

**Affect, Audience and Genre: Reading the Connection
between the Restoration Playhouse and the Secret History**

by

Erin M. Keating
M.A., Concordia University, 2006
B.A., Wilfrid Laurier University, 1998

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APPROVAL

Name: Erin Keating
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy
Title of Thesis: Affect, Audience and Genre: Reading the Connection
between the Restoration Playhouse and the Secret History

Examining Committee:

Dr. Carolyn Lesjak
Graduate Chair and Associate Professor of English

Dr. Betty Schellenberg
Senior Supervisor
Professor of English

Dr. Diana Solomon
2nd Reader
Assistant Professor of English

Dr. Peter Dickinson
3rd Reader
Professor of English

Dr. Lisa Shapiro
Internal Examiner
Chair and Associate Professor of Philosophy

Dr. Laura J. Rosenthal
External Examiner
Professor of English
University of Maryland

Date Defended/Approved: 12 March 2012

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ABSTRACT

Bringing together two understudied and underappreciated Restoration literary genres – pathetic tragedy and secret history – I argue for a realignment of genre through reception practices and affect. Traditional attempts to reconcile Restoration tragedy and secret history within broader generic traditions (of tragedy and of the novel respectively) have led to a devaluation of many of these complex texts. By considering the socially oriented reception practices associated with these genres, I argue that, for contemporary readers and audiences, they would have been more closely associated to each other than with a generic tradition. The affective element of social reception further reveals an ideological complexity within the texts, specifically surrounding notions of female virtue and political subjecthood. Authors treated in some length include Delarivier Manley, Thomas Otway, Nicholas Brady and Elkanah Settle. Other texts examined include Gabriel de Brémond's *Hattige* and the anonymous texts *The Player's Tragedy* and *The Perplex'd Prince*.

Keywords: Restoration tragedy; secret history; rehearsal plays; affect; Delarivier Manley; Restoration audiences

DEDICATION

To Sean—my hilarious husband, a man of infinite patience.

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INTRODUCTION

In Delarivier Manley's secret history *Memoirs of Europe, Towards the Close of the Eighth Century* (1710-11), two of her frame characters, Horatio (Charles Morduant, third Earl of Peterborough) and Merovius, Prior of Orleans (Melchior de Polignac, Louis XIV's ambassador to Poland), debate between themselves the nature of love.¹ Describing love as a "motion," Horatio articulates an explanation of love that is characteristic of the amatory (prose and dramatic) discourse of the period:

Besides, [Love] continues to agitate, and as differently as are the different Persons it possesses. There are no Disorders in the other Passions that are not found united in this! [...] Nay, what Words can express all the Workings and Changes of the Heart and the Eyes? How can that resplendent Humidity be represented? That modest Disquiet? That laughing Grief? That amorous Anger? [...] It was well feign'd of them, who call'd Love the Son of the Changing Wind, and the various colour'd *Iris*, metaphorically to explain his Nature, and shews that his Original is as much conceal'd from us as that of those two Meteors. (26-27)

¹ All known attributions for the secret histories discussed in this dissertation will follow the character names in brackets. In the case of Manley's *Memoirs of Europe*, all attributions are taken from Ruth Herman's notes to her 2005 edition of the text.

Characterized as a motion that causes other feelings, as bodily in its effects, as a “Wind” moving between individuals, and as, in itself, unknown and unknowable, Love is described here as affect.²

The above quotation brings together a number of strands that are important for the argument made through the upcoming chapters. Demonstrating the notion of affect as coming from the exterior rather than being an internal product of a feeling subject (an emotion), the passage is excerpted from a secret history, one of the two genres brought together in this work, and displays an important moment of story telling and reception. As occupants of a secret history, the characters in the tale by Manley have implied historical counterparts, knowledge of whom would have influenced the way that contemporary readers received the stories told and the opinions expressed by the figures within the text. Even further, the scene of communal storytelling (the characters in the above passage being joined by a number of different listeners and narrators through the course of the text), gestures toward the social spaces within which the secret histories would have themselves been discussed and decoded, a depiction which has led Paula McDowell to call Manley’s secret histories “coffee-house conversations in print” (258). Finally, the last strand of

² One major difficulty in working with theories of affect and emotion is the lack of standard terminology. For example, Daniel Gross uses the term “social emotion” for what I would consider affect while Sianne Ngai uses the words affect and emotion interchangeably. This becomes even more confused when we consider the proliferation of words used during the Restoration period for ideas of affect, including affect, emotion, passion, winds and movements. In an effort to maintain some clarity and distinction between emotion and affect, I will follow Teresa Brennan’s definitions, outlined more fully in the body of my introduction, of emotion as a subjective, conscious appropriation of affect, which itself is both physical and relational.

my argument, the Restoration stage, while not explicitly a part of the above passage, is linked through Manley herself, who wrote a number of plays before turning to political satire and secret histories and was the satiric target of what I will call in Chapter 2 a secret history of the stage. The Restoration stage was affectively linked to the secret history through the reception practices of the audiences and through the celebrity of the actresses whose public personae visibly underlay the many characters they created on the stage.

