal dismemberment prefigures his proliferation in print, Gallagher argues that the physicality of Behn's manuscript is transformed by print into 'a transcendent text, elevated above all materiality'.⁹⁶ Gallagher's argument is persuasive in theorising the way in which disembodiment fulfils a protective function in Behn's writing, but particularly in her examination of Behn's author-whore persona, she overlooks a second function of Behn's experimentation with multivocal text: the claiming of artistic talent. The construction of narrative voices that work to assert authority, even if covertly, problematises the alignment of amatory writers and prostitutes as despite her apparent sexual aggression, the prostitute is ultimately a compliant, submissive figure. As such, the ways in which amatory writers are skilfully and self-consciously manipulating both texts and reader expectations is lost through the prostitution metaphor.⁹⁷ The multiplicity of narrative voice allows amatory writers like Behn to queer the classifying impulse behind criticism that sought to define them in narrowly gendered terms, but it also demonstrates the versatility of amatory writers well practised in the strategic adoption of ambiguous positions which at once deny and assert agency.

Ingenious Conversations: Masters and Weavers

This section examines the ways in which amatory writers make claims for the skill of their craftsmanship in reaction to criticism that sought to denigrate amatory fiction as simply badly written. Disembodiment, effected through multiple narrative voices, as we saw above, functions to complicate and obscure the relationship between the amatory writer and her text, but is also a demonstration of adaptability. Behn exploits her familiarity with literary conventions in paratextual material as well as in narrative voice in order to claim agency and genius whilst seeming to eschew responsibility for her own creation. Manley and Barker also experiment with

⁹⁵ Gallagher, p. 8.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 65.

⁹⁷ Cf. Derek Hughes, 'The Masked Woman Revealed; or, the Prostitute and the Playwright in Aphra Behn Criticism,' *Women's Writing*, 7 (2000): 149-64.

and test out the limitations of gendered understandings of authorship, both staking claims for their own competence in dually-gendered terms, whilst Davys reclaims the childbirth metaphor for writing in terms of an organic and nurturing rather than mechanical process. I aim to show how amatory writers demonstrate their capability, both in terms of masculine genius, and in the reclamation of feminine (pro)creativity. After relating the grisly death of her hero, Oroonoko, the narrator famously writes:

Thus Dy'd this Great Man; worthy of a better Fate, and a more sublime Wit than mine to write his Praise; yet, I hope, the Reputation of my Pen is considerable enough to make his Glorious Name to survive to all ages.

(p. 119)

In this narrative postscript, the narrator's characteristic and strategic ambivalence regarding her position as a writer is apparent: she both denies and asserts her artistic ability. In this sense, she is rehearsing the same strategy employed in the opening of *Oroonoko* when she assures her readership that she was an eyewitness to the events of the narrative. In doing so, she dissociates herself from explicit claims to creative agency, legitimising her tale as truth rather than fiction, and fulfilling the expectations of readers conditioned to expect displays of modest self-effacement from prefaces. In addition, she asserts that '*Tis purely the Merit of my Slave that must render [the novel] worthy of the Honour it begs*', erasing herself and the labour of her writing on the one hand, but claiming him as her creation ('my slave') on the other (p 56). In a less subtle example, the narrator states that she '*writ [Oroonoko] in a few Hours [and] never rested [her] Pen a Moment for Thought*' masking an assertion of genius beneath an ostensible anxiety about the novella's '*Faults of Connexion*' (p. 56). She is thoroughly familiar with conventions that dictate the construction of prefaces, and like the 'dense literary artificiality' and 'myriad literary conventions' that she weaves together in Oroonoko's character, she shows in the preface that she knows how to rework convention in order to claim agency as a writer.⁹⁸ Despite her failure to preserve the hero in person, she is confident in the ability of the '*Pictures of the Pen [to] out-last those of the Pencil, and even Worlds themselves*', and thus endows her writing self with the potential to prevent this story being lost (p. 54). Gallagher argues that the

⁹⁸ Gallagher, p. 69.

narrator's claim to have written the novella in one sitting and her faith in the power of print evidence Behn's fascination with 'the gap between the physical act of writing and the immaterial results'.⁹⁹ But this reading again partially ignores what is being said here about genius. In implying that Behn privileges print above the labour of authorship, Gallagher overlooks the tension between masculine genius and feminine craftsmanship implied here, the way in which Behn and other writers oscillate between the two, and the fact that amatory fiction dramatises its own construction as a writing process as much as the finished product.

We can see the claim to genius elsewhere in amatory texts, existing alongside seemingly feminine modes of authorship: the epistolary and dialogic form, and metaphors of writing as needlework or painting in amatory texts. The coexistence of these understandings of authorship, the one that heralds the text as the product of one unique subjectivity and the other that stresses the collaborative conversations and intertextuality that inform the work, demonstrate amatory writers' continued destabilisation of gendered conceptions of authorship. In the dedication of *The Power of Love* (1720), Manley writes of the authors of other dedications that 'THESE fashionable Dedicators, Madam, may not be improperly compared to Habit-makers for Masquerades; [...] the Person in both is equally well concealed.'¹⁰⁰ She distances herself from modish, commercial pursuits such as the masquerade and scorns the writing of financially motivated 'Domine-Dedications', designed 'to disguise the Persons, and to fit all Sexes and Sizes'.¹⁰¹ Of course, this is an elaborate piece of rhetoric, which, like amatory treatments of reading, uses and displaces criticism often levelled at amatory fiction, and writing for money more widely, in order to construct Manley as both genuine (crucial for partisan political writers), and original rather than formulaic. She writes of 'the finest Web, wove by the most Masterly Antique Hand, [which] never produced so compleat a Texture' as

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 65.

¹⁰⁰ Delarivier Manley, *The Power of Love*, repr. in *The Selected Works of Delarivier Manley*, ed. by Rachel Carnell and Ruth Herman, 5 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2005), IV, 59-234 (p. 63). All subsequent references are to this edition.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 63. By 'domine', Manley is evoking the anonymity and uniformity of the domino costume, a blank mask commonly worn at masquerades. See Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), pp. 58-59 and pp. 77-78.

the dedicatee's virtue.¹⁰² Lady Lansdowne's virtue is, apparently, too great to be captured in writing, even by a most skilful practitioner. Except that the existence of the dedication at all speaks to Manley's 'Masterly' choice of language and register in nonetheless penning an effective dedication. In adopting metaphors of text as clothing and writing as weaving or spinning, Manley subtly claims the craftsmanship of one type of writing, whilst in adopting and recycling male criticism of formula fiction often aimed at her own writing, she shows herself able to write in their terms too.

Another less ambiguous claim to such skilled craftsmanship occurs in the work of Jane Barker. The extended metaphor of the patch-work frame and its lining situates Barker's two novels in terms of a feminised domestic pursuit but Barker is keen to stress the originality of her conceit:

*I am not much of an Historian; but in the little I have read, I do not remember any thing recorded relating to Patch-Work, [...] by which means it has not been common in all Ages; and 'tis certain, the Uncommonness of any Fashion, renders it acceptable to the Ladies.*¹⁰³

In asserting the uniqueness of her chosen form, Barker highlights her creativity, but immediately posits it as a non-threatening curiosity, a 'Fashion'. In *The Lining of the Patch-Work Screen*, Barker compares her 'Pane-work' composition both to petticoats and to 'Old London, when the Buildings were of Wood and Plaister'.¹⁰⁴ Just as she brought science and needlework together in her preface to *A Patch-Work Screen*, here she brings needlework and building together, creating a space for her work as a bridge between masculine and feminine.¹⁰⁵ Her dramatisation of Galesia's development and struggles as a poet evokes the same 'masculine Part' and 'Masterly' hand that we find in Behn and Manley respectively. Placing these claims alongside recipes for fruit punch and stories of nuns, Barker demonstrates her generic

¹⁰² Manley, *The Power of Love*, p. 64.

¹⁰³ Jane Barker, *A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies*, repr. in *The Galesia Trilogy and Selected Manuscript Poems of Jane Barker*, ed. by Carol Shiner Wilson (Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 49-173 (pp. 51-52). All subsequent references are to this edition.

¹⁰⁴ Jane Barker, *The Lining of the Patch-Work Screen*, repr. in *The Galesia Trilogy*, ed. by Shiner-Wilson, pp. 175-290 (p. 178)

¹⁰⁵ Barker, *A Patch-Work Screen*, p. 52.

versatility, but uses these multiple narrative modes and voices to mask her claims to artistry as the work of mere collection and assembly.

Whilst claims to genius work to destabilise the gendering of talent as male, other amatory writers work to undermine stereotypes such as Pope's, which equate the feminine with the inferior. In the preface to her *Works* (1725), Mary Davys refers to her first novel as 'the Brat of my Brain', and talks of an updated edition in the following terms:

Meeting with [the text] some time ago, I found it in a sad ragged Condition, and had so much Pity for it, as to take it home, and get it into Better Clothes, that when it made a second Sally, it might with more Assurance appear before its Betters.¹⁰⁶

As mother to her text, Davys demonstrates her natural capacity to revise and revitalise a work she considers to require improvement. Three years earlier, Daniel Defoe had employed similar terms in the preface to *Moll Flanders* (1722), claiming that in editing, he 'had no little difficulty to put [the narrative] into a dress fit to be seen, and to make it speak language fit to be read'.¹⁰⁷ Davys reworks this convention, recasting the dressing up of a narrative as a maternal, rather than a correctional, act and at the same time indicating that biology casts women as particularly suited to nurturing literary as well as literal offspring. In making this move, Davys's preface supports Friedman's argument that women's use of the childbirth metaphor 'tend[s] to defy those divisions [between procreation and creation] and reconstitute woman's fragmented self into a (pro)creative whole uniting word and flesh, body and mind'.¹⁰⁸ It is a different approach to the queer adoption of a multi-gendered subject position that we find in some other amatory texts, but in aligning creative writing and birth with clothing, Davys nonetheless deploys the same metaphors of female artistry and accomplishment that other amatory writers use to refer to their masterly brushstrokes and literary needlework.

The dialogues between amatory texts do as much work to stress artistry as the statements we find within the texts themselves. Amatory novellas exchange plotlines, character names and ideological stances, writing and rewriting particular narratives in a bid to, as Davys

¹⁰⁶ Mary Davys, *The Works of Mrs. Davys: consisting of plays, novels, poems, and familiar letters*, 2 vols (London: H. Woodfall, 1725), I, v, vi.

¹⁰⁷ Daniel Defoe, *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders*, ed. by Juliet Mitchell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 28.

¹⁰⁸ Friedman, p. 75.

put it, 'get [the narratives] into Better Clothes'. The amatory genre is an introspective one that is constantly reworking and recreating itself. Whilst I examine the implications of these repetitions in more detail over the coming chapters, the rest of this chapter now turns to a consideration of how an identification of amatory reactions to critics might enable new additions to the amatory canon. I argue that a residual author-based criticism has resulted in a limited understanding of the scope of the amatory genre, which we might extend, with a focus on some of the techniques I have identified above (mimicry, evasiveness, artistry, queerness), to consider a much wider range of material. Anonymous, lesser known, mid to late eighteenth-century, pornographic, moral, Whig-oriented, and generically distinct texts such as periodicals and pamphlets might demonstrate amatory influence, and the inclusion of these texts within the amatory canon would create a clearer picture of the influence of the amatory mode, based on a recognition of its unruly power and its queerness rather than on the people who wrote it.

The Textuality of the Sex: Attribution, Anonymity and the Amatory Canon

The dedication of an anonymous epistolary novel entitled *The Lover's Week* (1718) to Delarivier Manley claims thematic links between the two writers: 'Your Name, prefix'd to any thing of Love, who have carry'd that Passion to the most elegant Heighth in your own Writings, is enough to protect any Author who attempts to follow in that mysterious Path.'¹⁰⁹ Published by Edmund Curll, the novel now attributed to Mary Hearne, *The Lover's Week*, and its sequel, *The Female Deserters* (1724), promise content heavily influenced by Manley's style: the author hopes that Manley 'may lend of Portion of [her] Light to cast a Lustre over these Pages'.¹¹⁰ The author, signed only M.H., hiding in the darkness of anonymity, allows Manley to stand in for the absence of a knowable origin, replicating a similar distancing of author from text and displacement of voice, which other amatory writers effect in their use of narrators. Like other

¹⁰⁹ Mary Hearne, *The Lover's Week: or, the Six Days Adventures of Philander and Amaryllis. Written by a Young Lady* (London: E. Curll and R. Francklin, 1718), p. i. All subsequent references are to this edition. For the sake of clarity, I refer to this text as written by Mary Hearne, but I do so in recognition that the attribution is a moot point. See Kathryn R. King, 'The Novel before Novels (with a Glance at Mary Hearne's Fables of Desertion)', in *Eighteenth-Century Genre and Culture: Serious Reflections on Occasional Forms. Essays in Honor of J. Paul Hunter*, ed. by Dennis Todd and Cynthia Wall (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001), pp. 36-57 (p. 56, n. 37).

¹¹⁰ Hearne, p. ii.

amatory writers, Hearne mimics and deploys body/text confluences for the purposes of evasion; invoking Manley works as a decoy to distract from her own anonymity, whilst at the same time signalling amatory content and style. Kathryn King has suggested that the alignment of Manley with the sexual, rather than political, aspects of her writing is a means by which Hearne can use ‘the resources of a traditionally royalist-Tory form [...] to advance new Whiggish understandings of authority and political subjectivity’.¹¹¹ In other words, Hearne takes only what she can reuse from her predecessor, and in doing so, takes part in the retrospective creation of her predecessor by making selective choices from the portraits available to her. King’s contention that the text is Whig-oriented does not, however, mean that we ought to dismiss Hearne’s text as non-amatory. Rather, we are forced to reconsider the ways in which amatory forms and techniques can be reworked to suit different political agendas. The purposive ambiguity and displacement that I identify as crucial to the genre (more crucial, it might seem, than Tory ideology), would certainly enable such reworkings.

Whilst Hearne, if she existed at all, did not know Manley, the dedication of the anonymous novel *The Prude* (1724-25) to Eliza Haywood implies an actual acquaintance between the dedicatee and the ‘Young Lady’ author, ‘MA.A’. This dedication suggests that the author seeks, like Hearne, to align her work with a recognised figure, and to use the already established connotations of Haywood’s name to signal the content of her own work whilst remaining detached from it as its author. MA.A praises Haywood’s ‘*matchless Writings, [which] like Orpheus’s Harmony, rouzes the dullest Minds, to (till then) unknown Pleasures*’.¹¹² She cites Emanuella from Haywood’s *The Rash Resolve* (1723) as evidence of Haywood’s admirable treatment of both maternal duty and fallen women, recasting Haywood’s links to maternity from monstrous to didactic.¹¹³ King argues that Haywood’s exemplary mother takes part in the very public campaign surrounding Richard Savage, who claimed to have been

¹¹¹ King, ‘The Novel before Novels’, in *Eighteenth-Century Genre and Culture*, ed. by Todd and Wall, p. 46.

¹¹² *The Prude; a Novel: Compleat in Three Parts. By a Young Lady* (London: D. Browne and S. Chapman, 1726), I, iii. All subsequent references are to this edition.

¹¹³ I have chosen to refer to MA.A as ‘she’, because the novel is identified on the title page as ‘by a Young Lady’.

abandoned by his mother, Lady Macclesfield, owing to his illegitimacy.¹¹⁴ In addition, then, to possibly working to support Haywood's involvement in Savage's case, MA.A also claims to have had privileged access to Haywood's work in manuscript. Her claim to have read 'that incomparable play you [Haywood] were pleased to show me part of in manuscript', probably refers to *A Wife to be Lett* (1723), and, when coupled with praise of '*the affable Politeness of your Conversation, [which] can only be known, and enjoy'd by an Intimate,*' suggests that the two were friends.¹¹⁵ Perhaps, then, MA.A formed part of Aaron Hill's coterie circle.

These two brief examples, chosen for their explicit self-alignments with familiar amatory writers, demonstrate how lesser known authors were thinking about their own inclusion within and characterisation of the genre. They bring to light the supportive intertextuality of the amatory genre, which functions in a horizontal, conversational sense, rather than within the competitive and sometimes malicious contexts outlined above. Attention to such conversations enables us to rethink portrayals of amatory fiction as authored solely by three beleaguered professionals, and instead to highlight both the recognition of artistic skill played out in such dedications, and the borrowings and adaptations of techniques such as mimicry and evasion between writers. It also enables an understanding of the genre as organic and creative, rather than static and formulaic, and thus provides an alternative approach to the genre from the treatment handed down from hostile eighteenth-century criticism. We are able to reconsider narrow definitions of amatory fiction, on both political grounds and in terms of who was writing.

This section outlines the way in which questions of attribution have already had some impact in reshaping the amatory canon, but suggests that in their continuing focus on ascertaining known women writers, such questions risk overlooking anonymous amatory material. Instead I suggest that what we can draw from attempts at attribution is a critical self-awareness of our investments in and reliance upon authors as interpretive tools. 'Anon.' is

¹¹⁴ Kathryn R. King, 'New Contexts for Early Novels by Women: The Case of Eliza Haywood, Aaron Hill, and the Hillarians, 1719-1725', in *A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century English Novel and Culture*, ed. Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 261-75 (p. 271).

¹¹⁵ *The Prude*, I, iv.

prolific in the early eighteenth-century marketplace. And with an increasing amount of material being digitised, it is now easier than ever to locate anonymous amatory material. *Fair Ones*, both *Distress'd* and *Unfortunate* abound, as do *Secret Histories* and *Fatal Amours*; *Vertue is Rewarded* and *Innocence Preserv'd*; titles promise *Masquerades* and characters *Unmask'd*; and both *Atalantises* and *Nunneries* are plentiful. As well as similarities in titles, taglines, character names, and publishers, these novellas often share demonstrable similarities to already established amatory texts in terms of political and moral orientation; strategic uses of ambiguity; self-conscious authorial presence; intertextual references to previous or contemporary amatory texts; seduction plots; epistolary episodes; complex intrigue; taboo themes such as adultery, rape, and incest; and a precarious positioning on the edge of what constitutes erotica.¹¹⁶ To conclude this chapter, I examine four examples of these anonymous texts, unpacking the ways in which they are in conversation with established works by Behn, Manley, and Haywood. What becomes clear is that author-based criticism has severely limited our appreciation of the full scope of amatory texts. The search for the queer techniques of authorship that I have outlined above, and will continue to explore further in the following chapters, provides a different methodological approach to such texts and avoids the body/text connotations that are inherited from the eighteenth-century and often involuntarily seem to accompany known authors.

In a recent article, Leah Orr brings to light that several attributions to Eliza Haywood are predicated on unsound evidence. She argues that we need to be 'more cautious in considering Haywood's authorship as certain [because] if we do not approach the canon from a sceptical perspective, we risk drawing unsound biographical and critical conclusions'.¹¹⁷ Orr uses her evidence to suggest that Haywood 'was perhaps not quite as prolific as some of her twentieth-century admirers have claimed', narrowing down certain Haywood-authored texts from Patrick Spedding's 2004 assertion of seventy-two, to just forty-three confident attributions.¹¹⁸ In doing so, Orr suggests that Haywood's moral 'conversion' is actually based on

¹¹⁶ A bibliographical study of this body of anonymous work would prove a valuable resource for scholars.

¹¹⁷ Leah Orr, 'The Basis for Attribution in the Canon of Eliza Haywood', *The Library*, 12 (2011), 335-75 (p. 336).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 342, p. 335, p. 360.

works that may have been attributed erroneously, including *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751) and *The Female Spectator* (1744-46); the works that we can attribute to Haywood with certainty, which for the most part are her earlier works, make up a coherent whole, Orr claims.¹¹⁹ Likewise in Behn studies, whilst Mary Ann O'Donnell's influential bibliography of works surrounding Aphra Behn treats several posthumously published prose fictions as of certain attribution, Orr again points out that the attribution is unproved, if not entirely unfeasible.¹²⁰ In *A Political Biography of Delarivier Manley* (2004), Rachel Carnell agrees with J. A. Downie that Manley was probably not the author of *The Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarzarians* (1705), a piece of Tory propaganda.¹²¹ The amatory canon's instability becomes apparent in light of such assertions.

Bearing the burden of proof in attributing works to notoriously evasive writers within a chaotic literary marketplace has proved frustrating for feminist scholars. In an article on editing Aphra Behn, Todd writes:

despairing of much help from computers [in attributing plays to Behn] I returned to attribution through signature [but] A.B. is precisely what anyone might call him or herself when not wanting to be recognised [...] To work with A. B. is rather like trying to characterise Anon.¹²²

Todd acknowledges that *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister* was never ascribed to or owned by Behn in her own lifetime, but admits to her vested interest in attributing the novel to Behn. 'Do I want to feel sure about *Love-Letters* because in the search for the novel's origins I want a woman to have written a major text [...]?', she asks, concluding that 'to make the assertions, speculations, or guesses one inevitably makes an identity of the writer: one must imagine Aphra Behn'.¹²³ Whilst Todd candidly demonstrates the difficulties of realising a

¹¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 357-60.

¹²⁰ Leah Orr, 'Attribution Problems in the Fiction of Aphra Behn', *Modern Language Review*, 108 (2013), 30-51. Mary Ann O'Donnell groups together fiction which 'comprises works written by Behn, either with her name on the title page or with attributions of such long standing that authorship is not disputed'. *An Annotated Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources* 2nd edn (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. xiii.

¹²¹ Rachel Carnell, *A Political Biography of Delarivier Manley* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2008), p. 4; J. A. Downie, 'What if Delarivier Manley did Not Write *The Secret History of Queen Zarah*?', *The Library*, 5 (2004), 247-64. *Queen Zarah* is included in Paula Backscheider and John Richetti's *Popular Fiction by Women, 1660-1730: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

¹²² Janet Todd, "'Pursue that way of fooling, and be damn'd": Editing Aphra Behn', *Studies in the Novel* 27 (1995), 304-20 (p. 313)

¹²³ Ibid., p. 314.

feminist desire to fix upon and thus elevate such elusive women writers, her practice ultimately rests on an act of imagination. Perhaps this explains the reluctance to study writers such as Mary Hearne, whose lack of biography constantly renders clear the author as a function, rather than a reality. Despite clear links to other amatory texts, very little has been written on Hearne: a doctoral dissertation, two articles, and some scattered mentions.¹²⁴ Lacking a definitive and large body of work, or any substantial biography, Hearne's extreme disembodiment poses an interpretive difficulty for recovery project scholars; her novellas are, to use Turley's word, anomalous. Moreover, the difficulties of dealing with anonymous texts are acutely apparent on a syntactical level: how do we refer to the writer? What word do we put in his/her place? Must we keep referring, clunkily, to 'the author of *The Book*', or can we substitute the word 'Anonymous' for a name?

As Robert Griffin argues, in an article which also questions attributions of several 1750s works to Haywood:

The aesthetic identity of the author is [...] a conflation. We should not assume that the aesthetic identity of the author [...] is a unified entity; rather, it is split into multiple entities in the course of individual publications, whose nominal authors may have different names, and is collected together under the name of the empirical writer only after the fact. Here, we may return to Foucault, for he theorized that one aspect of the author-function was the way, in the act of writing, it produced multiple selves.¹²⁵

It is a point that I have tried to demonstrate above with reference to the fragmented narrative voices that we find in amatory texts; amatory writers are embracing and manipulating the 'multiple selves' enabled by their textuality. In the scramble, alluring though it is, to attribute and de-attribute texts, we are missing the point that by attempting to tie amatory writers to their works definitively, we, like hostile eighteenth-century critics, are overlooking the skill of their evasiveness, and the scope of their influence. Although de-attribution still works, to some extent, to reify the attributed text, it also opens up a space for the consideration of anonymous

¹²⁴ See Hans Turley, 'The Anomalous Fiction of Mary Hearne', *Studies in the Novel*, 30 (1998), 139-149; King, 'The Novel before Novels', in *Eighteenth-Century Genre and Culture*, ed. by Todd and Wall; and J. Reteshka, 'A scholarly edition of Mrs Hearne's *The Lover's Week* and *The Female Deserters*' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Duquesne University, 1998).

¹²⁵ Robert J. Griffin, 'Anonymity and Authorship', *New Literary History*, 30 (1999), 877-95 (p. 890).

material, as well as forcing a more conscious and critical interrogation of the ways in which we automatically read texts through the lens of their authors.

Mapping Intertextuality: Amatory Conversations

What is the relationship between named and anonymous amatory writers, and how does their work intersect? My first anonymous example is *The German Atalantis* (1715), which complicates fact/fiction boundaries, and explores the use of performance, of reading, and of writing in ways that are clearly taking part in amatory considerations of these issues.¹²⁶

Originally published as *Hanover Tales: Or, The Secret History of Fradonia and the Unfortunate Baritia. Done from the French*, it was cunningly republished under a new title by Edmund Curll just months later, presumably to boost sales by promising the same sort of exposures as Manley's commercially successful *New Atalantis*. Curll returned to its original title in the 1721 edition, perhaps to spin a profit from an old text by repackaging it as new. Both titles maintain the illusion of translation, a common trope in scandal fiction, which frequently displaced events at home into different geographical locations to protect its creators from prosecution. But the reference to the Hanoverian court in both is clear, and engenders the expectation of a salacious gossip novel, updated for the reign of George I, who succeeded Anne in August 1714. The author, known only as 'a Lady' defends her fiction on the same grounds as Rivella: she has learnt well from her narrative predecessor. When Rivella surrenders herself to the authorities following a warrant for her arrest, her 'Defence was with much Humility and Sorrow, for having offended, at the same Time denying that any Persons were concern'd with her, or that

¹²⁶ Manley's original *New Atalantis*, prompted a large number of other works which capitalised on its success by making use of her title for another half a century. These include Defoe's *Atalantis Major* (1711); the anonymous *The Northern Atalantis: or, York Spy* (1713-19); the anonymous *The Court of Atalantis* (1714), sometimes attributed to Manley or to Jodocus Crull, republished in 1717, and again in 1720 when it was passed to Edmund Curll; a ballad opera written by 'Atalia' in the early 1730s, of which the first version, *The Court Legacy* (1733) was published as 'by the author of the New Atalantis', and the second with the subtitle 'as it was performed at the Theatre-Royal in *Atalantis*, the Metropolis of the Kingdom of EUTOPIA'; William Musgrave, *The Atalantis Reviv'd* (1745); the anonymous *A New Atalantis, for the year one thousand seven hundred and fifty-eight* (1758), consisting of a collection of erotic stories, was followed two years later by the anonymous *A New Atalantis for the year one thousand seven hundred and sixty*, which employed the same heading for different content; the *New Attalantis For the Year 1762* is now lost except for the extracts in Ashbee's work; the whole biography, *Kitty's Attalantis for the Year 1766*; and the anonymous *Intrigue A-la-mode: or, The Covent-Garden Atalantis* (1767).

she had a farther Design than writing for her own Amusement and Diversion'.¹²⁷ Likewise, the Advertisement to *The German Atalantis* claims that:

it was Written only for a private Amusement. [...] It is hoped no Offence will be taken at the Title, since none is intended by it, and therefore 'tis best to conclude with the Royal Motto, *Evil be to him that Evil thinks*.¹²⁸

Both author and publisher, whose name is withheld from the title page, are thus exonerated for the use of a contentious title and for any potentially controversial content, with the responsibility for transgressive content shrugged off onto the reader and his/her reading practice. It is a clever move, which pre-emptively scolds critics eager to see only the licentious, much like Haywood's treatment of Amiana in *The Tea Table*. Such an introduction certainly invites the reader to expect a *chronique scandaleuse*.

However, the novel itself is much more like Hearne's *The Lover's Week*: rather than a scathing attack on contemporary political figures, *The German Atalantis* is an optimistic conversation between two women, Baritia and Calista, which charts the amorous relationship of the former from mutual but forbidden love to sanctioned marriage with Fradonia.¹²⁹ The two women successfully persuade Baritia's parents to agree to a marriage that, unbeknownst to the parents, has already taken place. Baritia's story takes up most of the narrative, but there are two inset narratives, one telling of Fradonia's capture in battle and escape from the amorous Queen of Moritania, and the other providing Calista's history, her lost first love and subsequent arranged marriage. Structurally, this text is very similar to *The Prude*, which also divides its action into three main narratives, employing the same tales of successful marriage, lost love, and adventures in exotic lands. These embedded narratives divide a singular omniscient narrative voice into three differently gendered perspectives all representing different temporal and, in Fradonia's case, geographical points in the narrative. Coupled with the play on nationality and translation in the title, and the withholding of author and publisher, the structure

¹²⁷ Manley, *Rivella*, p. 55.

¹²⁸ *The German Atalantis: Being, a Secret History of Many Surpizing Intrigues, and Adventures transacted in several Foreign Courts* (London: [n. pub.], 1715), p. ii. All subsequent references are to this edition and page numbers are given parenthetically within the text.

¹²⁹ Kathy King dismisses the suggestion of Virginia Blain, Patricia Clements and Isobel Grundy (eds.) that *The German Atalantis* was written by Hearne, on the basis of a receipt suggesting that Robert Busby was its author. See King, 'The Novel before Novels', in *Eighteenth-Century Genre and Culture*, ed. by Todd and Wall, p. 56, n. 37.

of the text demonstrates the refusal of origin that I have located in other amatory texts. The inset narratives invoke an oral tradition within a written one, emphasising the narrative productivity and generic diversity of conversation as much as writing.

The German Atalantis cleverly manipulates reader expectations predicated on a familiarity with amatory texts. For example, on first seeing Fradonia, Baritia says ‘I suck’d in Poison sufficient to torture me for some Years’ (p. 10). The hero is later described in a somewhat hackneyed amatory phrase as ‘the Rock on which my Repose was Shipwreck’d’ (p. 11). Rehearsed in amatory plotlines, we expect her ruin, but instead are provided with a heroine who openly desires, and eventually gets what she wants, using amatory modes of performance and ambiguity. When Baritia says ‘I fell into so violent a Feaver as made every body despair of my Recovery, which I told them I was sure would never be obtain’d but by a Journey to *Locutia*’ (where her love interest has gone), she makes clear what is often left unsaid about illness as a means of manipulation in amatory fiction (p. 39). Baritia can manipulate her body to signify in certain ways, but she can also manipulate words. It is Baritia who first writes to Fradonia, but her language is carefully chosen to mask a confession of love, positing it as a virtuous withdrawal from his company in the face of suspicion. She writes:

I must, at the same time, (let you know, that I am accus’d by ‘em both [her mother and her rival, Clara] of allowing you too great a share in my Esteem) tell you, that after this Confusion you must never expect to be seen more by Baritia, tho’ I can’t help avowing ‘tis with Regret I’m obliged to tell you so.

(pp. 47-8)

In a similar move to the shirking of responsibility found in the Advertisement, Baritia suggests but also denies her own desire for Fradonia by claiming that the suspicions of others must prevent them seeing one another. She carefully avoids directly owning her love for him, but also, assuming he is an astute reader, implicitly avows it. When she sees him again despite her letter, and he confesses his love for her, her insincerity is apparent and almost comical when she says, ‘’twas so far from my Design to encourage you to such a Discourse’ (p. 52). This is a text which deploys amatory techniques of evasion, ambiguity, performance, reading and writing towards different conclusions by revising a story of a lover’s indifference and a parent’s disapproval into a story of success.

1728 saw the publication of *The Illegal Lovers; A True Secret History. Being an Amour Between a Person of Condition and his Sister* by ‘one who did reside in the Family’. This novella charts the attempts of Bellario to woo his sister-in-law, Lindamira, following his wife’s death. The sensational title, like *The German Atalantis*, again promises something altogether more salacious than the actual content of the text, which acts as a somewhat reactionary warning against transgressive desire, and which, whilst certainly melodramatic, yields little but the suggestion of erotic content. Still, the histrionic manipulation of Lindamira’s sympathies by the male protagonist, who makes use of performed illnesses, two failed suicide attempts, and an attempted rape in order to possess her, demonstrates an interest in the de-gendering of bodily readability that we find in other amatory texts, as I outlined in chapter one. Bellario’s eventual suicide once his marriage to Lindamira is forbidden by the church reworks the punitive treatments of desiring women in texts like *The New Atalantis*, whilst the title gestures back to Behn’s *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister*, in its play on the public appetite for stories involving incest. As a whole, the text mimics an amatory plotline, but transposes it into a differently-gendered scenario.

Two years later, a much more explicit novella was printed for the same publisher, W. Trott, entitled *The Forced Virgin; Or, The Unnatural Mother* (1730). Writing almost one hundred and fifty years later, the avid collector of pornography Henry Spencer Ashbee included the novella in his *Bibliography of Forbidden Books or Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (1877), alongside works such as Cleland’s *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* and the anonymous *New Atalantis [sic] For the Year 1762: Being A Select Portion of Secret History; Containing Many Facts, Strange! but True!* (1762). In his introduction to the bibliography, Ashbee justifies his interest in such literature, arguing that ‘to the bibliomaniac, the real lover of books for their own sake, these unknown and outcast volumes, these pariahs of literature, are infinitely more interesting than their better-known and more universally cherished fellows’.¹³⁰ The inclusion of *The Forced Virgin* in the collection suggests firstly its longevity, but secondly that it was

¹³⁰ Henry Spencer Ashbee, *Forbidden Books of the Victorians*, ed. by Peter Fryer (London: The Odyssey Press, 1970), p. 19.

categorised as pornographic in a way that amatory writers such as Behn, Manley and Haywood, who do not feature in Ashbee's collection, were not. And it is certainly more explicit than other amatory novellas, exploiting both the pornographic possibilities and the tragic outcomes of sexual violence, which begs a reconsideration of the relationship between amatory fiction and pornography that is beyond the scope of this chapter.

The plot follows the doomed heroine Lominia, who is abducted and brutally raped by Lysanor. She stabs him after her ruin in a move which repeats that of the heroine of Aubin's *Charlotta du Pont* (1723) who stabs her would-be rapist with a hairpin, although Lominia actually succeeds in killing Lysanor. Upon finding herself pregnant, she attempts to induce an abortion, which results in a life-threatening illness. Once recovered, she is then drugged and raped by her lover, Arastes, whom she has refused to marry because of her defiled status, prefiguring Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748). She bears a child by him, but, unaware that she has been raped a second time, and believing her original abortion failed, she abandons and later murders the child she thinks is Lysanor's to prevent her exposure. Upon finding out the child is actually Arastes', she commits suicide, and Arastes is lost at sea. In a comparison between this novel and another anonymous text (*The Treacherous Confident; or, Fortune's Change* [1728]), Richetti argues that 'in *The Forced Virgin*, the standard combination of sex and violence is unbalanced, tilted towards an unacceptable explicitness and aggressiveness', and therein lies the difference between this text and Haywood's successful formula plot, which he sees as essentially monolithic.¹³¹ Indeed *The Forced Virgin's* eroticisation of female victimhood takes an implicit suggestion found in other amatory works and transfigures it into libertine language. On contemplating Lominia just before he rapes her, we hear that 'from forth [Lysanor's] burning Orbs the destructive Light'ning flew; - His whole Frame shook with boiling Joy'.¹³² But the seed of such descriptions is extant within Haywood's work, in the depiction of rape in *Fantomina*, or the even more disturbing story, *The Lucky Rape; or, Fate the best Disposer*

¹³¹ John Richetti, 'Popular Narrative in the Early Eighteenth Century: Formats and Formulas', in *The English Novel, Volume 1: 1700 to Fielding*, ed. By Richard Kroll (London: Longman, 1998), p. 91.

¹³² *The Forced Virgin; Or, The Unnatural Mother. A True Secret History* (London: W. Trott, 1730), pp. 14-15. Although this description occurs before the rape itself, with the orbs representing Lysanor's eyes, one presumes, it is certainly suggestive of the moment of climax that is to come.

(1727), demonstrating that Richetti overlooks similarities between these works because he overlooks the variations with Haywood's own oeuvre. Moreover, the repetition of the main traumatic event of the text, Lominia's rape, is a structural device common to amatory fiction which I will explore in chapter three. Signed 'Lysander', the dedication suggests that the text was written by a man, although both the pseudonym and the plot demonstrate a familiarity with the amatory conventions that inform this tale and its construction.

I close with a less tragic tale, which employs the allegorical, *roman a clef* mode. *The Fair Concubine: Or, The Secret History of the Beautiful Vanella* (1732), once attributed to Haywood, capitalises on the contemporary scandal surrounding Anne Vane (Vanella), Tory maid of honour to Queen Caroline from 1725 until her dismissal in 1732. In 1731, Vane was involved with John Hervey (Albimarides), and also with his friend Frederick, Prince of Wales (Prince Alexis). When, living as a kept mistress of the Prince, she gave birth to a boy, there was a dispute between the two men as to the paternity of the child, which resulted in a few published satires, including the poem *Vanella in the Straw* (1732), a caricature, and this novella.¹³³ Vanella is both satirised and admired in the text. She is constructed as a lucky coquette who becomes wealthy and celebrated despite the loss of her reputation, and the diatribe on the importance of marriage and chastity in the dedication sits at odds with Vanella's ultimate success in manipulating the men around her for her own gain. In the introduction, the author writes:

having stript [Vanella] of her Græcian Habit, I here present her to you in an English Dress; not pompous and gaudy, nor yet abject; but in such Apparel as may not create a Disgust in those who are nice and curious, nor cloy and forfeit them who keep a just Medium between real Love and Luxuriousness.¹³⁴

The narrative-as-clothing metaphor works to invest the author with the power to redress his/her subject, to make Vanella fit for a polite readership. The layering act, whereby Vane is removed from England to Greece, and then back again by the author's act of translation, fulfils the same protective function as assertions of foreign origins in scandal novels by Manley and Haywood

¹³³ Biographical information from 'Anne Vane', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com.chain.kent.ac.uk/view/article/28083?docPos=2>> [accessed 5 April 2012]

¹³⁴ *The Fair Concubine: Or, The Secret History of the Beautiful Vanella* (London: W. James, 1732), p. xvi.

do, blurring lines between fact and fiction, and drawing attention to the act of writing. Vane died four years after the publication of *Vanella*, forsaken, like several other amatory heroines, by her royal lover, and thus providing a peculiar testament to these blurred lines between fact and fiction.

In reading these four novellas as engagements with the metaphors and narrative strategies of other amatory texts, I argue that if we seek not to define an amatory centre of core writers against marginal works, but rather to explore amatory fiction as an interconnected discourse, or a web of conversations and re-workings, then we come to understand the ways in which the proto-postmodern techniques of mimicry and evasiveness are being put into practice, revised, and passed on, in more texts and by more writers than we have perhaps imagined. Across these four examples, there exists a recognition of the ways in which both genre and representation can be manipulated to tease out different significations. Amatory fiction abounds with layers of excess meaning and misdirection, in the plots themselves, in the carefully-crafted narrators, and in the tensions created by multi-generic inclusions in the text. What this amounts to is a constant assault on established boundaries between masculine and feminine, reality and fiction, public and private, played out in treatments of reading, writing, and performance, that is not even nearly accounted for by tidy confluences of bodies and texts.

*

This chapter has argued that in order for the recovery project to continue to develop in meaningful ways, it must move past its fixation with the woman writer herself, which is a fixation inherited from the eighteenth century. This is a process which has already begun, but which could be furthered by the consideration of anonymous texts alongside attributed ones. I began with an exploration of early eighteenth-century confluences of the female author and her text and traced the long continuation of this critical move right up to the modern day, where it is present both in the dismissal of amatory fiction on aesthetic grounds, and in the celebration of amatory writers by some early recovery project feminists. My point is that criticism that

unthinkingly conflates amatory writers with their texts misreads the amatory genre. Whether derisive or celebratory, reading novels as straight representations prevents a full realisation of the skill of construction demonstrated by amatory fiction's complex layers, dense plots, and evasive refusals of fixity. It ignores the play with textuality, and with what it means to write, read, and comprehend. It denies the queerness of amatory authorship and the ways in which it destabilised essentialist gendered ideas about male genius and female labour. And lastly it denies the pervasive influence of amatory fiction. Amatory writers are not simply author-whores. Rather, they are educators, critical theorists, seamstresses, philosophers, cynics, painters, flirts, and documentary-makers. They claim, on the one hand, the craftsmanship involved in translating and assembling the pre-existing pieces of their texts, but on the other, to be inspired. They are profoundly disembodied, intangible to readers forced to sort through their multiple representations, but they also exist in conversation with one another, distributing, redressing, and rethinking the forms which they share. As such, amatory fiction cannot be linked to one body. It does, however, form a body of work, a body that is represented not by linearity or fixity, but by repetition, process, and flux. It is this process that I explore in the following chapters, which examine masquerade and performativity as a working-through of identity formation, and then considers what this might mean for material bodies.