The argument set forth in this dissertation is one premised on a shift in methodology with respect to how we, as critics, approach genre during the Restoration period. Experimentally shifting focus from the formal elements of a text to the way that those texts and performances were received by contemporary audiences, I argue that a reception-oriented perspective on the theatre and on the secret history of the period productively expands the ways in which these often overlooked texts can be understood. This shift to audience, as physical bodies and thinking subjects, who affectively and communicatively influence the reception of a work of literature in ways that are always intersubjective and communal rather than private and internal, brings into focus the ways that these works reveal and, at times, critique ideological structures of Restoration society that were in flux. Though my focus in this work is on the representation and destabilization of ideologies surrounding female virtue and political subjecthood, my hope is that this approach can be expanded to the analysis of other minor literary genres in the period. By taking the reception

communities created by the pathetic tragedies and the rehearsal plays on the Restoration stage and the secret histories in the public spaces of London as my framework, I will argue that these genres are far more similar than has traditionally been supposed. Before launching into my argument, however, I will first clarify the particular line of affect theorists whom I draw from, justifying the theory's application to Restoration and early eighteenth-century literature. I will then provide a general picture of the social spaces that structured the reception of plays and secret histories within the Restoration period, ending the introduction with a brief summary of each chapter that establishes its place in the overall argument of my dissertation.

Structures of affect/affective structures: Tomkins, Brennan, Ngai

In his foundational work on the human affective system, Silvan Tomkins distinguishes affect from drive and emphasizes both the motivational importance of affect—for Tomkins affect is “the primary motivational system in human beings” (34)—and its non-causal relationship with reason. Though consciousness interprets affective response, this interpretation comes late in the feedback system described by Tomkins: “all central assemblies involve consciousness, but only when there is some aim to be realized” (38). What comes first is a bodily response (affect), either stimulated by an external object or directed toward an external object: “The object may evoke the affect, or the affect find the object”

(55).³ What is important in both cases is Tomkins's emphasis on the bodily nature of affect and its precedence with regard to the feelings they may provoke — which, as Teresa Brennan has helpfully defined them, are “sensations that have found the right match in words” (5). In other words, affects are relational (though the direction of the relationship can vary) and entail both a physical response and a judgement (as to whether the response is painful or pleasurable), which may be but is not necessarily followed by an articulation of feeling accompanying the affective response. The individual experience of an affect, the judgement and the conscious articulation are all influenced by a person's interest or excitement, anticipation (Tomkins's term for a person's history of affective experience) and social/intellectual history; as Brennan argues :

even if I am picking up on your affect, the linguistic and visual content, meaning the thoughts I attach to that affect, remain my own: they remain *the product of the particular historical conjunction of words and experiences I represent*. The thoughts are not necessarily tied to the affects they appear to evoke. One may as well say that the affects evoke the thoughts. (7, my emphasis)

Although affect theory appears to be highly subjective in the above descriptions, Brennan's particular articulation (italicized above) provides a way to approach affect as historically and culturally specific, particularly, as we shall see, in group

³ Tomkins gives a useful example of this distinction: “if I think that someone acts like a cad I may become angry at him, but if I am irritable today I may think him a cad though I usually think better of him” (55). In other words, the physical affect can seek out its object rather than being prompted by an object.

environments where affect is strengthened through transmission between bodies. Not only are particular affects historically constituted, but the emotions that arise from those affects are also influenced by historical and ideological contexts. Before moving to the social environments of the Restoration period, however, it is necessary to introduce the work of Sianne Ngai, who combines affect theory with Fredric Jameson's descriptions of ideology, while moving away from the larger passions commonly highlighted in the study of literature toward minor affects, or, as she terms them, "ugly feelings."

Unlike Tomkins and Brennan, who focus on the biological and psychoanalytic applications of affect theory, Ngai explicitly brings these ideas to bear on the study of the political resonances of literary texts that create minor affects. Minor affects, as defined by Ngai, include envy, paranoia, anxiety, irritation, "animatedness" and "stuplidity" and are characterized as "explicitly amoral and *noncathartic*" – as opposed to the grander passions of fear and pity.⁴ These minor affects "[offer] no satisfactions of virtue, however oblique, nor any therapeutic or purifying release" (6). It is the persistence, "the remarkable capacity for duration" (Ngai 7), of the minor affects that creates their political potential. Because ugly feelings are created by encounters marked by the recognition of a subject's restricted agency within a given situation, either in life or through aesthetic representation, and are not released through any form of

⁴ The last two ugly feelings in Ngai's list are her own creations. "Animatedness" is a racialised affect of movement and excitation (see Ngai 89-125) and "stuplidity" is a "strange amalgamation of shock and boredom" (2, see Ngai 248-97).

catharsis but instead persist as ongoing unnamed irritation, they “give rise to a noncathartic aesthetic: art that produces and foregrounds a failure of emotional release (another form of suspended ‘action’) and does so as a kind of politics” (9). The political potential of this noncathartic aesthetic is clarified by Ngai’s use of Jameson to combine particular affects with their historical, economic and cultural moments, basically combining affects with the ideologies which can be understood as, if not creating them, providing the grounds of possibility for their emergence. Thus Ngai distinguishes particular “affective ideologemes” which may be understood under broader affective categories like envy and, in effect if not explicitly, calls for a deeply historical and particular understanding of affects. It is this ideologically informed understanding of affect which allows us to take particular elements of affect theory into historically distanced periods in productive and non-essentializing ways.