‘All here are mask’d’:

Disguise, Artifice, and Gender Trouble

Thus we see that the globe is all Masquerade,
And Disguising and Tricking the only true Trade
(Anon., ‘Truth on All Sides. A New Masquerade Ballad’, 1750)¹

There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; [...] identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results. (Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 1990)²

Amatory fiction masquerades, and it does so in a number of different ways. As we saw in the previous chapter, amatory writers construct themselves carefully within their own texts, emphasising their textuality and disembodiment in order to avoid confluences between their bodies and their bodies of work, and to stress instead their skill and artistry. Narrative personae function, I argue, as protective disguises. As Janet Todd writes of Aphra Behn, in a formulation that can be applied to other amatory writers too, Behn ‘is not so much a woman to be unmasked, as an unending combination of masks’.³ Amatory novellas also masquerade in a political sense, in that tales ostensibly about love, sex, and marriage, are actually often deeply politically engaged on both partisan and non-partisan levels. Ros Ballaster pioneered the approach that recognised the political investments of Behn, Delarivier Manley, and Eliza Haywood, arguing in *Seductive Forms* (1992) that the period between 1684 and 1740 ‘provided significant and distinctive conditions of access for the woman writer into explicitly political discourse’.⁴ This line of investigation has been adopted by Rachel Carnell and Kathryn King in their political biographies of Manley and Haywood respectively. Carnell carefully situates Manley’s scandal chronicles within their historical context, whilst King complicates previous understandings of Haywood’s shifting political alignments that label her work as straightforwardly and

¹ ‘Truth on all sides. A new Masquerade Ballad, As it is intended to be Sung the next ball night, at the K--g’s Theatre in the H--ym----t’ (London: H. Carpender, 1750), p. 8. The quotation in the title is also taken from this text, p. 3.

² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge Classics, 2006), p. 34.

³ Janet Todd, *The Secret Life of Aphra Behn* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), p. 1.

⁴ Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women’s Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 11.

consistently Tory or Jacobite in orientation. In her 2011 monograph, *Force or Fraud*, Toni Bowers also examines the political ideologies at work in amatory fiction. She argues that the seduction story enabled amatory writers to work through questions of how one might practice Tory and Tory-inflected politics in the volatile years of the early eighteenth century. She contends that amatory writers developed a model of “collusive resistance” – a paradoxical exercise of *resistance through submission*, which allowed their stories to signify far beyond their immediate concerns.⁵ Indeed, the involvement of amatory writers in the political world was obvious enough to their male contemporaries to prompt begrudging admiration from writers such as Jonathan Swift. In his poem ‘Corinna’ (1728), Swift depicted Manley, or possibly Haywood, as touched by both Cupid and Satyr at birth:

Then Cupid thus: “This little maid
Of love shall always speak and write;”
“And I pronounce,” the Satyr said,
“The world shall feel her scratch and bite.”⁶

But the amatory alignment of passion and politics was one that was retrospectively masked, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, by critics anxious to suppress the political power of scandal chronicles, as well as the destabilising queerness of amatory writers’ play with gendered modes of writing. Amatory writers themselves often outwardly denied the politics of their work. Manley has the male narrator of *The Adventures of Rivella* (1714) persuade Rivella, at the end of the tale, into an agreement that ‘politicks is not the business of a woman, especially of one that can so well delight and entertain her Readers with more gentle pleasing Theams’.⁷ As King notes, ‘[w]hile under arrest in 1750 on suspicion of producing a seditious pamphlet, Eliza Haywood insisted that she “never wrote any thing in a political way”’.⁸ But of course, these assertions are entirely situational feints, both ironic and necessary to avoid persecution or

⁵ Toni Bowers, *Force or Fraud: British Seduction Stories and the Problem of Resistance, 1660-1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 4.

⁶ Jonathan Swift, ‘Corinna’, repr. in Eliza Haywood, *Love in Excess; or, the Fatal Enquiry*, ed. by David Oakleaf, 2nd edn (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2000), p. 274. There is uncertainty as to whether Swift was referring to Manley, Haywood, or Elizabeth Thomas in this poem. See John R. Elwood, ‘Swift’s “Corinna”’, *Notes and Queries*, 200 (1955), 529-30; Marcia Heinneman, ‘Swift’s “Corinna” Again’, *Notes and Queries*, 217 (1972), 218-21; Anne McWhit, ‘Elizabeth Thomas and the Two Corinnas: Giving the Woman Writer a Bad Name’, *ELH*, 62 (1995), 105-19.

⁷ Delarivier Manley, *The Adventures of Rivella*, repr. in *The Selected Works of Delarivier Manley*, ed. by Rachel Carnell and Ruth Herman, 5 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2005), IV, 1-58 (p. 56).

⁸ Kathryn R. King, *A Political Biography of Eliza Haywood* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012), p. 1.

prosecution. Such protestations work to obscure the ways in which Manley and Haywood manipulate acts of concealment and revelation in their texts to further their political, and as this chapter shall argue, theoretical aims and observations.

Haywood's *Memoirs of a Certain Island* (1726), the first of her three forays into the *roman à clef* genre, is primarily concerned with the exposure of vice and corruption in the political arena, framed in sexual terms.⁹ It continues a tradition, albeit within the much-altered political landscape of the 1720s, epitomised by Manley in *The New Atalantis* (1709), a text which, in turn, looks back to Behn's *Love-Letters Between a Noble Man and his Sister* (1684-7). Marta Kvande argues that Haywood's scandal novels differ from Behn's and Manley's, because of her characterisation of the narrator as an outsider as opposed to the political insiders found in Behn's and Manley's fiction.¹⁰ Reflective of the weakened position of the Tory party during proscription, Kvande argues, Haywood's outsider narrator functions to pit the primarily monetary ambition of the Whigs against the disinterested civic virtue and narrative authority only achievable from a Tory outsider position.¹¹ With the tempting avenues of private interest shut off to him, the outsider narrator is supposedly acting solely for the public good, whereas Government Whigs are forced to mask their self-interest with the appearance of civic duty in order to remain in power. In *Memoirs of a Certain Island*, Haywood's narrator, Cupid, takes on the task of unmasking the Whigs, and thus collapses their carefully constructed, hidden distinction between public and private. He outlines his project to the male traveller whom he regales with his stories, and to readers more widely:

Vices with utmost skill disguis'd, the finest Web of fraudulent Artifice and deep Deceit, 'tis given to thee to fathom and unravel! – Before thy Eyes the gaudy Hypocrite shall stand expos'd, the Mask of Virtue shall be worn in vain – and each offending Fellow-Creature appear, not as he *seems*, but as he truly *is*.¹²

⁹ The other two examples are *The Secret History of the Present Intrigues of the Court of Caramania* (1727), and *The Adventures of Eovaai, Princess of Ijaveo: A Pre-Adamitical History* (1736).

¹⁰ Marta Kvande, 'The Outsider Narrator in Eliza Haywood's Political Novels', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 43 (2003), 625-43 (p. 626).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 626-27.

¹² Eliza Haywood, *Memoirs of a Certain Island Adjacent to the Kingdom of Utopia*, 2 vols (London: [n. pub.], 1726) II, 2.

Despite the fact that this is a text wrapped in layer upon layer of its own fictionality, the narrator is invested in the potential of such a literary construction to reveal truths, and to provide access to what is, rather than what appears to be. However, as is so often the case in amatory fiction, the generic boundaries of the text frustrate the narrator's statement of intention. He is implicated by his confinement within a political scandal novel, where all claims to objectivity are rendered null and void. He too masquerades as a disinterested party performing a service to the public, working to displace his own masking strategies onto the political opposition rather than to do away with masks altogether. Revelation and concealment continue to exist in delicate balance within the political scandal novel: a revelation comes only at the expense of a concealment elsewhere.

Falling within a long tradition of writers who make similar observations about the relationship between appearance and reality, revelation and concealment, one midcentury ballad, quoted in my first epigraph above, states that 'the globe is all Masquerade'. The anonymous ballad, *Truth on All Sides* (1750) goes on cynically to satirise various members of society, showing how society is filled with people who mask their own true characters. The author writes of the married couple who put on a show in public, but fight at home; of the rake, who hides his disease to pursue his pleasure; and of the hypocritical parson, who cannot practice what he preaches. S/he moves on to the intrigue between nation states, ultimately aiming to demonstrate that nothing is as it seems, either on a private personal level, or on the grander public level of foreign policy, in this instance. According to this author, 'Disguising and Tricking [are] the only true Trade'. The double meaning of 'Tricking' as both dressing and deceiving, indicates the tangled connections between concealment, performance, and artifice, and more widely the ballad demonstrates the multi-faceted nature of a masquerade that occurs in a number of different modes, from the sartorial, to the emotional, to the political. Paradoxically, as with Haywood's Cupid, it is implied that only in the written representation can the truth be discerned. The ballad constructs itself as a device that lays bare the world as it really is. But the world as it really is is constituted by masks. As such, the ballad reveals an awareness and corresponding anxiety about the (un)sustainability of the acting/being or reality/fiction binaries.

The same concern about what is and what seems to be abounds in other eighteenth-century satires. It appears in a more specific sense in depictions of the masquerade ball, often represented as the dangerous originator of a social practice fast rendering society unreadable, except, of course, to the discerning eye of the satirist. To give an example, 'The Ball. Stated in a Dialogue Betwixt a Prude and a Coquet' (1724) is an anonymous poem which documents the conversation between prudish Lucretia (presumably named after the Roman paragon of self-sacrificing female virtue), and her more amorous friend, Hilaria (again named for her character). Having spent the entire poem unsuccessfully attempting to dissuade Hilaria from attending a masquerade lest it should occasion her ruin, Lucretia is then 'unmasked' for the reader and her persuasions undermined, as she is shown to have a secret lover. She learns, to her dismay, that Hilaria is meeting this lover, Philander (his name signalling his inconstancy), at the event. The implication is that Lucretia has already been seduced by Philander, and that, despite her prudish exterior, and protestations to the contrary, her warnings about the dangers of the masquerade come from personal experience rather than conjecture. The poem closes with the jealous Lucretia leaving for the masquerade in a domino costume, presumably to watch her friend usurp her own position as Philander's mistress. In a text which is ostensibly about the masquerade ball itself, the act of masquerade escapes its boundaries.

Whilst an anxiety about the power of performance to eclipse reality is immensely troubling for anti-masquerade writers, as shall become clear, satirists, including writers in the *roman à clef* genre such as Manley and Haywood, exploited the same anxiety with relish. The ambiguity engendered by performance and disguise was peculiarly suited to the amatory genre and to its engagement with the queerness of text and the queerness of identity. In fact, as this chapter argues, the notion of a universal masquerade is a fundamental characteristic of the genre, which heralds performance and disguise not only as necessary tools for survival, but also as tools in the construction of discursive identities. As such, amatory fiction becomes a particularly fruitful resource for studying the ways in which concepts of identity, particularly gender identity, are articulated and worked through in the early eighteenth century. On the level of plot, as Terry Castle has noted, a masquerade scene or the adoption of a disguise often drives

key events in the text, and provides a space for subversive acts, whereby characters are freed from moral norms, and enabled to act according to their vicious or amorous inclinations.¹³ But more fundamentally than that, amatory writers critique the notion of readability by showing normative identities to be fictions in and of themselves, and in doing so, chart the construction of performative female identities in their works. Formula, I argue, reflects these acts of constructions; constituted by processes of repetition with difference, feminine identities are constantly worked and reworked within amatory texts and across the genre. These identities are sometimes able to subvert or circumnavigate social expectations, but I aim to demonstrate that the crucial aspect of the way amatory fiction treats identity is its proto-queer recognition of gender as process, rather than its transgressive or reactionary impulses.

Two-hundred years after the heyday of amatory fiction, in a psychoanalytic examination of the behaviour of intellectual women, Joan Riviere argued that what she termed ‘womanliness’ (overtly feminine behaviour which sat in accordance with gendered social norms), was adopted by such women as a mechanism to assuage male anger and their own anxieties about their transgression into masculine professions. We saw examples of this adoption of femininity in Behn’s author-whore persona, and Manley’s characterisation of Rivella, outlined in the previous chapter, although as I argued, their adoption of feminine personae has often been overestimated as the only facet of their self-construction, at the expense of a recognition of their adaptability. In an oft-quoted passage, Riviere writes:

Womanliness therefore could be assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it [...] The reader may now ask how I define womanliness or where I draw the line between genuine womanliness and the ‘masquerade’. My suggestion is not, however, that there is any such difference; whether radical or superficial. They are the same thing.¹⁴

In asserting that there is no difference between ‘genuine womanliness’ and the masquerade, Riviere raises the same issues that amatory fiction explores, and that I unpack in this chapter

¹³ Terry Castle argues that ‘befitting its deeper link with the forces of transformation and mutability, the masquerade typically has a catalytic effect on plot’. *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), p. 118.

¹⁴ Joan Riviere, ‘Womanliness as Masquerade’, repr. in *Formations of Fantasy*, ed. by Victor Burgin, James Donald and Cora Kaplan (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 35-44 (p. 38).

and the next: the connections between identity and masquerade, being and appearance, the real and the constructed. Like amatory fiction, Riviere problematises the notion of a clear division between exterior and interior, suggesting that femininity is the point at which acting and being become indistinguishable.

Paraphrasing Gayatri Spivak, Judith Butler says of terms crucial to feminism, such as ‘woman’, ‘surely it must be possible both to use the term, to use it tactically, [...] and also to subject the term to a critique’.¹⁵ Partisan political texts such as amatory *roman à clefs* require an element of strategic essentialism: a true, if temporary, identity to reveal, or a coherent platform from which to attack. But amatory texts which explore how desire and fantasy intersect with performed and/or normative expressions of gender and sexuality are engaged in the critique of which Butler speaks. In this mode, amatory fiction self-consciously documents, and thereby makes strange, the naturalization of normative and prescriptive gender roles and the related functions of desire. I am not trying to suggest that amatory fiction can in any way be directly compared to the radical critiques of essentialist gender identity or heteronormativity provided by modern feminist and queer theory. However, in unravelling and queering ways of performing gender and desire, amatory fiction ought to be viewed as the beginning of a conversation about identity formation that has culminated in these radical modern conceptions. In its employment of strategic dissimulation, repetition with difference, mimesis and masquerade, amatory fiction certainly foreshadows the concerns of feminist and queer theory, and, as such, should be recognised within a genealogy of these theoretical movements.

Amatory fiction’s understanding of identity as process is, I argue, a surprisingly postmodern one. In making this assertion, this chapter explores with a narrower focus Dror Wahrman’s opening comments in *The Making of the Modern Self* (2004). In the introduction, he writes:

Many contemporary intellectual-political movements, from feminism through post-colonialism to multiculturalism, have emblazoned their banners with the imperative of destabilizing and denaturalizing modern Western notions of identity and the self,

¹⁵ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (Abingdon: Routledge Classics, 1993), p. 5. See also Spivak’s interview with Ellen Rooney, in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Outside the Teaching Machine* (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 1-24.

emphasizing instead the liberating postmodern potential in recognizing their limits, their gaps, and their contingencies. It may thus prove somewhat disorienting to discover, as we become better acquainted with the *ancien régime* of identity, that some of those charged political goals that our contemporaries have set for a better future had been (*mutatis mutandis*) taken for granted by our predecessors two and a half centuries ago.¹⁶

Wahrman argues that, rather than being specific to amatory fiction, this unlikely eighteenth-century correspondence with postmodernity reflects a concept of identity that underwent radical change during the course of the eighteenth century. He charts the overthrow of an '*ancien régime*' of identity by modern or Romantic conceptions: individualism, which defined the self as a private consciousness relinquished atavistic rituals of connection to a larger societal body exemplified in events such as the masquerade ball. He posits that the change in the last two decades of the eighteenth century was predominantly due to British reactions to the American Revolution, whereby the boundaries of identity were solidified in a conservative move to counter a fluidity that came to be associated with deceit and revolutionary thought.¹⁷ His argument informs my final chapter, which considers the afterlife of amatory fiction's concern with disguise in the mid to late eighteenth century. My aim in this chapter, however, is to examine how the understanding of identity, Wahrman's *ancien régime*, plays out within amatory fiction, specifically through the trope of masquerade. Felicity Nussbaum notes that Wahrman's argument does not attend to autobiographical writing, the novel, or women's writing, all of which might treat identity in different ways.¹⁸ And indeed, with the increasing popularity of sentimental novels from 1740 onwards, one might place the beginning of the shift Wahrman identifies much earlier in the century. Amatory fiction adopts an ambivalent position in terms of this shift, at once situated in opposition to Enlightenment humanism in its formulation of identity as citational and discursive, whilst

¹⁶ Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p. xvii.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 218-64.

¹⁸ Felicity Nussbaum, review of *The Making of the Modern Self* by Dror Wahrman, *The American Historical Review*, 110 (2005), 866-67 (pp. 866-67).

also, as we shall see in the next chapter, looking forward to discourses surrounding sensibility and the material.

The next part of this chapter examines several contemporary reactions to the masquerade ball itself, from sensationalist satire to religious pamphlets, and suggests some of the reasons for the unease with which the masquerade was treated by the more conservative elements of eighteenth-century society. Its immorality, its provision of a space for transgressions of gender and class, and its anarchic potential for destabilisation are all traits implied by the criticism of the masquerade. I then discuss the ways in which the masquerade ball has been characterised by modern scholars including Castle, Mary Anne Schofield and Catherine Craft-Fairchild in terms of its capacity either to engender or to remove the agency of fictional characters. Widening terms of my exploration to include feminist and queer theories of masquerade in Luce Irigaray's and Judith Butler's work, I suggest new ways in which we might view the function of the masquerade in amatory fiction by demonstrating its engagement with the very same issues and questions raised by these theorists. In doing so, I want to situate my own readings of two of Haywood's texts, *The Masqueraders* (1724-25) and *Fantomina* (1725), within both their historical and their theoretical contexts in order to understand more fully what masquerade signifies in these texts. Through an exploration of construction and form in amatory fiction, I suggest that approaches to amatory texts which get mired in debates about the extent of amatory fiction's proto-feminism often do so at the expense of recognising the subtle making strange that amatory fiction's masquerades effect, and the ways in which these texts are working through the problematic relationship between epistemology, ontology, and the real.

'Pleasure looks lovelier in disguise': Attitudes to the Eighteenth-Century Masquerade Ball¹⁹

¹⁹ Christopher Pitt, 'On the Masquerades', in *Choice of the Best Poetical Pieces of the Most Eminent English Poets*, 6 vols (Vienna: printed for Thomas Trattner, 1783) V, 41.

So, what exactly was the masquerade? In the following paragraphs, I outline the characteristics of the ball itself, suggesting an immediate affinity between the masquerade and amatory fiction based upon their similar positions and functions within society, as well as upon the similar discussions that they provoked. Aileen Ribeiro, for example, notes that masquerades ‘played an important part in London social life in the eighteenth century and [...] frequently served to comment on the political life of the period’.²⁰ Castle describes the origins of the masquerade, as rooted in English folk rituals, but also taking influence from continental carnivals, particularly Venetian ones.²¹ The multiplicity of these origins is, Castle notes, particularly fitting given the nature of the masquerade, which exposes the ‘hybrid and duplicitous nature of material appearances’.²² The same could be said of amatory fiction, of course, with its hidden political commentaries, and reliance on both native and imported textual influences. The masquerade ball was a phenomenon specific to the eighteenth century, in that it drew on older forms but transformed them into a commercial and socially inclusive event radically different from the court masques that came before, just as amatory fiction drew on romance influences, but commercialised them for an eighteenth-century British readership. Masquerade balls were popularised most notably by the Swiss Count John James Heidegger, who organised the events at the Haymarket Theatre from 1717 onwards, which often hosted seven-hundred or more guests.²³ In fact, the Count makes a brief fictional appearance in Haywood’s *The Masqueraders* to break up a dispute between three men over a woman. Masquerades were also held elsewhere, outside at Ranelagh Gardens and Vauxhall Gardens, and then in Carlisle House in Soho Square during the 1760s and 1770s, and the Pantheon in Oxford Street after it opened in 1772.²⁴ They were events of excess: excessive eating, drinking, dancing, gambling, flirting. But they were also events where, according to Castle, the dominant social order came under threat. She writes that ‘though on one level the masquerade advertised itself as a gathering of the upper classes, on

²⁰ Aileen Ribeiro, *The Dress Worn at Masquerades in England, 1730-1790, and Its Relation to Fancy Dress in Portraiture* (New York: Garland, 1984), p. 3.

²¹ Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, p. 18 and Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 84.

²² Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, p. 24.

²³ Castle, *The Female Thermometer*, p. 85.

²⁴ Ribeiro, p. 5.

another it was popularly recognized as the event, virtually unique among modern civil institutions, that did in fact “promiscuously” mingle the classes’.²⁵ In addition to undermining class segregation, gender norms were also forsaken; women could attend masquerade balls without an escort, a privilege previously reserved only for attendance at church.²⁶ Once at the masquerade, gender ambiguity was authorized in a material/sartorial sense as well as a behavioural one, with both women and men disguising their voices as well as their bodies, and with transvestite dress common for both sexes.²⁷ Castle argues that conventions were nonetheless adhered to within this chaos, in terms of customary greetings, and dress that ought to represent an opposite of the wearer in some way.²⁸

A taste of what it was like to attend one of these events is provided in a comic journalistic satire entitled *The Amorous Bugbears: or, The Humours of a Masquerade* (1725), probably written by Ned Ward.²⁹ The epigraph to the text implies a similar anxiety about masquerading to that expressed in the anti-masquerade ballad ‘Truth on All Sides’:

*In former Days, our bold unguarded Youth
Intrigu’d barefac’d, and show’d the naked Truth,
But now, new vitious Projects we devise,
And make our wanton Courtships in Disguise,
That neither Sex their Quality need own,
But mutually indulge their Lusts unknown.*³⁰

From the outset, then, it is clear that the masquerade is, for the writer, predominantly a place of sexual intrigue, ‘wanton Courtships’ and ‘Lust’, as well as confusion regarding rank. Later in the text, he suggests that in attending the masquerade, the women are ‘all aiming at much the

²⁵ Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, p. 28.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²⁷ Castle notes that ‘forms of speech usually representative of masculine sociolinguistic privilege – cursing, obscenity, loud joking – were usurped by women masqueraders’. *Masquerade and Civilization*, p. 34.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5, p. 75.

²⁹ Ward’s authorship is indicated by the initials E.W., and by the text’s subtitle: ‘intended as a Supplement to the London-Spy’, a periodical that Ward published in eighteen monthly parts, beginning in November 1698. Ward owned a tavern at this point, but could have published this text to supplement his income, a suggestion which is further supported by the stylistic similarities between this text and *The London Spy*, and the narrator’s description of himself as ‘one that hates Scribling as he does Poverty, yet, like a Dutchman in the Rasp-House, is forc’d to Pump or Drown’. *The Amorous Bugbears: Or, The Humours of a Masquerade. Intended as a Supplement to the LONDON-SPY*. (London: A. Bettesworth and J. Bately, 1725), p.10. All subsequent references are to this edition. See also Steven Earnshaw, *The Pub in Literature: England’s Altered State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 110-32.

³⁰ Ward, *The Amorous Bugbears*, title page.

same thing [...], that is, the Maids to gain Husbands, the Jilts to tempt Bubbles, and the Wives Gallants'.³¹ But the satirist has a rather more complicated aim than the moralist; like the amatory writer, he writes for the pleasure of an audience. Steven Earnshaw notes the bankruptcy of Ward's claims about the solely virtuous or educational purpose of his sensationalised accounts of London low-life: 'in the best of this tradition the material has its salacious cake and eats it'.³² The same could be said of many amatory writers; Ward's simultaneous enjoyment of and rejection of the masquerade parallels, albeit with more theatricality, the fraught engagements of writers such as Jane Barker with her amatory predecessors. Ward's moral ambiguity is reflected in the generic instability of his text: in the prose sections, the narrator takes part in the events he relates, reporting in a bawdy, gossipy voice. The interspersed poetry differs, in that it tends to have a loftier, satiric tone, creating distance between writer and event. Earnshaw, with regards to the *London Spy*, claims: 'A controlling conscience that experiences, rather than one that merely observes or is ostensibly moralistic, is part of the attraction of the *Spy*'.³³ The same is true for *The Amorous Bugbears*, although in this case the controlling conscience is lightly restrained by the more distant poetic commentary. This text provides an even more apparent example of the multivocal messages in amatory texts that I explored in the previous chapter.

The account opens with our narrator-guide deciding to attend a masquerade: 'I had heard of an old *French* piece of Gallantry reviv'd among us, call'd a *Masquerade*, [...] a merry open Festival, where Sinners of all sorts may surfeit themselves with the Fleshliness and Vanities of this Life'.³⁴ His curiosity to attend ensures that any attempt at distancing himself from the other 'Sinners' is rendered problematic from the outset, and this is certainly not a text where the narrator sacrifices his strict morals to bring readers an account of the ordeal of the masquerade. He goes along to a tavern with four friends, where they acquire their masquerade costumes. They are transformed into a Turk, a Venetian nobleman, a Scottish Highlander, a

³¹ Ibid., p. 21.

³² Earnshaw, p. 112.

³³ Ibid., p. 122.

³⁴ Ward, *The Amorous Bugbears*, p. 2. All subsequent references are given parenthetically within the text.

footman, and the narrator himself takes ‘the habit of a Gray-Fryar, call’d a *Domine*’ (p. 10).³⁵ At the masquerade, the narrator describes a scene that is at once grotesque and sublime, noting that ‘the dimensions of the Room were of incredible Extension, and the Sides of it adorn’d with [...] beautiful Pyramids of fine Fruits and Sweetmeats’, and imagining himself in Hell or Hades (p. 15).

The narrator oscillates between active enjoyment and passive disapproval, ruminating, for example, about

the Quality [meaning the rich and influential guests], whose awful Presence was the only Bulwark that could defend so whimsical an Assembly from publick Scandal; [...] I thought the Wine like some of the Company, but very indifferent [so] I put on the Ayre of a Great Man, and took the liberty of finding Fault, like an old snarling Courtier [...] till at length, to stop my Mouth, and pacify my dissembled Uneasiness, one of the Butlers produc’d me a Bottle of excellent *Bordeaux*.

(p. 22)

At the masquerade, our narrator performs disapproval to two different audiences. To the reader, he comments on the scandalous nature of the assembly; to the assembly itself, he comments on the quality of the wine. He benefits from both performances, no doubt gaining more readers, attracted by his implicit promise of scandal, as well as better wine as a result of his ‘dissembled Uneasiness’. Another instance of his ambivalence is provided by his interaction with women at the masquerade, many of whom he realises are prostitutes. He relates a number of conversations he has with attendees, two of whom are indeed soliciting for sex after the masquerade itself. The suggestively named Diana Riggle insists that he come to visit her after the ball, whilst a second woman lets him into a secret, that masquerade tickets ‘*pass as current with us Ladies as Bank*

³⁵ Castle leads us to believe that the domine, or domino, outfit was merely a blank (*Masquerade and Civilization*, p. 59, p. 78), but in Ward’s account, the costume has religious connotations, which provide conversations with two women at the masquerade: one shows her aversion, as a Protestant, to Catholicism; the other shows her moral aversion to religious dress worn at masquerades at all. Moreover, Castle’s suggestion that when choosing one’s costume, ‘the conceptual gap separating true and false selves was ideally an abyss’ (*Masquerade and Civilization*, p. 75) is undermined in *The Amorous Bugbears*, when the narrator says of his group’s costume choices: ‘we were none of us very Curious whether we were dizen’d up like Lords or equipp’d like Lacqueys, [...] but each in his turn strip’d to his Shift, and suffer’d himself to be transmography’d into such a sort of a Changling as was most agreeable to our Valet’s Wardrobe, he wisely knowing, by the Size of his Habits, what Fool’s Jackets would fit our Bodies best’ (pp. 7-8). The transformation is radical, but lacking in the premeditated opposition to character that Castle suggests characterised costume choice at the masquerade. What this suggests is that Castle’s attempt to pin down the masquerade to a set of general, if rather loose, rules, cannot necessarily be mapped onto specific instances of the event.

Bills among Citizens’, often being exchanged instead of, or to supplement, payment for sex (p. 59). His drunken promises to visit both prostitutes again implicate him as more than just an objective observer. Our unreliable narrator’s questioning of the ‘Publick Benefit of this most glorious Convention, whither all degrees of Persons [...] have recourse to play the Fool, or worse, without the Danger of being known’ is thus inconclusive (p.50); he simultaneously mocks with cynicism and partakes with delight, refusing fully to adopt an explicit position.

After a report of several notable costumes, the reader is treated to descriptions of the ‘odoriferous Fumes’ of the spirits bar (p. 43); the silent tension of the hazard room; the private rooms used by lovers to exchange vows and to plan further illicit encounters elsewhere; and the subterranean supper rooms, which ‘were so scanty, and the Company so numerous, that they stood Crowding upon one anothers Backs, at least eight deep’ (p. 54). The overall impression is one of hedonistic, but not particularly harmful, chaos. Once the gentlemen are ‘well cloy’d’, they depart (p. 60). The narrator’s *laissez-faire* message in the final poetic summary sees him distancing himself from, whilst at the same time trying to excuse, the revels he engaged in during the course of the text:

*Tis a folly in Age
To attempt to engage
The young frolicksome World by their Teaching,
For the Vice of the Tail
Will at all times prevail,
Notwithstanding our Laws and our Preaching.*

(p. 62)

In an attempt to situate himself, with the use of ‘our’, as sympathetic to those who disapprove of the masquerade, the narrator metaphorically shrugs his shoulders, but also cleverly ensures that the reader is left with Ned Ward the law-maker and Ned Ward the preacher, rather than Ned Ward the drunken reveller.

Not all the reactions to the masquerade were as ambiguous as *The Amorous Bugbears*, however, and the phenomenon provoked intense criticism, particularly from religious sources. A 1721 pamphlet entitled *The Conduct of the Stage Consider’d, with Short Remarks upon the Original and Pernicious Consequences of Masquerades* censures the events as ‘unhallow’d Groves of immorality [...] fatal to Virtue and Principles of Honour’, arguing that they ‘descend

to the very Dregs of Baseness, and sink the Honour of human Nature to the lowest Ebb of Infamy.³⁶ Denouncing the masquerade's 'heathen' origins, the writer asks:

among Christians how is the true God dishonoured, by the promiscuous Congress of Masqueraders, whose nocturnal Revels, if not restrained, will prove more fatal to Religion, than the Villany of the *South-Sea* Directors has been to the National Credit?³⁷

A similar pamphlet warning against the disastrous personal and national consequences of masquerade balls was published in 1750, entitled *Ranelagh Masquerade Jubilee Balls, a Bad Return for Late Deliverances, and an Omen of greater impending Judgements*. The extracts that compose the pamphlet are collected from the anti-masquerade texts of the 1720s and attack the popular phenomenon, asserting its illegality as well as its immorality. Included in the pamphlet are several extracts from speeches given during the 1720s by the Bishop of London, Dr. Edmund Gibson. The Bishop warned, in 1725, against the dangerous results of the anonymity permitted by masquerade, where 'whatever Lewdness may be concerted, whatever Luxury, Immodesty, or Extravagance, may be committed in Word or Deed, no one's Reputation is at Stake, no one's Character is responsible for it'.³⁸ In addition to moral considerations, he also draws on nationalist ones, pronouncing that:

no ENGLISHMAN ought to be fond of [the masquerade], when he remembers that it was brought among us by the EMBASSADOR of a neighbouring Nation [...] indeed there is not a more effectual way to *enslave* a People, than first to *dispirit* and *enfeble* them by Licentiousness and Effeminacy.³⁹

The pamphlet also draws on the succeeding Bishop of London Thomas Sherlock's *Pastoral Letters* (1750), which argued that the earthquakes in London in February and March 1750 were God's punishment for vice and lewdness. Taking its cue from this assertion, the 'late deliverances' of the pamphlet's title refer to these earthquakes. The writer of the pamphlet

³⁶ *The Conduct of the Stage Consider'd. Being a Short Historical Account of its Original, Progress, various Aspects, and Treatment in the Pagan, Jewish and Christian World. Together with the Arguments urg'd against it, by Learned Heathens, and by Christians, both Antient and Modern. With Short REMARKS upon the Original and Pernicious Consequences of MASQUERADES*. (London: Eman Matthews, 1721), p. 34, p. 35.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³⁸ *Ranelagh Masquerade Jubilee Balls, a Bad Return for Late Deliverances, and an Omen of greater impending Judgments*, 2nd edn (London: W. Owen, 1750), p. 10.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

views the masquerade ball as exemplary of such punishable lewdness, prophesying that, 'If such Wickednesses are permitted, the next Shock of an Earthquake may well be dreaded.'⁴⁰

So in addition to the anxiety already discussed in the introduction to this chapter, which sees the masquerade ball as a source of contamination, disrupting wider societal codes by threatening to make dissimulation normative, there are two different anxieties at work in the collection of anti-masquerade material that makes up this pamphlet. The first is manifested in an abhorrence for the immorality of masquerade gatherings and the scandal associated with attendance at such events. Typically for the eighteenth century, this fear has its root in the troubled relationship between, on the one hand, virtue as an inner quality, both of the physical body in terms of chastity and of the mind in terms of goodness, and, on the other hand, reputation as that which is knowable from outside. I say troubled because the implication, within the pamphlet, is that people are naturally inclined towards sin, and that it is concern for reputation, rather than a love of virtue itself, that prevents immoral or transgressive behaviour. In the earlier pamphlet, *The Conduct of the Stage Consider'd*, the writer makes the same point, arguing that disguise allows people of both sexes 'an Opportunity of conversing together with the most unlimited Freedom; and *Shame, which is generally the greatest Obstacle to vicious Actions*, having here no place, they greedily run into those Excesses, which otherwise they durst scarce have thought of' (my emphasis).⁴¹ Both pamphlets recognise the role of social discipline in maintaining the status quo, and in doing so, undermine the idea of real virtue by privileging appearance instead. In 1774, John Gregory reformulates the same problem: 'a fine woman shews her charms to most advantage, when she *seems* most to conceal them' (my emphasis).⁴² He unwittingly evinces the reliance of female modesty on an external (male) gaze by implying the theatrical aspect of modesty. For the moralist, modesty, or virtue always threaten to become just another mask.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 20.

⁴¹ *The Conduct of the Stage Consider'd*, p. 40.

⁴² John Gregory, *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*, 2nd edn (London: W. Strahan, T. Cadell and W. Creech, 1774), p. 56.

The second anxiety implied in *Ranelagh Masquerade Jubilee Balls* addresses the foreign roots of the masquerade. The ‘EMBASSADOR’ mentioned by the Bishop is certainly Heidegger, and the pamphlet evidences a particular concern about the degrading effects of imported cultural phenomena on polite British society. The Bishop imagines a foreign conspiracy to coerce Britain into degeneracy, and denounces attendance at the event as unpatriotic. But patriotism is also couched in homophobic terms, evidencing a desire to define a masculinised, morally upright British subject against a constitutive outside characterised by ‘Licentiousness and Effeminacy’. The Bishop reiterates the oft-made links between continental cultural forms, such as the opera and the masquerade, and homosexuality. A pamphlet entitled *Satan’s Harvest Home* (1749) provides a particularly clear example of this connection, claiming that ‘the odious Practice of *Sodomy*’ is ‘trivial’ and ‘modish’ in Italy, and the growing popularity of Italian opera thus ensures that ‘our Men are grown insensibly more and more *Effeminate*’.⁴³ Even Ned Ward’s less hostile account of the masquerade makes such connections. He describes a man dressed as a woman, who becomes the victim of a practical joke when another guest throws snuff at his back to make him look as though he has soiled himself. The narrator notes that ‘Every Body believ[ed] him some *Sodomite* or other, that could be guilty of so much Immodesty’.⁴⁴ The masquerade thus creates a group consciousness between attendees, but also between writer and reader, in which homosexuality is, to some extent, expected, if not legitimised.

More than any other institution, the masquerade ball threatens reactionary impulses to classify: to construct coherent and knowable identities, and to distinguish self from other and male from female. In Henry Fielding’s ‘The Masquerade, A Poem’ (1728), he writes of the ball: ‘Known prudes there, libertine we find, | Who masque the face, t’unmasque the mind.’⁴⁵ Like ‘The Ball’, discussed earlier, this is a poem which recognises the potential of virtue

⁴³ *Satan’s Harvest Home: or the Present State of Whorecraft, Adultery, Fornication, Procuring, Pimping, Sodomy, And the Game of Flatts, (Illustrated by an Authentick and Entertaining Story) And other Satanic Works, daily propagated in this good Protestant Kingdom* (London: the Editor, 1749), pp. 55-56. For Castle’s analysis of homophobia and the links between masquerade and homosexuality in *The Conduct of the Stage Considered* and John Cleland’s *Fanny Hill* (1748), see *The Female Thermometer*, pp. 95-96.

⁴⁴ Ward, *The Amorous Bugbears*, p. 36.

⁴⁵ Henry Fielding, ‘The Masquerade, a Poem’ (London: J. Roberts, 1728), p. 3.

(manifested as prudishness in both poems) to be an act. Disguise permits an inversion of inner thoughts (mind) and outward behaviour (body) which frustrates the gazer's desire for full knowledge of its object. Hence the narrator's anxiety about the inability to identify what type of women one might encounter at a masquerade. The narrator of the poem poses the following question to a female masquerader: 'Madam, how from another woman | Do you a strumpet masqu'd distinguish?'.⁴⁶ The question foregrounds male fears about female unreadability, which writers such as Haywood, as we shall see, are quick to exploit. That being said, the same concern is also deployed as an excuse for men who 'accidentally' end up with prostitutes after the masquerade; not knowing can ultimately work to male advantage.⁴⁷ Wherever there is condemnation, there is also hypocrisy.

For Fielding, the masquerade is superstitious, atavistic and irrational, a space where 'As in a madman's frantic skull, | When pale-fac'd Luna is at full, | In wild confusion huddled lies | A heap of incoherencies'.⁴⁸ These 'incoherencies,' as Castle argues, demonstrate Fielding's condemnation of the masquerade 'as a world of enveloping sexual chaos, in which any kind of wrongful connection was possible'.⁴⁹ In a much later poem 'On the Masquerades' (1783), the poet and Rector Christopher Pitt also describes the unsettling indeterminacy of the masquerade gathering. He creates a scene in which attempts to delineate gender roles, or even more fundamentally, to distinguish between the sexes, are thwarted, describing it as an event 'where sexes blend in one confus'd intrigue, | Where the girls ravish, and the men grow big'.⁵⁰ In doing so, he reiterates Fielding's earlier question: 'For when men women turn – why then | May women be not chang'd to men?'.⁵¹ The potential usurpation of male privilege by women is posited as the inevitable, and infinitely more troubling, result of the milder transgression of cross-dressing men. For Pitt, this sex/gender disorder, if pursued to its logical conclusion, results in the ultimate 'wrongful connection.' At Pitt's masquerade, 'to belles their brothers

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

⁴⁷ In *The Female Thermometer*, Castle provides examples from Haywood's *The Female Spectator* and *The Gentleman's Magazine* of masquerade 'accidents' in which women are ruined by attendance at masquerades. See p. 99.

⁴⁸ Fielding, p. 3.

⁴⁹ Castle, *The Female Thermometer*, p. 95.

⁵⁰ Pitt, p. 42.

⁵¹ Fielding, p. 4.

breathe their vows’, and in doing so represent the transgression of society’s most fundamental prohibitive law: the incest taboo.⁵² Castle notes that ‘at its most profound level anti-masquerade rhetoric was directed against the masquerade’s unholy mixing of things meant to remain apart – its impulse, as it were, toward an incest of forms.’⁵³

In an examination of eighteenth-century reactions to the masquerade, from the satirical to the genuinely appalled, the masquerade itself emerges as a space for unadulterated indulgence and play with the boundaries of propriety. The apprehensions of anti-masquerade writers, framed in religious, nationalist, and homophobic terms, indicate the destabilising nature of the masquerade, which troubles, but also, as a constitutive outside, enables the classificatory systems that they are attempting to implement. The discursive tensions between appearance and being, between epistemology and ontology, are evident within these discussions of the masquerade. Castle argues that ‘the masked assemblies of the eighteenth century were in the deepest sense a kind of collective meditation on self and other, and an exploration of their mysterious dialectic [resulting in] a material devaluation of unitary notions of self’.⁵⁴ The self is othered in the act of masquerade, and body becomes as unknowable as mind. In another parallel between the amatory genre and the masquerade, we might trace anxieties at the heart of criticisms of both to a fear of the feminine, of female generativity: amatory fiction proliferates, repeating itself, whilst the masquerade spawns double selves and selves as others. Both gesture towards a recognition of bodies (whether bodies of texts or bodies of people) as incomplete and as unstable. For Castle, the masquerade is a deeply subversive challenge to all dialectical logic, and she posits its promotion of fluidity as ‘a symbolic revocation of the cosmos itself [...] a metaphysical shock wave’.⁵⁵ The next section considers the ways in which the masquerade in fiction develops the qualities ascribed to the masquerade ball, and asks whether we can indeed see the masquerade as truly subversive institution, or whether it ought rather to be seen as a

⁵² Pitt, p. 42. Castle notes that ‘accidental incest was another popular motif’ in anti-masquerade writing. *The Female Thermometer*, p. 98.