Ngai’s differentiation between the major affects of fear, pity and anger, which are directed at and aroused by distinct objects, and the minor affects which confuse the boundaries between subject and object in various ways is particularly suited to the Restoration period in England. While the heroic drama of the period certainly was rife with major affects, particular subgenres of drama, such as the pathetic tragedy, reveal more nuanced affective potential within their bombastic, often over-the-top discourses surrounding the great battle between love, honour and glory. Looking at the ways that these plays could affectively complicate the relationships between the viewing subject and the actress upon

the stage will be a major part of my first chapter. Though both the affects I discuss in this work, envy and spite, are “object-directed,” they are “directed toward the *negation* of these objects, [...] subjecting them to epistemological scepticism” (Ngai 22). Both envy and spite operate upon their putative object in different ways—envy destroying its object and spite creating an illusory object capable of being judged and derided—yet both ultimately highlight the instability of the seemingly solid object and implicate the feeling subject in that object’s construction in important and revealing ways. Chapters 1 and 3 will elaborate my particular use of affect theory with respect to Restoration drama and secret history; I will provide a detailed discussion of the role of envy in maintaining a particular ideology of female virtue in Chapter 1 and use Ngai’s definitional methodology to describe a period-specific affective definition of spite created by secret history in Chapter 3. Before we get there, however, it still remains to bring affect theory into the literature and the social spaces and reception communities of the period from 1660-1710, an important element of my first three chapters.

“til you in that fatal hour inform’d me I was a Lover”

In Part 1 of Aphra Behn’s three-part novel/secret history *Love-Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister* (1684), the heroine, Silvia (Lady Henrietta Berkeley), describes to her lover and brother-in-law Philander (Ford Lord Grey) how she came to learn that she was experiencing love:

I wonder'd what my sleepless Nights, my waking eternal thoughts,
and slumbring Visions of my lovely Brother meant, I wonder'd
why my Soul was continually filled with wishes and new desires
[...] till I discovered the cheat by jealousy [...] oh how I found my
colour change, my Limbs all trembled, and my blood inrag'd (22-
23)

Silvia's attention to her bodily responses and her awareness of the sensations before her conscious realization of the emotions are by no means unique for the literature of the period. As late as the 1720s, Eliza Haywood in *The Tea-Table: or, A Conversation between Some Polite Persons of Both Sexes* (1725) describes love as "that sweet Destroyer, that stealing Poyson of a Woman's Peace" (88), as something still conceived as external to the feeling subject. As primarily bodily in its impact, as separate from the feeling subject, and as intersubjective, coming from the "you" who informs Silvia that she is "a Lover" (23) in the heading of this section, love provides a paradigmatic example of the intersubjective and externally created understanding of affect in this period, the same understanding upon which modern day theories of affect rely.⁵

Though he does not use the term affect, Daniel Gross's study of rhetoric and emotion in the long eighteenth century insists that "subjective experiences such as emotion have an essential social component and are best treated with

⁵ Brennan also defines love as a "matter of energy" rather than a "metaphysical concept" in her work on the transmission of affect, emphasising the affect's physical and intersubjective, albeit often unidirectional, nature (151).

social analysis" (33-34), particularly in the period under discussion, which, unlike the modern period, saw the physical body as less fixed and more porous than modern conceptions of the body and self.⁶ Brennan argues that "the transmission of affect was once common knowledge" and cites the loss of intersubjective notions of affect as coinciding with the rise of theories based upon "the individual, especially the biologically determined individual" (2), a transition which she also argues takes place after the seventeenth century in which the "discussion of the passions is explicitly concerned, in part, with transmission" (16). The period's own sensitivity toward the transmission of affect (referred to in contemporary works as passions, winds, movements, spirits and even demons) combines for my purposes with the social nature of literary reception practices during the Restoration. Representational affect when experienced in theatre audiences, through public readings in coffeehouses, or in later discussions and analysis of privately read texts opened up powerful possibilities for "entrainment": "the process whereby human affective responses are linked and repeated" (Brennan 52). According to Brennan, entrainment can happen through visual means, touch, physical movement or, most importantly in her view,

⁶ The later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries are widely recognized as a period of transition between a number of overlapping worldviews. Thomas Laqueur has described the shift in this period from a one-sex model, whose continuum of sexuality allowed for the potential belief in the ability to actually shift one's sex in extreme circumstances, to the two-sex model, which made the sexes binary opposites rather than differences of degree. Dror Wahrman and Michael McKeon have widened Laqueur's ideas to look at the ways that the internalized modern subject slowly distinguished itself from more socially-oriented and socially defined views of subjecthood throughout the course of the eighteenth century (an operation whose dominance Deidre Lynch questions from the perspective of literary character representations throughout the period, nicely highlighting the unevenness of the sorts of shifts described by McKeon, Wahrman and Laqueur).

through smell, which activates complex hormonal responses between affectively stimulated groups. Though the possibilities inherent in these reception groups will be discussed further in the relevant chapters, the greater point is that the dominance of social literary reception during the Restoration period strengthened and multiplied the affective impact of the literary works directed at those audiences.

The social spaces of Restoration literature

Although the London theatre community and the club culture and social reading practices centred in coffeehouses and taverns during the Restoration period will be discussed in more detail in the coming chapters, it is necessary to provide a preliminary sketch here to clarify the ways that my argument links the genres of pathetic drama, rehearsal plays and secret history together through their reception communities and the affective structures created by the texts which were enhanced through these communities. On the most basic level, these London public spaces were linked by their ability to attract large, often unruly groups. In the case of the Restoration theatre, the relatively small spaces created an “informal, intimate atmosphere”: “At all times, in spite of a tendency for the socially or financially elite to sit apart from those of lesser quality, the spectators talked and listened in an atmosphere of conviviality” (Avery and Scouten xxvi). As Emmett Avery and Arthur Scouten indicate, the theatre attracted a mixture of classes from the time of its restoration, even if, as Harold Love argues, there was

“a strong sense that certain physical areas were under the proprietorship of particular social classes or groups of the like-minded” (39). This relative inclusivity extended to gender as well; women entered the theatre both on stage and in the audience after 1660, though as William Pritchard has argued, the female playgoer was often closer to the actress as a focus of male attention than to her fellow male spectators.⁷ Despite attracting a variety of audience members, the London theatre was still, according to Avery and Scouten, a “relatively intimate” community comprised of “literary factions [who] made themselves heard both inside and outside of the theatre” (clxxii). One of the key locations for these sorts of literary discussions outside of the theatre was, of course, the coffeehouse.

There is no questioning the impact that the rise of the coffeehouses, “the paradigmatic places of the public sphere” (McKeon, *Secret* 75), had on British society.⁸ As both modern historians and early pamphlet writers noted, the coffeehouse attracted a wide variety of patrons. Sometimes characterized as “a meer Chaos” in which “all the Elements [are] confusedly mixt” (M.P. 10), the coffeehouses brought together people from many different stations and avenues

⁷ Pritchard argues “The female playgoer [...] was ‘staged’ in ways that offered her the same pleasures, opportunities, inconveniences, and degradations known to other women in the playhouse” (84).

⁸ A wide variety of current history and criticism exists regarding Restoration and eighteenth-century coffeehouses. There are two excellent, recent histories of the coffeehouse by Markman Ellis and Brian Cowan as well as numerous works linking coffeehouses to the rise of politeness (see Carter and Cowan, “Mr. Spectator”) and to the periodical trade (see McDowell, Sommerville, Maurer) to name just a few valuable works in the field.

of business and facilitated the exchange of information, news and gossip.⁹ The reading aloud of news, which figures without comment in a number of coffeehouse pamphlets, demonstrates the way that the coffeehouses could serve as centres of learning for those not formally educated: with news being read aloud, everyone, literate and illiterate, had access to information about current events. The fact that the coffeehouse served as a physical space for acquiring and discussing news on a day-to-day basis has led John Sommerville to see it as a “periodical medium” in itself (75). Although the status of women in coffeehouses continues to be a contested topic, Paula McDowell has made a convincing argument for the presence of the women who acted as pamphlet hawkers, many themselves illiterate, who “played a significant role in the production and dissemination of printed political literature in the revolutionary and post-revolutionary period” (17) and usually were associated with particular streets and particular coffee-houses (60). McKeon and Steve Pincus claim that women were both proprietors and patrons of coffeehouses in London (*Secret*, 76; 815).¹⁰

This is not the place to reopen these arguments; my point here is that the

⁹ Ellis writes that “coffee-houses maintained specialised books listing commodity prices, rates of exchange of foreign coin and the prices of government stocks” as well as “the marine list, which reported the arrival and departure of ships at English and foreign ports” (173). They were also well-stocked with newspapers and newsbooks (Ellis 69). Cowan traces the links between the early coffeehouses and the virtuosi in England in Part I: “Coffee: From Curiosity to Commodity” of his *The Social Life of Coffee*.