⁵³ Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, p. 80.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

carefully managed and organised moment of catharsis which ultimately only reinforces the dominant social order.

‘Metaphysical libertinage’: Resistance or Catharsis?

For women, according to Castle, the masquerade enabled a temporary release from gender oppression, albeit with accompanying dangers. During the masquerade, women could take on masculine privileges, some sanctioned, such as the use of bad language, and some undetected, as in cross-dressing. Castle writes that:

Most important, masquerading granted women the essential masculine privilege of erotic object-choice. [...] It would be going too far, perhaps, to call the masquerade a feminist counterpart to the brothel; eighteenth-century culture, unremittingly patriarchal in structure, was never so Utopian in its sexual arrangements. Nonetheless, the masquerade offered contemporary women a subversive – if temporary – simulacrum of sexual autonomy.⁵⁶

However, the exact nature of this privilege and this autonomy remains a moot point. If the power structure is simply inverted during the masquerade, in order for women temporarily to assume male privilege, then patriarchal structures are essentially left intact. And indeed, early in *Masquerade and Civilization*, Castle argues that the masquerade was ‘a world *upside-down*, an intoxicating *reversal* of ordinary sexual, social, and metaphysical hierarchies’ (my emphasis).⁵⁷ However, by the end of her book, Castle’s position has shifted to emphasize a more radical subversion, whereby the masquerade ball highlights the fictionality of organising structures as opposed to reinforcing them. She claims that the ball symbolizes a utopian potential for inclusivity and freedom, for ‘metaphysical libertinage – a convulsive negation of every form of ideological discrimination’.⁵⁸

More recently, Dror Wahrman has adopted and revised Castle’s conception of the masquerade, using it to provide what he terms a bird’s eye perspective on the conceptual terrain of identity. He suggests that the masquerade does not concern itself with specific categories of identity, such as gender or race, but instead represents ‘a scene of bacchanalian experimentation

⁵⁶ Castle, *The Female Thermometer*, p. 93.

⁵⁷ Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, p. 6.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

with the protean mutability of identity on a more basic level and in all its possible manifestations'.⁵⁹ Whilst he argues that the ball itself provided limits for the borrowing of identities, and kept such borrowings firmly within the realms of make believe (thus emphasizing Castle's mention of the temporary nature of the release), he nonetheless claims that the potency of the event lies in its 'potential for less containable exposure[s] of the limits of identity categories [which were] never far from the surface'.⁶⁰ Like Castle, Wahrman sees in the anti-masquerade discourses of the time a suggestive failure to differentiate the temporary act of masking at the ball, from a real erasure of social distinctions.⁶¹

If the masquerade enables the co-existence of two bodies in one – the occupation of a space characterised by both bodies, or neither – then we might see its function as typifying what Luce Irigaray means when she talks about 'mucosity' as an alternative to the phallic mode of discourse.⁶² In *This Sex Which is Not One* (1977), Irigaray draws our attention to '*the sexual indifference that underlies the truth of any science, the logic of every discourse*' whereby female sexuality 'is never defined with respect to any sex but the masculine'.⁶³ Judith Butler explains:

In opposition to Beauvoir, for whom women are designated as the Other, Irigaray argues that both the subject and the Other are masculine mainstays of a closed phallogocentric signifying economy that achieves its totalizing goal through the exclusion of the feminine altogether.⁶⁴

So, for Irigaray, the 'real' feminine constitutes an unutterable outside, entirely separate from the phallogocentric norm, and inaccessible via the given linguistic system. Margaret Whitford notes, however, that the masculine order fears 'the *fluid*, that which flows, is mobile, which is not a solid ground/earth or mirror for the subject'.⁶⁵ And it is within the fluid that the possibility of

⁵⁹ Wahrman, p. 160.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 159.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 159.

⁶² See Luce Irigaray, *Ethique de la difference sexuelle* (Paris: Minuit, 1984), and also Margaret Whitford, 'Irigaray's Body Symbolic', *Hypatia*, 6. 3 (Fall, 1991), 97-110 for a discussion of Luce Irigaray's symbolic formulation of the feminine as two lips, and as mucous.

⁶³ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. by Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 69. Originally published as *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1977).

⁶⁴ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 13.

⁶⁵ Luce Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader*, ed. by Margaret Whitford (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), p. 28.

speech about, or at least a gesture towards, a feminine real might be realised.⁶⁶ Although Irigaray applies this thinking to considerations of the feminine, it seems to me that ‘mucosity’ also usefully describes one manifestation of queerness that amatory fiction experiments with.

Whitford explains that

the mucous represents the most “unthought” and “unthinkable” of Western culture; it is related to the threshold, but is never theorised.
[...]
It corresponds to the attempt to build a sensible transcendental, in which the most corporeal and the most transcendent are no longer culturally split.⁶⁷

Like the positions occupied between gender by amatory writers, the spaces occupied by and between bodies by masqueraders could be read as queer spaces.

I want now to consider how the relationship between the real masquerade ball and its fictional representations have been theorised. I have already made some reference to the alignments I see between the masquerade and the amatory genre in terms of their origins and their reception. Whilst the readings that I examine here, from Castle, Schofield, and Craft-Fairchild have tended to focus on the extent to which we can read masquerade as subversive, I argue that the way in which masquerade is deployed in amatory fiction can tell us a great deal more about how amatory writers were thinking through questions of femininity and identity in terms of strategy and performativity. The queer possibilities of the ball itself are experimented with in amatory fiction, and these considerations are played out not only in the plots of the stories and the masquerade scenes and disguises contained within them, but also in the formal construction of the amatory text. Formula, it transpires, is a particularly appropriate medium to trace identity as a series of acts. Castle argues that: ‘We cannot separate the real and the fictive masquerade, for both were a part, ultimately, of a larger imaginative experiment in violation.’⁶⁸ William Warner critiques her approach by claiming that her readings ‘annul the strangeness or opaqueness of literary language’, and fail to pay attention to the fact that ‘literature is ordinary

⁶⁶ Caroline Rooney also argues for the recognition of the feminine real, experienced subjectively by the body, but not through a self or ego: ‘the feminine pertains not to inwardness so much as to a laterality of inter-connection’. *Decolonising Gender: Literature and a Poetics of the Real* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 4.

⁶⁷ Whitford, ‘Irigaray’s Body Symbolic’, p. 102.

⁶⁸ Castle, *The Female Thermometer*, p. 99.

language's masquerade, [which] develops in [sic] own cultural truth'.⁶⁹ And as I implied above, the self-conscious textuality of amatory fiction draws attention to a dual, or even multiple masquerade occurring. Characters masquerade within the intrigue plots, but the literary text itself also masquerades: the form – we might say costume – of the amatory text, is replicated and altered across various, repeated renderings. Letters written by disguised heroines, within inset narratives, within spoken histories, within texts that pretend to be translations, authored by women who use these layers of textuality as masks, all attest to a genre that is acutely aware of the power and pervasiveness of the masquerade.

Masquerade and Civilization examines representations of the masquerade in mid to late eighteenth century fiction (Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Frances Burney, and Elizabeth Inchbald), and whilst Castle does mention Haywood, it is only in passing. She thus misses out on the lines of influence running through the eighteenth century from earlier amatory fictions, which I return to in chapter five. Nonetheless, she makes some interesting and relevant points about the masquerade's literary incarnation. 'The masquerade itself masquerades', she argues, 'Ostensibly the scene of pleasure, it is actually the scene of snares – a region of manipulation, disequilibrium, and sexual threat.'⁷⁰ Castle argues that masquerades in fiction serve several purposes: they are catalysts for narrative action; they allow for 'the proliferation of intrigue itself', looking back, I would add, to their amatory predecessors' strategies of masking; and masquerades allow writers to resist and circumvent the expectation that their fiction be solely didactic by mingling the transgressive and the instructive.⁷¹ In its provision of a space that is ambiguous, fictional masquerades are at once exciting and dangerous, functioning to titillate and to warn; they are narrative strategies as much as narrative events, drawing together the outside and the inside of the text.

In *Masking and Unmasking the Female Mind* (1990), Schofield examines the origins of masking that Castle does not attend to. She attempts 'to reveal the power that lies beneath the

⁶⁹ William B. Warner, review of *Masquerade and Civilization* by Terry Castle, *MLN*, 103 (1988), 1144-47, (p. 1144), (p. 1145).

⁷⁰ Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, p. 119.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 254, p. 120. Castle, *The Female Thermometer*, p. 97.

disguise of feminine submission and marital compliance, romantic love and female powerlessness, the controlling ideologies of the eighteenth century'.⁷² Ostensibly then, prescriptive femininity masks female power. Reading texts by a diverse range of writers including Elizabeth Boyd, Penelope Aubin, Eliza Haywood, Jane Barker, Mary Davys and Mary Collyer, Schofield argues that these writers combined traditional romance with the emerging novel form to develop a specifically female writing. Masquerade for Schofield, unlike Castle, is productive of a concrete identity: 'the self that is truly female'.⁷³ She suggests that these writers are involved in a process of 'double writing', whereby masquerade enables them to 'mask their own feminist, aggressive intentions and to unmask the facile and fatuous fictions they are supposed to be writing as members of the weaker sex'.⁷⁴ In other words, these writers feign submission but claim power; as Haywood puts it: 'whenever we would truly conquer, we must seem to yield'.⁷⁵ Schofield sees the characterisation of women in these fictions as either virgins or viragos as a means for female authors to vent their frustration with the choices available to women behind the facade of didacticism.⁷⁶ But her desire to locate feminist anger within author-heroine identifications in the texts prevents her from analysing the ways in which the reiteration of such stereotypes can sometimes in itself be destabilising, as I shall discuss. For Schofield, masquerading ultimately seems to be an act of revelation rather than concealment, in that it allows women to reveal the desire for control and 'masculinity' beneath the feminine mask of subservience and submissiveness. She writes that 'although an illusion, the mask is the true face of the woman. [...] Masquerade in this use – as revelation – uncovers the dissatisfaction of the woman and her desire for power'.⁷⁷ But which mask? The submissive one or the aggressive one? Schofield appears here to reverse Riviere's conception of the masquerade, in which overly feminine behaviour is used to deflect male criticism of female

⁷² Mary Anne Schofield, *Masking and Unmasking the Female Mind: Disguising Romances in Feminine Fiction, 1713-1799* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1990), p. 10.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁷⁵ Eliza Haywood, *The Female Spectator*, repr. in *Selected Works of Eliza Haywood*, ed. by Alexander Pettit and Kathryn R. King, 6 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2000), II, 348. Power within submission is reconsidered in terms of its political implications by Toni Bowers in *Force or Fraud*.

⁷⁶ Schofield, p. 24.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

transgression into male intellectual territory, claiming instead that women adopt a masculine mask indicative of their true power.

Schofield's attention to the significance of early women's writing, and her reconsideration of the subversive potential of these ostensibly conservative texts, as well as her employment of the reading against the grain technique make her work typical of recovery project scholarship, and important within that context.⁷⁸ But what Warner refers to as Castle's 'programmatic optimism' informs Schofield's work too; rather tellingly, she conflates female, feminine, and feminist in her analysis.⁷⁹ She argues that all the women novelists she examines were involved in deviations from and subversion of romance norms and conventions and can thus be seen as forming a conscious criticism of the patriarchal nature of these earlier forms. This argument risks overlooking each writer's nuanced treatment of femininity, colonising them all into one proto-feminist sentiment based, as April London notes, 'on the existence of an essential self, a coherent identity that authors are intent on revealing'.⁸⁰ As we saw in the previous chapter, amatory writers are more interested in fracturing and avoiding single coherent identities than in realising them. Whilst Schofield's eagerness to locate historical resistance to patriarchy sometimes obscures the fact that some of the texts bear a much more complicated relation to patriarchy, and cannot be viewed as simply progressive or straightforwardly feminist, Castle's utopian vision of the masquerade also overlooks the reality of the masquerade's reactionary relationships to capitalism and to class hierarchies. As Warner notes, the eighteenth-century masquerade represented 'the translation of what is commonly owned into what is sold, of what is part of everyday life into the spectacularized commodity, of what was popular culture into packaged entertainment'.⁸¹ Presumably this process is exacerbated when the masquerade appears in an increasingly capitalist literary marketplace.

⁷⁸ Deborah D. Rogers, review of *Masking and Unmasking the Female Mind* by Mary Anne Schofield, *Eighteenth Century Studies* 24 (1991), 546-58 (p. 546).

⁷⁹ Warner, p. 1146.

⁸⁰ April London, review of *Masking and Unmasking the Female Mind* by Mary Anne Schofield, *The Review of English Studies*, 43 (1992), 566-68 (p. 567).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1147.

Whilst both Castle and Schofield celebrate the masquerade as a relatively uncomplicated vehicle for subversion, in *Masquerade and Gender* (1993), Craft-Fairchild provides an interesting revision of both Castle's and Schofield's arguments, legitimately criticising both for viewing the masquerade as an always-already subversive act. Craft-Fairchild writes that 'by ignoring the ways in which writing by women often upheld or promoted ideologies of female inferiority and subservience, Schofield misses the opportunity of examining women's complicity in the construction of eighteenth-century femininity'.⁸² And so, Craft-Fairchild's aim is to examine individual literary examples of masquerade, looking for adherence to and even creation of dominant ideologies, as opposed to the counter-ideology that Schofield and Castle assert. This is, of course, an important corrective to the two prior books. Using Lennard Davis's formation of literature's relation to ideology in *Factual Fictions* (1983), Craft-Fairchild conceptualises literature as both a product of and contributor to ideology, arguing that it serves a double function of embodying and simultaneously counteracting or subverting through re-enactment, thus showing the ideology it relies on as constructed, or insufficient.⁸³ This insight comes to bear on my own reading of how amatory writers are using their texts to test out the limits and edges of dominant ideologies.

The masquerade is not always subversive, as Castle would have it, and eighteenth-century women writers are not always (proto)feminist. Craft-Fairchild's main issue with Castle's version of masquerade as liberating for women lies in the centrality of voyeurism and exhibitionism to masquerading: the male gaze, which leaves women 'inscribed in the dominant economy as objects of male vision and masculine desire'.⁸⁴ Employing Irigaray's theories, which I shall examine in more depth in the next section of this chapter, she stresses the fact that subject/object positions are not altered by masquerade, arguing that '[i]f it is the woman who becomes a spectacle or fetish for the man's pleasure, masquerade does not alter women's

⁸² Catherine Craft-Fairchild, *Masquerade and Gender: Disguise and Female Identity in Eighteenth-Century Fictions by Women* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), p. 5.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 55. See Lennard Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 222.

⁸⁴ Craft-Fairchild, *Masquerade and Gender*, p. 53.

status'.⁸⁵ However, Craft-Fairchild does not argue that all texts merely serve to reinforce dominant ideologies, but rather that resistance and subscription occur simultaneously in texts that are more complex and nuanced than either Castle or Schofield allow. In a 1991 article, for example, Craft-Fairchild demonstrates the subversive narrative silences and sympathies in Behn's *History of the Nun* (1688), but her analysis of *The Dumb Virgin* (also 1688) in *Masquerade and Gender* casts the latter text as 'a gloss to those of Behn's works [including *The History of the Nun*] which celebrate female sexual license', in that masquerade is profoundly disabling for the characters in the latter text.⁸⁶ Craft-Fairchild asserts that in *The Accomplish'd Rake*, Mary Davys's two masquerading female characters, unlike Behn's Maria and Belvideera, use the event to confuse and manipulate the male gaze, as opposed to simply to attract male attention. But both *The Dumb Virgin* and *The Accomplish'd Rake* 'rearticulate and reaffirm patriarchal structures', whilst also 'expos[ing] through re-enactment, rendering invisible ideology visible and revealing the operative structures by which the feminine is suppressed'.⁸⁷ Whilst this revelation of the way in which the normative is constituted and structured cannot be read as feminist in any modern sense, it is suggestive of an awareness of the ways in which discourse functions and fails in constructing identities and narratives that cohere.

Craft-Fairchild is able to draw out examples of subversion, but argues that overall, the masquerade is disabling rather than enabling. She acknowledges that eighteenth-century criticism (written by men), evidences a fear about the transgressive potency of masquerading, which I have already demonstrated, but she argues that her readings, rather than supporting this impression, actually serve to contradict it. She claims that 'female masquerade remains at best double-sided and problematic'.⁸⁸ Of the seven texts that she examines, only two exemplify the empowering faculties of the masquerade, so she concludes that masquerading is more often disempowering, locking women into a system of exchange controlled by men. For Craft-

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 53. Craft-Fairchild goes on to argue that as the century progressed, masquerade did indeed become ubiquitous for women, and synonymous with femininity, but this masquerade represented female capitulation to repressive domestic ideals. See p. 173.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 34. For her discussion of Behn's *History of the Nun*, see Craft-Fairchild, 'Reworking Male Models: Aphra Behn's *Fair Vow-Breaker*, Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina*, and Charlotte Lennox's *Female Quixote*', *The Modern Language Review*, 86 (1991), 821-38.

⁸⁷ Craft-Fairchild, *Masquerade and Gender*, p. 50.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 171.

Fairchild, what constitutes subversion is not Castle's reversal, but distance: 'distance between the woman's self and her representation, [and] distance between the woman's desire and the man's', which create the gap necessary for subjectivity.⁸⁹ In making this assertion, she follows Mary Ann Doane, who argues, in her analysis of women and the cinema, that for women

the effectivity of masquerade [as opposed to a transvestite adoption of the male gaze] lies precisely in its potential to manufacture a distance from the image [of a woman on-screen], to generate a problematic within which the image is manipulable, producible, and readable by the woman.⁹⁰

However, the notion of distance, as I shall argue, is problematic within fictions that refuse a static self, separated from the process of construction or the masquerade. Whilst Craft-Fairchild engages primarily with Irigaray's theories of masquerade, I will examine Judith Butler's conception of masquerading alongside Irigaray's. My aim is to concentrate on the ways that amatory texts work to, as Craft-Fairchild puts it, render invisible ideology visible. I argue that a totalising feminist ideal of emancipation from the status quo as a standard fails to account fully for the ideology critique occurring in amatory texts, which works through defamiliarisation, reversal, and parody. By showing identities to be a series of replications, without origin, amatory writers are engaging in, but also distancing themselves from, the construction of performative discursive identities that signify beyond the transgressive/reactionary interpretive frameworks through which they are often read.

Mimesis and Performativity: the Workings of the Machine

It is necessary, at this point, briefly to lay out the terms of both Irigaray's and Butler's arguments about the construction of feminine identity, before moving on to consider how we might read amatory fiction as pre-figuring modern debates about the nature of performativity and its relation to the real. As I noted above, for Irigaray, discourse has entirely effaced the feminine in language, reducing all gender difference to a male-oriented 'economy of the

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 173.

⁹⁰ Mary Ann Doane, 'Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator', *Screen*, 23.3-4 (September/October, 1982), 74-87 (p. 87). Also see Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16. 3 (Autumn, 1975), 6-18.

Same'.⁹¹ The male/female binary is entirely enclosed within an overarching masculinist linguistic structure, which she terms the specular economy, so that the feminine provides the negative image against which the masculine defines itself. The position of femininity is therefore always reflective and part of the male, and never of itself. Any 'real' femininity, outside of this structure, is rendered unthinkable: the feminine, then, comes to signify only absence, a void beyond the economy of the same. Masquerade, for Irigaray, represents the 'alienated or false version of femininity', forcibly enacted within the specular economy, a sign of woman's exchange value within a male system of representation.⁹² She writes: 'In this masquerade of femininity, the woman loses herself, and loses herself by playing on her femininity. The fact remains that this masquerade requires an *effort* on her part for which she is not compensated.'⁹³ Thus, those who masquerade do so forcibly, in accordance with the patriarchal status quo. Irigaray sets herself apart from other psychoanalysts, but we might also say critics such as Castle, who consider masquerade as corresponding to women's desire, claiming instead that masquerade is 'what women do in order to recuperate some element of desire, to participate in man's desire, but at the price of renouncing their own. [...] they are there as objects for sexual enjoyment, not as those who enjoy'.⁹⁴ This assertion is one that can easily be mapped onto amatory fiction's highly ambiguous treatment of female desire, which often serves the interests of men at the expense of women.

In response to the enforced masquerade of femininity Irigaray urges the 'jamming of the theoretical machinery itself' through mimicry.⁹⁵ This is a strategy which involves interpreting through repetition the ways in which the feminine is defined by specular logic, a re-enactment of exploitation in order to demonstrate that a '*disruptive excess* is possible on the feminine side'.⁹⁶ Amatory fiction interprets, through repetition, certain types of femininity and their possibilities, whilst the fractured and disembodied amatory narrator is acutely aware of the ways

⁹¹ Irigaray, *This Sex*, p. 74.

⁹² Publisher's note on selected terms, in Irigaray, *This Sex*, p. 220.

⁹³ Irigaray, *This Sex*, p. 84.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 133-34.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

in which the feminine is commonly defined either by its reduction to body alone, or by its lack. That these experimentations with discursive formations of the feminine result in a 'disruptive excess' is something I return to in the following chapter, where I consider the ways in which embodiment and a realisation of the material come to bear on these texts. For my purposes here, it is sufficient to note that Irigaray defines mimicry thus:

One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it. [...]

To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself [...] to "ideas," in particular to ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make "visible," by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible: the cover-up of a possible operation of the feminine in language. It also means "to unveil" the fact that, if women are such good mimics, it is because they are not simply reabsorbed in this function. *They also remain elsewhere.*⁹⁷

She envisages the breakdown of the universalising logic of phallogocentrism achieved via processes of revelation, making strange, and distancing, as opposed to a simple redistribution of power within the existing structure. Toril Moi explains that Irigaray is suggesting 'a theatrical staging of the mime: miming the miming imposed on woman [...] to *undo* the effects of phallogocentric discourse simply by *overdoing* them'.⁹⁸ The hoped for result is articulated in strikingly similar terms to Hélène Cixous's *écriture féminine*: Irigaray promises that through the misuse of phallogocentric language, women can recover 'a different language'.⁹⁹ Moi criticises Cixous for her attempt to reclaim the feminine in stereotyped terms, arguing that 'it is, after all, patriarchy, not feminism, that insists on labelling women as emotional, intuitive and imaginative, while jealously converting reason and rationality into an exclusively male preserve', and she applies the same argument to Irigaray's concept of mimicry.¹⁰⁰ '[S]ometimes', Moi argues, 'a woman imitating male discourse is just a woman speaking like a man'.¹⁰¹ The question, of course, is at what point is mimicry incorporated back into the dominant male ideology?

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 76.

⁹⁸ Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1985), p. 140.

⁹⁹ Irigaray, *This Sex*, p. 80.

¹⁰⁰ Moi, p. 123.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 143.

Moi writes of the Symbolic Order:

We have to accept our position as already inserted into an order that precedes us and from which there is no escape. There is no *other space* from which we can speak: if we are to speak at all, it will have to be within the framework of symbolic language.¹⁰²

Whilst Moi is concerned with speech, Butler extends this thinking to encompass being as well. For Butler, debates over liberation are rendered irrelevant if one considers that both ‘before’ and ‘after’ the law are grammatical formulations of temporality produced by Power.¹⁰³ Following Foucault, she argues that ‘power can neither be withdrawn, nor refused, but only redeployed’.¹⁰⁴ There is, for Butler, as for Foucault, no escaping the law itself, no position outside, or prior to it, nothing not constituted by power itself, in its simultaneously generative and prohibitive gestures. This poses two further questions for consideration: is it really the case that we have no access to any pre- or extra-discursive reality, or that reality is simply a product of the discursive? Caroline Rooney argues that, ‘Reality is not some Thing out there. We are in it, it is all around us [...] The real is not some object so much as a consciousness of reality.’¹⁰⁵ So perhaps discourse is not as omnipotent as Butler would argue. The second question, to which the rest of this chapter attends, is one that nonetheless temporarily accepts the basic difficulty Butler posits in escaping discourse: what sort of alterations are possible from within discourse, and can we characterise these as subversions? I argue over the rest of this chapter and the next, that performativity in amatory fiction is used to chart the operations of power and subtly to experiment with their limits, whilst moments of embodiment in amatory fiction serve in a more concrete, violent, but also more randomised way to disrupt the operations of power.

In thinking about questions of agency, Butler highlights two versions of gender constructivism: the first denies human agency and claims that gender construction is predetermined, whilst the second emphasises free will, casting gender as a ‘manipulative artifice’.¹⁰⁶ The former view assumes that power is somehow ‘a grammatical and metaphysical

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 170.

¹⁰³ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 40.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 169.

¹⁰⁵ Rooney, *Decolonising Gender*, p. 38.

¹⁰⁶ Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, p. xiv.

subject', thus simply substituting human agency for the agency of power.¹⁰⁷ The latter view's assumption of a choosing subject somehow prior to gender is, Butler says, a reinvestment in the humanist subject that many constructivist accounts seek to problematise.¹⁰⁸ So both forms of constructivism inevitably lead back to the grammatical demand for a subject. She claims that both constructivist and essentialist arguments over gender are missing the point, which is that 'performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate "act," but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names'.¹⁰⁹

There is no essential gender, and gender construction is not a single act, but a process, rendered invisible, with no beginning and no end. For Butler, agency 'is to be found, paradoxically, in the possibilities opened up in and by that constrained appropriation of the regulatory law, [...] the compulsory appropriation and identification with those normative demands'.¹¹⁰ She claims that agency can thus be seen as 'a reiterative or rearticulatory practice, immanent to power, and not a relation of external opposition to power'.¹¹¹ Essentially, she has developed Irigaray's concept of mimicry, but removed the element of conscious choice involved, and this, I argue, can shed new light on the way that we might read the masquerade in amatory fiction, helping to reconcile the proto-feminist and anti-feminist elements that have troubled feminist critics of the genre.

Performing gender, enacting the masquerade, is not, in amatory fiction, necessarily transgressive or reactionary, but rather ought to be seen as the working through of processes of repetition, an experimentation with the deployment and redeployment of power, and a working towards agency.

Irigaray highlights the need to re-examine discourse, to point out 'how the system is put together, how the specular economy works'.¹¹² In a sense, Butler's theory of gender performativity is doing exactly this, in interrogating 'what the coherence of the discursive

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. xviii.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. xiv.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. xii.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. xxi.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. xxiii.

¹¹² Irigaray, *This Sex*, p. 75.

utterance conceals of the conditions under which it is produced'.¹¹³ The performative gendered body, Butler argues, 'suggests it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality'.¹¹⁴ Aware of the way in which epistemological privilege is often claimed by the denial of real, lived lives, Rooney criticises the dangerous implications of Butler's theory, arguing that '[a]ccording language a precedence over reality can indeed foster an omnipotence of word and thought, one that can seek to literalise itself in an authoritarian manner'.¹¹⁵ Rooney argues that it is important to distinguish between a mechanical, techno-performativity, based in empty citationality, and a more creative, theatrical performance that plays on the gap between reality and said performance in an ironic way. She contends that Butler conflates these two distinct forms of performativity into 'an economy of representation as repetition compulsion' and in doing so, reduces 'the potential for transformation to deformative mutations of the norm'.¹¹⁶ But the point in the readings of amatory fiction that follow is that the genre is merely providing a blueprint for the tensions between the discursive and the real which emerge in modern theory. The arguments I make below situate amatory fiction primarily within a techno-performative framework as Rooney understands it, seeing the repetitions of form as prefiguring Butler's understandings of performativity, but I go on to examine moments of embodiment in amatory texts in the following chapter, which also gesture towards the more organic, feminine real which Rooney insists upon.

'False, False Woman!': Repetition with Difference¹¹⁷

Haywood's *The Masqueraders; or Fatal Curiosity* is a two-part novel published between 1724 and 1725, which makes use of the masquerade both as a setting for the action of the plot, and in terms of the disguise and intrigue of the characters, effected through behaviour, clothing, and letters. The plot bears summarising here as it is one of Haywood's less familiar texts.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 74.

¹¹⁴ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 185.

¹¹⁵ Rooney, p. 6. Also see p. 32.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 26.

¹¹⁷ Eliza Haywood, *The Masqueraders; or Fatal Curiosity: Being The Secret History of a Late AMOUR*, 2 vols (London: J. Roberts, 1724, 1725), I, 45. All subsequent references are to this edition, and volume and page numbers are given parenthetically within the text.

Essentially, this is a novel that follows four women who seduce/are seduced by the same man, Dorimenus. In volume one, Dalinda becomes Dorimenus's mistress after meeting him at a masquerade, but their romance is short-lived. Dalinda's friend Philecta pursues Dorimenus, using a series of disguises and intrigues to pique his curiosity and engage his attentions. At the second masquerade in the text, Philecta disguises herself as Dalinda, entirely fooling Dorimenus who is, like many amatory heroes, incapable of distinguishing between women's bodies. When she unmask, he is surprised to find that she is not his lover, and curious as to her identity. Philecta refuses to satisfy his curiosity, instead forging a letter in Dalinda's hand to contrive a second meeting with him. Dorimenus swiftly abandons Dalinda in favour of Philecta, despite a long and deeply ambiguous resistance from Philecta. However, Philecta's success is quickly followed, at the end of the first volume, by her pregnancy and abandonment as Dorimenus leaves her for an advantageous marriage. Volume two continues Dorimenus's story: he is happily married to country-bred Lysimena at the beginning, but their marriage soon falls apart as the vices of the city distract them from one another. The rest of the narrative details his pursuit of the coquettish Briscilla. His plotting has unexpected and comic results when he accidentally seduces his own wife, disguised as a nun at a masquerade ball. A second masquerade ball sees him finally bedding Briscilla after a series of failed plots on his part, and deferrals on hers. His success is tempered when he learns the identity of the nun of the previous masquerade (i.e. his wife), whom he has engaged his friend to seduce, thus cuckolding himself. At the end of the text, we leave him faithful to Briscilla, but how long this will last is anyone's guess.

The text is interesting within the context of this chapter for a number of reasons: its representation of contrasting 'types' of femininity and feminine behaviour; its inclusion of four actual masquerade scenes; its attention to a masculine obsession with fixed identity; its acknowledgment of female capitulation to male desire and narcissism (foreshadowing Irigaray's insights); its understanding of the relationships between curiosity, female desire, and power; its treatment of voyeurism and the gaze; its deferred seduction scenes; its ambiguous moral codes; and its compulsive repetitions. For the purposes of this reading, I focus on the repetitions,

comparing them to those in *Fantomina*, published during the same period of Haywood's career.¹¹⁸ In *The Masqueraders*, the male character is unable to see the differences between four different women; for him, they fulfil the same function, and are interchangeable. *Fantomina* almost acts as a mirror, a riposte to or rewriting of the earlier work. The heroine splits her representation into four disguises (Fantomina, Celia, Widow Bloomer, and Incognita), which the male character fails to recognise as the same woman. Both texts thus identify and experiment with the failure of masculinist discourse to recognise women as anything other than mirrors of male desire.

If we read these texts through the lens provided by Castle, then what we have are three clear examples of women manipulating their masquerade in order to gain that 'simulacrum of sexual autonomy' of which Castle speaks.¹¹⁹ Fantomina, in her continual manipulation of Beauplaisir's lack of knowledge, misdirects the male gaze and is successful in her designs upon her lover, at least until she is unmasked by her labour.¹²⁰ In volume one of *The Masqueraders*, Philecta attends the second masquerade of the text in a double disguise: as Dalinda, and in the costume of an Indian slave. She has ensured, beforehand, that she is in a position both to 'read' the masquerade and to act her part correctly; her prior knowledge of intended costumes allows her to gaze without being known. She is able to experience the body and the subjectivity of another via Dorimeneus's treatment of her, but when Dorimeneus, convinced she is Dalinda, asks her to leave with him, she fractures the identification by unmasking herself. 'You see, Sir, *said she*, how impossible it is for you to do any thing in private' (I. p. 14). Philecta's masquerade, true to Castle's arguments, collapses the binary between public and private, self and other. Her unmasking also makes Dorimeneus aware of a power imbalance, albeit temporary, that rests on identity: for her, his private world is rendered public, but for him, both Philecta's private and public identities remain masked by his lack of knowledge. Philecta understands, if

¹¹⁸ I have omitted a summary of this text, which I have discussed in chapter one.

¹¹⁹ Castle, *The Female Thermometer*, p. 93.

¹²⁰ Ashley Tauchert notes that 'it is specifically birthing, rather than pregnancy, that performs the final unmasking; and it is the unmediated communication of the trauma of birthing through and on Fantomina's "material body" which shatters the layers of misidentification established by her "little whim"'. 'Woman in a Maze: *Fantomina*, masquerade and female embodiment', *Women's Writing*, 7 (2000), 469-86 (p. 473). I return to this and other moments of embodiment in the following chapter.

unconsciously, how to manipulate male desire for knowledge and closure, using both the mask, and her status as unknown to him.

In volume two, unwilling to make the same mistake, Dorimenes attempts to gain prior knowledge of his new love interest's masquerade costume in order to guarantee his status as knowing gazer and her status as object of this gaze. Briscilla chooses a nun's disguise; he chooses a friar's, solidifying the link between them, as well as its power dynamic. However, Briscilla wilfully undermines his power by changing her costume at the last minute to a gypsy, whilst Dorimenes's wife, Lysimena, unbeknownst to him, adopts a nun's disguise when her country maid costume does not fit. The comic result sees conservative prescriptions for behaviour mockingly and parodically acted out in the place where they should be least adhered to: the transgressive scene of seduction in a hackney coach turns out to be the only sanctioned form of sex, i.e. within marriage.

The choice of costumes at the masquerades is interesting in this text and once again more complex than either Castle's or Schofield's schematisations of masquerade costume allow for. Schofield suggests that the conventional costumes of nuns, shepherdesses and courtesans emphasize submissive femininity, and the women who don these disguises are characterised by these traits, rather than, as Castle argues, their opposites. Women dressed as gypsies, demons, or prostitutes, Schofield claims, are characters who choose their disguises to demonstrate their desire for power, but who, as a consequence of their transgressions, usually end up cast out or dead.¹²¹ So what ought we to make of Philecta's Indian slave costume, which effectively unites two different women with different relationships to power, in one body? Which character is the costume supposed to signify? Briscilla's nun outfit reflects an opposition to her coquettish personality (Castle's contention), whilst her final choice of the gypsy reflects her desire for power (Schofield's argument). The change in her costume choice suggests that she knows is able to manipulate and confuse the way in which she signifies. She justifies her gypsy costume thus: '*Read me, and take me, – was, perhaps, what I design'd by that little Artifice*' (II, 21).

¹²¹ Schofield, p. 44.

What she is attempting to emit is not power, but availability, and readability, although Dorimenus proves himself a bad reader, unable to see beyond surface appearance.

There are, across both texts, instances of female manipulation which appear to thwart or redirect male intentions. However, a reading influenced by Castle, which notes only the empowering possibilities of the masquerade fails to take into account the fact that the autonomy of these women always eventually privileges male desire and pleasure. Fantomina creates a chain of exciting seduction scenes for Beauplaisir, but the nature of her own desire remains uncertain. Likewise, Philecta's motives remain uncertain, and her masquerade works to enable Irigaray's specular economy, in that it allows Dorimenus to fail to see her as distinct from her friend; he sees her only in his terms, projecting his narcissistic desire onto Philecta's body, 'inform'd by some tell-tale *Cupids* in her Eyes [...] that he had a Friend within' (I, 23). Philecta's eventual capitulation to him and her unfortunate fate undermine her short-term successes in managing his attentions, implying instead that her deferrals are merely a means to increase his desire. Indeed, her initial refusal of Dorimenus leaves him 'convinced Love had its Pains as well as Pleasures, and [...] Haywood wryly adds] as much surprised to find this Alteration in himself, as he was that there was a Woman in the World on whom he had not been able to make any visible Impression' (I, 27). Dorimenus's failure to recognise Briscilla in the second volume of the text again demonstrates that women are interchangeable tokens of male competition rather than subjects, and that this objectification is only rendered more severe by masquerade.¹²² However, a closer examination of the characterisation of the women in *The Masqueraders* reveals that this interchangeability is highly complex, and ideologically charged.

Initially, the female characters in *The Masqueraders* seem to represent different archetypal femininities: virgins and viragos. Volume one of the text contrasts the naive, readable Dalinda with the more worldly Philecta. The narrative opens with Dalinda, disguised as a shepherdess, fainting at a masquerade, and drawing the attention of Dorimenus. She is

¹²² Despite her redirection of Dorimenus's gaze, Briscilla is still pursued by an unwanted and forceful admirer, and Lysimena is fought over by two unknown men and Dorimenus, with the result finally being settled by the appearance of Heidegger himself. The masquerade, then, is cast as a picking ground for predatory men, in which even the most canny women are at risk.

instantly unmasked, and her desire for him is apparent in ‘her Eyes, those infallible Betrayers of the Heart’ (I, 4). It is this disjuncture between her body, signifying desire, and her costume, signifying innocence, that proves problematic in her subsequent relationships with other characters: she is too readable. Later on, her lack of ‘cautio[n] for her own Interest’ leaves ‘the poor unthinking Open-hearted Fair’ abandoned in favour of her friend and rival, Philecta (I, 39). Philecta, by contrast, is wary of men due to a former disappointment, and is much more able to disguise and manipulate codes of behaviour to her own advantage. Volume two employs a similar contrast between Lysimena, bored with, but nonetheless accustomed to, ‘the innocent Delights of a rural Life,’ and Briscilla, again a more experienced woman who, as a practised coquette, knows how to increase and maintain male desire by constant deferral (II, 3). But despite the apparent contrast of innocence (Dalinda and Lysimena) and experience (Philecta and Briscilla) in each volume, the divide is troubled. Dalinda, after all, has been seduced; Lysimena falls into a dissipated lifestyle once in London. Moreover, the divisions between the women themselves are also broken down: Philecta ‘becomes’ Dalinda by masquerade, and in doing so, replaces her in Dorimenus’s affections. Lysimena temporarily ‘becomes’ Briscilla, when she puts on a nun’s habit for the first masquerade of volume two. The women replicate one another as their tale is told and retold through each engagement with Dorimenus. The women are also linked by a circularity in terms of their fates: in that they are both hurt by love, Dalinda’s abandonment towards the end of volume one leaves her in a position similar to Philecta’s at the start of the novel. Indeed, we are told that Philecta ‘had herself suffered much by Love, and the Ingratitude of a Man who had deceiv’d her with Professions of much the same nature’ as those made by Dorimenus to Dalinda at the start of the text (I, 9). The instability of the novel’s resolution rests on the fact that Briscilla, successful in keeping Dorimenus for now, has the potential to mirror Philecta’s fate, to be abandoned. However, finally seduced in her shepherdess outfit, Briscilla again links back to Dalinda, dressed as a shepherdess, fainting at the masquerade in the opening scene. This is a text that refuses closure, that strains against the narrative conventions that seek to confine it. It is a text that is compelled to repeat.

Noting the ‘unrelenting circularity [in] Haywood’s text’, Craft-Fairchild suggests that in attending the masquerade, the women ‘who seem differentiated and independent initially, [...] are reduced to sameness and dependence’, and ‘function solely as repositories for Dorimenes’s desire’.¹²³ However, this reading, like Dorimenes himself, fails to recognise the subtle differences between these women in knowledge, management, restraint, and fate. It misses the mockery of Dorimenes, and, by association, Beauplaisir in *Fantomina*. In creating a knowing reader, Haywood’s texts do not encourage identification with the male characters’ failures to recognise female difference. There is a distance being established, I would say, whereby the text is working through the negative effects of female masquerade without endorsing them. In making visible and ridiculing the male gaze, the text allows readers themselves become aware of and thus avoid adopting the male gaze. In volume one, we hear that Dorimenes ‘could not find a DALINDA in PHILECTA: as she knew better how to love she also knew better how to govern it’ (I, 24). Notably, this is at a point in the novel where Dorimenes has full knowledge of Philecta’s identity and is thus equipped to distinguish her from Dalinda by her resistance to him. I would say, however, that this statement demonstrates the narrator acting to make the differences between these women clear. Haywood provides examples of a woman abandoned; a pregnant woman abandoned; a woman abandoned in marriage; and a woman not abandoned, testing each variation within the sexual arena created by the masquerade. The four different tales demonstrate four different rehearsals of femininity: the naive mistress; the reading/writing mistress; the bored wife; the coquette. The web of similarities, doubles and replications that Haywood constructs mean that the links between female characters are no doubt striking and tangled, but I would argue that this is repetition with slight differences each time. Whilst repetition, as I shall demonstrate, is crucial to the way in which Haywood is demonstrating identity as process, difference allows her to make room for a certain elasticity within the boundaries of this process.

Craft-Fairchild argues that *The Masqueraders* and *Fantomina* are ideologically very different: *The Masqueraders*, she claims, is an inescapably conservative text which constructs

¹²³ Craft-Fairchild, *Masquerade and Gender*, p. 59, p. 56, p. 59.

masquerade as submission to male desire, but *Fantomina* is a more liberatory tale, not because of an inversion of male/female privilege, as Castle might see it, but because of the heroine's creation of distance between self and consciously constructed image.¹²⁴ Fantomina's actions, for Craft-Fairchild, are more representative of Irigaray's mimicry than enforced masquerade, or of Doane's conception of masquerade as a form of resistance to the male gaze, which refocuses this gaze on a false self.¹²⁵ She sees Fantomina as working to recover the place of female oppression via imitation.¹²⁶ But might we not also say that Philecta, in disguising herself as Dalinda in order to experience Dorimeneus's attention, is actually engaged in the same act as Fantomina, when she dresses as a prostitute? As Fantomina recovers the place of the prostitute, Philecta recovers the place of submissive Dalinda. Neither woman wants to be entirely reduced to the position she performs, to the woman she mimics. However, when she is raped, Fantomina is, in fact, reduced to this position. Arguably, then, it is Philecta who provides the better, or at least more sustained, example of mimicry as Irigaray defines it. She defers the gratification of male desire and manages the male gaze, although she, too, is eventually reduced to a position of familiar female oppression. It is actually Briscilla, as Craft-Fairchild concedes, of all the women in both texts, who is the most successful in her designs:

Haywood hints, through Briscilla's early efforts to frustrate Dorimeneus's desires and satisfy her own, and through Briscilla's successful evasion and refocusing of Dorimeneus's gaze when she is cloaked as a gypsy, that the masquerade can function differently from the way it does for the first three women in this text.¹²⁷

Nonetheless, Briscilla's desire, and her 'success', predicated on maintaining male desire, remain questionable in terms of feminist analysis. Craft-Fairchild's reading of *The Masqueraders* as reactionary, and *Fantomina* as liberatory doesn't ultimately work, because of the close similarities between both texts. Her arguments can be cross-applied to either text to demonstrate that, like *Fantomina*, *The Masqueraders* provides examples of mimicry, but also that, like *The Masqueraders*, *Fantomina* ends up being a tale about capitulation to male desire. Her argument that the texts are ideologically distinct is undermined by her argument that both texts

¹²⁴ Ibid., pp. 51-73.

¹²⁵ Doane, pp. 81-82.

¹²⁶ Craft-Fairchild, *Masquerade and Gender*, p. 60.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 59.

simultaneously embody and subvert dominant ideology, which leaves us able to read either text as representative of enforced masquerade, or of mimicry, depending on how we define enforcement and subversion.

I would argue that the problem we are coming up against lies in the idea of liberation and transgression so integral to feminist criticism. None of the female characters in these texts realise the liberatory potential promised by Castle's utopian vision of the masquerade, but these texts are still clearly saying something important about gendered identity. What they are saying falls outside of the repressed/rebellious framework that continues to render these texts frustrating to feminist critics. I suggest that these texts, in addition to providing specific examples of female transgression or oppression on the level of the characters, are also using masking and masquerade to demonstrate more broadly the ways in which discourse functions to constitute identity: they are demonstrations of the workings of the machinery. In this sense, we can see the texts themselves as mimetic, in their indication of, to quote Irigaray again, 'how the system is put together, how the specular economy works'.¹²⁸ The repetitions with difference that characterise the women in *The Masqueraders*, and the series of disguises that Fantomina undergoes, can be read as a structural recognition of performative identities in the process of becoming. As such, it is necessary to shift the focus from the subjecthood of the female characters, to the form of the plot, to the 'unrelenting circularity' that Craft-Fairchild describes, in order to understand more fully the implications of amatory fiction's theoretical position.

Butler highlights an important split in considerations of the masquerade: can all gender be reduced to appearances, or is there something prior to the masquerade, something 'that is masked and capable of disclosure, [and] might promise an eventual disruption and displacement of the phallogocentric signifying economy'?¹²⁹ From these two different understandings of the masquerade (masquerade as entirely performative, or masquerade as a denial of a prior femininity), Butler sets out two tasks:

The former task [which sees masquerade as producing gender ontology] would engage a critical reflection on gender ontology as parodic (de)construction and,

¹²⁸ Irigaray, *This Sex*, p. 75.

¹²⁹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 64.

perhaps, pursue the mobile possibilities of the slippery distinction between “appearing” and “being” [...] The latter [Irigaray’s position] would initiate feminist strategies of unmasking in order to recover or release whatever feminine desire has remained suppressed within the terms of the phallic economy.¹³⁰

Butler remarks that ‘perhaps these alternative directions are not as mutually exclusive as they appear’.¹³¹ And indeed, amatory fiction experiments with performativity and redeployments of power, whilst at the same time obsessively returning to the material effects of passion, punishment, and pregnancy on the body, dramatising the tensions between discursive constructions and fleeting revelations of the real. Like its female characters, amatory fiction constructs, and constructs, and in this construction gestures towards potential agency achieved by discursive repetitions with difference, even whilst recognising the limits of the discursive.

In *Fantomina*, the narrator tells us that the heroine:

was so admirably skill’d in the Art of feigning, that she had the Power of putting on almost what Face she pleas’d, and knew so exactly how to form her Behaviour to the Character she represented, that all the Comedians at both Playhouses are infinitely short of her Performances. She could vary her very Glances, tune her Voice to Accents the most different imaginable from those in which she spoke when she appear’d herself.¹³²

Fantomina is certainly one of the most adept actresses to be found in amatory fiction. During the course of the novella, she successfully negotiates and manipulates the subject/object paradigm by splitting and multiplying her self-representations in a number of different disguises.¹³³ More fundamentally, at least with regards to the point at hand, there is a silence or an absence at the heart of the heroine’s (non)identity, an empty sign which eludes both the reader and Beauplaisir, and which is implied in Haywood’s word choice. Even without disguise, Fantomina only ever ‘appear’d herself’ (my emphasis); the name ‘Fantomina’ is, itself, a pseudonym. Fantomina is, as it turns out, a phantom. As such, Fantomina as a subject does not exist independently of her performances and her ‘ongoing process of self-constitution and self-transformation [...] anchored in the perilous and shifting sands of non-identity’ can be seen, in this light, as proto-

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 64.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 64.

¹³² Eliza Haywood, *Fantomina: Or, Love in a Maze* (1725), repr. in *Fantomina and Other Works*, ed. by Alexander Pettit, Margaret Case Croskery and Anna C. Patchias, (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2004), pp. 41-71 (p. 57).

¹³³ This technique is similar to the technique employed by amatory writers themselves, which I outlined in chapter two.

queer.¹³⁴ She exemplifies Butler's notion that identity is 'performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results'.¹³⁵

If we remove the subject who 'does' gender from amatory fiction, then we are left with repetitions, both of character and of plot. *Fantomina*, *Celia*, the *Widow Bloomer* and *Incognita* are all repetitions that constitute the illusion of a person beneath all these performances. Likewise, *Dalinda*, *Philecta*, *Lysimena* and *Brisquilla* can all be read as repetitions of the masquerade of femininity. For both *Fantomina* and *The Masqueraders*, the circularity and repetitions of the basic seduction plot reach out beyond the boundaries of the text itself, suggesting the lack of origin and end that Butler understands as integral to performativity. *Fantomina* is placed in a nunnery where she, or indeed another woman, might feasibly start the process again. As noted already, *Brisquilla* has the potential to link back to *Dalinda*, enclosing the entire novel into a circle; the same circularity and repetitions demonstrate discourse as inescapable. Butler writes:

To enter into the repetitive practices of this terrain of signification is not a choice, for the "I" that might enter is always already inside: there is no possibility of agency or reality outside of the discursive practices that give those terms the intelligibility that they have. The task is not whether to repeat, but how to repeat or, indeed, to repeat and, through a radical proliferation of gender, to *displace* the very gender norms that enable the repetition itself.¹³⁶

And it is here that repetitions with difference become crucial. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler famously cites drag as destabilising practice, which highlights the problematic gaps between 'the natural and the artificial, depth and surface, inner and outer'.¹³⁷ In drag performance, Butler sees a parodic revelation of the impossibility of an origin upon which gender is based. She writes that

This perpetual displacement constitutes a fluidity of identities that suggests an openness to resignification and recontextualisation; parodic proliferation deprives

¹³⁴ David M. Halperin describing Michel Foucault in *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 122.

¹³⁵ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 34.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 202-03. There are, as mentioned earlier, problems with Butler's totalising viewpoint. Rooney argues that she does not leave room for creativity within her understanding of the performative, failing to distinguish between 'the mechanically conformative and forms of the performative that may be considered to be theatrical and ironic' (p. 9). What is lost, she claims, is an acknowledgement of a reality beyond the discursive, which I think amatory fiction nonetheless gestures towards and situates in conversation with its discursive experimentations.

¹³⁷ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. xxxi.

hegemonic culture and its critics of the claim to naturalized or essentialist gender identities. Although the gender meanings taken up in these parodic styles are clearly part of hegemonic, misogynist culture, they are nevertheless denaturalized and mobilized through their parodic recontextualization.¹³⁸

Whilst she is not claiming that all parody is subversive, she nevertheless sets out several acts which subvert by making visible that which was formerly concealed. Those acts, in the right contexts, which ‘invert the inner/outer distinction’; which ‘compel a reconsideration of the *place* and stability of the masculine and the feminine’; and which ‘enact and reveal the performativity of gender itself in a way that destabilizes the naturalized categories of identity and desire’ all have subversive potential.¹³⁹ Failures to repeat, or parodic repetitions, which show identity’s construction, can become loci for disruption.¹⁴⁰

Each repetition in *Fantomina* represents a denaturalization of a type of femininity, and destabilisation of gender and class systems too. Similarly, the masquerades of both Philecta and Briscilla, and, to some extent Lysimena, dramatise and unsettle distinctions between the natural and the artificial and focus attention on the way in which the male gaze functions to effect uniformity on that which is actually differentiated. These two texts by Haywood, and the citational relationships between other amatory texts which experiment with the seduction narrative, render explicit the ways in which repetition constitutes and stabilises both masculine and feminine roles. They tacitly acknowledge the naturalization of normative and prescriptive gender roles and the related functions of desire, whilst also working subtly to resist such roles and functions by redeploying power along slightly altered lines for each repetition.

*

Amatory fiction masquerades. Not only are the narrators engaged in acts of masking, but the texts also mask their political engagement. In addition, the characters within amatory narratives frequently engage in acts of masquerade. Female characters forge letters and disguise themselves as other women or as men, and on a more theoretical level, they are often forced to

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 188.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 189.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 192.

mask their own desire as submission or face ostracism. Amatory fiction thus deploys a notion common to the early eighteenth century that masquerade is universal. At the same time, however, it provides a meditation on the extent to which and the ways in which performance is constitutive of identity. I have argued that amatory fiction, long before the advent of queer theory, recognises identity as to some extent performative. In doing so, the genre engages with eighteenth-century concerns about the gap between appearances and reality, drawing on both the stylised artifice of the Restoration court and emerging discourses of sensibility. The masquerade ball, as the site at which these concerns over ontology and epistemology were most viscerally and visually reproduced, provides a queer space that amatory fiction's masquerades attempt to replicate. Hence *Fantomina* can become four women, whilst the women of *The Masqueraders* can replicate one another, providing a critique of the myopic male gaze whilst also gesturing towards an understanding of identity as constituted by repetition, rather than as static. The genre posits performative identity as an alternative to, and parody of, essentialist and prescriptive female identity. In amatory fiction's form, the fluidity that Castle identifies as a characteristic of the masquerade ball is structured into a series of repetitions both within amatory plots, for example in terms of the interchangeability of characters or the inset narratives, and across the amatory genre, in terms of the intertextuality of amatory narratives, and their experimentation with similar plots, themes and archetypes. Whilst the genre recognises performativity as limited to repetition, it also deploys differences in each repetition, straining against the edges of the discursive in a bid to at once render ideology visible, and to reshape it. Feminist interpretations, such as Castle's and Craft-Fairchild's, which read the eighteenth century masquerade through the lens of theory, demand that texts such as Haywood's conform to either a liberatory or repressive model of masquerade as female identity. If however, we reverse the lens, and view these texts as precursors to modern theoretical ideas about identity as process, then we uncover a detailed exploration of the way in which masquerade as performance structures identity through repetition, and an experimentation with the limits of this discursive process.

But what of the real? Rooney contrasts an uncreative and citational techno-performativity, which ‘can be used to facilitate auto-legitimations that are beyond challenge and to promote “conformativity”’ with a more creative form of ironic performance that is based in the gap between reality and discursive construction.¹⁴¹ I have argued here that amatory fiction is recognising and charting discursive constructions, and attempting to make room for alterations and differences within its compulsion to repeat. However, these discursive configurations function in relation to the real. As Rooney notes, ‘there is a generative capacity outside the order of representation and of iterability thought of in terms of repetition compulsion,’ and this generative capacity forms the subject of the next chapter.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Rooney, p. 6.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 29.

'The Rack of Nature':

Passion, Punishment, and Performativity

What Misery is it to dissemble that which to reveal would give us Ease! With what Pain are the Sighs kept down, which as they are even ready to burst the Strings which hold the thobbing [*sic*] Heart! With what inexpressible Torment are the Tremblings of impatient Rage suppress'd, and the Tears of swelling Grief.

(Eliza Haywood, 'The Capricious Lover; or, no trifling with a Woman', 1727)¹

She could not conceal the sudden Rack which all at once invaded her; or had her Tongue been mute, her wildly rolling Eyes, the distortion of her Features, and the Convulsions which shook her whole Frame, in spite of her, would have reveal'd she labour'd under some terrible Shock of Nature.

(Eliza Haywood, *Fantomina*, 1725)²

Amatory fiction, as we saw in the previous chapter, is engaged in unpacking the repeated performances that constitute the impression of stable identities. In demonstrating that masking is essential for female survival, amatory writers play with the notion of readability, and posit a proto-performative notion of identity construction. These women mask in order to make themselves legible to those who read them and to bring themselves into recognisable existence. Both display and concealment are crucial to these performances and the body is one of several sites of display and concealment in these texts.³ The first epigraph above is taken from a short tale by Eliza Haywood, in which Calista, with great difficulty, but nonetheless successfully, suppresses the physical signs of her adoration for Montano. She is so successful, in fact, that he believes her entirely indifferent, and withdraws his attention from her. Believing Montano likewise indifferent to her, she hurriedly marries someone else, but after a distraught reunion, the lovers realise their mistake, namely that jealousy, pride, and customary modesty have led to

¹ Eliza Haywood, *Cleomelia: or, the Generous Mistress. Being the Secret History of a Lady Lately arriv'd from Bengall, a Kingdom in the East-Indies. To which is added, I. The Lucky Rape: Or, Fate the Best Disposer. II. The Capricious Lover: Or, No Trifling with a Woman* (London: J. Millan, 1727), p. 100. Subsequent references are to this edition.

² Eliza Haywood, *Fantomina: or, Love in a Maze*, repr. in *Fantomina and Other Works*, ed. by Alexander Pettit, Margaret Case Croskery and Anna C. Patchias (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2004), pp. 41-71 (pp. 68-69).

³ Other sites include letters, physical settings, and, related to the body, items of clothing and disguise.

their estrangement despite their mutual passion. Montano commits suicide by falling on his sword, and Calista wastes away; the suppressed body asserts itself at the close of the text.

My second epigraph, taken from *Fantomina*, similarly ends with the materialization of the body, which manifests in an eruption of the real when the ‘sudden Rack’ of labour finally puts a stop to Fantomina’s performances. It is a moment that has been theorised by several critics. Ashley Tauchert’s psychoanalytic reading of the novella argues that:

what is ultimately masked in *Fantomina* is the articulation of desire between female-embodied subject and female-embodied object; [...] “masquerade” both screens that desire by embodying it in a heterosexual narrative [...] and sustains that desire through the narrative experience of scenes of compulsive repetition.⁴

Unlike Ros Ballaster, who sees the body’s reappearance as an admission of inescapable sexual difference, Tauchert claims that the abrupt end to the text is not about the body as a barrier to the masquerade at all, but is rather an indication of something both unspeakable within normative discourse and prior, which necessitates masquerade. Within masculine discourse the body itself, she argues, is as much a blank as the domino costume, as demonstrated by Beauplaisir’s repeated failures to recognise Fantomina in her different guises.⁵ But for Tauchert, Fantomina’s fate is representative of ‘mother-daughter silence and severance’, and a reminder of the ‘*pre-text* female-embodied same-sex desire that initiates the masquerade of femininity’.⁶

Tauchert argues that:

in birth it is the body-object that speaks forth in a language that accords with Irigaray’s “hysteria”: a language beyond the confines of masculine discourses and misrepresented by these. Birthing speaks of something beyond the forms of subjectivation, and looks back on these as a masking of the body that actively produces form on its own terms.⁷

The ending of *Fantomina*, then, signals not the triumph of the body as a confining or preventative entity, but rather the existence of a body in excess of the language available to

⁴ Ashley Tauchert, ‘Woman in a Maze: *Fantomina*, Masquerade and Female Embodiment,’ *Women’s Writing*, 7 (2000), 469-86 (p. 471).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 474. See Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women’s Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), especially p. 93.

⁶ Tauchert, p. 481. Helen Thompson also notes that in this text, Haywood’s engagement with Epicurean ideas of the ‘whole persons’ (a sort of materialist monism) ends with ‘the specter of matrilineity’ in which Fantomina, who has substituted herself for herself throughout the text, creating a series of distinct bodies, now produces another body in the form of her daughter. ‘Plotting Materialism: W. Charleton’s *The Ephesian Matron*, E. Haywood’s *Fantomina*, and Feminine Constancy’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 35 (2002), 195-214 (p. 208).

⁷ Tauchert, p. 481.

describe its generativity. Whilst we might see the first example as the repression of a body which fades away without performance, Fantomina's labour signifies something in excess of her repeated performances. In these two examples, then, we see two different engagements with the real: the first sees the body as materialized in discourse, leading ultimately to death, whilst the second sees the birthing body as unaccounted for by that discourse.

This chapter builds on the division Tauchert identifies between masculine discourse and an inexpressible something beyond that. But in place of a psychoanalytic lens, I draw on materialist feminist criticism of the linguistic turn in order to consider the interactions that are mapped out between performativity and embodiment, and between texts and bodies in amatory fiction. In *Volatile Bodies*, Elizabeth Grosz identifies the 'profound somatophobia' that underlies Western philosophical approaches to the body, whereby it is 'regarded as a source of interference in, and danger to, the operations of reason [...] a betrayal of and a prison for the soul, reason, or mind'.⁸ In part, this chapter is interested in exploring how, and indeed whether this 'somatophobia' manifests in amatory fiction. The compulsive return to the body at the close of the text, despite attempts to manage the signification of the body during the narrative, suggests that the body itself is not simply a passive tool available to amatory actors to manipulate at will. Rather, the body is envisaged as both enabling and disrupting the progress of amatory narratives: it is generative in terms of passion, prohibitive in terms of punishment, and intimately implicated in the performances deployed by amatory characters. Using the work of Grosz, Vicki Kirby and Karen Barad, in contrast to constructivist theories posited by Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, the chapter explores bodies from the inside out in terms of passion and performance; as constructed from the outside in, in terms of punishment; and on its own terms as a self-producing entity potentially beyond text.⁹

⁸ Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 5.

⁹ I am indebted to Grosz for her clear descriptions of the ways in which the body has been conceptualised from inside out by phenomenologists and psychologists, and from outside in by constructivists. These differing epistemologies form the structure of her book, which has proved an invaluable resource for this chapter.

I argue that amatory fiction experiments with a number of understandings of the ways in which matter is conceived, addressing the tensions between surface and depth, and between the performed, the constructed, the represented and the real. Ultimately, amatory fiction dramatises the tensions between two often conflicting discourses of the body. The first is a discourse specific to amatory fiction, a language developed to conceive the body as itself generative, as integral to performativity and as engaged in repetitions with difference. The second is the dominant understanding of the body as passive and awaiting inscription or regulation from without.¹⁰ We might understand this latter discourse in terms of an inescapable symbolic order, which seeks to limit what is intelligible according to hegemonic understandings of gender, desire, and mind/body divisions. In attempting to disrupt and test out the limits of the symbolic order, amatory fiction finds that it cannot quite circumvent dominant discourses of the body; the constraints of narrative require an end to the potentially endless repetitions with differences that it explores. However, the clash between amatory and dominant discourses of the body nonetheless indicates a conception of productive matter which neither amatory nor punitive discourses are able fully to contain.

In her examination of the limitations of theories of performativity, Caroline Rooney, as I noted in the previous chapter, contrasts ‘conformative’ or deterministic techno-performativity with a theatrical performativity that is reliant on the real. She asks, ‘Is not gender both a question of live performances and certain realities?’¹¹ *Decolonising Gender* thinks through what this real beyond the performative might be, and how one might approach it. Rooney talks about a consciousness of the real, which exists separately from the impulse to own or define it, to reproduce or represent it: ‘a use of language that attends to an awareness of a reality, beyond the linguistic utterance’.¹² It is my contention that we can locate this gesturing movement at certain moments in amatory fiction, which imply the body as a body coming into being beyond repetitions with difference. But before turning to consider these moments, I want to explore the

¹⁰ This second understanding of matter as passive is initiated by Cartesian dualism, but remains implicit in many constructivist accounts, including Foucault’s conception of the way in which power operates.

¹¹ Caroline Rooney, *Decolonising Gender: Literature and a Poetics of the Real* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 28.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

tensions between amatory and dominant discourses of the female body, to demonstrate the way in which discursive iterations give rise to material bodies.

Processes of Becoming: Depth and Surface

This section firstly outlines several different ways in which the body is conceptualised in amatory fiction using Haywood's *Reflections on the Various Effects of Love* (1726) as an exemplary model of the ways in which these understandings play out. I outline passion, display and concealment, and suffering, in order to demonstrate the way in which amatory fiction engages with the collision of desiring bodies and repressive prescriptions. I then go on to explore this collision in more detail as it occurs in the characterization of the women in Haywood's *Love in Excess* (1719-20) and the anonymous novel *The Prude* (1724-25). I argue that whilst many of the performative repetitions effected by amatory women are subject to punishments that materialize the body only to destroy it immediately, in some cases the materialization of the body is framed in a way that is more ambiguous, and less containable. The final section examines the body in amatory fiction in light of materialist feminist theorisations of the interaction between matter and discourse. I am interested here in the excess which admits the existence of the real, and which simultaneously informs and is produced by amatory bodies and amatory texts.

Desire, which, along with performance, drives the action of amatory fiction, is posited as a particularly material force, engendering a specific language of the body that Elizabeth Gargano argues allows for 'a realm of female agency masked as an instinctual bodily response'.¹³ The amatory body becomes its own signifying system, but it is one that holds considerable power to destabilize the binary oppositions of inner and outer; self and other; and language and matter, which seek to categorise an unruly and integrated world. The main inset narrative in Haywood's *Reflections on the Various Effects of Love* (1726) tells of the young and coquettish Sophiana's obsessive love for first one and then a second seducer. In a letter to her

¹³ Elizabeth Gargano, 'Utopian Voyeurism: Androgyny and the Language of the Eyes in Haywood's *Love in Excess*', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 21 (2009), 513-34 (p. 514).

first lover, Alanthus, she reconstructs a desiring physical body in an attempt to seduce both him and the reader into a participation in her fantasy:

O' what wou'd I give to be still thus deluded, to hear thy soft enchanting Tongue
protest eternal Truth, to taste the balmy Sights of Pain-mix'd Pleasure, and feel the
Tremblings of unsated Love shooting through every Pulse, and panting in thy
Heart.¹⁴

Her imaginings attest to the intense, and somewhat muddled sensory pleasures of unsatisfied passion. Sophiana's hearing, taste, vision and feeling are all affected by desire: she longs 'to taste the balmy *Sights of Pain-mix'd Pleasure*' (my emphasis), so, to taste vision and to see feeling. Distinctions between bodies are also unclear. She wishes to 'feel the Tremblings of unsated Love shooting through every Pulse, and panting in thy Heart' but the reader is left to guess where her body ends in this description and his begins: is she talking about her body's pulse, or his? There is a mutuality of erotic response here and a physical closeness gestured to by the text which problematises the gendering of action as masculine and passivity as feminine, breaking down familiar associations as well as sensory and physical distinctions.¹⁵ Just as the boundaries of bodies and the capacities of the senses are subject to play, language and matter are also closely interwoven. Reconstructed in writing, Sophiana's physical response is initialised by imagining Alanthus speaking 'eternal Truth[s]'. That is to say, it is initiated by a combination of written language, imagination, memory, and spoken language. Her letter is situated within an inset narrative, in a book which also has a physical manifestation, creating the layered and self-referential textuality characteristic of amatory fiction, but also suggesting a physicality which is in excess of the words themselves. The destabilizing effect of passion is reminiscent of the effects of the masquerade itself, unsettling clear-cut boundaries within bodies, between bodies, and between body and text.

¹⁴ Eliza Haywood, *Reflections on the Various Effects of Love*, repr. in *Selected Works of Eliza Haywood*, ed. by Alexander Pettit, 6 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2000), I,73-122 (p. 102). All subsequent references are to this edition. Sophiana draws on a long line of amatory predecessors who also use letters to reconstruct desiring bodies, beginning with Aphra Behn's *Silvia*.

¹⁵ For an account of the conflicting understandings of women's roles and capacities in sex and reproduction, see Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), particularly pp. 25-62.

The performative processes that form identity cannot be divorced from the body, which not only invites, as in Sophiana's case, the sort of textual seduction that Ballaster describes, but also appears as a site of performance and as constituted and regulated by societal norms.¹⁶ Amatory characters reconstruct their physical experience in letters but in addition, their skin itself provides its own evidence in the form of culturally recognisable signs and symptoms: the body tells. We hear, for example, that Sophiana 'become[s] enamour'd of [Alanthus] to that violent Degree, that she cou'd not conceal it from the View of the whole World'.¹⁷ As we can see though, from both Calista's and Fantomina's examples above, bodies, like texts, are highly unstable in amatory fiction: they display, imply and conceal certain signifiers; they are used as disguises, and as indicators of truth. The reader is left to discern where, if anywhere, the real body is located; which, if any, bodily signs are pretended and which are genuine; and how, and by whom, the body is read and constructed.

Bound up with the manipulation of display and concealment is the amatory preoccupation with the suffering, repressed and punished body, which fulfills a number of functions in the genre. It is a marker of developing notions of sensibility.¹⁸ Calista's death, for example, replicates a number of other deaths, both in Haywood's fiction and beyond, that result from unfulfilled or unrequited illicit desire, and represent not only the heroine's delicacy, but also the conflict between her authentic and deeply-felt passion, and her notions of duty and reputation. These women recognise their transgression and enact punishment upon their own bodies. But elsewhere, female characters undermine the traditional romance convention of the abandoned or despairing woman pining to death, in favour of more actively or externally imposed punishments: suicide, murder or public exposure. In *Reflections*, Sophiana twice considers suicide, but Haywood is more interested in the space opened up by the repetition of Sophiana's excessive and uncontrolled desire than in demonstrating that her hedonistic heroine

¹⁶ See Ballaster, pp. 153-95.

¹⁷ Haywood, *Reflections*, p. 99.

¹⁸ For the development of the amatory heroine as a combination of female libertinism and sensibility, see Laura Linker, *Dangerous Women, Libertine Epicures, and the Rise of Sensibility, 1660-1730* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), particularly pp. 35-71.

has been reformed in any way. She leaves her twice seduced, abandoned by her patroness, but still blissfully unaware of her precarious, dependent situation.

Sophiana's inset narrative explores social rather than personal enactments of punishment. The lack of narrative closure in her story is compensated for by an episode in which Sophiana is subjected to public humiliation as a punishment for her predatory pursuit of Alanthus.¹⁹ This episode demonstrates the regulation, but also the production of bodies, which change according to the contexts in which they are read. Abandoned by Alanthus, Sophiana disguises herself as one of 'those Women [...] who have no better Business than to frequent Butchers Stalls, and carry Meat to the Houses of those that buy it' in order to get into his house.²⁰ Alanthus immediately recognises her, and unbeknownst to her, tells his servants she is a madwoman. The disordered, hallucinatory but ultimately pleasurable corporeal symptoms that Sophiana attests to and attempts to recreate in the letter I quoted above are thus reframed as madness by Alanthus. Expelled from the house, she is pursued down the street by a mob which torments her, reading her 'wild Confusion' as physical evidence of the illness ascribed to her:

One pluck'd her by the Arm, another by the Petticoats, a third pull'd off her Hat, and her Hair falling about her Shoulders, exposed her lovely Face to the View of this unpolish'd Crowd, who, instead of paying that Respect her Beauty merited, had a thousand scurrilous Jests upon her, and the imaginary Disease which had subjected her to their Derision.²¹

Although we are told that it would be 'little probable' that anyone should recognise her in her disguise, Alanthus does so with ease, and projects a different persona onto her. It is an action which the mob repeats on a physical level: they literally strip her, and she is subjected to a violent misreading in which her 'fine Hair' and 'Awe-inspiring Brow' fail to signify her quality as they ought to. Both her sartorial disguise and her body itself are out of her control, constructed instead by those around her.²² It is only in this moment that she becomes aware of

¹⁹ It is worth noting that this 'punishment' is not explicitly endorsed by Haywood. The lack of closure at the end of her narrative, whereby Sophiana effectively gets away with her transgressions, at least for the present, sits in opposition to the punitive aspects of this episode, creating a purposeful ambiguity regarding the moral stance of the text.

²⁰ Haywood, *Reflections*, p. 109, p. 110.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

²² This moment is also indicative of certain class anxiety, which persists in the fiction of the time. Nobility can, in this case, recognise members of their own class despite disguise, whereas the mob is less perceptive. I return to this class recognition in the next chapter.

her situation, and ‘the contemptible Estate to which her Folly had reduced her.’²³ The mob’s willing belief in Sophiana’s madness, and the physical threat posed to her body force Sophiana into a recognition of madness (‘Folly’) in herself: the mob constructs her identity.

In *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and *The History of Sexuality* (1976 trans. 1978), as Jana Sawicki explains, Michel Foucault conceptualises a power that

“subjects” individuals in both senses of the term: It subordinates them and makes them subjects in a single stroke. [...] it establishes limits through the production of discourses and subjects as well as the creation of institutions and technologies of the body [...] It grasps its objects at the level of their bodies and desires.²⁴

Sophiana’s treatment provides an example of the way that a discourse of madness, based upon exclusions in ways of seeing (there are, after all, multiple ways of reading her signs), is violently enforced upon Sophiana’s body, and then internalised. At this point, she considers suicide, perhaps as a means to regain a simulacrum of control over her reconstructed body, until she is rescued by a new suitor, and the seduction narrative begins again. So this moment shows power operating both on a societal level in terms of institutional control and policing of bodies, but also on a more insidious individual level in terms of the return to citation, to the enforced and repeated normative expressions of subjecthood that render bodies intelligible.

Libertine Case Studies: *Love in Excess*

How is the body materialized by discourse? And what sort of body is it that appears? In the following section, I read the libertine characters of Haywood’s *Love in Excess* and the anonymous novel *The Prude*, in order to demonstrate the interactions between the repeated and performative constructions typical to amatory fiction, and the punitive constructions which seek to limit them, between the generative and repressive aspects of identity as played out upon the body. I argue that in *Love in Excess*, both Alovisa and Ciamara engage in masquerade of some sort in order to constitute themselves as objects of the male gaze. Both also engage in a masculinised objectification of another woman. Both ultimately come up against a refusal,

²³ Haywood, *Reflections*, p. 110.

²⁴ Jana Sawicki, ‘Queering Foucault and the Subject of Feminism’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. by Gary Gutting, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 379-400 (p. 382).

wrought upon their bodies, of their attempt to occupy a dual space of object and subject: they are punished by death. *The Prude* also puts a stop to Elisinda's increasingly elaborate masquerades: after the failure of her disguise, she poisons herself. In all three cases, the women prove unable to exist beyond their performances. But Haywood's Melantha, I argue, demonstrates that these texts do not accept the repressive aspects of discourse as entirely pervasive. Instead, Melantha demonstrates the capacity of certain performative iterations with potentially destabilizing or subversive attributes, sometimes to escape detection, disruption, or closure. As in Fantomina's case, Melantha's machinations result in duplication, in birth, rather than in disappearance.

Love in Excess is a crucial demonstration of the multiple ways in which physical passion is produced, performed, and punished on and through both male and female bodies. Volume one documents Alovisa's sabotage of her rival Amena's affections for the hero, D'Elmont; volume two depicts D'Elmont's waning interest in his wife, Alovisa, whom he eventually murders, albeit accidentally, in favour of Melliora; and volume three follows D'Elmont's adventures in Italy, and his eventual reunion with, and marriage to, Melliora.²⁵ In each volume, we are presented with a female libertine character (Alovisa, Melantha, and Ciamara), who allows for a working through of the sorts of performative and masquerade-oriented identities that I examined in the previous chapter. We are also presented with suffering female characters (Amena in volume one; Melliora in volume two; and Violetta in volume three), whose sensibility provides a counter to the more hardened libertine characters. There is a subplot in each volume involving another couple: Brilliant and Ansellina in volume one; Frankville and Camilla in volume two; D'Saguillier and Charlotta in volume three. This complex narrative patterning and mirroring demonstrates the sorts of repetitions with differences that I outlined in chapter three: the repetition of archetypal femininities; the repetition of almost-seduction scenes with different women; the repetition of the basic courtship plot; the repetition of D'Elmont's seduction attempts on Melliora; and the repetition of both

²⁵ Alovisa is spelt Alovysa in volume two, but I have chosen to retain the initial spelling throughout this chapter.

intrigue plots and their subsequent punishment. Such structural repetitions also, however, allow for a sustained analysis of the role of the body in shaping feminine identity, dramatising the ways in which the generative aspects of discursively constituted identities are often policed by a repressive hegemonic ideal.

Alovisa, as an orphaned heiress, claims, “‘I have no body to whom I need to be accountable for my actions, and am above the censures of the world.’”²⁶ As such, she is free to self-fashion, and practises adapting herself to varied situations. Before she attends the ball that opens the novel, we are introduced to her experimenting with her appearance: ‘she consulted her glass after what manner she should dress, her eyes, the gay, the languishing, the sedate, the commanding, the beseeching air were put on, a thousand times, and, as often rejected’ (p. 40). She is immediately established as a character who has access to a wide range of expression, and wit enough to use this to her advantage; she is a chameleon, quickly able to adapt her bodily signs to best suit her ambitions, although these ambitions are, of course, dictated by their connection to the male gaze and to male desire. Shortly after she negotiates her rival Amena’s banishment, in conversation with Amena’s father, D’Elmont visits, prompting a swift transformation in her behaviour. Having played the concerned female guardian for Amena’s father, she now ‘thr[o]w[s] off her dejected and mournful air, and assume[s] one all gaiety and good humour, dimpl[ing] her mouth with smiles, and call[ing] the laughing cupids to her eyes’ (p. 65). Haywood stresses the affectedness of Alovisa’s behavior to suggest a certain inauthenticity of desire, a lack of immediacy, whereby desire is manipulated and channeled into a self-conscious construction of the body as an object of signification, an object to be gazed at.²⁷ Indeed, we hear later that although Alovisa is ‘apt to give a loose to her passions on every occasion, [...] she knew well enough how to disguise ‘em, when ever she found the concealing of them would be an advantage to her designs’ (p. 96).

²⁶ Eliza Haywood, *Love in Excess; or, the Fatal Enquiry*, ed. by David Oakleaf, 2nd edn (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2000), p. 62. All subsequent references are to this edition and page numbers are given parenthetically within the text.

²⁷ Cf. D’Elmont’s performative desire during his courtship of Amena: ‘by making a shew of tenderness he began to fancy himself really touched with a passion he only designed to represent. ’Tis certain this way of fooling raised desires in him little different from what is commonly called love’ (pp. 46-47). Both Alovisa’s excessive desire for D’Elmont, and D’Elmont’s performative desire for Amena are constructed by Haywood as inferior to the ideal, honourable love which D’Elmont eventually finds with Melliora.

Ciamara, as a widow, occupies a similarly liberated position to Alovisa, and like her predecessor, she understands the importance of appearances. In her first meeting with D'Elmont, she manipulates the erotic potential of the veil, 'contriv[ing] to let her veil fall back as if by accident, and discover[ing] a face, beautiful even to perfection!' (p. 171). In doing so, she demonstrates her familiarity with the coded world of masquerade. The scenes between her and D'Elmont are characterised by descriptions of her ostentatious ornamentation, both in terms of setting and dress. We read of walls 'covered with tapestry, in which, most artificially were woven, in various coloured silk, intermixed with gold and silver, a great number of amorous stories', and of her dress dripping with diamonds and 'jewels of a prodigious largeness and lustre' (p. 206, p. 207). In a discussion of the function of different spaces in the novel, David Oakleaf compares Ciamara's indoor space with the liminal gardens (located between public and private) in which Amena and Camilla are courted and the 'chamber of the mind' of Melliora's bedroom, concluding that this artificial location 'reveals that [Ciamara] is a calculating aristocrat devoted to art rather than nature'.²⁸ Her art extends, in their second meeting, to her masked body:

she had a veil on, but so thin, that it did not, in the least, obscure the shine of her garments; or her jewels, only she had contrived to double that part of it which hung over her face, in so many folds, that it served to conceal her as well as a *vizard* mask.

(p. 207)

Masking serves several purposes here. It allows Ciamara to pose as her step-daughter, Camilla, and to intercept a letter meant for her, demonstrating the familiar interchangeability of women in amatory fiction, at least in the hero's eyes. It also substitutes her clothing, a signifier of wealth, for any notion of a physical identity, in a move that is later replicated by Fantomina as Incognita. The corporeal is subordinated to the sartorial, and ultimately to the male gaze. Whilst her clothing signifies, her mask ensures that her body is, as Tauchert writes of Fantomina, a blank space open for D'Elmont's projections. Paradoxically, this self-objectification works to place Ciamara in a position of power in terms of the balance of knowledge, deflecting the male gaze by refusing to reflect it back, removing the possibility of D'Elmont's knowing through

²⁸ Oakleaf (ed.), introduction to *Love in Excess*, p. 18.

seeing, refusing a concrete identity. As Joseph Drury puts it, Ciamara is ‘all plumage and no bird’.²⁹ In a much more explicit fashion than Aloverisa, Ciamara’s acts are carefully construed to invite desire. Whilst Aloverisa’s body becomes an item of clothing to be put on or taken off at will, Ciamara’s body is, in this instance, absent, emptied of all signification and constructed as entirely artificial.³⁰ For both women though, the body starts off as a generative tool with which they can control the ways in which they signify.

Aloverisa pursues D’Elmont, declares her desire for him, and betrays Amena, benefitting from the patriarchal law that demands Amena’s banishment even as she subverts it with her own aggressively masculine behaviour. She also engages in a dangerous exchange with the Baron D’Espernay, who attempts to provide her with ‘ocular demonstration’ of her husband’s infidelity with Melliora, in return for sex (p. 135). His plot is thwarted by Melantha’s bedswapping trick, and Aloverisa, who has hitherto feigned desire in order to gain knowledge, almost resolves to submit to the Baron in order to extract the name of her unknown rival:

“do not keep me longer on the rack, give me the name and then” – She spoke these last words with such an air of languishment, that the Baron thought his work was done, and growing bolder, from her hand he proceeded to her lips, and answered her only in kisses, which distastful as they were to her, she suffered him to take without resistance, but that was not all he wanted, and believing this the critical minute, he threw his arms round her waste, and began to draw her by little and little toward the bed; which she affected to permit with a kind of an unwilling willingness.

(p. 147)

She replicates the speechlessness that accompanies moments of extreme desire so effectively that the Baron believes her unwilling willingness to be genuine, but she retreats at the last minute, unwilling to violate her marriage vows; she does, after all, still have her reputation intact at this point.³¹ Her faithfulness to D’Elmont and fear of punishment win out over her

²⁹ Joseph Drury, ‘Haywood’s Thinking Machines’, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 21 (2009), 201-28 (p. 225).