¹⁰ Both Ellis and Cowan allow that there were professional women in the coffeehouses but claim that women of the middle and upper classes would not have been patrons. Ellis claims that there was no explicit rule that excluded women but that “there was no need to formally exclude them because it was assumed that no woman who wished to be considered virtuous and proper would want to be seen in a coffee-house” (66). Cowan also supports this unwritten rule specifically for London coffeehouses, claiming that Pincus’s examples are taken from country coffeehouses, such as Bath and Tunbridge, that were often gaming houses as well (*Social* 248)

coffeehouses, whether they hosted middle and upper-class women or not, did provide a social space marked by a variety of classes, genders and political persuasions, and by the circulation of news both orally and in print. It was the reception practices that spaces such as the coffeehouse and the theatre fostered that shaped the plays and literature being aimed at those public spaces, which often shared their patrons.

In the coming pages, I look at particular examples of literature which were tailored to the spaces in which they emerged, bringing together in the process the genres of pathetic tragedy, dramatic satire (in the form of rehearsal plays) and secret history. The realignment of texts through reception opens up a space for thinking about the ways that groups spread interest and excitement toward literary works through oral communication and affective means, particularly through the creation of privileged knowledge groups of which a reader or audience member would seek to feel a part. Furthermore, attention to affect in Restoration audiences reveals the ideologies expressed in the works, often though not always uncritically, and, for my purposes, opens up an aesthetic tradition of ideological representations which gives new and rich contexts for the critical drama and satire of Manley, who, I argue, was innovatively working in and critiquing this tradition. Finally, my work seeks to realign the way that we think about Restoration genres in order to open up the interpretative possibilities available for these rich, yet understudied, texts in order to offer new possibilities for the study of early prose fiction.

In Chapter 1, I bring together performance theory, theatre history and Ngai's articulation of envy as an affective relationship in a detailed discussion of four pathetic tragedies of the 1680s and 90s. The first three plays, by Thomas Otway, Nicholas Brady and Elkanah Settle, each in their own way demonstrate how pathetic tragedy reveals the paradoxes inherent in the Restoration construction of female virtue, yet is uncritical itself of those paradoxes, instead allowing for and even relying on the pleasure created for the audience through the activation of envy as they watch the female exemplars destroyed despite (and perhaps even because of) their exemplary virtue. The chapter concludes with Manley's play *The Royal Mischief* which brings the figure of envy onto the stage in the character of Homais, thus, I argue, allowing her not merely to reveal but to critique and satirize the valorization of female virtue on the Restoration stage.

In Chapter 2 I construct a generic link between the playhouse and the social reading practices associated with secret histories. Addressing the legacy of the private reading practices associated with the eighteenth-century novel, I draw on the work of Kate Loveman and Melinda Alliker Rabb to argue for a different, socially oriented model of reading for the scandal fiction of the Restoration. Analyzing two rehearsal plays and a prose secret history about the actress Anne Bracegirdle, I bring together the secret history and the playhouse through their content and their reception, and reveal the way that the communal aspects of these types of literature affectively spread the interest in these texts by creating a group of audience members/readers who were in on the joke and thus

part of a community which through its laughter and privileged knowledge would itself be desirable.

In Chapter 3, I define the affect of spite as a historically specific affective possibility created by Restoration secret histories that focus on the political leaders of the time, both royal and aristocratic. I argue that this relationship, created by the interplay of textual character and historical individual within the mind of the reader, and strengthened by the gossip communities surrounding the texts, created a powerful yet illusory bond between the subjects and their rulers such that the subjects felt an intimacy with those rulers. This illusory bond, a form of Joseph Roach's "public intimacy" (3), enabled contemporary readers, regardless of their social position, to pass moral judgement upon their leaders, thus contributing to the movement, underway already in this period, toward a broader notion of political subjecthood.

Finally, Chapter 4 focuses on Delarivier Manley's most popular secret history, the *New Atalantis*. In my analysis of this text, I argue that Manley was self-consciously working within the generic tradition of the secret history and the aesthetic tradition of the ideology of female virtue popular in pathetic tragedy. Manley's text combines the illusory intimacy created by spite with a complex satire of dominant ideologies of female virtue. Through her use of exaggeration and multiplication of historical targets, her emphasis on education over discourses of nature, her wicked satire of bad readers of her fiction and, finally,

her activation of disgust within erotic, seduction tales, Manley's satire turns against the literary and ideological tradition in which she writes.

CHAPTER 1: ENVIOUS PRODUCTIONS: ACTRESSES, AUDIENCES AND AFFECT IN THE RESTORATION PLAYHOUSE

Theatre historians working on the Restoration and early eighteenth-century performance environment routinely emphasize the fact that the late seventeenth-century audience was distracted, often unruly and at the playhouse for a great many reasons other than the play being performed. Additionally, some audience members were not even present for the entire play, choosing to wait until after the third act so that they could enter for a lesser fee (referred to as “after money”) or sometimes without cost, thus seeing only the fourth and fifth acts.¹¹ The chaotic nature of the Restoration playhouses has contributed to an important yet problematic critical commonplace in theatre history and drama criticism: that Restoration theatre performance (and the plays written for the theatre for this time) created a distance between the performance and the audience. This distance, what Jocelyn Powell terms “a kind of involved detachment” (24), is contrasted with the audience absorption characteristic of sentimental plays later in the eighteenth century.¹² This understanding of the

¹¹ See Avery and Scouten liii, lxxii-lxxiii.