³⁰ Whilst Aloverisa and Ciamara’s self-constructions are written as choices that they make, and therefore seem voluntary, we would do well to recall Judith Butler’s argument that ‘to enter into the repetitive practices of this terrain of signification is not a choice’. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge Classics, 2006), p. 202. I would argue that despite ostensibly posing self-construction as a form of agency, Haywood’s characters are nonetheless compulsively taking part in their own repeated and forcible subjection to power, passion, and male desire, and, as such, are still demonstrating the inescapable nature of the discursive, except in these moments where the real erupts.

³¹ In fact, her deliberating consciousness at this moment is similar to Melliora’s, although initiated by a baser desire for knowledge and revenge, rather than sexual desire.

desire for knowledge (masked as sexual desire), and she is unable to complete this particular act. Scott Black argues that this episode, characterised by an awareness on the part of both players that they are masquerading, is ‘not simply a mirroring of the main plot [D’Elmont’s pursuit of the resisting Melliora], but a narrative engine that drives it’.³² The Baron, as ‘a figure of narrative productivity’, stands in for the author in possession of a secret, whilst readers experience both Alovisa’s ‘epistemological desire, [or] curiosity, a desire that’s satisfied not by having but by knowing’, and her awareness of her involvement in a game of deferrals and evasions that mirrors the deferrals and evasions of the novel more widely.³³ Alovisa’s next plan to engage in a similar encounter with the Baron, to return to masquerading and evasions, and to confuse the drive to have and the drive to know, results in both of their deaths. She is impaled on D’Elmont’s sword in a metaphorical rape that violently reasserts patriarchal law. Punished for her refusal to become the object she counterfeits, as much as for her consideration of adultery in pursuit of knowledge, the enactment of the law on her body works to shut down the space for agency opened up by her temporary position as neither/both/in-between constancy and ruin. Her death attests to the anxieties aroused by the ongoing incompleteness of performative identities, demonstrating the ways in which the dominant discourse seeks to shut down the potential for repetitions with differences by enforcing clear categorisations upon otherwise ambiguous performances. If, following Black, we take the Alovisa-Baron relationship as an allegory for the reader-author one, then perhaps their deaths can also be read as an enactment of the requirements of genre, the requirement for closure enforced upon an ongoing and necessarily incomplete play of signification enacted between reader and writer.

Ciamara is also punished for her crimes. She too manipulates patriarchal law in attempting to give her step-daughter, Camilla, to her brother in marriage. She transgresses upon male territory here, taking up the position of giver of woman, rather than the gift itself, and her ultimatum to Camilla – marry Cittolini or go to a monastery – gestures back to Alovisa’s

³² Scott Black, ‘Trading Sex for Secrets in Haywood’s *Love in Excess*’, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 15 (2003), 207-26 (p. 215). The Baron’s desire for Alovisa, Black argues, prompts D’Elmont’s more aggressive pursuit of Melliora, and leads to a series of events up to and beyond the Baron’s death.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 215, pp. 217-18.

negotiation of Amena's banishment, although Ciamara has exceeded Alovisa by actually taking the place of the father. Her passion for D'Elmont is driven by lust and a masculinised desire to possess: "He must – he shall be mine! [...] I rave – I burn – I am mad with wild desires – I dye, Brione, if I not possess him." (p. 176). And indeed, her scenes with D'Elmont reverse gendered norms, casting her, like Behn's Miranda in *The Fair Jilt*, as predatory.³⁴ Their third encounter sees her 'throwing herself into his arms' and 'grasping him yet harder' (p. 211). Despite him 'struggling to get loose from her embrace', she persists until, no longer able to cope with her excessive passion, she swoons (p. 211). The eruption of a real body which refuses repetition disrupts Ciamara's inauthenticity, but it also forces a deferral of seduction and thus enables future repetitions. Ciamara's swooning body therefore does not act as a mere preventative to discursive iterations, but instead has a rather more complex relationship to them, simultaneously interrupting and informing them. The next time they meet, she alters her performance so as to appear less aggressive, sinking 'supinely on D'Elmont's breast' and allowing 'her robes [to] fly open, and all the beauties of her own [to be] exposed, and naked to his view' (p. 224, p. 225). It is a moment which replicates, with difference, D'Elmont's attempted seduction of Amena, whose garments similarly demonstrate a mind of their own, 'flying open as he caught her in his arms' (p. 58). The difference being, of course, that Ciamara's submission is entirely affected; she is still the one who initiates their sexual encounter. As a result of her boldness, D'Elmont 'lose[s] all the esteem, and great part of the pity he had conceived for her', and she is reduced in his opinion to 'a common *courtizan*' (p. 224, p. 225). Ironically, this change simultaneously reinvests him with agency and sparks his desire in exactly the way that Ciamara wants. We are reminded that he

was still a *man!* and, 'tis not to be thought strange, if to the force of such united temptations, nature and modesty a little yielded; warmed with her fires, and, perhaps, more moved by curiosity, her behaviour having extinguished all his respect, he gave his hands and eyes a full enjoyment of all those charms, which had they been answered by a mind worthy of them, might justly have inspired the

³⁴ Cf. Aphra Behn, *The Fair Jilt: or, The History of Price Tarquin and Miranda*, repr. in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, ed. by Janet Todd, 7 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1992-96), III: *The Fair Jilt and Other Short Stories* (1995), 1-48. See, in particular, pp. 22-26, in which Miranda attempts to seduce a young friar, 'snatching him in her Arms', and 'violently pulling [him] into her lap' before accusing him of attempted rape after he rejects her (p. 24).

highest raptures, while she, unshocked, and unresisting, suffered all he did, and urged him with all the arts she was mistress of, to more.

(p. 225)

Nonetheless, her passive mask fails to be entirely successful, firstly because D'Elmont, like Alovisa with the Baron, has become a knowing reader, and secondly because they are interrupted, again. After D'Elmont leaves to search for Melliora, Ciamara commits suicide by taking poison, and in 'raving agonies' confesses her hopeless love for D'Elmont as the cause (p. 244). Unlike Violetta, who dies passively as a result of her unrequited love for the hero, or Alovisa, who is murdered, Ciamara's suicide represents an attempt actively to refuse the operations of power that would construct and punish her from without. But her resistance fails because even from her own hands, her punishment remains in keeping with the patriarchal laws that seek to confine potentially subversive iterations of identity; her suicide merely demonstrates the extent to which she has internalised such laws.

Libertine Case Studies: *The Prude*

The Prude, a much less frequently studied text than Haywood's bestseller, although not dissimilar in many ways, was originally printed in three parts between 1724 and 1725. It is signed only MA.A, and remains unattributed. From its first publication, it was advertised by numerous newspapers in close proximity to contemporary texts by Haywood, including various editions of *Love in Excess*, *The Masqueraders* (1724-25), *The Fatal Secret* (1724), *The Surprise* (1724), *The Arragonian Queen* (1724), and *Bath Intrigues* (1725).³⁵ *The Newcastle Courant* attributes *The Prude* to Haywood, but this attribution seems very unlikely given firstly that Haywood was unconcerned about her name being attached to other works advertised and published around the same time, and secondly that *The Prude* is dedicated to Haywood.³⁶ However, the mistaken attribution nonetheless demonstrates that this text was certainly situated with Haywood's in terms of advertising, implying stylistic and ideological similarities, and

³⁵ The latter two texts are possible, but unproved attributions. See Leah Orr, 'The Basis for Attribution in the Canon of Eliza Haywood', *The Library*, 12 (2011), 335-75, particularly Appendix 1, pp. 363-64. See, for examples of such advertising, *The Evening Post*, 7-9 July 1724, Classified ads, p. 3, and *The Daily Post*, 11 September 1724, Classified ads, p. 2.

³⁶ *The Newcastle Courant*, 18 July 1724, p. 8.

perhaps a similar audience. Like Haywood, the author takes her introductory poem from George Granville Baron Lansdowne, although Haywood's choice of 'To Myra', carries a somewhat different message, choosing to emphasize the inescapability of love, rather than the importance of duty, obligation and gratitude in maintaining love.

The Prude makes use of three main plots, following three integral female characters: Bellamira, Elisinda, and Emelia, and drawing influence from several different genres, including crime biography; secret history; the novel of sensibility; and the captivity narrative. Because of the relative obscurity of the text, the plot is worth briefly outlining here. The novel charts the relationship of orphaned Bellamira and her admirer Lysander from their first meeting to their marriage. Their courtship adheres to the appropriate standards of decorum, takes place via the appropriate methods, and is approved by all of the appropriate characters. In volume one, Lysander plots, with his guardian Olarius, to ingratiate himself with Bellamira's brother Bellgrand, by helping him marry Ariana, a rich coquette. However, she is discovered to have made a prior engagement, which her father forces her to honour. Lysander's plan to gain Bellamira via her brother falls through, and he is left with no hope of Bellgrand's approval of the match he desires with Bellamira, although he does manage to curry favour with her guardian, Emelia. For the most part though, Lysander and Bellamira's courtship is one enacted between men, with the woman as a passive object of exchange.

Emelia's characterisation occupies the middle ground between the silenced Bellamira, and Elisinda, a Restoration-influenced female libertine. Like Melliora, she negotiates this middle ground by occupying multiple grounds: she is an author-figure, a mother, a woman of sensibility, and a woman whose carefully managed passive resistance is ultimately rewarded. Her inset narrative takes up most of volume two, and incorporates the abandoned woman narrative familiar from Manley's and Haywood's work with the adventure narrative popularised by Penelope Aubin. She relates how she fell in love with Bellvile, eventually capitulating to a secret marriage with him enforced by her reduced circumstances after her aunt gambled away her inheritance. After she bears a son, Bellvile abandons her, taking the child, whom she later hears is dead. This transpires to have been a trick played on the couple by the rakish Marimont

in an attempt to seduce Emelia. Believing herself abandoned with no means to prove her marriage, Emelia sails to the Indies as companion to her cousin. Shipwrecked on the island of Golconda, she is reunited with her uncle, long thought dead. During her three years there, she resists the King's repeated attempts first to rape and then to seduce her, determined to keep her marriage vows.³⁷ She finally escapes back to England disguised as a eunuch after the jealous Queen attempts to poison her. She is made an heiress to her uncle, and, at the end of the novel, is reunited with Bellvile: virtue is rewarded. As in Haywood's novel, the unremarkably virtuous are rewarded in fairly unremarkable ways; whereas the characters who mildly transgress (Emelia in her secret marriage, and Melliora in her illicit desire for D'Elmont) are held up as the ideal, able to negotiate between romance and social requisites. The unrecoverable transgressions, however, are punished with death.

Bellamira's sister, Elisinda, is the 'prude' of the title. In reality, she provides a libertine counter to the idealised female characters in the novel, driven entirely by desire and revenge, and her fate demonstrates most clearly the failure of an attempt to repeat with difference; as her performances become more intricate, so they become easier to detect and subject to correction. Volume one documents her escapades and intrigues as she seduces a number of lovers with the help of her similarly debauched friend, Stanissa, and the usual amatory arsenal of letters and disguises. Like Alovera, Elisinda is an orphaned heiress who lives alone now she is of age. We are introduced to Elisinda's appearance as follows:

her Eyes, moving with a heavy Deadness, are generally fix'd on the Ground, with so conscious a Shame, as if afraid to advance their Lids, as dreading to encounter looks too amorous, too warm for so cold Chastity and so strict a Virtue, as that which she possesses.³⁸

Elisinda's careful and sustained cultivation of a strictly virtuous outward persona in direct opposition to her transgressive actions surpasses the calculated masking in *Love in Excess* by

³⁷ These scenes tap into the same ideologies that Toni Bowers unearths in *Love in Excess*, exploring how to manage resistance to authority, and, in doing so, rethinking Tory ideology. See Bowers, *Force or Fraud: British Seduction Stories and the Problem of Resistance, 1660-1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 223-47.

³⁸ *The Prude; a Novel: Compleat in Three Parts. By a Young Lady* (London: D. Browne and S. Chapman, 1726), I, 14. All subsequent references are to this edition and volume and page numbers are given parenthetically within the text.

being considerably more thought-out, and more permanent.³⁹ Her apparent prudishness functions in a similar but more sophisticated way than coquetry, constructing her as an object for the male gaze whilst withholding availability in a bid simultaneously to increase male desire, and to avoid surveillance, suspicion, or correction.⁴⁰ The author drops a number of hints to alert readers to Elisinda's artifice, writing of her '*seeming Piety*' (my emphasis) and that '*Emelia's* real Virtues were the Original from whence she so artfully copy'd all her seeming ones' (I, 14). Virtue is reduced to a series of signs which can be copied.

Elisinda's angelic physical appearance is indicative of the ways in which bodies are subjected to different readings dependent upon knowledge and context. She has 'a Complexion of the purest White, without the least Tincture of Red; her Hair is of that golden Colour so celebrated in the Poets Songs' (I, 14). Later, however, we are told that her constitution 'certainly ha[d] more Fire in it than is natural to so cold a Climate', which links her unnatural amount of passion to that of some of amatory fiction's other passionate heroines, influenced by the warmer climes of continental and classical settings (I, 15). Her lover, Stanorius guesses that 'her colour'd Hair was rather a Symptom of Flames, Raptures, and Darts, than so much Ice', reinterpreting her body according to his own opportunistic desires and a misogynist suspicion, which, in her case, proves true: she is, at heart, a rake (I, 20). Her characterisation exploits and upholds anxieties about virtue as performed, and the inclusion of some lines from John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester's poetry to describe her hypocrisy situates her within the world of the Restoration libertine, which the fiction of the 1720s at once drew influence from and sought to overcome.⁴¹

³⁹ In accordance with Terry Castle's conception of masquerade costume, Elisinda's main 'mask' is contrived to signify in direct opposition to her actions. See Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), p. 5, p. 75. It is important to add though, that her persona is not a static one. Like Fantomina, Elisinda's libertinism escalates as she undertakes a series of different disguises.

⁴⁰ See Elaine McGirr, *Eighteenth-Century Characters: A Guide to the Literature of the Age* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 91-104. To give an example, Stanorius, one of Elisinda's lovers, is, when he first sees her, 'fired with a desire to try if she could prove a Rock against all his artful Batteries' (I, 20).

⁴¹ The lines are from 'Rochester's Farewel' (1680):

*So Vice grows safe, dress'd in Devotion's Name,
Unquestion'd by the Custom-house of Fame.
Where-ever so much Sanctity you see,
Be more suspicious of hid Villany:*

In *Love in Excess*, the Baron D'Espernay uses a disturbing logic that could well be derived from characterisations such as Elisinda's when he persuades D'Elmont to rape Melliora:

Women are taught by custom to deny what most they covet, and to seem angry when they are best pleased; believe me, D'Elmont that the most rigid virtue of 'em all, never yet hated a man for those faults which love occasions.

(pp. 113-14)

Elisinda crafts many of her actions to appear as self denial, whilst actually using them as opportunities for further fulfillment. She refuses to attend the masquerade, pretending an aversion to its impropriety and thus consolidating her reputation for strict virtue, before taking full advantage of the anonymity of a masked assembly at which her attendance would be unthinkable to most characters. She also couches her anxiety about the loss of freedom which accompanies marriage as piety. Outwardly, she fears that 'in this lewd irreligious Age it would be impossible for her to find a Husband, that in the least could match her exalted Virtues', and when she begins to reconsider due to her likely pregnancy after an illicit affair with a footman, Stanissa is quick to persuade her otherwise (I, 15).⁴² She warns that a Husband [...] is too near a Spy on your Actions' and that 'he'll soon loath that constant insipid Feast of a Wife, and on some unknown Flirt, lavish not only the Love that should be your's, but your very Fortune' (I, 17, I, 18). Coming from Stanissa, this cynicism is not overtly endorsed, but Haywood's tales of abandonment lend a certain weight to her advice all the same.

Elisinda differs from Ciamara and Alovisa in that she is promiscuous, rather than remaining attached, throughout the narrative, to one man. Her masculinised desire for variety as well as mastery suggests that her characterization is less about the power of passion, and more about working through anxieties about knowledge, appearance and manipulation. Whilst both Ciamara and Alovisa are to some extent sympathetic, the power of their passion being unavoidable, Elisinda's motivations are less channeled; her desire is more threatening because it

*Whose-ever's Zeal is than his Neighbour's more,
If Man, suspect him Rogue; if Woman, W---*

(repr. in *The Prude*, I, 29)

⁴² Like Melantha, who manages to marry a suitor before bearing D'Elmont's child, Elisinda needs a husband who won't ask questions, and one whom she can easily manipulate. As a result, the only man she considers is one 'whose soft pliant Temper shew'd more of a sweet Disposition, than any great Depth of Understanding' (I, 17).

is not fixated upon one object but rather represents a more rapacious and unruly desire for pleasure and control. *The Prude* depicts her sexual relations with three men, and her pursuit of a fourth, although we are told ‘it would be endless to relate all the Recounters she and *Stanissa* had with accidental [lovers]’ (I, 29). Elisinda’s decline into depravity sees her grow increasingly reckless. Her initial affair with the footman is orchestrated almost wholly by *Stanissa*, whereas Elisinda takes a slightly more active role in her encounter with *Stanorius*, deftly managing a game, similar to *Alovisa*’s and the Baron’s, of careful manoeuvre and manipulation of both knowledge and identity via letters before they actually consummate their relationship. After *Stanorius* is fortuitously summoned abroad, Elisinda pursues another lover, *Thomaso*. She moves from letters to sartorial disguise, becoming merchant-class *Maranda*, ‘in a Habit that shew’d more of plain Plenty, than the Grandeur she liv’d in’ (I, 29). Motivated by greed, he attempts to blackmail her to release him from debtor’s prison, having found out her identity from a letter hidden in her pockets.⁴³ Despite her reputation’s precarious situation, she carefully negotiates these attempts by continuing to deny *Maranda* and Elisinda are the same, whilst at the same time satisfying *Thomaso*’s desire for money.

Her final target is the rakish *Polonius*, whom she pursues against *Stanissa*’s advice, demonstrating that, in her ‘Taste [for] Variety [equal to] any of the gay *Beau Monde*’ and her desire ‘but [to] possess him once, and [...] be satisfy’d’, her libertine desires have overtaken her concern for reputation (I, 35). Her plan to seduce *Polonius* at a masquerade backfires when *Stanissa*, who reluctantly plays her part, mistakenly delivers a letter to *Lysander* instead of *Polonius*. Contained within the letter is a cap to wear to the masquerade so that Elisinda can identify *Polonius*, which *Lysander* decides to wear. Her ‘key’ to the masquerade disrupted, Elisinda ends up unknowingly soliciting her sister’s admirer. She demonstrates the same inability to distinguish between bodies as the male characters so often do. Out of curiosity, and a faint sense of recognition, *Lysander* acts along with her even when the conversation reaches

⁴³ The connection between letters, pockets, and private interior spaces is, of course, more fully worked through in novels such as *Pamela* (1740). See, for example, Jennie Batchelor, *Dress, Distress and Desire: Clothing and the Female Body in Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 19-51.

‘such a height of Obsceneness, as caus’d *Lysander* to think her too well experienc’d for any but a common Practitioner’ (I, 42).⁴⁴ After unsuccessfully attempting to engage him to have sex with her in a hackney coach (perhaps she had read *The Masqueraders*), she becomes angry when he is distracted by her sister, and

too much out of humour to be on her guard [...] spoke [...] in her own Voice [...] which *Lysander* immediately knew to be *Elisinda*’s; and turning his Eyes on her, from Head to Foot, discover’d her Height, her Shape, her Mien.

(I, 42)

It is significant that it is her speech that allows for his recognition, rather than her body, as it is in speech that the sign and the material, language and matter, are most evidently unified. The masquerade ball sees Elisinda unmasked by a temporary coming-together of the male gaze, female discursive performativity and embodiment, and this moment signals the beginning of the end of Elisinda’s story, as her performances are finally embodied and recognized as such.

In volume three, Elisinda’s jealousy of her sister’s superior charms leads her to plot, with the help of Thomaso, to have Bellamira abducted, raped, and married off to her rapist. The plan aims to neutralise the threat posed to her by Bellamira, to satisfy Thomaso’s greed, and to enact revenge on the men who have rejected her in favour of her sister (*Lysander* and *Stanorius*).⁴⁵ As both *Alovisa* and *Ciamara* do, Elisinda simultaneously thwarts and makes use of patriarchal strictures to serve her own agenda. The abduction plot fails due to the timely intervention of *Lysander*, and Elisinda attempts to poison Thomaso in a bid to destroy the evidence of her involvement. Exposed by a letter she writes, she is confronted by the other characters, ‘the partakers of her past Pleasures, now becom[ing] the instruments of her Destruction,’ as her brother puts it (III, 82). In despair and defiance, she poisons herself with the opium-laced wine meant for Thomaso. She remains unrepentant and committed to her ‘all the world is masquerade’ ideology until right before her death, ‘ridicul[ing] their Simplicity, in reproaching her Actions, telling them they are all such, tho’ yet undiscover’d, or else insipid

⁴⁴ Elisinda’s progression involves a similar series to *Fantomina*, although in reverse: she seduces by letters, by cross-class disguise, and then by disguising herself to the point where she is mistaken for a prostitute.

⁴⁵ Cf. Haywood, *The Lucky Rape: or, Fate the best Disposer* in *Cleomelia*, pp. 94-94; and Manley, *The Physician’s Stratagem* in *The Power of Love*, repr. in *The Selected Works of Delarivier Manley*, ed. by Rachel Carnell and Ruth Herman, 5 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2005), IV, 59-234 (pp. 131-46).

Ideots' (III, 84-85). Her suicide, like Ciamara's, can be seen as an attempt to bypass patriarchal correction, at least in the form of public spectacle. But it also signals that she is unable to survive beyond her performances. Her pregnancy, only mentioned once in the first volume, is never spoken of again, which demonstrates the author's unwillingness to afford her any generative capacity beyond the text. We hear that her 'black Story, and the manner of her Death' are as much as possible concealed from the world, by '*Emelia* and the rest' although the text itself, like her letters, gives up her secrets (III, 86).

Libertine Case Studies: The Coquette

All three libertine characters, Alovisa, Ciamara, and Elisinda, rely on masking in order to manage the male gaze. All three are involved in repetitions with difference: Alovisa writes and styles her bodily responses; Ciamara orchestrates different encounters with D'Elmont in which she uses dress to stand in for body, and Elisinda seduces a series of men. Whilst the degree of action taken by the characters and the level of transgression differs, their deaths all depict the violent reaction of patriarchal law to potentially unruly and dangerous repetitions. Joseph Drury argues that Haywood addresses the contemporary fear that 'materialism [...] leads directly to libertinism' by shifting emphasis from personal freedom to consciousness or awareness, which becomes the key component of morality and works to mount a critique of mechanistic excuses for male libertine behaviour.⁴⁶ As such, he sees the female libertine characters as working to 'impress upon the reader the consequences of failing to deliberate'.⁴⁷ Juxtaposing the consciously resisting Melliora with her aristocratic rivals provides a means, for Drury, by which to situate 'thought [as] the woman's weapon of resistance against the man machine'.⁴⁸ But this approach risks positing Haywood as more invested in a middle-class, Richardsonian, morality than she perhaps was, leaving a character such as Melantha unaccounted for and also, in privileging thought, downplaying the extent to which the female body is crucial as part of both deliberation (in the form of swooning, for example), and morally-sanctioned pleasure, such as

⁴⁶ Drury, p. 207.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 224.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 223.

Melliora's. I would argue instead that whilst Haywood dramatises the forcible and physical end to discursive repetitions that could contain subversive elements, she still leaves some room for manoeuvre, both within discourse, and in terms of the body beyond discourse.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault charts an ideological shift, whereby the public spectacle of punishment was, over the course of the eighteenth century, replaced by an internalised discipline and policed by the individual under constant potential surveillance: the punished body becomes the 'docile' body.⁴⁹ However, it seems that the two disciplinary methods, the spectacle and the internalised, are often coexistent in amatory fictions. The docile body is represented by those characters who violently regulate their own desiring bodies, both passively by dying, and actively by suicide. But other characters such as Sophiana find themselves subjected to social punishment in the form of the spectacle, and indeed in deaths such as Elisinda's, although she is docile in that she is the one who ends her life, there is a theatrical aspect whereby the surveillance of the other characters enforces her adherence to the repressive norms that demand her death: internalization and the spectacle are combined. The punitive moments of the texts are used to signal the ways in which performative identities come into contact with, and are shaped and interrupted by conservative social regulations.

But there are also moments in which body is not materialised as part of a punitive gesture. As a coquet, Melantha is far less calculating than Alovisa, Ciamara, or Elisinda, and at first seems more concerned with answering billet-doux and playful teasing than the sorts of aggressive pursuit of D'Elmont that Alovisa and Ciamara engage in. Indeed, she looks forward to midcentury characters such as Betsy Thoughtless, rather than back to aristocratic romance-derived characters. Rejected by D'Elmont, she is 'fretted to the heart to find him so insensible' but her response is 'to fall into a violent fit of laughter' and pretend her declaration was a joke (p. 126). However, she still engages in the same sorts of amatory intrigue as her counterparts in the text, albeit with more playfulness. Her 'charming piece of vengeance', sees her outsmart all of the other libertine characters in the text to bed D'Elmont, who believes, in the darkness, that

⁴⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1995), p. 138.

she is Melliora, and to get away with it (p. 140). This comic moment, in which she swaps beds with Melliora, demonstrates her investment in substitutions rather than erasures or banishments. She is discovered by her brother, who chastises and threatens her: ““thou shame of thy sex, and everlasting blot and scandal of the noble house thou art descended from, rise, I say, or I will stab thee here in this scene of guilt”” (p. 144). But despite this threat, Melantha manages to escape Alovisa’s fate, and at the close of volume two, we hear that

not of a humour to take any thing to heart, [she] was married in a short time, and had the good fortune not to be suspected by her husband, though she brought him a child in seven months after her wedding.

(p. 159)

Given the violence of the treatment of other transgressing female characters in the text, the lightness of Haywood’s treatment of Melantha seems remarkable.

One way of theorizing Melantha’s lack of punishment is that she is differentiated from Alovisa and Ciamara because she does not attempt to exchange and control other women. One might also cite Stanissa’s portrayal in *The Prude* to evidence this point. Stanissa, we are told, has ‘experienc’d as many Lovers as Religions’ (I, 15). She shares Elisinda’s first lover; persuades her to live alone and not to marry; and helps her in her escapades. But she also escapes relatively unscathed, being only ‘discarded from [the] Friendship or Acquaintance’ of the remaining characters (III, 86). Stanissa is cast as an immoral character, but she stops short of aiding Elisinda’s plot to have Bellamira kidnapped and raped. Indeed, when Elisinda ‘hints [at] her Hell-contrived Design, [Stanissa] starts at the horrid Wickedness of it’, and Elisinda pretends to discard it as an idea (III, 29-40). From this differentiation in punishment then, we might surmise that what is being most violently corrected is a usurpation of male privilege, rather than excessive desire, plotting, or performances, which, in some cases, are allowed to play out undetected by repressive social constructions. Melantha’s baby is an indication that the materialization of her body allows continuing replication, informing rather than preventing future performance.

The fraught engagement between the generative and repressive aspects of construction materialise the amatory body. But these moments of contact between performative iterations

and repressive discursive structures also gesture towards a conception of the body as in excess of these iterations and their regulation. Whilst the acts of violence enacted upon unstable identities in these texts, stabbings and suicide but also imprisonment and attempted rape, attempt to prevent the disruption to clear and knowable identities and bodies posed by performativity, the excess implied in depictions of involuntary bodily acts such as swooning and birth suggests that bodies themselves can be generative beyond the reach of linguistic-discursive performances and control. Grosz argues that ‘nature may be understood not as an origin or as an invariable template but as materiality in its most general sense, as destination’.⁵⁰ This certainly rings true for the ways in which amatory texts work towards bodies as destinations in terms of discursive tensions giving rise to punished bodies. But it is complicated by the more involuntary and uncontrolled materialization of the passionate or pregnant body, and it is these eruptions of the real that I explore in the final section of this chapter.

In Excess: Theories of Entanglement

Just as there is a language surrounding masquerade and intrigue, there is a specific language of desire to which amatory fiction adheres. *Love in Excess*, for example, is full of abstract, stylised descriptions of ‘melting soul[s] stamped [with] love’s impression’ (p. 56); ‘countless burning agonies’ (p. 111); ‘whirlwinds’ (p. 43); ‘ravished soul[s]’ (p. 196); and ‘kindling transports’ (p. 203). These are strangely disembodied markers of passion, which draw on heroic romance conventions and early modern ideas about lovesickness. The abstraction of these descriptions has led Karen Harvey to disagree with Ballaster’s contention that amatory fiction is a kind of ‘pornography for women’, claiming instead that the genre is neither pornography nor erotica.⁵¹ She argues that whilst amatory fiction ‘sometimes hinted at obscenity’, it did not take part in the ‘puns, allusions and knowingness [which] were central to erotica; the tone of amatory fiction is, in contrast, earnestness’.⁵² However, the moments in which amatory fiction’s deliberately

⁵⁰ Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 21.

⁵¹ Ballaster, p. 35.

⁵² Karen Harvey, *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century: Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 33.

overblown language of passion fails provide a self-conscious admission of the limitations of conventional language. Contrary to Harvey's suggestion, these silences demonstrate that there is indeed 'something going on between the lines or behind the page', namely a gesture towards a material realm that is accounted for by and incommunicable within the discursive.⁵³

Haywood writes in *Love in Excess* that 'there is not greater proof of a vast and elegant passion, than the being incapable of expressing it' (p. 101). This is a sentiment borne out by numerous examples from the same text. We hear that 'none but those, who [...] have burned in hopeless fires can guess, the most lively description would come far short of what [Alovisa] felt' (p. 43). Frankville exclaims that 'what *words* had not the power to do, *looks* and *actions* testified' (p. 196). And D'Elmont claims that 'when once the fancy is fixed on a real object, [...] the dear idea will spread it self thro' every faculty of the soul, and in a moment inform us better, than all the writings of the most experienced poets, could do in an age' (p. 108). These characters situate embodied consciousness as a means by which to access that which is inaccessible through language. We are reminded of Rooney's definition of poetic realism as 'literature which attempts to address the real not so much in an objectifying, representational way, but in a manner that accords particular significance to states of consciousness', and indeed amatory fiction's concern with the experience of passion seems to accord such significance to experience.⁵⁴

Tiffany Potter argues that Haywood creates 'a powerful and distinct idiom for the expression of that which is culturally determined to be feminine' and claims that the moments of speechlessness in the text are a result of the difficulty in expressing traditionally private, feminine experience within a masculinised public sphere.⁵⁵ But what she sees as Haywood's challenge to 'the lack of a public space for discourses considered inappropriate for public demonstration' is, I would argue, actually a recognition of bodies in excess of discursive

⁵³ Ibid., p. 33.

⁵⁴ Rooney, p. 9.

⁵⁵ Tiffany Potter, 'The Language of Feminized Sexuality in Eliza Haywood's *Love in Excess* and *Fantomina*', *Women's Writing* 10 (2003), 169-86 (p. 169, p. 171).

formulations, a recognition of the real.⁵⁶ Despite words consistently proving ‘too poor to express what ’twas [...] felt’, amatory fiction continues to attempt to gesture towards the bodily affects which cannot fully be captured or accounted for by language, constructing a sort of embodied sublime which is at once impossible to capture and highly visible (p. 250). In *Love in Excess*, Haywood writes of love:

if so impossible to be described, if of so vast, so wonderful a nature as nothing but it’s self can comprehend, how much more impossible must it be entirely to conceal it! [...] there is no power in [honour and virtue], to stop the spring that with a rapid whirl transports us from our selves.

(p. 122)

In doing so, she implies an active and agential desiring body which exists independently of both managed performances (concealment) and repressive social constructions (honour and virtue), and which holds the power to rapidly and uncontrollably destabilize and fracture unified selves, in favour of pleasure. Take, for example, the scene between D’Elmont and Melliora in which he finds her ‘in unguarded sleep’ in bed (p. 116). He leans in to kiss her, and

that action, concurring at that instant, with her dream, made her throw her arm (still slumbering) about his neck, and in a soft and languishing voice, cry out, “Oh D’Elmont, cease, cease to charm, to such a height – Life cannot bear these raptures. – And then again, embracing him yet closer, – O! too, too lovely Count – extatick ruiner!”

(p. 116)

Ballaster suggests that Melliora’s unconscious response removes responsibility for transgression, in a similar way to swooning.⁵⁷ It does so by situating her speech and her bodily response outside of the performative/repressive paradigm through which bodies are often materialised, and thus recognizes a body that is able to act on its own terms, working towards blameless pleasure: ‘racking extasie’.

Focusing not on silence or the unconscious, but on the body as an alternative to the written word, Elizabeth Gargano argues that *Love in Excess* ‘repeatedly contrasts a deceptive and limiting verbal language with the supposedly more expressive “language of the eyes”’.⁵⁸ Reading the scene in which Melliora first returns D’Elmont’s gaze, Gargano mines its

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 171.

⁵⁷ Ballaster, p. 19.

⁵⁸ Gargano, p. 513.

‘androgynous possibilities’, whereby the gaze itself adopted by both male and female parties circumvents the gendered power dynamic of spectator/spectacle, allowing for ‘equal and even identical expressions of desire’.⁵⁹ Potter also identifies ‘a language of both the physicality and emotion of love that transcends prescriptive divisions of gender’ in the narrator’s interruptions and ruminations on the nature of love.⁶⁰ Paradoxically, a language generated by the body itself disables traditional gender oppositions, privileging a universally-experienced desire over its gendered expressions. And indeed this mutuality of desire is stressed at several points in Haywood’s tale. In Frankville’s inset narrative, he describes his seduction of Camilla, in which ‘dissolved in love [she] met [his] transports with an equal ardor’ (p. 197). In another scene between Melliora and D’Elmont, the narrator, perhaps less invested in stressing a positive female response than Frankville might be, tells us of Melliora experiencing ‘a racking kind of extasie, which might perhaps, had they been now alone, proved her desires were little different from [D’Elmont’s]’ (p. 122). The language is interesting here: the use of ‘racking’ or ‘the rack of nature’ in amatory fiction is often associated either with the pain of jealousy, or the pain of childbirth, and thus links both mental and physical states. In Manley’s *Court Intrigues* (1711), for example, an unnamed woman describes, to her friend, her pleasure and relief when her lover, temporarily turned against her, comes back to her: ‘I felt the same Ease, the same Release from Pain, as a Wretch took from the Rack; or from that more exquisite Torture, the Rack of Nature; the Ease a Woman feels, releas’d from *Mother-Pains*’.⁶¹ The same imagery is also used to connect pleasure and pain, casting both the ‘racking extasie’ of Melliora’s orgasm and ‘the sudden Rack’ of Fantomina’s labour pains as involuntary bodily responses which break down the boundaries between genders in the first case, and between bodies themselves in the second.

The implication in Gargano’s and Potter’s arguments is that there is a utopian freedom associated with these involuntary bodily responses in amatory fiction, situated in opposition to the restrictions of (public, masculine, written) language. Gargano claims that, ‘Throughout the

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 531.

⁶⁰ Potter, p. 172.

⁶¹ Delarivier Manley, *Court Intrigues, in a Collection of Original Letters, from the Island of the New Atalantis, &c.* (London: Printed for John Morphew and James Woodward, 1711), p. 197.

novel, spoken and written words enforce debilitating stereotypes of female weakness.’⁶² She identifies verbal and bodily speech, the letter and the gaze, as ‘two forms of language that will exist in a problematic and dialectical relation throughout [Haywood’s tale]’.⁶³ Her identification of these competing forms of communication is interesting, but, I would argue, fails to acknowledge the interactions between the two, or their engagement with real itself. It is not that text, disguise, manipulation always restrict, and the body always enables. Rather, texts produce bodies; bodies both enable and restrict texts and meaning; and the real is situated beyond verbal or bodily language. Gargano thus risks oversimplifying the tangled relationship between performative constructions of identity which use both text and body, the repressive norms that they strain against, and material bodies themselves, in favour of a reading which situates female agency solely in moments of embodiment. The rack of nature, I argue, is not the locus of agency, but rather a recognition of a shifting materiality independent from or in excess of the discursive configurations that work to constitute it.

As we have seen, amatory fiction charts the emergence of material bodies constituted through conflicting discourses: the generative (performance) and the repressive (punishment). But as Barad puts it in a corrective to Butler’s constructivism, ‘as surely as social factors play a role in scientific knowledge construction [...], there is a sense in which “the world kicks back”’.⁶⁴ Far from ignoring the material, or subordinating it to abstracted discursive iterations, there are moments in amatory texts, as I have suggested, which reveal a body in excess of discursive structures, moments where language fails, where the body demonstrates itself as active, or where matter replicates itself. Materialist feminist theory provides potential ways of understanding alternative renderings of the relationship between mind and body which amatory fiction recognises, in which the body appears as unstable, changeable, and creative rather than as passive matter. Ultimately, I argue that amatory fiction is interested in the possibilities of material bodies to inform performative iterations of identity. But it also recognises the real as

⁶² Gargano, p. 522.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 523.

⁶⁴ Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), pp. 214-15.

holding the power to disrupt discursive citationality, and thus posits the existence of a feminine real, characterized by processes of creative duplication, repetition, relation and interconnectedness, as an alternative, albeit random and often inaccessible, to the incremental changes wrought on discursive iterations by repetitions with difference. This is not to situate amatory fiction as radical, but rather to argue that the relationships it plots between discourse and the body are not as somatophobic as they might at first appear.⁶⁵

Barad asks: ‘How did language come to be more trustworthy than matter?’⁶⁶ Vicki Kirby notes that ‘there is little risk in most contemporary criticism [...] of attributing agency and intelligent inventiveness (culture) to the capacities of flesh and matter’, whilst Grosz argues that in Butler’s work, ‘having significance, having a place, mattering, is more important than matter, substance or materiality’.⁶⁷ Materialist feminism’s re-conception of matter as non-passive provides a useful lens through which to read involuntary bodily responses in amatory fiction, and to theorise their relationship to the performative construction of identity that is being charted in these texts. As I have noted, in moments of passion, the boundaries of bodies are broken down, often conceptualised in terms of a dissolving. In childbirth, boundaries are similarly complicated, but this time in terms of replication. Both examples demonstrate firstly an agential body, and secondly a lack of fixity that mirrors the fluidity of identity suggested by the masquerade texts. So ultimately what both the material and the discursive in amatory fiction

⁶⁵ See Phyllis Ann Thompson, ‘Subversive Bodies: Embodiment as Discursive Strategy in Women’s Popular Literature in the Long Eighteenth Century’ (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Louisiana State University, 2003), in which she argues that eighteenth-century women writers were deliberately attempting to author a counter-Cartesian narrative of the relationship between mind and body.

⁶⁶ Karen Barad, ‘Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter’, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28 (2003), 801-31 (p. 801).

⁶⁷ Vicki Kirby, ‘Natural Convers(at)ions: or, what if culture was really nature all along?’, in *Material Feminisms*, ed. by Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), pp. 214-36 (p. 216). Robert Ausch, Randal Doane and Laura Perez, ‘Interview with Elizabeth Grosz’ <http://web.gc.cuny.edu/csctw/found_object/text/grosz.htm> [accessed 24 January 2014]. In a more recent interview, Grosz gestures towards the complexity of the relationship between the real and representation, saying, ‘I am not happy with the current opposition between representation and reality that affirms the real only at the expense of representation. Representation *is* real, after all. The materiality of the real must have a dimension of ideality for there to be a language at all. Language and the real are not linked in terms of language’s (or ideology’s) construction of the real, but perhaps we have moved too rapidly away from the converse claim, that reality constructs or at least makes possible the very existence of language, that language is virtual in the real.’ (‘Significant Differences: An Interview with Elizabeth Grosz’, *Interstitial Journal* (March, 2013) <<http://interstitialjournal.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/grosz-interview1.pdf>> [accessed 25 January 2014])

seem to suggest is that both material and discursive identities, whilst distinct from one another, are constituted by process, and characterized by a temporal lack of fixity.

As Grosz explains, Cartesian dualism has invariably led to the body being conceived of as a passive, feminised object: brute biology, an instrument or tool to be owned and occupied, or a two-way transparent intermediary between inner psyche and outer world.⁶⁸ Searching for alternative philosophies, Grosz contrasts dualistic approaches with the monism posited by Baruch Spinoza, in which body and mind are attributes of a single substance.⁶⁹ She notes Hans Jonas's comparison, with regards to Spinoza's theories, of bodies to flames, which allows us to understand how matter might be considered, like identity, as existing in a state of process:

As in a burning candle, the permanence of the flame is a permanence, not of substance but of process in which at each moment the "body" with its "structure" of inner and outer layers is reconstituted of materials different from the previous and following ones so the living organism exists as a constant exchange of its own constituents and has its permanence and identity in the continuity of this process.⁷⁰

As Grosz puts it, 'the body must be seen as a series of processes of becoming, rather than as a fixed state of being. The body is both active and productive.'⁷¹ What this means for amatory fiction is that we can read desiring and birthing bodies which dissolve and reproduce as an admission of the transformative power of the real, which can inform, disrupt, and enable performative iterations of identity in a more profound way than repetitions with difference.

The body in the discursive process of becoming is implied by Fantomina's repeated performances, or Aloverisa's self-fashioning. But one of the clearest examples of the way in which processes of the real are charted in amatory fiction comes during Amena's near-seduction in the first volume of *Love in Excess*. It is worth quoting this scene at length:

all nature seemed to favour [D'Elmont's] design, the pleasantness of the place, the silence of the night, the sweetness of the air, perfumed with a thousand various odours wafted by gentle breezes from adjacent gardens completed the most delightful scene that ever was, to offer up a sacrifice to love; not a breath but flew winged with desire, and sent soft thrilling wishes to the soul; Cynthia her self, cold as she is reported, assisted in the inspiration, and sometimes shone with all her brightness, as it were to feast their ravished eyes with gazing on each others

⁶⁸ Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, pp. 8-9.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁷⁰ Hans Jonas, 'Spinoza and the Theory of Organism', in *Philosophy of the Body*, ed. by Stuart Spicker (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), pp. 50-69 (p. 55). Cited in Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p 11.

⁷¹ Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 12.

beauty; then veiled her beams in clouds to give the lover boldness, and hide the virgins blushes. What now could poor Amena do, surrounded with so many powers, attacked by such a charming force without, betrayed by tenderness within? [...] The heat of the weather, and her confinement having hindred her from dressing that day, she had only a thin silk night gown on, which flying open as he caught her in his arms, he found her panting heart beat measures of consent, her heaving breast swell to be pressed by his, and every pulse confess a wish to yield; her spirits all dissolved sunk in a lethargy of love, her snowy arms unknowing grasped his neck, her lips met his half way, and trembled at the touch; in fine, there was but a moment betwixt her and ruine.

(p. 58)

Amena's desiring body here becomes the concentration point of her surroundings. The moon works to make visible and to conceal; the heat works to undress her; nature seems to reconstitute itself in and through Amena's body. The mutual response and 'measures of consent' reflect not only the reaction of Amena's body to D'Elmont's, but also the interrelation between her body and the surroundings that work, with desire, to constitute it in the present moment. Drury reads this scene as 'a kind of materialist inversion of pathetic fallacy [...] in which, instead of Amena's surroundings becoming projections of her inner state, inner and outer dissolve into a single chain of cause and effect'.⁷² In moments of passion, Haywood often describes her characters as 'dissolved' in love or rapture (see, for example, *Love in Excess*, p. 124, p. 197, p. 258): embodied desire is characterized by its lack of solid boundaries. Amena's desiring body is temporarily enabled by, and part of, her material surroundings, and neither the 'charming force without' nor the 'tenderness within' are prior. Whilst Drury reads this dissolution as 'the collapse of consciousness into the realm of pure action', a reversion to libertine materialism in which the body becomes a machine, I argue that this is not a mechanized but an organic perception of the body.⁷³ Kirby, citing historian of science Bruno Latour, suggests that 'nature is articulate, communicative'.⁷⁴ For her, identity is an emergence of 'mutualities', a 'synchronous assemblage/emergence', or coming-into-being of the material alongside the discursive, which I think we can productively map onto moments in amatory fiction in which the desiring body emerges from its surroundings. As Rooney writes about

⁷² Drury, p. 213.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 213.

⁷⁴ Kirby, pp. 227-28. See Bruno Latour, 'Circulating Reference: Sampling Soil in the Amazon Forest', in *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 24-79, especially p. 8.

composition, ‘instead of “a form of doing” without “a form of being,” [techno-performativity], this is: a being in the act of forming, or being in the act of forming anew’, and is thus creative rather than purely citational.⁷⁵

So what relationship do discursive and material processes have to one another in amatory fiction? Barad suggests that the material and the discursive co-exist in ‘an ongoing topological dynamics’.⁷⁶ She criticises Butler’s constructivism, claiming that ‘the fact that language itself is an enclosure that contains the constitutive outside amounts to an unfortunate reinscription of matter as subservient to the play of language’.⁷⁷ For Barad, the material is not reducible to the discursive. Grosz makes a similar point. Reformulating a model that Lacan uses, she imagines the relationship between mind and body as a:

Möbius strip, the inverted three-dimensional figure eight [which] provides a way of problematizing and rethinking relations between the inside and the outside of the subject, its psychical interior and its corporeal exterior, by showing not their fundamental identity or reducibility but the torsion of the one into the other, the passage, vector, or uncontrollable drift of the inside into the outside and the outside into the inside.⁷⁸

Her conception of this relationship is similar to both Kirby’s conception of ‘mutualities’; Barad’s arguments about ‘intra-action’, whereby subjects and objects are materialised as a result of the changing relations between phenomena; and Rooney’s conception of holism (as opposed to monism), as a ‘non-duality [which] pertains not to oneness as singular but rather to what is not yet separate and thus entails a *potential for duality, plurality and difference*’.⁷⁹ In her examination of the mind/body relationship, Kirby argues that we ought to see discursive signs as part of a wider materiality: ‘we don’t tend to think of signs as *substantively* or ontologically material. But what prevents us from doing so?’⁸⁰ We can read this material-discursive interaction in a text like *The Masqueraders*, in which the generative pregnant body is also the

⁷⁵ Rooney, p. 29.

⁷⁶ Barad ‘Posthumanist Performativity,’ p. 826.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 825, n. 31. Barad makes the same criticism of Foucault, claiming that ‘for all of Foucault’s emphasis of the political anatomy of disciplinary power, he fails to offer an account of the body’s historicity in which its very materiality plays an *active* role in the workings of power. This implicit reinscription of matter’s passivity is a mark of extant representationalism [the ontological distinction between signifier and signified] that haunt his largely postrepresentationalist account.’ *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, p. 65.

⁷⁸ Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. xii.

⁷⁹ Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, p. 140, and Rooney, p. 11.

⁸⁰ Kirby, p. 219.

repressed punished body. At the end of volume one, after a pursuit that involves a number of sartorial and corporeal performances, Philecta is abandoned by Dorimemus, and not only exposed in society, but also pregnant. Haywood tells us that Philecta

is sufficiently convinc'd how infinitely to blame she was, in indulging a Curiosity which proved so fatal to her Virtue, her Reputation, and her Peace of Mind; and which, 'tis highly probable, will in a short time be found so to her Life.⁸¹

As with other docile bodies, her internalised sense of discipline begins the familiar process of punishment upon her body. Initially a site of pleasure and manipulation, it is now beyond her control as patriarchal law reasserts itself. However, her pregnancy signals something beyond the discursive movement between passion and punishment. In its self-replication, her body, like Fantomina's and Melantha's refuses its own future performances, but allows the future performances of other characters. Whilst the plot of *The Masqueraders* continues to repeat, and eventually leaves us with an open ending, its narrative is punctuated by the appearance of Philecta's involuntary body. Potter has suggested that Haywood employs 'a feminised structure of multiple climaxes' in her novels, and in doing so aligns the text itself with the female body.⁸² Philecta's pregnancy, which signals not only a closure to her action, but also the end of her narrative, and of the first part of *The Masqueraders*, can thus be read as a structural, or even a grammatical device. It provides closure to the text in a physical form whereby text and body become mutually enabling, mutually productive of more text and more bodies.

*

This chapter and the previous one have attempted to map out the ways in which amatory fiction prefigures the tensions within and between feminist and queer theory over questions of identity and the body. Chapter three demonstrated the recognition within amatory fiction of performative modes of identity construction, whereby female identity is constructed through a series of repetitions. Repetitions with slight differences each time allow for a certain amount of manoeuvre within these constructions, and amatory fiction experiments, I argue, with the spaces

⁸¹ Eliza Haywood, *The Masqueraders; or Fatal Curiosity: Being The Secret History of a Late AMOUR* 2 vols (London: Printed for J. Roberts, 1724-25), I, 47.

⁸² Potter, p. 175.

opened up by difference and by potential redeployments of power. What this chapter has attempted to demonstrate is that within the performative iterations of identity that amatory fiction makes visible and tests out, there is also an admission of and engagement with the material body as an entity produced by, but also in excess of, the discursive. My exploration was informed by materialist feminist critiques of performativity, although the performative still remains integral to my arguments here, as it continues to play a crucial role in deferring the punitive discursive embodiment that concludes many amatory texts.

Amatory fiction demonstrates the ways in which performance allows its female characters to resist the type of embodiment that would seek to limit the potential for future performance, i. e. repressive forms of embodiment such as suicide and death. Their performances situate their bodies as passive tools or surfaces, easily effaced in order to allow them to occupy ambiguous positions between power and submission, masculine and feminine. However, many amatory heroines are finally forcibly embodied through punishment. Within the realms of the discursive, the body becomes a means by which dominant discourses are realised and enforced, and potentially destabilising repetitions with difference are shut down in order to maintain the status quo. As such, I argued that the discursive tension between amatory discourses of performativity which engender uncertainty and refuse meaning, and reactionary prescriptions for femininity which seek to effect closure upon performance, result in the brief materialisation of a punished body, which then disappears. In death, punishment, and public humiliation, the destabilising aspects of the performing amatory body are fixed into something knowable: victim, adulterer, murderess, madwoman. My case studies reveal how this discursive materialization operates, but also function to show how characters such as Melantha suggest an alternative to the seemingly inescapable trajectory of the performing woman in amatory fiction. Melantha's body duplicates rather than disappears. Her pregnancy puts a stop to her performances, for now, but is nonetheless generative rather than destructive, suggesting firstly that claims to desire rather than power can prevent the implementation of punitive measures upon female bodies, and secondly that beyond the repressive forms of citation, certain bodies exist that we might, with Rooney, see as creating rather than copying. The final section of this

chapter explored the way in which amatory fiction gestures towards the real in its silences, and in its treatment of desiring and birthing bodies. I argued that amatory fiction is recognizing the real as a process, and the materialisation of Amena's body as a momentary articulation of her surroundings, ready to dissolve again at any moment, demonstrates a holistic and organic conception of the body, in opposition to the discursively-constituted docile bodies of other amatory characters. In birth, I argued that the interactions between the discursive and the real are rendered clear. The real, the rack of nature, both begins and ends the discursive repetitions. The body functions like a text, producing meaning and duplicating itself, but also, in its immediacy, remaining beyond what is communicable. The passionate body and the pregnant body in amatory fiction thus imply a conception of the material as constituted by process, as interconnected with and part of other matter, and as generative, beyond the discursive configurations which seek to define and limit it, and beyond the text which seeks to contain it.

'Heterogeneous' Afterlives:

Amatory Inheritances

My Booksellers [...] advise me to write rather more modishly, that is, less like a Christian, and in a Style careless and loose, as the Custom of the present Age is to live. But I leave that to the other Female Authors my Contemporaries, whose Lives and Writings have, I fear, too great a Resemblance.

(Penelope Aubin, *The Life of Charlotta du Pont*, 1723)¹

But what extraordinary Passions these Ladies [Manley and Haywood] may have experienced I know not; far be such Knowledge from a modest Woman: Indeed Mrs. *Haywood* seems to have dropped her former luscious Stile, and, for Variety, presents us with the insipid: Her *Female Spectators* are a Collection of trite Stories, delivered to us in stale and worn-out Phrases, bless'd Revolution!

Yet, of the two, less dang'rous is th' Offence,

To tire the Patience, than mislead the Sense.

(*The Memoirs of Mrs. Laetitia Pilkington*, 1748)²

Recent scholarship has done much to disrupt traditional accounts that argue that the realist novel, epitomised by Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), emerged out of the demise of amatory fiction and other popular yet crude early eighteenth-century genres. Accounts which privilege this narrative of the rise of the novel, from those by eighteenth-century writers such as Laetitia Pilkington and Clara Reeve, up to modern critics such as Ian Watt and, most recently, John Richetti, all document a dramatic stylistic and generic shift during the 1740s and 1750s. Pilkington, as we see above, articulates the idea, later adopted by Reeve, of an abrupt alteration in Eliza Haywood's work, from the passionate amatory tales of the 1720s and 1730s, to the more sentimental and seemingly didactic novels and essays of the 1740s and 1750s. In doing so, Pilkington foregrounds her understanding of the changed tastes of the late 1740s, and privileges her own refined morality by setting it against Haywood's immoral amatory fictions whilst simultaneously defining her own work as more interesting and innovative than Haywood's

¹ Penelope Aubin, *The Life of Charlotta Du Pont, an English Lady* (London: A. Bettesworth, 1723), p. vi.

² Laetitia Pilkington, *Memoirs of Laetitia Pilkington*, ed. by A. C. Elias Jr., 2 vols (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997), I, 227.

reformed publications.³ But she was not the first writer to hasten to assert her difference from amatory writers, as Penelope Aubin's prefatory comment demonstrates. Pilkington's criticism of her fellow writer has led Jennie Batchelor to suggest that her 'readers could be forgiven for suspecting this far from respectable author of protesting too much', and indeed her *Memoirs* bear more resemblance to secret histories than to conduct fiction.⁴ Pilkington's exploitation of the fact that, as William Warner put it in 1998, amatory fiction had become an outdated and 'degraded "other"', provides an early example of the advantages (moral, political, and aesthetic) that denigrating amatory fiction bore for women writers in the midcentury.⁵ That being said, explicit references to amatory writers are few and far between in midcentury fiction, so the lines of influence from amatory to midcentury fiction require careful excavation. And indeed many women writers' assertions of their superiority to, and abhorrence of, amatory fiction and its authors ought not to be taken at face value as their texts tell a very different story.

Warner analyses Richardson's attempts to revise amatory fictions, and therefore demonstrates the latter writer's indebtedness to what came before. However, he also delineates and upholds a definite split between the romance-influenced styles of amatory texts, and an emergent realist style. It is a split which both Pilkington and Reeve had defined on moral grounds. Warner's claims that these older forms 'never quite disappear', but rather are thought of as inferior predecessors, are also supported by Richetti, who argues that although the thematic content remained similar between early and midcentury writing, the aesthetic and formal changes were significant.⁶ Richetti's more recent contention that amatory fiction ought to be seen as 'a fertilising muck or productive irritant for the great works of the 1740s', provides another example of the same theory, and both Warner and Richetti seem invested in the idea of

³ Elias Jr. notes that Pilkington's critiques of amatory fiction's immorality are actually very similar to the critiques of romance writers that Haywood herself published in *The Female Spectator*. See *Memoirs of Laetitia Pilkington*, ed. by Elias Jr., II, 618-19.

⁴ Jennie Batchelor, 'The "latent seeds of coquetry": Amatory Fiction and the 1750s Novel', in *Masters of the Marketplace: British Women Novelist of the 1750s*, ed. by Susan Carlile (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2011), pp. 145-64 (p. 147).

⁵ William Warner, *Licensing Entertainment: The Elevation of Novel Reading in Britain, 1684-1750* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 43.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 43. Cf. John Richetti, 'Popular Narrative in the Early Eighteenth Century: Formats and Formulas', in *The English Novel, Volume 1: 1700 to Fielding*, ed. by Richard Kroll (London: Longman, 1998), pp. 70-106 (p. 96).

an aesthetic shift from bad to good, from debased and primitive to ‘elevated’ and ‘sophisticated’.⁷ They both take part, although Warner to a lesser extent, in the new formalist rejection of amatory fiction, whereby its formulaic nature is seen as a literary failing. This is a viewpoint that I, following critics like Scott Black, Kathryn King, and Laura Rosenthal, have tried to problematise in this thesis, claiming instead that the intricate layering deployed by amatory writers, the integral use of repetition with difference, and the exploration of the ways in which bodies and texts interact, are ideologically and aesthetically significant as demonstrations of artistry and as theoretically sophisticated experimentations with discursive and materialist conceptions of identity.⁸

The clean break argument is now undergoing a thorough re-evaluation by feminist scholars, and a revised literary history is being constructed that suggests more gradual changes over the course of the eighteenth century. Such scholarship reassesses the importance and afterlives of amatory fiction and demonstrates the continuations, borrowings and complex intertextual relationships between early and mid eighteenth-century writers. Many, including Warner, have focused on the influence of amatory modes on midcentury male writers, but, more recently, work has also started to be attentive to the usage of amatory ideologies, tropes, and conventions, by midcentury women writers.⁹ This scholarship, particularly the scholarship that

⁷ John Richetti, ‘An Emerging New Canon of the British Eighteenth-Century novel: Feminist Criticism, the Means of Cultural Production, and the Question of Value’, in *A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century English Novel and Culture*, ed. by Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 365-82 (p. 367).

⁸ See Scott Black, ‘Trading Sex for Secrets in Haywood’s *Love in Excess*’, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 15 (2003), 207-20, in which he argues that Haywood’s ‘texts are self-conscious explorations of narrative’ (p. 207); Kathryn King, ‘The Afterlife and Strange Surprising Adventures of Haywood’s Amatories (with Thoughts on *Betsy Thoughtless*)’, in *Masters of the Marketplace*, ed. by Carlile, pp. 203-18, where she argues that ‘Haywood should be regarded as an artful, stylistically various, and generically self-aware writer’ (p. 204); and Laura J. Rosenthal, ‘*Oroonoko*: reception, ideology, and narrative strategy’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, ed. by Derek Hughes and Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 151-65, where she contends that ‘in spite of considerable serious and productive attention to the complex web of ideological engagements in the novel, we have yet fully to appreciate the narrative’s intriguing artistry’ (p.156).

⁹ For the influence of amatory fiction on male writers, see, for example, Warner, *Licensing Entertainment*; Thomas Keymer and Peter Sabor, *Pamela in the Marketplace: Literary Controversy and Print Culture in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and Katherine Williams, ‘Samuel Richardson and Amatory Fiction’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2005). For the influence of amatory fiction on female writers, see, for example, Aleksandra Hultquist, ‘Equal Ardor: Female Desire, Amatory Fiction, and the Recasting of the Novel, 1680-1760’ (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois, 2008); Catherine A. Craft, ‘Reworking Male Models: Aphra Behn’s *Fair Vow-Breaker*, Eliza Haywood’s *Fantomina*, and Charlotte

seeks to uncover matrilineal inheritances, is necessarily wary of the problematic critical frameworks inherited from eighteenth-century literary histories such as Reeve's, and the way in which such frameworks have continued to inform more recent, inescapably masculinist theories of influence, such as Harold Bloom's conception of the 'anxiety of influence'.¹⁰ It is this scholarship that informs this chapter, and to which I now turn before tracing the afterlife of one amatory tale from first publication in the 1680s through two separate 1720s renderings, and ending with a midcentury revision.

Naming Them together: Beyond Pious or Scandalous

Whilst the links between the 'fair triumvirate of wit' have been acknowledged since Haywood's day, correspondences between these three writers and other early eighteenth-century writers have largely gone unrecognised or have been passed over, at least to the point whereby Behn, Manley, and Haywood are often grouped together, in opposition to their contemporaries.

However, the pious/scandalous interpretive framework, which critics have, like the rise of the novel narrative, inherited from the eighteenth century itself, is coming under increasing pressure as critics explore the links between early eighteenth-century writers, problematising the distinctions made between Penelope Aubin, Elizabeth Singer Rowe, and Jane Barker on the one hand, and amatory writers on the other. Elizabeth Kim, for instance, criticises the imposition of rigid moral divisions between Aubin and her contemporaries, emphasising the generic instability of Aubin's work, and the complex influences on which she draws. She grants merit to the myriad generic categorisations applied to Aubin's novels 'as responses to amatory fiction, as Defoean imitations, as pious polemics that anticipate Richardson's novels, as types of spiritual autobiography, and as amatory-travel narrative hybrids', but chooses to place Aubin within the

Lennox's *Female Quixote*', *Modern Language Review*, 86 (1991), 821-38; and Emily Smith, 'Traces of Aphra Behn in Frances Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague* (1769)', *Notes and Queries*, 54 (2007), 470-72. Much work has also been done on the trajectory of Haywood's career, and on the networks of literary influence between men and women in the midcentury. See, for example, Betty Schellenberg, *The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹⁰ See Jennie Batchelor, 'Introduction: Influence, Intertextuality and Agency: Eighteenth-Century Women Writers and the Politics of Remembering?', *Women's Writing*, 20 (2013), 1-12 (pp. 3-6) for an overview of the feminist critiques of both models of influence and models of intertextuality.

tradition of politically engaged women's fiction authored by Behn, Manley, and Barker.¹¹ Sarah Prescott, to give another example, argues that setting Aubin and Elizabeth Singer Rowe in opposition to Haywood ignores the fact that 1720s writers were all participating in the commercial marketplace, and often writing for the same audiences.¹² She situates 1720s women writers in dialogue with one another, choosing to reject Warner's notion of 'overwriting' as unhelpful for feminist criticism, and also arguing that the 1720s plays a more crucial role in the development of the novel than has been acknowledged.¹³ Prescott's focus is on the seduction narrative, the 'eroticism of virtuous resistance' and particularly on what Toni Bowers has called the 'collusive resistance' of the heroine, as a starting point for Haywood, Aubin, and Rowe, who all intervene in constructions of femininity via explorations of this theme, using similar tropes and language.¹⁴ Debbie Welham links Aubin not to Haywood, but to Manley. She examines Aubin's 'deliberate copy[ing] and subversion' of Manley's *The Power of Love* (1720), whereby Aubin takes the content of three resentment tales, which date back to 1554, but reverses the endings in accordance with her different interpretation of Tory sensibility and the necessity of passive obedience.¹⁵ In creating a link between two writers whereby Aubin's adaptation of Manley demonstrates her 'pointedly participat[ing] in debate with her literary contemporaries', Welham also goes beyond the pious/scandalous framework to explore, with more nuance than that framework allows for, the complex interrelations between 1720s writers.¹⁶

Despite the work done to elucidate these links, divisions between pious and scandalous texts continue to hold sway, particularly in the case of Jane Barker. Jane Spencer, for example, concludes that whilst Manley, Pix, and Trotter drew comparisons between themselves, and saw

¹¹ Elizabeth S. Kim, 'Penelope Aubin's Novels Reconsidered: The Barbary Captivity Narrative and Christian Ecumenism in Early Eighteenth-Century Britain', *The Eighteenth-Century Novel*, 8 (2011), 1-29 (p. 17, p. 3). Also see Marilyn Williamson, *Raising Their Voices: British Women Writers 1650-1750* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), p. 251, and Aparna Gollapudi, 'Virtuous Voyages in Penelope Aubin's Fiction', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 45 (2005), 669-90.

¹² Sarah Prescott, 'The Debt to Pleasure: Eliza Haywood's *Love in Excess* and Women's Fiction of the 1720s', *Women's Writing*, 7 (2000), 427-45 (p. 428). Also see Prescott, *Women, Authorship, and Literary Culture 1690-1740* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), particularly pp. 20-21.

¹³ Prescott, 'The Debt to Pleasure', pp. 428-29.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 435. For 'collusive resistance', see Toni Bowers, *Force or Fraud: British Seduction Stories and the Problem of Resistance, 1660-1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁵ Debbie Welham, 'The Political Afterlife of Resentment in Penelope Aubin's *The Life and Amorous Adventures of Lucinda* (1721)', *Women's Writing*, 20 (2012), 49-63 (p. 57).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

both Behn and Katherine Phillips as appropriate models, ‘for Jane Barker only Sappho and the chaste Orinda (Phillips) can be acceptable models’.¹⁷ Warner, Marilyn Williamson and Jeslyn Medoff also cite and uphold the distinction between the dangerous inheritance offered by Behn (Astrea), and the more laudable legacy of Phillips (Orinda). Medoff claims that in the altered climate of the generations following Behn’s death, she functioned as ‘a Great Warning’.¹⁸ However, Medoff also notes Barker’s vexed relationship to Behn, whereby, despite Barker’s protestations, the similarities between the two writers are clear in terms of their location within the literary marketplace and their commercial awareness of their audiences.¹⁹ Both King and Medoff call attention to the religious and political similarities between Barker and Behn, whilst Josephine Donovan sees Barker’s feminism, and her ‘satiric treatment of marriage marketing [as] much closer to [Margaret] Cavendish, Behn, and Manley than to Rowe and Aubin’.²⁰ Jacqueline Pearson also traces Barker’s indebtedness to Behn through her reliance on Behn’s plotline in *The History of the Nun* (1689), a method which I employ in my own reading of Barker’s treatment of another of Behn’s texts.²¹ Studies of the intertextual connections between early eighteenth-century writers are working towards a more thorough understanding of literary alliances and correspondences in the early eighteenth century, but anonymous fiction and the work of less prolific writers like Mary Hearne still remain understudied within this context.²²

The pious/scandalous interpretive framework was used historically to support a narrative that situates amatory fiction as a morally questionable, and, in later criticism,

¹⁷ Jane Spencer, ‘Creating the Woman Writer: The Autobiographical Works of Jane Barker’, *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*, 2 (1983), 165-81 (p. 179).

¹⁸ Jeslyn Medoff, ‘The Daughters of Behn and the Problem of Reputation’, in *Women, Writing, History, 1640-1740*, ed. by Isobel Grundy and Susan Wiseman (London: Batsford, 1992), pp. 33-54 (p. 36). Also see Williamson, pp. 102-04, and Warner, p. 150.

¹⁹ Medoff, p. 38. Barker was published, like Haywood and Mary Hearne, by Edmund Curll.

²⁰ Josephine Donovan, *Women and the Rise of the Novel, 1405-1726* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), pp. xii-xiii. See also Kathryn R. King and Jeslyn Medoff, ‘Jane Barker and Her Life (1652-1732): The Documentary Record’, *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 21.3 (1997), 16-38.

²¹ Jacqueline Pearson, ‘The History of *The History of the Nun*’, in *Rereading Aphra Behn: History, Theory, and Criticism*, ed. by Heidi Hutner (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), pp. 234-52.

²² There are two notable exceptions in the case of Hearne: Hans Turley, ‘The Anomalous Fiction of Mary Hearne’, *Studies in the Novel*, 30 (1998), 139-149; and Kathryn King ‘The Novel before Novels (with a Glance at Mary Hearne’s Fables of Desertion)’, in *Eighteenth-Century Genre and Culture: Serious Reflections on Occasional Forms: Essays in Honor of J. Paul Hunter*, ed. by Dennis Todd and Cynthia Wall (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001), pp. 36-57 (p. 46).

aesthetically inferior, predecessor to the realist novel, and to divide early writers not only from each other, but also from midcentury writers. As with early eighteenth-century intertextuality, however, a few scholars have also turned their attention to mapping the dialogues between early eighteenth-century and midcentury writers. Batchelor, for example, discusses links between amatory and midcentury writers, which she argues are obscured ‘by our willingness retrospectively to remap later eighteenth-century histories of the novel’s rise, authored by figures including Reeve, onto earlier periods in which such narratives were neither fully recognized nor sanctioned.’²³ She identifies two staple concerns in 1750s women’s writing, positing that both originate from amatory fiction: coquetry, as a means of survival different from Richardsonian virtuous simplicity; and community, forged by an awareness of amatory conventions.²⁴ Story-sharing, she argues, is transferred from amatory to midcentury fiction as a basis for female community, in a repetition with difference whereby the aim changes from sexual arousal to the arousal of sympathy, whilst the method remains the same.²⁵ King takes part in a similar project, although focused specifically on Haywood. Her essay in Susan Carlile’s edited collection, *Masters of the Marketplace*, traces reappearances in the 1730s and 40s of sections of Haywood’s work, situating them within a wider ‘aftermarket of borrowings, repackagings, and plagiarisms’ of early fiction, and citing this as evidence of the lasting appeal of amatory fiction.²⁶ She mentions, for example, the anonymous *Nunnery Tales* (1727) as a clear example of the amatory style, noting the similarity of the seduction scenes in this text to those in Haywood’s, and arguing that the afterlife of amatory fiction is rendered clear by the fact that *Nunnery Tales* was in print until 1828.²⁷ King argues that Haywood herself recycles amatory motifs in midcentury work such as *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751), but also

²³ Batchelor, ‘The “latent seeds of coquetry”’, p. 148.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 150-55.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

²⁶ King, ‘The Afterlife and Strange Surprising Adventures of Haywood’s Amatories’, p. 205.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.205. Haywood’s texts continued to be republished throughout the eighteenth century. A novel published in 1768, for example, entitled *Clementina; or the History of an Italian Lady, who made her Escape from a Monastery, for the Love of a Scots Nobleman* (London: W. Adlard, 1768), is a reprint of Haywood’s 1728 novel *The Agreeable Caledonian*. Published twelve years after her death, the editor (T.B.) claims, in the advertisement to the reader, that Haywood prepared an altered copy for reprint but died during the process: ‘From that revised Copy the present Edition is printed’. The later text, however, is almost a word-for-word reprint of the earlier one, suggesting that the editor was simply capitalising on Haywood’s continuing fame.

carefully explores the limitations of the emerging domestic novel. She concludes that despite contestations that amatory fiction was no longer in vogue after the 1720s, it was actually Haywood, rather than the literary marketplace, that had moved on, and that we should view the later Haywood as matured, rather than reformed.²⁸ Maggie Kulik's work on plagiarism provides a final example of the type of enquiry that is informing my reading of the afterlife of one of Behn's texts. She examines the afterlife of Aubin's *The Life of Charlotta Du Pont* (1723), which was reprinted, almost word-for-word, as *The Inhuman Stepmother; or the History of Miss Harriot Montague* in 1770. Situating this reprint within the context of the eighteenth-century literary marketplace, and the profusion of plagiarisms and reprinting in the wake of the Statute of Anne (1710), Kulik claims that the alterations made demonstrate a conscious manipulation of Aubin's prose suggestive of 'an intentional but woefully clumsy deception' rather than an authorised reissue or a mistake.²⁹ From the arguments of these three scholars emerge three different types of afterlives: the borrowing and adaptation of certain tropes; the repackaging of a text to suit, or to comment upon changing fashions; and straight plagiarism or reprinting for solely commercial reasons.

As the earliest amatory writer, and the one whose work ought therefore to be most alien to the demands of the midcentury marketplace, Aphra Behn's tales prove surprisingly pervasive: we can trace the afterlives of her writing, in all three of these manifestations, throughout the eighteenth century. To give a brief example, before moving on to a more sustained one, I located a plagiarism similar to the one that Kulik identifies of Aubin's work, but of Behn's *The Unfortunate Happy Lady* (1700). The original tells the story of the orphaned Philadelphia, who is placed in a brothel by her brother, and then rescued by Gracelove. Upon eventually marrying her rescuer, she restores her brother's lost fortune, despite his treatment of her. The tale was easily co-opted at the end of the century as a tale of virtue and innocence rewarded in two

²⁸ King, 'The Afterlife and Strange Surprising Adventures of Haywood's Amatories', p. 216.

²⁹ Maggie Kulik, 'What The Bookseller Did: A Case of Eighteenth-Century Plagiarism,' *Female Spectator*, 4.4 (2000), 9-10 (p. 10). The same bookseller produced a number of other derivative, if not directly plagiarised, publications including *The Nun; or, The Adventures of the Marchioness of Beauville* (London: J. Roson, 1771), which, in its narrator's statement that taking orders was 'not so much my own choice, as the effect of a too easily compliance with the repeated solicitations of all the community, to embrace a religious state' (p. 5), is immediately reminiscent of Behn's *The History of the Nun*.

reprints, which the *English Short Title Catalogue* dates around 1800. One, written in pamphlet form, adds as a subtitle to Behn's original title, *Virtue and Innocence Rewarded; Being the History of Harriot Wilding, The Daughter of a Baronet in the County of York*. This text retains all of Behn's other names, only substituting Harriot for Philadelphia, perhaps to capitalise on the contemporary popularity of the name.³⁰ The publisher attempted to prevent other plagiarisms with a notice in the front of the pamphlet, notifying readers and potential pirates that each authentic pamphlet would bear the publisher's signature on the back of the title page. It is uncertain whether the other version was printed before or after this one, but both sold cheaply for six-pence. The second plagiarism calls its heroine Clarissa Moore, once again capitalising on a popular predecessor: the eponymous heroine of Richardson's 1748 tale *Clarissa*. Both of these instances of plagiarism directly demonstrate the lasting popular appeal of the original tale, *The Unfortunate Happy Lady*, left, for the most part, unaltered for a century.

The remainder of this chapter aims to contribute to the emerging maps of influence and intertextuality that are being unearthed by scholars such as Batchelor, King, Welham, Carlile and Victoria Joule, using the revised definition of amatory fiction that the previous chapters have constructed. I am interested in shifting the terrain of the debate, which currently often focuses on amatory fiction's political or feminist alignments, to focus instead on three connected characteristics which I see as integral to the genre, but also as potentially queer: (1) self-conscious (inter)textuality and layering of narrative voice as a demonstration of aesthetic artistry, (2) the strategic dissimulation of characters, and the discursive and material limitations of this dissimulation, and (3) repetitions of plot and structure and repetitions with difference, in terms of intertextuality, but also as a way in which amatory writers are charting the construction of hegemonic ideas, and attempting to make space within these constructions for change. With

³⁰ In addition to Lennox's *Harriot Stuart* (1751), the name Harriot/Harriet was frequently used for heroines in novels from the 1750s on, including titles such as *Memoirs of a Coquet; or, the History of Miss Harriot Airy* (1765) and *Harriet: or, the Innocent Adulteress* (1779). Attached to the *Harriot Wilding* pamphlet is another tale, taken from a 1764 text which professes to be a translation from French by one Harry Lovemore, entitled *Cupid's golden Age: or, The Happy Adventures of Love*. This brief text tells the improbable tale of the victim of a robbery being taken in and seduced by a young widow. The same narrative forms part of a 1790 publication entitled *The True and Entertaining Story of Miss Charlotte Lorrain*, demonstrating an unashamed recycling of material already used several times over. The origin of this tale is probably William Painter's 1566 collection of tales, *The Palace of Pleasure*, which provided most of the content for Manley's 1720 collection, *The Power of Love*.

this reformulated definition of amatory fiction in mind, I will examine the afterlife of one particular plot, probably written by Behn: *The Wandering Beauty* (1698). I will trace its progress through three later renderings: Arthur Blackamore's *Luck at Last, or, The Happy Unfortunate* (1723); Jane Barker's 'The History of the Lady Gypsie' in *The Lining of the Patch-Work Screen* (1726); and Sarah Scott's 'The History of Leonora and Louisa' in *A Journey Through Every Stage of Life* (1754). I will argue that the evasive manoeuvres and the refusal of fixity initiated within amatory fiction have considerable reach within the early eighteenth century and continue to have significant impact on midcentury writers. Later treatments of the original plot tap into the potential queerness of amatory fiction's persistent fracturing, deferrals, masking, and repetitions with difference, in order to make their own culturally, politically, and historically specific points, clearly demonstrating the immense generative potential of the original text. In Blackamore's hands, the text is updated to suit a new commercial audience in a way that capitalises on and draws out all of its saleable attributes: the moral, but also the titillating. Barker's conservatism dictates a more didactic approach to the text, whereby it functions, like Behn herself, as a warning against certain types of behaviour. Scott makes use of the conceit of the original text, (the disguised heroine), using the structure of repetition that we find in amatory fiction to effect a similar, although less sexualised, meditation on the limitations of prescriptive femininity. And so in fifty-six years, the text is adapted commercially, didactically, and philosophically into these distinct sibling examples.

Wandering into the Midcentury: The Origins of Disguise

The original plot of *The Wandering Beauty* – in its treatment of filial obedience; the unprotected woman; disguise; and self-sufficiency – proved a useful vehicle for later writers to articulate a number of differing ideological standpoints. It was malleable enough to be shaped to fit the aims of traditional Tory authors like Barker, and more progressive ones like Scott. It is at once a tale of rebellion, of rebellion curbed, and of virtue rewarded. But whilst the plot was adapted to suit different politics, and different readerships, I argue that the amatory techniques initiated by the original continued to be deployed from the early century to the midcentury. King argues that

‘the novel as we know it did not achieve its present generic identity until the second half of the eighteenth century’.³¹ For her, amatory fiction, as part of the body of early prose fiction, represents ‘a distinct literary form that flourished in the opening decades of the century [and] carried a widely recognized set of generic expectations’.³² These expectations, she rightly claims, ‘demanded of [the early novel’s] readers far more attention to irony, complication, and generic affiliation than has been acknowledged’.³³ But whilst the novel perhaps, as King argues, lacked ‘definitional stability’ in these years, I would argue that reading Scott’s *A Journey Through Every Stage of Life* alongside these early treatments of a very similar plot demonstrates firstly the extent to which early novels are crucial to what came after, and secondly, the extent to which the novel in the 1750s was still very much an experimental genre.

Amatory fiction is often contextualised in terms of its reliance on seventeenth-century romance.³⁴ But because of the persistence of the clean break thesis, readings of texts such as *A Journey* frequently refuse to look backwards, preferring instead to situate 1750s novels in relation to the emerging realist novel, or to late eighteenth-century fiction. Such readings fail to note the innovative form and generic play at work in 1750s novels, and the ways in which amatory techniques of strategic dissimulation, self-conscious textuality, and repetition with difference continue to prove integral to fiction long after the apparent demise of amatory fiction itself.

As I noted in Chapter 2, the attribution of posthumous works such as *The Wandring Beauty* to Behn remains uncertain. G. A. Starr notes that, along with *The Unfortunate Happy Lady* (1698), *The Wandring Beauty* differs significantly from Behn’s other works, in that it is pure fantasy, set in a fairy-tale world where help is forthcoming from strangers. This setting, Starr argues, is a far cry from the brutal Hobbesian environments of *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* (1684-87) and *The Fair Jilt* (1688), although he does not question the

³¹ King, ‘The Novel before Novels’, p. 36.

³² Ibid., p. 36.

³³ Ibid., p. 37.

³⁴ See Ballaster, pp. 31-68.

attribution of either of the former texts.³⁵ I would argue that Starr is right to some extent: the fortunate heroine of *The Wandering Beauty* certainly doesn't occupy the same dangerous world as some of Haywood or Manley's heroines. And indeed, these posthumous tales are ostensibly different from some of Behn's earlier texts, perhaps because, if she did write them, they were not fully developed for publication when she died.³⁶ But the diversity of Behn's work, the multiple genres (from poetry to translation), and multiple generic and ideological influences (from folk to romance to Restoration libertinism) that she drew upon, still allow for her to work through similar issues in different styles.³⁷ *Love-Letters* examines the results of male inconstancy, unfettered greed, and self-interest, and creates a central heroine who attempts to live as a female libertine. *The Wandering Beauty* is working through solutions to parental tyranny and examining the nature of the marriage market; it is concerned with events before and after marriage: what might constitute good marriage, and how to get it, whilst *Love-Letters* is not really concerned with marriage except as a means to an end. Despite these differences, as amatory texts, strategic dissimulation is essential for both heroines, and situations (seductions for Sylvia and marriage proposals for Arabella) are repeated with variations within the stories, working and re-working narrative conventions in an attempt to trace the operation of power. Both texts depict women in non- or pre-marital situations, unfettered, if only temporarily, from some of the hierarchical and patriarchal systems they can then attempt to manipulate, and both texts assess the possibilities for resistance and manoeuvre. As such, either could be construed as 'pure fantasy', but both share the amatory techniques which I have outlined above.

³⁵ G. A. Starr, 'Aphra Behn and the Genealogy of the Man of Feeling', *Modern Philology*, 87 (1990), 362-72 (pp. 370-72). Whilst I refer to the text as Behn's, I do so in recognition of the fact that the jury is still out, although I would argue that both Barker and Blackmore recognised *The Wandering Beauty* as authored by Behn.

³⁶ Germaine Greer suggests that the posthumous works are not Behn's, arguing that Behn's financial situation at the end of her life would have forced her into publishing everything she had. Notes transcribed from the roundtable discussion of the 1999 Aphra Behn conference at the Sorbonne, in *Aphra Behn (1640-1689): Identity, Alterity, Ambiguity*, ed. by Mary Ann O'Donnell, Bernard Dhuicq and Guyonne Leduc (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000), p. 281.

³⁷ Mary Ann O'Donnell notes the folk motifs employed in *The Wandering Beauty*, linking it to Chaucer's 'The Man of Law's Tale'. Carol Lindquist also draws parallels between Behn's tale and Cinderella. Both demonstrate that, as with the revenge stories that Manley incorporated in her *Power of Love*, the plot Behn adapts is not necessarily a new one. See Mary Ann O'Donnell, 'Myth and Mythmaking in the Works of Aphra Behn', in *Aphra Behn (1640-1689): Identity, Alterity, Ambiguity*, ed. by O'Donnell, Dhuicq and Leduc, pp. 101-10 (pp. 102-03); and Carol Lindquist, 'The Prose Fiction of Aphra Behn' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, 1970).