¹² Powell bases his reading of the objectivity of Restoration drama and its relationship with the new science on this presumed distance. That this assumption remains current in criticism today is demonstrated by Paula Backscheider’s uncritical use of it in her recent contribution to the volume *Players, Playwrights, Playhouses*: “In the first half of the century, consumers learned by analysing and judging characters and their actions, while in the second half absorption led to identification with the characters” (89).

late-seventeenth-century theatre provides valuable insights for both performance and textual criticism; however, it has also led to some troublesome assumptions.

In *Restoration Theatre Production*, Powell cogently argues for an understanding of Restoration drama that not only takes into account the distance created by the performance conditions, but that sees this distance as an integral factor in how late seventeenth-century playwrights wrote their plays. He characterizes both serious drama and comedy as predominantly plays of ideas (33, 35) and concludes that, as a whole, Restoration plays are “not narrative” but rather “depend on contrast and variation, on analytical relationships” (38). While I agree with the importance of Powell’s notion of “involved detachment,” his move from this detachment to reading all the plays of this period through the lens of objectivity oversimplifies the matter and is based on a problematic binary relationship between objectivity/analysis and subjectivity/absorption. In other words, there is much more than objective analysis that could be happening in the space created between audience and performance in the Restoration theatre. As I will argue, this space also facilitated the creation of an affective relationship between the performers and the audience and the contagion of that affect amongst the individual audience members.

Powell’s argument for objectivity is predicated on the notion that Restoration plays actively “separate[] action and feeling” (36). On this model, emotions “are seen from a distance, as it were through the microscope of wit and with the eye of judgement. They are described to be observed” (36). Underlying

this is the assumption that affect (which Powell uses interchangeably with emotion) mars rational design in a play (77). Seen from the perspective that views subjective emotion as the binary opposite of objective reason, this incompatibility between the two in a dramatic work is perhaps understandable. However, Eric Rothstein, in his classic, foundational text on Restoration tragedy, also emphasizes the need to take into account the fractured attention of Restoration audiences but, in contrast to Powell, argues for a different relationship between feeling and judgement in the tragedies of the period.

Emphasizing the plays as “a series of effective incidents rather than a ramified totality” (8), Rothstein is sensitive to the fractured attention of Restoration spectators as well as their habits of watching parts of, rather than entire plays. While this leads to a separation of affect and judgement, Rothstein argues that the dramatic criticism of the time reveals that the playwrights saw these two operations as intimately related rather than oppositional, much in the way that Tomkins and Brennan describe affect as an operation that itself can contain two or three steps (physical motion, judgement, and, ideally, articulation). Describing the Restoration notion of catharsis, Rothstein argues that for critics at the time, “catharsis came as a result of contemplation and will, of meditation on the emotions generated, albeit perhaps a meditation and decision both natural and unconscious” (13). Rather than being set against affect, judgement here is an important element of the entire affective operation of seeing a play, and much like the operations of envy to which I will shortly turn, the

effect of this separation of passion and judgement was that “the pleasure of the passion separates itself from the bitter moral of passion’s fruits” (13).

This chapter will build on Rothstein’s work on critical understandings of tragedy within the Restoration period by bringing it together with current work in the field of affect theory that demonstrates that there is a great deal more to the realm of audience response than subjective feelings and that the model of subjective emotion may not be the best one for understanding the affective impact of dramatic performance in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Combining the notion of a mediated distance between audience and actors in the Restoration playhouse with an understanding of affect as a relationship between individuals provides another model for understanding the experience of theatrical performance in the period. Rather than creating a distance which led to objective analysis of a play, the serious drama of the period created audience distance that was subsequently filled with an interplay of affective response between the players and the audience. This response was created not only by the actions of the characters performed upon the stage but also, crucially for the Restoration period, by the knowledge that the audience had concerning the private lives of the actors and actresses who played those characters, particularly by the culture of celebrity that existed around actresses such as Elizabeth Barry and Anne Bracegirdle. Thus the audience response was not one based on emotional identification but rather on social affect created by

the rhetoric of the play, the actor/character relationship, and the social environment of the playhouses.