The original tale sees the heroine, Arabella Fairname, run away from home to avoid a financially advantageous, but ‘almost unnatural’ marriage to an elderly friend of her father’s.³⁸ The stress on the inequality of the match demonstrates the story’s participation in an exploration of the limits of filial obedience and obligation, which runs through much of Behn’s work. Arabella escapes in broad daylight on the pretence of visiting her cousin, and takes lodging for the night in a husbandman’s cottage, swapping clothes with his daughter so as to disguise her noble origins. From there, she heads north, staining her skin with walnut leaves on the way to further her disguise. When she reaches Lancashire, she seeks a job in service in the Kindly’s household. Having cured Lady Kindly’s child of an eye infection, Arabella is taken on as attendant to their eldest daughter, Eleanora. She stays there for three years, under the name Peregrina Goodhouse. Her change of names, from Fairname, drawing attention to her birth, to Peregrina Goodhouse, drawing attention both to her status as a traveller, and to her domestic abilities, reflects her changed social position, and her deliberate crafting of a persona suited to her situation.³⁹ Arabella’s ability to move between social classes with ease foreshadows Fantomina’s, but whilst her transgression temporarily destabilises class boundaries, her nobility, like Oroonoko’s, ultimately shines through her disguise, suggesting that transgression is perhaps only possible from the top downwards. As such, class hierarchies are not undermined by the text, but rather the heroine’s capacity for masking, using both words and dress, is highlighted. Arabella’s dissimulation is strategic, in that it is effective when necessary to facilitate her escape and gain her employment, but also purposefully not lasting. During her time with the Kindlys, we hear that ‘her Skin had long since recover’d its Native Whiteness; nor did she need Ornaments of Cloaths to set her Beauty off’ (p. 399). In allowing her birth to signify, albeit obliquely to the other characters, by means of her skin, Arabella exploits ideas about female transparency, assuming the position of servant without being reduced to it. Once again, the body

³⁸ Aphra Behn, *The Wandering Beauty: A Novel*, repr. in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, ed. by Janet Todd, 7 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1992-96), III: *The Fair Jilt and Other Short Stories* (1995), 389-409 (p. 394). All subsequent references are to this edition and page numbers are given parenthetically within the text.

³⁹ Peregrina is a derivative of the Latin term ‘peregrinus,’ meaning foreigner, or stranger from abroad.

is able to signify in excess of and in contradistinction to the discursive paradigms that produce it as socially legible.

During her time in service, she attracts the attention of the chaplain, Mr. Prayfast, but despite Mr Kindly's offer of a large dowry, Prayfast rejects her upon discovering her origins are uncertain. Meanwhile, eligible bachelor Sir Lucius Lovewell comes to visit the Kindlys and falls in love with Arabella. He asks Sir Kindly for Arabella's hand in full knowledge her supposed low origins, in a scene that replicates, with difference, the earlier scene between Prayfast and Sir Christian. Paradoxically, the disregard that Lovewell has for Arabella's apparent lack of nobility ensures that the class hierarchy is maintained: Arabella is reintegrated into the marriage system that she has temporarily escaped from, and her class position is re-established by her eventual union with a man of equal standing to her. Prayfast is required to officiate at the wedding, at which we hear that '[t]he Slave bow'd, and look'd very pale' (p. 404). One could read the mockery of Prayfast as a warning against privileging birth over worth, and therefore as a precursor to the Richardsonian 'virtue rewarded' narrative. Or, it could be seen as an elevation of the more observant Lovewell, engaged in an unconscious recognition of one of his own class, over Prayfast, who is too lowly himself to notice Arabella's nobility. The latter seems more likely, although such productive and manipulable ambiguities go some way to accounting for the original text's durability in the hands of different authors. In creating an opposition between financially motivated marriages of convenience, and marriages based on affection, this text initiates a progressive concern which was to dominate fiction during and after the 1750s from writers as diverse as Haywood, Charlotte Lennox, Frances Burney, Jane Austen, Maria Edgeworth and Mary Wollstonecraft.⁴⁰ Even seen in a reactionary light, *The Wandring Beauty* explores the limits of female agency within patriarchal/hierarchical codes, positing identity as a process that is, at least some of the time, uncertain to outsiders and performed.

Once married, Arabella asks to visit her parents, although maintains that they are '*poor and mean*' and '*not worth [Lovewell's] Regard*' (p. 405). The continuation of her disguise after

⁴⁰ See Ruth Perry, *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture, 1748-1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

marriage enables her to orchestrate a reunion with her parents, but to make Lovewell appear the active agent. She removes herself from subject to object, thus signifying the end to her necessary disobedience. Whilst travelling near her original home, she sends her husband to visit a local wealthy family. That she has planned the scene is apparent when she says to him: '*I must not have no Denial [...] for if you refuse this Favour, all my Designs are lost*' (p. 406). Lovewell goes ahead, ignorant of the fact that he is visiting his wife's parents. Whilst there, he sees a portrait of Arabella, but fails, like so many amatory men, to recognise Arabella and Peregrina as the same woman. He nonetheless tells the Fairnames of his wife's similarity to their missing daughter and they beg him to fetch her, which leads to the long awaited reunion. Lovewell's failure to recognise his wife's portrait is testament to her skill at disguise as much as to the myopia of the amatory hero. But equally, the assertion that he has married her for her virtue alone is undermined by the visibility of her nobility, by the ways in which she makes it readable even in service, and by her final reunion with her family, in which class hierarchies are restored to equilibrium. Whilst the wedding is a device used to privilege virtue, then, the reunion privileges birth. Both the wedding and the reunion, however, privilege acting as integral, both to female survival, and to female choice.

Jacqueline Pearson claims that Arabella's manipulation of those around her is an indirect mirror to the narrator's task, in that Arabella is 'exercising [her] authorship not over texts but over the real world [...] author[ing] elaborate fictions in [her] own li[fe]'.⁴¹ As such, the reunion draws attention to the constructedness of the tale: just as the narrator crafts the events of the tale from a position outside the text, Arabella does so by manipulating those around her into the position necessary to fulfil the generic expectations for a satisfying ending. The narrator, as Pearson notes, is explicitly present at the beginning of the tale, when she claims to have received the story from a female acquaintance who knew the heroine.⁴² The displacement of authorial agency is then mirrored by Arabella's passive guise as she draws together the elements necessary for her reintegration back into her family, providing a moment of circularity between

⁴¹ Jacqueline Pearson, 'Gender and Narrative in the Fiction of Aphra Behn', *The Review of English Studies*, n.s., 42 (1991), 40-56 (p. 47).

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 55.

the end and the beginning of the narrative by aligning Arabella's strategic artistry and dissimulation with the narrator's. Pearson reads this mirroring act as rebellious: 'One young woman's quest for unconventional independence and creative power [...] gives a blueprint and validation to another young woman who will seek an unconventional independence and creative power as a writer.'⁴³ Her optimism is problematised, however, by the investment of the tale in hierarchical class and gender systems which limit Arabella's capacity for independence. It is clearly too much to claim this is simply a tale about rebellion, as Arabella's rebellion, insofar as it can be framed as such, is tempered, firstly by its necessity, and secondly by her reintegration into the systems from which she has escaped. Rather more cautiously, I would argue that *The Wandering Beauty* is recognising these systems and hierarchies, and testing out the ways in which artistry and strategic dissimulation might be used to reorganise existing power structures. As such, the text opens up diverse possibilities for future heroines who are able to manipulate codes of behaviour, and future writers who are able to manipulate the ways in which their heroines signify. In 1752, another Arabella went about, to use Pearson's phrase, 'author[ing] elaborate fictions in [her] own li[fe]', with similar effect to the heroine in *The Wandering Beauty*. Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752) calls attention to the ways in which gender and genre hierarchies operate, allowing the heroine, through the medium of romance, a modicum of control within a claustrophobic, male-dominated world.

Dissimulation Rewarded: *Luck at Last*

The Wandering Beauty was last printed during the eighteenth century in 1718.⁴⁴ Five years later, in 1723, a novella was published entitled *Luck at Last, or The Happy Unfortunate*, signed only – and rather suggestively from a marketing perspective – A. B.⁴⁵ The text is now attributed to Arthur Blackamore, an alcoholic schoolmaster who spent several years living in colonial

⁴³ Ibid., p. 56.

⁴⁴ In *Select Novels and Histories written by the late ingenious Mrs. Behn* (London: W. Mears, F. Clay and D. Browne, 1718).

⁴⁵ A. B., *Luck at Last, or, the Happy Unfortunate* (London: H. Parker, 1723). This text was reprinted as *The Distress'd Fair, or Happy Unfortunate* in 1737 (London: T. Cooper), without the dedication and with a shortened address to the reader. The latter text is the version I cite from in this chapter as the only two copies of the original 1723 version are in America. Because the original title was still included in the reprint, I have continued to refer to the text as *Luck at Last*.

Virginia, and published one other satirical novel, *The Religious Triumvirate, Display'd in Three Ecclesiastical Novels* (1720).⁴⁶ Blackamore considerably expands upon the content for his 1720s readership, making his own mark upon the original. In his address to the reader, he asserts that the tale is a true history, which he heard from a male confidante of the heroine. In doing so, he displaces the sharing of histories between women that opens *The Wandring Beauty*, firstly from women onto men, and secondly from the text itself into the prefatory material, establishing firmer boundaries between inside and outside the text. In a bid to emulate other contemporary amatory texts, Blackamore alters the names of the characters and increases the heroine's capacity for dissimulation, introducing a new episode into the original that suggests a canny awareness of what sold. But he also attempts to curtail his adaptation, by imposing a moral framework upon the text. In doing so, he renders clear the flexibility and inclusive potential of the original text.

The new set of names that he affords his characters signals his version's affiliation with the amatory novellas that were very much in vogue in the 1720s. For the most part, the name changes still point towards the same character types, suggesting that the structures remained intact, but the signifying codes had shifted: Prayfast becomes Theophilis (Greek for 'friend of God') and Lovewell becomes Philaretus (meaning 'lover of excellence').⁴⁷ Arabella becomes Sylvia though, which merits consideration. William McBurney aligns *Luck at Last* with *Pamela*, claiming that both novels 'bear [...] everywhere the mark of [their] romance origin' and suggesting that both authors sourced their heroines' names from the pastoral.⁴⁸ He also conjectures that the name Sylvia 'may [...] derive from Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona* in which Sylvia runs away to escape a rich and foolish suitor'.⁴⁹ But he entirely overlooks the possibility that the name Sylvia may have also alluded to a source closer to home:

⁴⁶ For attribution, see William H. McBurney, *Four Before Richardson: Selected English Novels, 1720-27* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963). Information on Blackamore has been taken from Robert Bain, 'Arthur Blackamore', in *Southern Writers: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. by Robert Bain, Joseph M. Flora, and Louis D. Rubin, Jr. (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), pp. 29-30.

⁴⁷ By the time Haywood published *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, direct aptronymic character names had once again taken over from the romance-coded ones used by Blackamore and other 1720s writers of amatory fiction, and such names continued to hold currency well into the nineteenth century, with characters from Edgeworth's Harriet Freke (*Belinda*, 1801) to Dickens's Scrooge, or Mr. Bumble.

⁴⁸ McBurney, p. xviii.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

Behn's *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister*. King notes one particular midcentury borrowing from Haywood, which devised 'jokey little novel-world renamings [in which] a woman named Clarissa with an unconquerable lust for unsuitable men shares a storyline with a paragon of virtue named Pamela [...] while a good girl turned whore is named Eliza'.⁵⁰ I would argue that the renaming of Arabella as Sylvia by Blackamore is just as likely to be a nod towards Behn, as towards Shakespeare, or the pastoral. Might we not read Arabella becoming Silvia as the author's suggestion that in their recourse to dissimulation, Behn's original characters might not be that different? Such a move enables Blackamore to hint at the transgressive potential of his heroine, whilst simultaneously attempting to tame Behn's unruly possibilities into more manageable ideals.

Just as *The Wandring Beauty* took influences from folk and fairytales, Blackamore's version also builds on the popular appeal of ballads and chapbooks, as well as contemporary amatory narratives such as Haywood's and both crime and travel narratives. He deviates from the original plot in his description of Sylvia's flight, having her join a company of gypsies. This development builds on the picaresque elements of the original, but also draws on contemporary sources such as 'rogue' narratives.⁵¹ Blackamore adds in the entertaining and often comedic exploits of the travellers, and the frisson of the potentially scandalous encounter between high-born Sylvia and her new low-born companions. Sylvia is, for example, dismayed to find that 'Men and Women [were] to sleep together *promiscuously*' when she beds down with her new companions in a barn.⁵² Whilst she escapes sharing a bed that night, the following day Sylvia gets drunk with the company, and has to be put to bed early. As a result, she escapes involvement in a disturbance her fellow travellers cause that night, and is abandoned when they flee from arrest, to her relief. These episodes combine the unprotected woman of amatory

⁵⁰ King, 'The Afterlife and Strange Surprising Adventures of Haywood's Amatories', p. 203. King is referring to the borrowing from Haywood's *Memoirs of Certain Island* (1724-25) in *The Modern Lovers: or, the Adventures of Cupid* (1756).

⁵¹ See, for example, *The English Rogue, or Witty Extravagant; Described in the Life of Meriton Latroon* (London: J. Phillpott, 1710) and *The Scotch Rogue: or, the Life and Actions of Donald Macdonald, a high-land Scot*, (London: Anne Gifford, 1722). 'Rogue' narratives proliferated in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, and there were German, Spanish, Dutch and French rogues, and even one 'matchless rogue' on offer for readers.

⁵² Blackamore, *The Distress'd Fair, or Happy Unfortunate* (London: T. Cooper, 1737), p. 20. All subsequent references are to this edition and page numbers are given parenthetically within the text.

fiction with the voyeuristic insight provided by criminal biography and promise some form of ruin or disgrace that the text never actually delivers.

Whilst Blackmore combines several popular generic conventions which complement one another, McBurney also notes the simultaneous appeal to moral codes taken from contemporary religious tracts, which, he argues, cast the novel as ‘a sermon exemplum on the subject of virtue and patience rewarded’.⁵³ He argues that ‘to dismiss *Luck at Last* as a poorly written mixture of popular religious and romantic strains is to underestimate it and to overlook the continued vitality of its themes in the eighteenth century’, which is, as we shall see, true, but the importance McBurney places on the novel results from his arguments that Sylvia is ‘crudely anticipatory of Pamela’s actions and attitudes’ and his stress on the novel’s realism.⁵⁴ Moreover, McBurney can only envisage the generic multiplicity of Blackmore’s text as an aesthetic failing and, like Richetti, is quick to stress that it is the thematic content, rather than any literary technique, which accounts for the novel’s lasting importance.

The separation McBurney creates in his reading of Blackmore between the old romance influences and the forward-thinking anticipation of midcentury Richardsonian themes manifests itself in his frustration with Sylvia’s characterisation:

The real weakness of the novel is the character of the heroine. Sylvia is first seen as a pert and resourceful heiress, importuned by Stertorius, the superannuated beau of the comedy of manners. After her escape and the gypsy interlude, she suddenly becomes an exemplar of modesty and humility, and apparently comes to believe that she is the beggar-maid she has pretended to be.⁵⁵

I would argue that this characterisation is not a result so much of generic inconsistency as it is symptomatic of the way the original Arabella’s ability to transform herself has been realised and exploited in Blackmore’s characterisation of Sylvia. What McBurney frames as a weakness on the part of the writer is actually an unsettling possibility inherent in the original character.

Blackmore’s development of a chameleon heroine is most apparent when we examine the ways

⁵³ McBurney, p. xvii.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xvii, p. xviii. McBurney claims that details of money in the text (the amounts of alms received by the beggars; the value of the chaplain’s living; and the dowry proposed for Sylvia) provide a realist aspect to Blackmore’s adaptation, but in fact, whilst the latter text certainly adds more psychological justification for characters’ actions, the financial details are present in *The Wandering Beauty* already, with the amount given by Arabella’s father to her husband after their reconciliation being the same in both texts (£10,000).

⁵⁵ McBurney, p. xviii.

in which he stresses and capitalises on her capacity for dissimulation. Whilst in *The Wandering Beauty*, Arabella escapes from her parents' house in broad daylight and, ever the pragmatist, picks up a disguise along the way, Sylvia plots her disguise for several days beforehand, and escapes at the last possible moment, in darkness. Blackamore introduces the suggestive thrill of the woman sneaking out in the night that we find so often in other amatory texts. But he also creates an explicitly decisive heroine who is more implicated in her own decisions than Arabella is.

Like Arabella's disguise, however, Sylvia's is not always convincing. For example, despite staining her skin with walnut leaves, Sylvia exposes herself to her fellow travellers whilst sleeping: 'turning often, she threw off her *Cloak*; which unveiled her *Under-Habit*, and disclosed a *Neck* and *Breast* like *Alabaster*, tho' her *Hands* and *Face* were of such a dingy *Colour*' (p. 22). In characteristic duplicity, this moment functions to uphold the notion that class shows on the body, but is also, one suspects, included for its suggestiveness. This moment leads Sylvia to fracture her identity, as Fantomina does, crafting a new persona out of the failure of the previous disguise. She claims her name is Cloe [*sic*], and learns from the gypsies how to pass for one of them. At this point then, there are two simultaneous disguises occurring: Sylvia as Cloe, and Cloe as gypsy. In Blackamore's version, Sylvia is employed by a wealthy family, again after curing their child's eye infection, but rather than starting as lady's maid, Sylvia starts as a 'scullion' and works her way up through cook to lady's maid over three years. As we saw above, McBurney argues that she comes to believe she is the beggar-maid, and that her disguise is, in this sense, performative. Indeed, when she is initially employed, she abandons the Cloe persona and enters service under her real name. However, I would argue that this point does not represent a generic shift in the novel, as McBurney claims, but rather a sustained deployment of amatory techniques in terms of the heroine's dissimulation. Sylvia is never reduced to the roles that she plays; her disguise is constant, necessary, and effective once in service, despite one near-discovery. In arguing that Blackamore represents a middle-class morality which anticipates Richardson's, McBurney traces forward to Richardson, rather than back to Behn, and thus overlooks the ideological accord between *Luck at Last* and *The Wandering Beauty*. As she

orchestrates the reunion with her parents, Arabella exclaims: ‘*Was ever Disobedience so rewarded with such a Husband!*’ (p. 27); these are not so much stories of ‘virtue rewarded,’ as of ‘necessary, but effective acting rewarded’.

This accord between the two tales is evidenced firstly by the stress on the unequal match between Arabella/Sylvia and the elderly suitor at the start of the tale. Sylvia justifies her actions as a necessary result of parental tyranny:

Is this [her forced marriage] an Action of Humanity? Is this the Duty of a Father? He has brought me up ‘tis true, and for that I owe him Duty. But Duty does not oblige to Impossibility. I cannot love Stertorius, and ought my Parent to constrain me to it? I have an Aversion to him; and there’s no uniting of Antipathies. [...] Are we not all not born Free? Have we not the Liberty of bestowing our Affections where we please? [...] Will it be Disobedience if I fly for’t? It can’t. No Parent ought to be so cruel.

(pp. 8-9).

In drawing out the obligations of a daughter when faced with parental tyranny, Sylvia is absolved of blame and disguise is vindicated as a method. Behn’s warning against the dangers of forced vows in the opening of *The History of the Nun* is called to mind. Both writers privilege affection as the basis for marriage, over financial gain, and suggest that disobedience is sometimes necessary to achieve this goal. Sylvia is posited as a sensible and successful amatory heroine, who, like her namesake in *Love-Letters* has made her way in the world by her wits, although in this case, has also managed to maintain her virtue. Whilst the warning against parental cruelty might seem fairly integral to the plot as it stands, both authors also promote a similar view of class structures. McBurney, in his continued effort to liken Blackamore to Richardson rather than Behn, argues that ‘the attention given to the Theophilus episode [...] brings out Blackamore’s ideas on the fallacy of rigid class distinctions’ by mocking Theophilus’s class snobbery.⁵⁶ Theophilus is indeed ridiculed more thoroughly in Blackamore’s version than in *The Wandring Beauty*, but this is a critique of his self-interest and economic greed. That a chaplain could marry a noble woman is clearly laughable for Blackamore, so his satire of Theophilus ought to be seen as upholding hierarchical class structures rather than

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. xix.

critiquing them. Both Arabella and Sylvia demonstrate the personal virtue that Richardson wanted Pamela to epitomise, but this is irrevocably tied up with their nobility.

The one area in which Blackamore diverges significantly from the original is in his opening address to the reader. Here, as well as masculinising the sharing of stories, he lays out an alternative interpretive framework for his readers, anticipating the moral that he hopes they will draw from it:

however unfortunate some Persons may be in the Affairs of Life, the utmost Exigencies can be no sufficient Argument for Despondency: For that a sudden Turn may be, and an unforeseen Providence may so direct all Things, that the worst of Evils may become our greatest Good.

(p. ii)

The explicit focus on providence, which was, at best, implicitly present in the original, sits at odds with the ways in which Sylvia, like Arabella before her, is very much active in authoring her own luck; she is both more vehement and assertive regarding her forced marriage than her predecessor and more aware of how to disguise herself effectively. Her final reunion with her parents is also effected much more subtly, and with more control, than Arabella's: rather than going to them, as Arabella does, Sylvia's reunion happens at the inn where she is staying: on her terms, and on her turf. The changes that Blackamore makes to Behn's original emphasize Sylvia's dissimulation skills in accordance with contemporary amatory conventions, but whilst he enjoys the added sensationalism of a heroine who acts, he tries to curtail the power of his heroine, firstly by emphasising, within the text, the absolute necessity she was under to run away, and secondly by a focus on the role of providence in the letter to readers.

In a repetition with difference of *The Wandering Beauty*, Blackamore exploits the possibilities opened up by Arabella's potential for dissimulation, but in trying to make the initial plot fit his providential moral, he finds he has created a heroine in Sylvia whom he cannot control. McBurney writes that, 'The fact that *Luck at Last* was reissued in 1737, on the eve of *Pamela*, shows the continued currency of Behn's and Blackamore's work.'⁵⁷ The renaming of the 1737 publication as *The Distress'd Fair* speaks to Blackamore's attempt further to remove agency from a lucky heroine by casting her as a distressed victim. Blackamore's re-rendering

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. xix.

explores some of the potential possibilities arising from the original text, and capitalises on and develops a plot that is indeed open to co-option in favour of a Richardsonian ‘virtue rewarded’ narrative. But whilst Barker develops the plot in this direction, Scott continues to explore the more radical possibilities opened up by Arabella and Sylvia’s acting. The original text, therefore, holds both pious and scandalous possibilities for development, showing any strict division between the two to be unsustainable.

Vile Undertakings: ‘The History of the Lady Gypsie’

Before exploring Scott’s midcentury take on the wandering heroine, I want to examine one more 1720s rendering of the plot in Jane Barker’s *The Lining of the Patch Work Screen*. ‘The History of the Lady Gypsie’ is an inset story in Barker’s text. It provides a comedic balance to the preceding tragic tale, ‘The *Story of the Portugueze Nun*’, in which a nun escapes from a convent to marry her lover but is left alone when he is killed at war, and subsequently dies.⁵⁸ Both stories are related to Galesia and friends by a female visitor who claims to have heard them both from different people on her journey from France to England, surely a nod towards the influence of French romance. Although Behn’s influence on Barker has been elucidated, the same links have not been made between Barker and Blackamore, although it seems likely that she read Blackamore’s adaptation.⁵⁹ From the original, Barker takes the initial location in the West (Blackamore’s Sylvia heralds from Worcestershire); the fact that the heroine is disguised en route, rather than planning carefully beforehand; and the fact that her complexion recovers its whiteness whilst in service. But from Blackamore, Barker takes the fact that the heroine is an only child (in *The Wandring Beauty* she has two sisters); the interlude with the gypsies and the

⁵⁸ ‘The *Story of the Portugueze Nun*’ draws on the popularity of similar continental fictions translated into English by Roger L’Estrange (*Five Love-Letter from a Nun to a Cavalier* [1678]), and Delarivier Manley (*Letters, to which is added a letter from a supposed nun in Portugal to a gentleman in France* [1696]). See Linda S. Kaufmann, *Discourses of Desire: Gender, Genre, and Epistolary Fictions* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), especially pp. 95-96. Barker also borrows from Behn’s *History of the Nun* (1698) for an earlier inset narrative entitled ‘*Philinda’s Story out of the Book*’. See Pearson, ‘The History of *The History of the Nun*’, pp. 234-52.

⁵⁹ Carol Shiner Wilson points out the similarity of Barker’s tale to Behn’s in her edition of Barker’s work. See *The Galesia Trilogy and Selected Manuscript Poems of Jane Barker*, ed. by Carol Shiner Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 227, n. 1.

blend of romance and criminal biography that Blackamore adds to the original; the fact that the heroine escapes at night; and her swift rise through the ranks once in service.

Barker also adds in her own deviations from both the previous versions. Firstly, Barker's heroine (who remains unnamed until the end) is betrothed to 'a Widower, though not old', which, given the stress on the inequality of the match in both of the previous versions, represents a considerable departure.⁶⁰ We hear that he is 'perfectly Country bred like her self' and it is the heroine's desire for the fashionable pursuits of town, coupled with her vanity in feeling that she deserves 'an Husband wholly new, and not a Man at second hand', which leads to her flight from home (p. 227; p. 228). Rather than depicting a heroine who escapes a truly unpleasant fate, Barker reframes the story as one driven by the heroine's vanity, and her romantic ideas of London life, and she is condemned by the narrator as 'an unthinking Wretch' (p. 228). Barker's heroine does not take to the road alone. Rather, she demonstrates opportunism when a group of gypsies appear in her town and she asks to join them. Barker is much more explicit than Blackamore about the gypsies' criminality, and has her heroine regret her choice soon after joining them, writing that, '[t]he wicked way in which these vile Wretches liv'd, cheating, stealing, lying, and all sorts of Roguery, was abominable to her vertuous Mind' (p. 229). Barker then adds an entirely new inset narrative: 'The *Story of Tangerine, The Gentleman Gypsie*'. Born a gentleman and serving as a soldier at the Garrison of Tangier, Tangerine arrives home to find that his wife, whom he married privately, has married his older brother in his absence. He flees and becomes a highwayman, eventually falling in with the gypsies. In a rather remarkable turn of events, just after his relation, a coach passes containing his wife in mourning, and he resolves to make himself known. He is eventually reunited with her and his son.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Jane Barker, *The Lining of the Patch-Work Screen*, repr. in *The Galesia Trilogy*, ed. by Shiner-Wilson, pp. 175-290 (p. 228). All subsequent references are to this edition and page numbers are given parenthetically within the text.

⁶¹ If Barker had been reading Behn, then we could see this narrative as loosely based on the story of Prince Henrick in Behn's *The Fair Jilt* (1688), in which Henrick and a young woman fall in love, but are tricked apart by Henrick's brother, who then forcibly marries her. There is no reconciliation in Behn's tale though, as after Henrick's brother tries to kill him, he flees to a monastery. It seems that Barker was even keener to see class order, paternity, and inheritance re-established than Behn. Alternatively, we could read the reconciliation as a reward for Tangerine's own forbearance and submission to fate. Despite

The final significant diversion from the other versions begins during the heroine's time in service. Promoted to housekeeper, and accordingly looking more genteel, the heroine starts attracting male attention, but in Barker's version, there is no Prayfast to reject her. Instead, her employer's son returns home from travelling, and takes a liking to the heroine, although initially, he 'thought of no other Favours, but what might be, purchased at the price of a Guinea, or so' (p. 234). In scenes which are certainly more anticipatory of *Pamela* than either of the previous versions, he attempts to rape her, and when she resists and threatens to resign, he then changes his approach and tries to woo her instead. His altered strategy meets with success. Maintaining her disguise, she goes to her lady, and asks to leave on the grounds that she has fallen in love with the son. The son then proposes marriage, to his mother's horror, and despite his engagement to one Miss Truman. Barker is not writing a simple virtue rewarded narrative; while she remains in disguise, the heroine's apparent low birth means that 'in fine, she was unfit for his Quality or Fortune', so Barker demonstrates the same investment in class hierarchies as her predecessors (p. 235). The denouement comes when a timely letter is brought to the family from Mr. Truman, detailing the escape of his daughter after he was tempted by riches to disregard her former engagement and marry her to a rich neighbour. His servant recognises the heroine as Miss Truman, and her identity is discovered, to her simultaneous 'Shame and Satisfaction' (p. 237). The heroine marries the man she wants, but it is her previous actions that the narrator dwells on, concluding: 'thus was this young Lady deliver'd out of that Ocean of Disgrace, into which her Folly and Rashness had cast her' (p. 237). In *The Wandering Beauty*, the heroine is dependent on her own disguise and manipulations. Blackamore attempts, in his opening address to readers, to credit providence for the happy ending, but the heroine's management of disguise is accentuated and privileged in the text itself, creating tension between content and prefatory material. In Barker's tale, the fate of the heroine is more explicitly dependent on luck and providence, and the proverb cited at the end, '*give Folks Luck, and throw*

returning home to find '[his] Father's House a Den of Incest; [his] Brother [his] Rival; [his] Wife an incestuous prostitute', he resolves not to confront them, on the self-sacrificing grounds that 'to go near, or reproach them, was to make them miserable, and my self not happy' (p. 231).

'em into the Sea', demonstrates how she has enhanced the weight of Blackamore's opening address to readers, at the expense of the heroine's own control of events (p. 237).

The reaction of Galesia and the other listeners focuses on the heroine's motivations, in a moment that both anticipates Lennox's *The Female Quixote* and looks back to amatory warnings against the dangers of certain types of reading: 'surely she had been reading some ridiculous *Romance*, or *Novel*, that inspired her with such a vile Undertaking, from whence she could rationally expect nothing but Misery and Disgrace' (pp. 237-38). The link made here between potentially scandalous behaviour and the influence of reading on impressionable female minds is elaborated upon in the next story in *The Lining*: 'The *History of Dorinda*,' which sees a young woman rescued by the male narrator after she throws herself into a pond.⁶² The unrealistic expectations engendered by the consumption of romance have led her to engage in dangerous adventures such as going 'mask'd and unaccompanied to the Play-house' (p. 240). Whilst she escapes Fantomina's fate, she also rejects a worthy suitor and what begins as a playful flirtation results in her marrying a footman to save face. Once married, Dorinda's brutal husband squanders all of her money, fathers illegitimate children with the woman he assigned as Dorinda's waiting maid, and sells his children into slavery, eventually murdering his mistress after Dorinda leaves for London. Attempting to justify her actions in marrying the man, she says: 'my romantick Brain would make me imagine, that he was of an Origin; (if known) above what he appeared: for he had been a Beggar-boy, taken up at my Father's Gate' (p. 243). In a moment of circularity, Barker recalls and mocks the romance elements of 'The Lady Gypsy', and by association, *Luck at Last*, which sees the high-born heroine reduced to begging at a gate. Barker positions her rewritten text alongside Dorinda's narrative, in a move that positions romance and realism side-by-side within one generically-aware text long before Lennox.⁶³

⁶² Lennox's *Arabella* does the same thing in *The Female Quixote* (1752), although it is to escape imagined ravishers, in imitation of Clelia swimming across the River Tiber in Madeleine de Scudéry's *Clelia, an excellent new Romance* (1678).

⁶³ Multiple treatments of genre in Lennox are available. See, for example Regina Martin, 'Specters of Romance: The Female Quixote and Domestic Fiction,' *The Eighteenth-Century Novel*, 8 (2011), 147-66; Scott Paul Gordon, 'The Space of Romance in Lennox's *Female Quixote*,' *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 38 (1998), 499-516; and Laurie Langbauer, 'Romance Revised: Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*,' *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 18 (1984), 29-49.

Carol Shiner Wilson situates the move away from romance towards the ‘novel’ within the context of emerging ideas which privileged verisimilitude over the ‘aristocratic figures, heroic actions, idealized love, and unlikely coincidences’ of romance, and this move is traced in the gap between Barker’s lucky Lady Gypsie and the less fortunate Dorinda.⁶⁴ However, reflecting on Dorinda’s story, Galesia mounts a much more sympathetic defence of this character than of her Lady Gypsie. It seems that Dorinda’s quixotic penchant for romances is perhaps more tolerable than the Lady Gypsie’s longing for town diversions. Or perhaps Dorinda’s class transgression is more acceptable than the Lady Gypsie’s filial disobedience. Galesia excuses romances on the grounds that whilst ‘we find strange and improbable Performances, very surprising Turns and Rencounters; yet still all tended to vertuous Ends’ (p. 251).⁶⁵ She compares this to ‘the Stories of our Times [which] are so black, that the Authors, can hardly escape being smutted, or defil’d in touching such Pitch’, although both the Lady Gypsie’s and particularly Dorinda’s histories clearly contain elements of both romance and more modern ‘black’ stories (p. 252). Barker’s professed aversion to scandal stories explains partly the complex layering she borrows from amatory fiction, in which her stories are filtered through several narrators before they arrive with the reader, masking her own ideological standpoints. Shiner Wilson notes that, like Richardson, Barker ensured that she could ‘have it both ways: examining examples of lewd behaviour that would titillate readers [...] combined with material that would ostensibly show the salutary effects of decent behaviour’.⁶⁶ Barker is the perfect demonstration that there is no clean break, either between the moral and the immoral, or between romance strains and realist ones, because she is deeply implicated in the conventions that she ostensibly seeks to eschew, commercially, aesthetically, and ideologically.

In tracing the history of this particular plot, the implications of the disguised, unknowable heroine in the earliest rendering become apparent, as do the attempts to coax her into a moral framework that defers to providence. We see the same plot adapted to fit different

⁶⁴ Shiner Wilson, p. xxxvi.

⁶⁵ Criticism of ‘improbable Performances’ in romances seems especially ironic, given that the end of Dorinda’s story has seen her reunited with her trepanned son, who is coincidentally acting as foot-boy for the man who rescued her from the pond.

⁶⁶ Shiner Wilson, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.

commercial demands: the popular and the didactic, and as such, I argue that we can see Behn's original text as generating both pious and scandalous rewritings. Whilst the three versions I have examined so far have predominantly focused on disguise as a means to temporarily prevent the classed body from signifying, and therefore to escape tyrannical or unjust parental law, the final version, taken from the midcentury, exploits more fully the queerness of the original plot along gendered lines, using the cross-gender disguise of the heroine to destabilise traditional ideas about male and female roles and capabilities, and, as a by-product, to problematise heteronormative desire based on these roles.

The Boundaries of Genre and Gender: 'The History of Leonora and Louisa'

Sarah Scott's little-studied *A Journey Through Every Stage of Life* was published anonymously in 1754. Gary Kelly asserts that Scott's novels 'ignore the libertine fiction of earlier women writers such as Aphra Behn and Delarivier Manley and owe less to Samuel Richardson's 'revolution' in fictional representations of subjectivity than to the pious and moralistic fiction by women such as Elizabeth Rowe and Jane Barker.'⁶⁷ But as the previous analyses have shown, we can trace lines of influence from Behn to Barker, and from Barker to Richardson through the afterlife of just one text, and so the categories that Kelly attempts to construct are not sustainable on closer scrutiny. Moreover Scott is certainly not isolated, either from her predecessors, or from contemporaries such as Lennox and Haywood. Her sister, Elizabeth Montagu, was one of the founding members of the bluestocking group, and she clearly had access to a diverse and divergent range of ideological influences.⁶⁸ She is most often studied for her later fiction, particularly *A Description of Millenium Hall and the Country Adjacent* (1762), which depicts an all-female community living out an ideal based on the exchange of knowledge, on cross-class generosity and philanthropy, and which has prompted debates about the extent of

⁶⁷ Gary Kelly, 'Sarah Scott', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com.chain.kent.ac.uk/view/article/24912?docPos=1>> [accessed 22 July 2013]

⁶⁸ See Gary Kelly, 'Bluestocking Feminism', in *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere, 1700-1830*, ed. by Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant, Clóna Ó Gallchoir and Penny Warburton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 163-80; and Nicole Pohl and Betty Schellenberg's special edition of *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, entitled 'Reconsidering the Bluestockings', 65.1-2 (2002).

her radicalism and speculation regarding her sexuality.⁶⁹ Written nearly a decade before *Millenium Hall*, *A Journey* examines and advocates for female capability and independence, and, as such, warrants further study in terms of how Scott conceived and developed the ideas presented in her later novels. However, despite its relevance to Scott's later fiction, its potential to contribute to understandings of midcentury writings more widely, and its importance in its own right as an innovative and radical challenge to prescriptive femininity, *A Journey* has been mostly overlooked.⁷⁰

The series of stories that make up *A Journey* are framed as a conversation between a young princess, Carinthia, locked away by her ambitious cousin to prevent her rightful accession to the throne, and her maid, Sabrina. The tale that I focus on is the first one, 'The History of Leonora and Louisa'. The heroine, Leonora, is introduced by Sabrina as 'almost the only Woman I have ever met with, who endeavoured to conquer the Disadvantages our Sex labour under, and who proved that Custom, not Nature, inflicts that Dependence in which we live'.⁷¹ Like Arabella and Sylvia before her, Leonora manages not only to survive, but to thrive as an upper-class woman in the public world of work. The story, like the versions of *The Wandering Beauty*, explores and works through the possibilities for the unprotected woman in society, and in doing so, allows its heroine to demonstrate, in more explicit ways than the earlier texts, the capabilities that are masked by conventional femininity. When Leonora's mother dies, her father remarries an avaricious young woman named Arabella. This new step-mother attempts to alienate his children from him, sending his two sons away to school with little subsistence, mistreating his ward and Leonora's cousin, Louisa, and then attempting to force a marriage between Leonora and an elderly suitor. Fearing for Louisa's health, and unwilling to

⁶⁹ See, for example, Julie McDonegal, 'The Tyranny of Gift Giving: The Politics of Generosity in Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall* and *George Ellison*', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 19 (2007), 291-306; and George Haggerty, "'Romantic Friendship" and Patriarchal Narrative in Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall*', *Genders*, 13 (1992), 108-22.

⁷⁰ The exceptions are Eve Tavor Bannet's article, 'Lives, Letters, and Tales in Sarah Scott's *Journey Through Every Stage of Life*', in *Masters of the Marketplace*, ed. by Carlile, pp. 59-83; and Jennie Batchelor, who discusses this text in terms of its portrayal of women's labour in *Women's Work: Labour, Gender, Authorship, 1750-1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), pp. 29-66.

⁷¹ Sarah Scott, *A Journey Through Every Stage of Life*, 2 vols (London: A. Millar, 1754), I, 6. All subsequent references are to this edition and page numbers are given parenthetically within the text.

submit to the marriage arranged for her, Leonora flees to the spa town of Buxton with Louisa, and so begin their adventures.

Scott's text maintains the stress on the illegitimacy of forced marriages seen in *The Wandering Beauty* and *Luck at Last*: Leonora's suitor is described as 'a Man of above fifty Years of Age, odious both in Person and Heart, and despicable in Understanding' (p. 15). But Sabrina's criticisms of both marriage and courtship go beyond the questions of personal choice and affection explored by Behn, or the links between poor female education and bad marriages examined by the early feminist writer Mary Astell.⁷² Sabrina criticises marriage on the grounds that '[t]here is no divine Ordinance more frequently disobeyed than that wherein God forbids human Sacrifices, for in no other Light can I see most Marriages' (p. 16). Her refusal to distinguish between forced marriages and desired ones, in favour of discussing 'most', ensures that her statement goes considerably further in its radicalism than the earlier texts. When Carinthia asks 'Where is then the boasted Superiority of Man [during courtship]?', Sabrina is quick to counter with the fact that after marriage 'the humble Beggar becomes a King, and the worshipped Goddess dwindles into a tame useful Drudge, or a disregarded Appurtenance' (p. 34). The wording recalls the famous discussion of provisos for marriage between Millamant and Mirabel in William Congreve's *The Way of the World* (1700), in which Millamant suggests that if her conditions are met, she may 'dwindle into a wife'.⁷³ As well as looking back to the frank discussions of marriage in Restoration comedy, Sabrina's vision of marriage also foreshadows Mary Wollstonecraft's critiques of the institution of marriage, particularly in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) in which she argues that prescriptive feminine education, rather than encouraging women to foster the good management skills, and 'strength of body and mind' necessary to raising a family, instead 'mak[es] mere animals of them'.⁷⁴ Indeed, Scott's text is a catalogue of bad marriages: Arabella marries Leonora's father, Hortensius, for money;

⁷² See Mary Astell, *Some Reflections Upon Marriage, Occasion'd by the Duke and Dutchess of Mazarine's Case* (London: John Nutt, 1700).