An affective response is not restricted to an individual; it is not a personal cathartic moment that may or may not bring about a growth in one's moral understanding. Rather, as Daniel M. Gross, drawing on Hobbes and Aristotle, has argued, affect in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was experienced as social: "An emotion such as jealousy originates not from within – not in the biological organism jealous of scarce resources, for instance – but rather is constituted without, in the contested space *between* politically and historically situated agents" (45).¹³ As a social phenomenon, affect, for Gross, is a characteristic of persuasive language and thus is "one important way in which language and the world connect" (15):

For rhetoricians, emotion makes language and identity matter [...]
Emotions are the contours of a dynamic social field manifest in
what's imagined and forgotten, what's praised and blamed, what's
sanctioned and silenced. (15)

Underlying Gross's theory of the persuasive power of affect is Silvan Tomkins's insistence that the affective system is "the primary motivational system in

¹³ Although Gross uses the term "emotion" throughout his work, his theory of social emotion is analogous to the way in which "affect" is used by theorists, and thus for the sake of clarity, I will use the term affect in relation to his work in order to maintain the distinction between subjective emotion and social affect.

human beings" (34); in other words, affect "makes things matter" (Ngai 54).¹⁴ Rather than merely being tools of emotional escapism, the pathetic tragedies of the late seventeenth century can provide a great deal of information about the affective landscape of the period and the role of the theatre within that landscape.

On the subject of pathetic tragedies, Robert Hume writes: "Too often the pathetic plays have on one the effect of watching a dog die by inches after being run over in the street" (403). Brazenly avowing what many readers quietly feel, Hume identifies a key critical problem for those of us trying to understand Restoration drama and audiences: what was it about watching the depiction of intense emotional pain that brought audiences out again and again to the playhouse? Though one cannot deny the attraction of an activation of group pathos, of a good cry, a closer look at a number of the pathetic tragedies of the period will reveal that there is a lot more happening on the affective level of these plays than a straightforward identification with distress. In fact, by activating an affect of envy, plays such as Thomas Otway's *The Orphan: or, The Unhappy Marriage* (1680), Nicholas Brady's *The Rape: or, The Innocent Imposters* (1692), Elkanah Settle's *Distress'd Innocence: or, The Princess of Persia* (1691), and Delarivier Manley's *The Royal Mischief* (1696) provide a great deal of pleasure for the audience while revealing the ideological structures underpinning the moral exemplars provided by Restoration culture. While the first three plays I discuss

¹⁴ For Tomkins, the primary affect in this respect is "interest," upon which other affective and cognitive responses build. See Tomkins 75-80.

in this chapter are not themselves critical of the ideological foundations they expose, their affective structures of envy have the potential to “diagnose situations [...] marked by blocked or thwarted action in particular” (Ngai 27): the exact situation in which, this chapter argues, female virtue finds itself on the pathetic tragic stage. Thus understanding the affective structure of these plays exposes the ways that they reveal but also, for the most part, uphold the ideology of female virtue dominant in the period. However, when Manley moves the figure of envy out of the audience and onto the stage, she exaggerates and displays the affective relationship in a way that facilitates a critique of the gendered ideology of virtue, particularly when read back against the theatrical tradition in which she is writing.

Envy as affect

Envy as an affect is not to be confused with envy as a subjective response. Rather an affect of envy expresses an ideological position toward the play itself; such a formulation recognizes that this tone may create subjective envy but may also create pleasure, distress or any number of subjective responses. As Ngai develops her understanding of the affect in *Ugly Feelings*, envy as an affect is created by the relationship between an envied object and the subject who envies. Yet, as Ngai points out, it is commonly (and mistakenly) perceived by society as a lack in the subject who envies, as a deficiency that is purely subjective rather than relational. By opening up envy as reciprocal, Ngai is able to critique the

subjective illusion that masks what is, in fact, an ideology. An object of envy is not a random target but rather is something being held up as an ideal by a particular society. Once envy is removed from the realm of the subjective and is no longer dismissed as a deficiency in an individual, it can be read as the desire to destroy the privileged object and thus “envying becomes a way of stripping this ‘example’ of its exemplarity” (163).

For Ngai, writing about twentieth-century psychoanalysis, feminism and film, this relationship is very much a gendered one and very much feminine. In her chapter on envy, Ngai draws on Freud to demonstrate how his exemplification of the feminine leads to “*the feminization of exemplarity*” (149) and thus to the firm alignment between her theorization of envy as intimately concerned with questions of exemplarity and the feminine. The feminization of envy is a part of the affect in the pathetic tragedies written for the Restoration theatre; however, the story is not so homogeneous. The pathetic tragedies presented the tragic heroine in such a way that both men and women watching the play could potentially recognize the ideological nature of the model of female exemplarity being acted out upon the stage, particularly as the women in the audience would be unlikely to identify with the heroines and thus be less likely to fall into the sort of envy that would then return upon their own supposed deficiencies. Furthermore, plays like Manley’s *The Royal Mischief* could also be seen to destabilize the gendered nature of envy by including critical

representations of both male and female exemplarity.¹⁵ The critical potential of this notion of envy lies in the fact that “it is only once the ideal object is envied that it becomes viewed as persecutory” (Ngai 163). In other words, envy simultaneously reveals the ideal and that ideal’s repressive nature. In the pathetic tragedies discussed below, I will demonstrate the specific ways that the plays frame virtue, for the most part female, in a way that exaggerates the lack of agency involved in the maintenance of this moral standard. The separation of virtue and agency, intensified by the affective relationship created by the productions, reveals an ideological uncertainty with respect to traditional notions of virtue that opens the way for the reinvention of female virtue later in the eighteenth century.