⁷³ William Congreve, *The Way of the World, a Comedy*, repr. in *The Works of William Congreve*, ed. by D. F. McKenzie and C. Y. Ferdinand, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), II, 95-225 (p. 184).

⁷⁴ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (London: J. Johnson, 1792), p. 9.

Leonora's friend Laetitia is nearly forced, by her guardians, to marry the hero Calidore against her wishes; Leonora meets a coquet who is unhappily married to a jealous husband; a milliner marries a reformed rake, with potentially disastrous results should he relapse; and so on. Sabrina is clearly sceptical about the literary alignment of a happy ending with a marriage.

Once at Buxton, Leonora decides that she and Louisa will disguise themselves as brother and sister. She takes the male role, deciding on a clergyman for the sake of modesty, epitomised by the possibility of wearing petticoats. She hopes that this disguise will afford the same polite treatment due to any woman. Instead, she finds herself the target of much unwanted, and sometimes forceful, female attention. A love triangle is set up between the heroine, Leonora, the hero, Calidore, and another female character, Laetitia: Leonora loves Calidore; Calidore loves Laetitia; and Laetitia loves Leonora, thinking she is a man. Despite the growing friendship between Calidore and the disguised Leonora, Calidore's jealousy about Laetitia's preference for Leonora eventually leads to a dispute, after which he leaves. Low on money, Leonora finds work as a personal tutor to the son of one of her admirers, the dissipated Lady Haines. A failed seduction attempt by Lady Haines and an accusation of Catholicism aimed at Leonora force her to flee again, with Louisa. En route they are nearly captured by Leonora's father and Arabella at an inn, but manage to escape once again, after the fortuitous arrival of Laetitia and her maid, who swap places with them.⁷⁵

The pair arrives in London where Leonora takes on a new disguise as a foreign painter, lodging at a milliner's shop. She uses her disguise to provide moral instruction and support to a series of vain clients, successfully reforming each one. The scenarios she encounters are repetitions, with differences, of earlier seduction narratives, which incorporate and comment upon reformed coquets, abandoned children, parental tyranny, and the sexual double standard. The inset narrative of Lucy, for example, sees a high-born girl lose her fortune and take work as a milliner, where she attracts the attention of rakish Dorinton. Lucy's turn to work for

⁷⁵ The exchange of places between a woman in captivity and a free woman also occurs in Charlotte Lennox's *Harriot Stuart* (1751), when Harriot, imprisoned by a rakish count, escapes by exchanging places with Danville, who loves the count. Danville, disguised as a man in order to pursue the man she loves, is also reminiscent of Violetta in Haywood's *Love in Excess* (1719-20).

subsistence is a variation of Leonora's own storyline, another strand by which Scott works through different possibilities for the same formula. Lucy escapes the looming seduction and abandonment due to Leonora's intervention: Dorinton is reformed by conversation with Leonora, and eventually persuaded to marry Lucy. However, although Leonora interrupts the trajectory expected by readers familiar with seduction fiction, reforming the genre it is taken from as much as Dorinton himself, it is precisely because of this expected trajectory that Lucy and Dorinton's marriage is an uncertain one. Sabrina's derisory comments on marriage only serve to increase the suspicion that Dorinton will, after the close of the text, stray. Thus although Leonora's reform seems successful within the text, beyond that it remains unstable at best. The mixing of generic impulses reveals not the triumph of moral fiction over seduction fiction, but rather the interconnectedness of the two.

Leonora's stint as a painter is cut short when another young lady falls in love with her, and her jilted lover challenges Leonora to a duel. She is, for the last time, forced to flee to the other side of London. Here, she takes over a school, and greatly improves the education offered to the boys, replacing an old system geared towards promoting virtue through ignorance and reputation through vanity, with a new method based on Christian friendship, generosity, respect, charity, and education intermixed with entertainment. Out walking one evening, she hears some screams, and finds herself at a murder scene: a husband has been stabbed by his wife's lover. Leonora is jailed for the crime, but released when the guilty perpetrator hands himself in, and turns out to be Calidore. When the injured husband recovers, Calidore is released and he renews his friendship with Leonora, until he is summoned home following the death of his father. Lovestruck Leonora follows Calidore to Scarborough, exchanging her trousers for skirts again, and capturing his attention, this time as a woman, but still holding back her true identity. Their budding romance is interrupted by the news that Arabella is dead and Leonora goes home to be reunited with her father and brothers, relinquishing her disguise for good. Calidore continues to court Leonora and after she comes clean about her exploits, the couple are married in a somewhat anti-climactic ending. Just as the end of *The Wandering Beauty* sees the heroine

surrendering her previously fluid identity, Leonora's admission of her true identity and her former transvestite activities to her future husband replicates this fixing of identity.

The text promotes education, self-sacrifice and generosity as vital to a functioning community, and satirises fashionable gender performances based on superficial sets of values in characters such as Lady Haines. Whilst Leonora's own performance is based in necessity, the performances of Lady Haines, like earlier libertine characters, are based on capturing the male gaze and initiating and maintaining a male desire that is given little attention in Scott's text. In resituating performance in the service of her own liberal ideals, Scott engages in a proto-feminist project, redefining femininity and emphasising female potential in order to argue for a revised understanding of the ways in which women can contribute to society. In a reading of this text, Batchelor outlines Scott's critique of domesticity as dependency, and argues that she posits work as an alternative to the marriage market, beneficial both in terms of individual female independence, and wider societal good. *A Journey* also, Batchelor claims, makes arguments about the value of literary labour, which, like other forms of work 'lies not only in the intrinsic worth of the sentiments it contains but also in the cultural benefits it generates when readers labour to respond to its example in their own lives'.⁷⁶ Eve Tavor Bannet also claims that the novel 'castigates the injustices of society and the evils of women's condition'.⁷⁷ She contextualises *A Journey* as a novel that allowed Scott, at that time exiled from society after the breakdown of her marriage, to work through the possibilities open to her, under the protective mask of fiction.⁷⁸ Both Bannet and Batchelor highlight the importance of female support and community for Scott within the narrative itself, but also in the friendship between Sabrina and Carinthia. We might see this community as similar to the implied friendship between the narrator of *The Wandering Beauty* and the original relator of the story, or to the community of speakers in Barker's *Patch-Work Screen*. Whilst Batchelor focuses on the relationships set up between an exemplary heroine, an exemplary narrator, and a reader willing to learn from these examples, Bannet suggests that the replacement of the patriarchal family

⁷⁶ Batchelor, *Women's Work*, p. 58.

⁷⁷ Bannet, pp. 59-60.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

structure by a network of female friendships in 'The History of Leonora and Louisa' is only temporary, and is disrupted in the end by the 'happy ending' of romance.⁷⁹

What interests me here, however, is not so much Scott's arguments about women themselves, but rather her adoption of amatory conventions and the potential queerness they engender to make these arguments. She satirises affected gender performances, but renders these clear by a different form of theatricality in Leonora's disguise. The capacity and capability of Leonora to succeed in male roles is indeed the focal point of the novel, but is only made possible by the use of the amatory tropes and themes inherited from earlier fiction: self-conscious artistry and intertextuality; strategic dissimulation; and repetition with difference. It is the self-reflective nature of the framing narrative that allows Scott to demonstrate the ways in which fictions, including the fiction of gender, are put to use. It is the heroine's strategic dissimulation, which demonstrates the constructedness of gender roles and identity, and moreover, perhaps inadvertently, sexuality. And it is repetition with difference and circularity, as in the case of Lucy's story, which allows for Scott to test the boundaries of genre and gender in the text.

The Self-conscious Text: Writers and Readers

The structure of *A Journey* performs a double function, at once looking inwards and outwards, calling attention both to its construction, and to its reception. The series of stories, framed as a conversation between two women, is prefaced by an apparently male editor. Coupled with the anonymity of the publication, these layers of fictionality demonstrate the same self-aware construction of text, and the same manipulation of narrative voice employed by earlier amatory writers. Bannet notes multiple generic influences for both frame and content of the text, but in particular the possibility of a borrowing from Manley's *New Atalantis* (1709) in terms of the framing narrative, with Sabrina standing in for Intelligence.⁸⁰ The layers mask an elusive author, but nonetheless gesture insistently towards their own production. Despite the conventional truth

⁷⁹ Batchelor, *Women's Work*, pp. 62-65; Bannet, p. 77.

⁸⁰ Bannet, p. 62.

claims in the male-authored preface, Sabrina's self-conscious artistry becomes a way of drawing attention to and negotiating the limits of the generic conventions that this text deploys. As such, the text continues within the framed-novelle tradition that Donovan traces back to the fifteenth century, in which she claims that the frame was employed primarily for the expression of a feminist standpoint.⁸¹ I would add that they also enable a discussion of the act of writing itself.

As the storyteller in the conversation, the substitute author-figure, Sabrina frequently details the process of narrative construction, and provides the text's inward focus. Her breaks during her relation act as a constant reminder of the presence of the narrative frame. Sabrina explains her narrative choices in wry asides that simultaneously invest the characters with a life beyond her construction, and draw attention to her own agency as a creator. For example, when Leonora leaves Buxton, she hears that Calidore is nearby and decides to pursue him. Sabrina pauses the story to discuss the fate of chivalry. When Carinthia asks Sabrina to proceed, fearing that 'they should be as fairly distanced by *Leonora* as she was by *Calidore*', Sabrina replies, "She, alas! is likely to stay for us, as we shall not attempt to come up with her till she is at a full stop, and not at Liberty to run away from us." (p. 61). The tale is at once a construction and an act of pursuit. Likewise, when Leonora and Louisa are locked in their room at the inn by Leonora's father Hortensius and step-mother Arabella, the pair discusses what to do with the girls. At this point, Sabrina interrupts,

as it is not proper a Man should yield to easily to his Wife, to save *Hortensius's* Honour as far as I can, I will leave *Arabella* Time to exercise all the Power of Art and Obstinacy, to conquer his better Disposition, and take breath a little, to give him Leisure to submit with less Indignity.

(p. 65)

Sabrina's sardonic asides create a performative interaction between text and frame: she creates, but builds herself and her own needs into the creation. As a result, the creation comes to affect her act of telling, and a mutual relation is set up, whereby the text itself and the narrator vie for agency over the pace and pauses of the narrative. It is, seemingly, Sabrina who triumphs over

⁸¹ Donovan, p. 30. See chapter four in this monograph for a discussion of the use of the framed-novelle structure in Margaret Cavendish, Manley, and Barker, and chapter six for a discussion of women's literary realism informed by the framed-novelle tradition in the 1690s, including Behn's *Wandering Beauty*.

control of the text, when she defends her ‘innocent Art’ as a means of maintaining Carinthia’s interest (p. 150). Just after Leonora and Calidore are reunited at Scarborough, Sabrina hints that their happiness is short-lived, but concludes ‘I think it would be ill-natured not to leave *Leonora* in this pleasing Situation for this Night, and therefore will delay all melancholy Incidents till To-morrow’ (p. 149). The following day, before she resumes her narration, she tells a frustrated Carinthia that, ‘Suspence is the Soul of a Story, without which it grows dead and lifeless’ (p. 151), reclaiming control over the text. It is significant that for Scott’s readers, the interruptions of the main text by Carinthia and Sabrina work to create the same type of suspense as Sabrina’s rests do within the frame for Carinthia, thus aligning readers with Carinthia, and Scott, to some extent, with Sabrina.⁸²

In addition to justifying her pauses, Sabrina also underscores her narrative choices, such as her adherence to certain plot devices, and her choice of character names, all the time drawing attention to the fictionality of her tale, and, by implication, to her own fictionality. At the end of ‘The History of Leonora and Louisa,’ she claims that ‘a Novel would make but a bad Figure carried on beyond Marriage’ (p. 159), demonstrating an investment in the romance plot despite having evinced her dissatisfaction with it. When introducing the heroine’s love interest, ‘whom for want of having a more Christian-like Name ready I shall call *Calidore* [...] which in poetic Fiction has been made to signify Courtesy’ (p. 23), she again calls attention to her employment of romance conventions, although as with Leonora’s marriage, which I shall return to, Sabrina makes the insufficiency of romance ideals apparent in Calidore’s failure to act in a manner befitting a true romance hero. Twice in the narrative, Leonora pursues Calidore, nearly, in the first instance, leading to her capture. Carinthia, beginning to understand the distance between the romance conventions that she is accustomed to, and the story that Sabrina is telling, comments: ‘Sadly must the *Calidores* be degenerated since the Age of Romance and Heroism, that a Damsel should be left to follow’ (p. 60). Bannet claims that ‘the distance between

⁸² Batchelor notes the correspondences between author, narrator and heroine, which manifested in the conception of labour as a tool for reform: the author labours (writes) to get readers to imitate; Sabrina labours (narrates) to improve the Princess; Leonora labours (paints) to reform her clients. *Women’s Work*, p. 64.

artificial literary conventions and “living manners” was a key stylistic feature of *A Journey*.⁸³ But whilst Sabrina argues that ‘Nothing can be more unlike those Mirrors of Chivalry than our modern fine Gentlemen’ (p. 61), she nonetheless still finds herself drawn to using romance as a foundation, as a way of making her story signify to her reader. Like Barker, Scott uses her text to engage in an analysis of the ways in which romance frames might continue to be useful, but deliberately complicates the terms of her discussion. Reality and fiction are blurred, and the fact that Sabrina herself has been constructed within a romance framework, as maid to an exiled princess, as narrator-author for an inexperienced reader, demonstrates the fluidity and inclusivity on a generic level that earlier amatory fictions are so fascinated by on the level of identity.

Whilst Sabrina focuses the text inwards in a self-reflexive consideration of what it is to write, Carinthia, as the reader substitute, is the tool by which the text reaches out beyond its own boundaries to consider and shape its own reception. In some cases, Carinthia’s reactions to Sabrina’s tale are used to critique existing forms of social prescription. For example, after Leonora, in her painter’s disguise, reforms a coquet through conversation, and reconciles her to her husband, Sabrina ‘like other old Women, loving preaching’ (p. 89) launches into a long and detailed relation of Leonora’s conduct book worthy advice to the young wife, prompting Carinthia to ‘yawn most unmercifully’ (p. 89). After an overnight chapter break, an additional third-person narrator suggests that ‘no Opiate will operate more powerfully on the Mind of a young Girl than a moral Essay against Coquetry’ (p. 89). At a point when Sabrina loses awareness of her own narrative whilst in conduct book mode, another layer of textuality is added in the form of a third person narrator, who stands outside the frame narrative altogether; the theatrical self-consciousness of the narrative, predicated on distance, is thus maintained. In other cases, the conversations between Sabrina and Carinthia anticipate the debates and considerations resulting from the narrative, and work through ways of interpreting Leonora and Louisa’s tale. These conversations anticipate reader response, and admit to the multiple interpretive possibilities engendered by Leonora’s actions and fate. They stop, for example,

⁸³ Bannet, p. 65.

along the way, to consider the effectiveness of Leonora's disguise, or the ethics and limitations of giving, and these moments open up the text as a generative spur to thought and conversation.

Sabrina, as the moral centre and creator of the tale, tries to shut this multiplicity down, but, in the case of the text's treatment of marriage, to give one example, rather than simply providing a critique of the institution of marriage, she also makes a much wider point about the unruliness of textuality itself. In doing so, she illustrates the tensions between the tyranny of a single author telling a tale, the more democratic implications of dialogue, and the unfixable nature of language. Whilst Leonora remains successfully disguised as a man, the text serves to exemplify Sabrina's statements about female independence as opposed to the restrictions of marriage. Leonora's abilities to make her own choices, to improve the lives of others, and to provide financial support for both Louisa and her two brothers, are indicative of the possibilities open to women outside of marriage. The ending of the text, however, sees Leonora's willing reincorporation back into a patriarchal structure, beginning with her return to her father's home and ending with her marriage. The marriage creates an ideological fracture between narrator and text, which prompts Sabrina's dissatisfied statement that despite showing 'how capable [the female] Sex might be made of preserving Independence', Leonora had:

done so common a Thing as marrying, and made herself dependent on one of the other Sex; she might rather serve as an Argument that, let your Talents be equal or superior to them, our Spirits above Meanness, and our Situations above Controul, still sooner or later we become their Dependents, perhaps their Slaves.

(p. 160)

The text, previously manipulated knowingly and adeptly by Sabrina, suddenly seems to escape her control, in its adherence to the romance-comedy convention and the capacity of repetitions with difference is shown to be limited by the material demand of a story for an ending. As such, the marriage might seem to be a comment on limited authorial agency in the face of restrictive traditional convention. However, her vocal dissatisfaction demonstrates the ways in which Sabrina still has the power to create knowing and complicit readers, whose dissatisfaction with the ending mirrors her own. Batchelor points out that the self-conscious narrator allows a critique of 'a (literary) culture in which the virtuous, independent woman worker is seemingly unimaginable', whilst Bannet notes the way that the framing narrative 'draw[s] attention to the

artifices of the tales' romance or pastoral emplotments, and [...] subvert[s] or discredit[s] the overt moral'.⁸⁴ The amatory techniques of self-conscious artistry allow a double function for the text, whereby it serves as a commentary on reading and writing as much as on the social implications of female capability versus domesticity and marriage. In the cases of genre and gender, the text works to unpick the construction of convention, exposing, like the texts I examined in the previous chapters, the workings of the discursive machinery.

The Actress: The Androgyne

Like Arabella, Sylvia, and Miss Truman, and like several other amatory heroines, including Fantomina, Leonora attempts, arguably with more success than her forebears, to author an identity for herself outside of the conventional position for women within the homes of fathers or husbands. *The Wandring Beauty* and *Luck at Last* chart warring impulses between innate identity and constructed identity in terms of class, although the transgression of gendered roles and expectations is also, of course, part of the plot structure. 'The History of Leonora and Louisa' explores the possibilities for the acting heroine, but Leonora's cross-dressing transposes a tale originally about social class into a specifically gender-related framework. Mirroring the way in which the self-conscious framing narrative draws attention to the demands and limitations of genre, the queerness of disguise – that is, the refusal of fixity that it suggests – is fully capitalised on to expose the demands and limitations of prescriptive gender roles, and to posit gender as a series of acts. Scott's elevation of the feminine could be read as taking part in the wider elevation of the feminine as a force for reform or a locus for certain political or national ideologies, as identified by scholars such as Nancy Armstrong and Harriet Guest.⁸⁵ However, I argue that in constructing Leonora as androgynous, Scott is attempting to reshape both femininity and masculinity into something altogether more fluid. One of the implications

⁸⁴ Batchelor, *Women's Work*, p. 39; Bannet, p. 62.

⁸⁵ Cf. Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) and Harriet Guest, *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

of this attempt is that the text admits to a frustration with heteronormative modes of desire, as well as gender.

Right from the outset, Leonora is characterised as somebody who troubles conventional gender binaries. Educated alongside her brothers, she proves more academically able than either of them, but she also epitomises many prescriptive feminine qualities. She is modest and self-sacrificing; she has a great deal of sensibility; and she is, at least to start with, highly readable; we hear that ‘her Eyes which were of a fine Blue, spoke every thought’ (p. 10). In stressing Leonora’s suitability to the role of schoolmaster, Sabrina argues:

Learning is of no Sex, tho’ it is chiefly arrogated by one, and Virtue should be common to both, therefore her Scholars might be as well instructed as by a Man, tho’ she was a Sort of heterogeneous Animal, in whom Art and Dress contradicted Nature.

(p. 119)

Leonora’s natural ‘heterogeneity’ means that ‘Art and Dress’, regardless of gender, are insufficient signifiers of her full person. Batchelor argues that ‘Leonora is never masculinised by her work, her success in which [...] is crucially dependent upon the feminine qualities she brings to it [although] her activities interrogate the categories of masculine and feminine and repeatedly expose nature as culture’.⁸⁶ Leonora certainly is not masculinised, but neither, I would say, is she entirely feminised. Rather, she adopts an ungendered space, informed by, but not reducible to, cultural prescription. As masculine woman or feminine man, she holds the power to destabilise normative gender definitions and to render clear gender as construction, functioning in much the same way as amatory writers’ claims to both masculine and feminine writing styles. As Caroline Rooney writes, ‘[t]he figure of the androgyne may be said to offer us the co-existence of a dual and indeed multiple potential, this infinite or open *actuality of potentiality*’.⁸⁷ Leonora is a heroine under constant construction but one who also makes clear that the terms in which construction occurs are not exhaustive.

As in amatory fiction, there are moments in Leonora’s disguise where the body interrupts her performances, but these moments are initiated by desire, rather than by innate

⁸⁶ Batchelor, *Women’s Work*, p. 43.

⁸⁷ Caroline Rooney, *Decolonising Gender: Literature and a Poetics of the Real* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 27.

femininity. In other words, it is the desiring body rather than the female body that materialises. To give an example, after Calidore and Leonora argue over Laetitia, Leonora faints. Calidore accuses his rival of ‘assum[ing] womanish Arts to prolong [her] Treachery’ (p. 43). He continues: for Shame, act up to the Character of the cold Traitor you have shewn yourself, be true to your Sex at least’ (p. 43). The reader recognises that Leonora’s disguise has faltered. Calidore, however, reads her response as itself an act, which suggests that it is not the sexed body that appears. Leonora’s desire manifests materially, but fails to signify her sex. Only when Leonora dresses as a woman does Calidore see her as a woman. Her active pursuit of him is masked, in a rather Haywoodian fashion, by a return to her passive feminine guise. In a moment that foreshadows Riviere’s much later arguments about the mask of femininity, we hear that Leonora ‘took Care to conceal her Learning, as she had been accustomed to do *while in her female Habit*’ (my emphasis, p. 149). As the wording makes clear, this is a disguise too.

Sabrina claims that Leonora’s actions demonstrate ‘how much good a Woman might do to her own Sex, when she does not appear to be of it’ (p. 96). Whilst part of this good is based on the reconstruction of femininity as a force for reform, there is also a Sapphic aspect to Scott’s portrayal of women in the novel. Although Leonora’s disguise provides the grounds for comic or titillating moments in the text, the text also displaces female same-sex desire onto heteronormative frameworks whilst simultaneously evincing dissatisfaction with these frameworks. As a clergyman, Leonora finds herself persecuted by female attention, some more, and some less, virtuous. The indiscreet and vulgar flirtations of a gentlewoman whose hand in marriage is offered to Leonora as part of a living would not seem amiss in a Restoration comedy, or an Austen novel. In a reversal of ostensible gender roles, the male Leonora is portrayed as a victim, and the cast-off mistress as a predator when Leonora’s friends compare Leonora to ‘*Andromeda*, and other ill-fated Fair-ones, who had been exposed to ravenous Monsters’ (pp. 31-2). The point here is familiar from amatory fiction, namely, that power structures, although gendered, do not adhere to sexed bodies. The most sustained account of a seduction attempt upon Leonora comes from her second employer, the widowed Lady Haines.

Our initial introduction to Lady Haines sees her defending Leonora's effeminacy on the grounds that

had *Achilles* been very Masculine in his Appearance, he could not have passed for a Woman when disguised in a female Habit, and yet we had no Reason to believe that *Briseis* found him a worse Lover for the Delicacy of his Form.

(p. 33)

The seduction attempt itself, like the earlier 'ravenous Monster' episode, is set up to provide comedic entertainment, but it also ridicules the sorts of desiring libertine heroines that early amatory fiction portrayed in characters such as Haywood's Ciamara, for example. Lady Haines uses performed illness as a ruse to lure Leonora to her bedside, who 'found her Ladyship so decorated with Paint and Lace, and all that Labour of Dress which is sometimes used to compose *une dishabille gallant et negligé*, as raised in her some Apprehensions concerning the Motive for all this Care' (p. 56). Haines, like the male characters of several amatory texts, uses text as a tool for seduction, and attempts to entice Leonora into her bed by encouraging her to read and enact *Eloisa and Abelard* with her. In satirising Haines, Scott makes clear that the theatricality and artifice she has inherited from her amatory predecessors has been carefully stripped of its libertine roots, and transformed through the character of Leonora into a more beneficial form of dissimulation.

However, the queerness of Leonora's disguise disrupts heteronormativity in a more profound way than earlier amatory fictions. Firstly, it advocates for a new, more natural female desire based upon the recognition of feminine qualities in another, a far cry from the narcissistic male desire portrayed in amatory fictions. When Laetitia finds out that the object of her love is a woman, we hear that she 'looked a little foolish [...] but soon acknowledged that she was no Loser in exchanging unreturned Love for mutual Friendship' (p. 45). Laetitia goes on to marry a shy but readable, and somewhat effeminate man whom Leonora employs in her school on the grounds that he has 'a Heart so like her own' (p. 138). As such, Laetitia's desire for Leonora, and for the feminine in her, is not corrected, but merely displaced onto the right body. We hear that

Leonora's Beauty charm[ed] many of the young Ladies; she soon found by the forward Advances of the Coquets, and the sly Glances of the Prudes, that an

effeminate Delicacy in a Man is not disagreeable to a Sex to whom it should more peculiarly belong.

(p. 20)

It is the conventionally feminine aspects of both her behaviour and her body that other women find attractive, but it is her male dress that permits these attention. Likewise, her clothes are the only things that 'checked the Impulse which appeared natural' in Calidore upon his first meeting her (p. 25). When she does present a disguise that permits Calidore's sexual attentions, it is predicated on her hiding her education, so, in a sense, donning another mask. When he meets her in Scarborough, he sees the similarity between this woman and his schoolmaster friend, but, like his male amatory predecessors, including Behn's Lovewell when he sees the portrait of his wife, Calidore fails to see anything but the surface:

he was so far from believing it possible they could be the same, that he wondered to see two Persons so exactly made in the same Mould, with Voices alike; but never conceived the least Suspicion. In Complexion they only differed, *Leonora* having disguised hers as much as possible while in Man's Apparel, which now shone out in its extremest Lustre. But this Difference was not sufficient to have blinded him as to the Identity of the Person, had not *Leonora's* Learning been so very extensive, as would thoroughly convince any one, she could not be a Woman, who was ignorant of the Peculiarity of her Education.

(p. 148)

Ultimately, it is Leonora's education that proves the most effective disguise of all. And this point renders the ending even more unsatisfactory, as in a moment that mirrors the earlier texts, Leonora is reintegrated back into a system in which she is valued only as a mirror for male desire. After relating her adventures to Calidore before their marriage, thinking that their 'Irregularity [...] might possibly disgust him', the narrator archly comments that whilst he admired her actions, 'what still charmed him more than all, was finding her constant Partiality for him' (p. 159). Such comments expose the gendered double standard that initiates Leonora's disguise, but also demonstrate frustration with genre, with gender, and with the limitation of desire to fixed (gender) identities which turn out to be clothing, masks, and fictions alone.

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In the epigraph to this chapter, Aubin and Pilkington asserted that the amatory 'Style' and amatory 'Knowledge' were not the domains of modest women. The rise of the novel narrative,

and realist teleologies that posit a clean break between the fiction of the early and mid eighteenth century have proved remarkably persistent. But what this chapter has argued is that such divisions are unsustainable if one attends to the ways in which midcentury writers continue to draw on amatory techniques. What emerges from an analysis of the afterlives of Behn's text is the fact that the development of the novel was not swift, steady, or linear, and that narratives that imply otherwise have been inherited from eighteenth-century writers eager to establish themselves as original by denigrating or ignoring their predecessors. However, the sorts of self-conscious textuality and strategic dissimulation that amatory fiction exploits prove integral for later writers, and generic formulae and expectations continue to be simultaneously deployed, experimented with, and critiqued in the midcentury. As such, the queerness and ambiguity of early amatory fiction held enormous generative potential. The indebtedness of an eclectic body of work to amatory fiction, including sentimental fiction, scandal fiction, pulp fiction, feminist fiction, utopian fiction, and realist fiction, demonstrates the integral role that amatory texts played in constructions of later novels. In relations of denial, reclamation or simple reiteration, later writers attempt either to control or to develop the plots, heroines, and ideological entanglements that they inherit from their forebears. The midcentury literary marketplace was, then, deeply and visibly influenced by a continuing, experimental tradition that prospered alongside and in conversation with the realist tradition.

Scholars have already begun to draw out continuities between early and midcentury writers. What I have attempted to add to this aspect of recovery (recovering inheritance), is a slightly different angle based upon the definition of amatory fiction's techniques and concerns that this thesis has argued for. *The Wandering Beauty* initiates discussions about female agency and filial disobedience; about female labour and independence; about the merits of virtue and birth; and about the performance of identity, and the limits of a classed body, which subsequent writers then develop according to their own ideologies. As such, Behn's text provides the seed for a multidirectional response.

Blackmore's revision introduces more generic diversity to Behn's original, making it highly marketable whilst simultaneously emphasising themes of virtue rewarded, and of the

necessary and strategic dissimulation of the heroine. In doing so, Blackamore opens up the questions raised by the original in a way that continues to enable further re-renderings based on the same plot. He focuses on and develops the disguised amatory heroine, foreshadowing later works that build on strategies of dissimulation, such as Scott's *A Journey*, whilst maintaining Behn's Tory focus on class and the duties of fathers and daughters. Meanwhile, Barker's self-conscious positioning of Behn's tale alongside a warning about the dangers of quixotic reading practices situates romance and realism side-by-side, and thus prefigures Lennox's well-known analysis of genre in *The Female Quixote*. In authoring a naïve but essentially virtuous heroine, Barker uses the tale to provide a critique of modern manners, manners which are addressed by Haywood in *The History of Betsy Thoughtless*. In greatly emphasising the role of providence, and thus downplaying the agency of the heroine, and in adding in the master-servant episode, Barker also foreshadows Richardson in a much more explicit way than Blackamore, demonstrating the ways in which Behn's original comes to bear on texts that have been posited as working in distinct ideological traditions. In examining the binaries that Behn opens up for interrogation (acting/virtue rewarded; appearance/innate being; scandalous/pious), Blackamore and Barker's versions make clear the ways in which the original carries within itself both possibilities. Rather than either/or, the purposeful ambiguity employed by Behn allows her narrative the adaptability to ensure its longevity in many different forms, and to ensure that the pictures of the pen last, and the brats of amatory brains are allowed to mature.

Scott's novel develops and plays on the ways in which the earlier novels describe identity as a process in specifically proto-feminist and proto-queer ways, using gender confusions to entertain, but also demonstrating an awareness of the fluidity of identities based on appearance, which is present in the earlier texts. The self as constructed in accordance with its surroundings and a recognition of the mask of femininity are played out both in intertextual repetitions with difference (the ways in which this text builds on the implications of earlier amatory texts), and in the repetitions with difference across the text itself, in the form of Leonora's series of male, but also female, disguises. The unprotected woman functions as a vehicle by which to demonstrate capacities masked by conventional feminine roles and Scott's

project looks back to Galesia using a feminised form (patchwork) to address masculinised subjects (poetry; medicine). Behn's experimentations with discursive and material forms of class thereby end up taking part in a midcentury discussion about the function of femininity: Scott's proto-feminism has its basis in the queer techniques initiated by writers like Behn, and the amatory thus informs a proto-feminism that it never quite achieves by itself. Like amatory fiction, Scott's narrative detaches sex from gender, but rather than using that to play with power dynamics, Scott uses it to transform the notion of the feminine into something much more androgynous. Leonora is able to perform both masculine and feminine roles, existing temporarily in a queer space in between both that reflects the position of amatory writers that I outlined in chapter two. In a more strictly feminist reading, Scott seems to be crafting what we might call a gyn-economy, in which men are rendered unnecessary, male roles are feminised, and the world works better for them being so. But her gyn-economy is soon overtaken by the narrative demands for fictional closure and the triumph of the patriarchal specular economy. Leonora returns to her skirts in order to reflect Calidore's desire. Indeed, all of the texts see a heterogeneous identity, either in terms of class or gender, 'righted' by marriage, demonstrating the potency both of the drive for closure, and of a controlling and dominant heteronormativity that finally puts a stop to repetitions with difference.

Amatory fiction is not an abject trace, or mere fertilizer, but rather proves to be a vital contributor to both the canonical realist novel, and the more experimental novel, well into the midcentury, and beyond. Its queer techniques prove persistently troubling for later writers grappling with the nature of identity, and the tensions between the performed, and the real. Thus, the amatory 'Style' and amatory 'Knowledge' were not the domains of modest women, but instead became the 'little Arts' of many writers – female, male, and anonymous – throughout the rest of the century.

Coda: Dangerous Patterns

Doing theory requires being open to the world's aliveness, allowing oneself to be lured by curiosity, surprise, and wonder. Theories are not mere metaphysical pronouncements on the world from some presumed position of exteriority. Theories are living and breathing reconfigurings of the world.

(Karen Barad, 'On Touching – The Inhuman That Therefore I Am')¹

Like the current manufacturers of popular entertainment, [Haywood] recognised that variation from the successful pattern is dangerous.

(John J. Richetti, *Popular Fiction Before Richardson*)²

Amatory fiction is a decidedly queer phenomenon. It is queer in the sense that it authors strategies of refusing or opening up meaning; amatory texts play with the ways in which signification – verbal, political, bodily – work, and situate these different modes of communication in competition with one another in order to create deliberate ambiguity and to draw attention to the structuring of meaning. It is queer in its evasion of fixity, both in terms of the author complicating the traditional paradigms through which s/he is understood, and in terms of its mimicry and parody of normative identity and normative desire. It is queer in its demonstration of how identities are constructed in and through discourse by repetition, and in its rehearsal of these constructions it highlights the moments at which prescriptive gender fails. It is queer in its dramatisation of the effects of the real upon performative iterations of identity. Its plots test out the repetitions that create identity, both within single texts and across multiple texts, and within these repetitive patterns, amatory fiction attempts to make space for difference. John Richetti is right to suggest that Haywood understood variation to be dangerous, but what he misses is that she, like other amatory writers, nonetheless deviated from her own pattern, reworking and reworking repetitions in order to effect incremental changes. But amatory fiction

¹ Karen Barad, 'On Touching - The Inhuman That Therefore I Am', forthcoming in *The Politics of Materiality*, ed. by Susanne Witzgall <http://womenstudies.duke.edu/uploads/media_items/on-touching-the-inhuman-that-therefore-i-am-v1-1.original.pdf> [Accessed 28/08/14]. Revised version of the article by the same name in *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 23 (2012), 206-223.

² John J. Richetti, *Popular Fiction Before Richardson: Narrative Patterns, 1700-1739* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 207.

also demonstrates the ways in which these textual patterns are disrupted by materialisations: real bodies punctuate plots reliant upon the recurrence of the same event, and closure – the enclosure of pages within a book – disrupts iterations that threaten to keep repeating. Amatory fiction is queer in that it functions as an alternative to Enlightenment ways of seeing identity, ontology, and epistemology.

This thesis has attempted to forge a new definition of the genre, which in accounting for and drawing attention to its queerness, demonstrates the way in which amatory fiction initiates discussions of, and opens up questions around, identity construction, which continue to structure and inform modern feminist and queer understandings. My aim was to suggest that our genealogies of these theoretical movements are incomplete without a recognition of the fact that amatory formations of the discursive, the performative, and the real prefigure in surprisingly postmodern ways the articulation of such ideas in the forms that we are now familiar with. My arguments respond to new formalist criticism firstly by demonstrating the continuing relevance of the content of amatory fiction to discussions about the operations of power and the possibilities for change, and secondly by interrogating the forms which these fictions make use of from a perspective that does not already see them as degraded or inferior. The study demonstrates amatory fiction is deeply engaged in the questions and problems that have been the focus of feminist and queer scholarship for the past five decades, and posits that the use of formula supports this engagement by allowing amatory writers to enact, in both content and form, experimentations with discourse, intelligibility, and materiality. This is an approach which necessarily broadens an amatory canon previously based upon who was writing rather than how they were writing. My final aim was to show that far from dwindling into non-existence, amatory fiction is more influential than has been imagined and has a vibrant and vital afterlife in the eighteenth century.

It was beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the afterlives of amatory fiction further into the late eighteenth century and beyond, although there are ways in which the interrogations of each chapter might further be explored with the correspondences between early and mid eighteenth-century writers in mind. What happens to amatory techniques and strategies such as

strategic dissimulation, experimentation with bodily signification, female libertinism, repetitions with difference, and self-conscious textuality, in the second half of the eighteenth century? In terms of strategic dissimulation, for example, one might consider the fate of the cross-dressing heroine, either as a historical figure, such as Charlotte Charke, or a literary one such as Harriot Freke in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801), to ascertain whether Dror Wahrman was right to suggest that the 'gender panic' in the closing decades of the eighteenth century truly saw 'the sweeping closure of the eighteenth-century space for imaginable gender play'.³ Or one might examine the ways in which performance and deception are treated in light of the growing popularity of novels of sentiment and sensibility, which privilege sincerity and openness. In the anonymous 1780 text, *Masquerades, or What you Will*, a text which elevates sensibility to the point of fetishising illness as the appropriate and default condition of the feminine, one female character is told: 'you cannot dissemble without detection – your feelings, exquisite as they are, are instantly delineated on your features'.⁴ Another is described in the following terms: '[h]er skin was of a dazzling whiteness. Ten thousand blue veins meandered about her forehead [...], her temples, and her chin'.⁵ But it seems that the investment in extreme transparency evidenced in this text continues to produce parodic reformulations and outright rejections of its own prescriptions elsewhere, just as conduct manuals did.

The acute sensibility of Gothic heroines such as Horace Walpole's Matilda (*The Castle of Otranto*, 1764) and Ann Radcliffe's Ellena Rosalba (*The Italian*, 1797) seems, to some extent, to tap into the popularity of such transparent formations of femininity. But Gothic texts also engage with the very same tropes of resistance and submission, and conflicts between bodies and speech that we find in early amatory fictions, replicating the amatory fascination with the repressed and punished body. Do Gothic texts, then, have their own brand of queerness, and if so, how is it informed by, or different to, the repetitions with difference that amatory fiction traces? Jane Austen's oeuvre also continues a critical examination of the female

³ Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 44.

⁴ *Masquerades; or, What You Will. By the Author of Eliza Warwick, &c.*, 4 vols (London: J. Bew, 1780), I, 73.

⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 93.

readability originally manipulated by amatory characters and solidified by sentimental fiction. Her intriguing use of inset amatory narratives of female ruin (for example, Lydia Bennet's elopement with George Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice* [1813], or the story of the two Elizas in *Sense and Sensibility* [1811]) is situated against the socially enforced silences of characters such as Elinor (*Sense and Sensibility*) and Anne Elliot (*Persuasion* [1818]), and serves to comment upon the failures of prescriptive femininity and social discipline in ways that bear some similarities to her amatory predecessors. Indeed, the misreading and misrecognitions engendered by female silence in Austen's texts replicate those that occur in amatory fiction as the result of a proliferation of meaning, and often serve the same purpose of drawing attention to the operation of societal norms. Moreover, the amatory contrast of feminine archetypes as a means of exploring constructions of femininity and possibilities for agency continues to inform writers such as Frances Brooke, Frances Burney and Austen, and to enable a female tradition of social commentary. The outright rejection of readability, however, is more explicitly reliant upon amatory treatments of masquerade and performativity, which continue to prove compelling to readers and temporarily enabling for female characters. Such rejections are apparent in an ongoing libertine tradition that we find exemplified by characters such as the Marquise de Merteuil in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (1782), or, even later, by the resourceful but morally reprehensible heroines found in Victorian sensation fiction such as Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), or Wilkie Collins's *No Name* (also 1862).

Once we define amatory fiction as queer, we are able to explore further the ways in which queer strategies functioned within eighteenth-century fiction, and to uncover a tradition of uncertainty based upon making identity strange or charting the mechanical, inescapable aspects of existence, in contradistinction to liberal discourses emphasising personal identity, ownership of the body, and freedom. Amatory fiction suggests a more integrated, atavistic understanding of what it means to exist in which distinctions between self and other, mind and body, the discursive and the material, are highly ambiguous and in which identity, rather than being a predicate of a pre-existing subject, is an ever-emerging and constant process, subject to redirection and interruptions. Karen Barad argues that '[t]heories are living and breathing

reconfigurations of the world'. To exist is to take part in theory: to perform, to repeat with difference, to stretch the fabric of the intelligible, to be citational or to be organic, and to be subject to material disruptions. Amatory fiction's theories continue to inform the processes of modern thought and modern theory. They are early examples of strategies via which we might, now and in the future, use queer positionality to reshape discursive identities from within, but also recognise ourselves as materially constituted by, and integrated within, our surroundings rather than separate from them. If we take Barad's point, then we see how amatory fiction's dangerous patterns continue to live and breathe, to underline our own workings through and of identity, and to enable reconfigurations based on our understanding of the queer terrain of identity.

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