The term “virtue” is potentially vague and mutable, and so before moving on to the plays, it is important to provide a historically specific sense of the term. On the one hand, the virtue discussed in this chapter, like that discussed in Chapter 4 of this work, is quite simply linked to chastity, whether that be the still important and traditionally Catholic notion of chastity as virginity or the rising Protestant notion of married chastity or sexual fidelity to a proper partner. However, as Toni Bowers points out in her study of seduction fiction, the notion

¹⁵ The less deterministic role of gender in the envy relation during the Restoration period could be productively explained through the current theoretical studies that recognize a more fluid relationship between both sex and gender in the early part of our period. The perceived gender solidity true of the periods in which Ngai’s sources wrote is not a feature of the Restoration period but rather has been described as a somewhat later formation of the eighteenth century. See McKeon, “Historicizing”; Wahrman; Laqueur.

Thus, while Ngai’s theory of envy is, as I will demonstrate, extremely useful in thinking about Restoration theatre it is also important to understand how the historical moment necessarily affects the finer details of the affective relationship.

of virtue has larger political implications during the Restoration and early eighteenth century, as seduction stories were used to explore the possibilities of maintaining sexual and political virtue while opening up a potential space for resistance. Though the focus here differs dramatically from Bowers, I fully agree with her privileging of the discourse of female virtue and its fall as “paradigmatic” and “capable of standing for both partisan political virtue and virtuous Christian subjecthood” (15). Far from being merely about sex, Bowers reads seduction stories as:

primarily concerned [...] with two of the most troubling ideological issues of their day: the difficulty of combining resistance to authority with traditional – and still powerful – measures of virtue, especially the obedience of those in subjection, and the relative agencies and the responsibilities of unequally empowered persons. (11)

Understood as widely paradigmatic in this way, the spectacles of fallen virtue enacted by the following plays take on a broader cultural resonance. The “delight and anxiety” (10) which Bowers describes in the readers of seduction stories is present through the affective tone of envy created in these plays, which provided both pleasure and the potential to diagnose the paradoxes of agency and blame within that pleasure. However, in contrast to the solitary reader’s response, the affect produced within the playhouse was intensified by the bodies of the audience members, whose own visual, aural and hormonal reactions spread and

intensified the initially individual affective bodily responses, thus heightening the potential for the later conscious recollection and analysis of the affective response.

Otway's orphan: A model heroine and a model play

In her recent study of "she-tragedy," Jean Marsden argues that *The Orphan* was not merely the "prototype for she-tragedy" but also became "the play by which the pathos or 'distress' of other plays was calibrated" (*Fatal* 79). Though the retroactive application of the label "she-tragedy" to Otway's play is debateable, what is striking in Marsden's argument is the popularity and importance that she claims the play had with audiences, critics and other playwrights.¹⁶ That this popularity continued well into the eighteenth century is evidenced by the number of performances recorded in *The London Stage*.¹⁷ Recalling to mind Hume's colourful description of pathetic tragedy, the question of what made this play so popular remains, particularly for a play which features the heroine in tears for most of the two final acts, a heroine played by an actress,

¹⁶ The term "she-tragedy" did not exist when Otway wrote his play; it was coined thirty-four years later by Nicholas Rowe in his epilogue to *The Tragedy of Jane Shore* (1714):

If the reforming stage should fall to shaming
Ill-nature, pride, hypocrisy, and gaming,
The poets frequently might move compassion,
And with she-tragedies o'errun the nation. (Rowe 25-29)

It has been applied retroactively by critics to earlier plays in a similar mould. However, the debate about the problems which potentially arise from this generic labelling are for another place. For a problematization of this designation see Tumor .

¹⁷ *The London Stage* lists 22 performances from 1704 to 1717, 48 from 1717-1729, 45 from 1729-1736 and 71 from 1736-1747.

Elizabeth Barry, “renowned for her ability to wring tears from the audience” (Marsden *Fatal* 85).¹⁸ Though the enjoyment of a safe form of vicarious distress, of tears brought on by the sight of tears in others, is not an attraction to be underestimated, Otway’s *The Orphan* also allows the audience to experience the affect of envy, without the guilt of actively expressing subjective envy. The play does this by displaying a truly virtuous exemplar of feminine behaviour and then destroying her in front of the audience’s gleeful eyes.

Unlike the morally compromised heroines of Nicholas Rowe’s she-tragedies, Monimia begins the play as an exemplar of virtue, so much so that her beloved Castalio encourages his brother, Polydore, to try to court her, promising:

If’t prove thy fortune, Polydore, to conquer
(For thou hast all the arts of fine persuasion!)
Trust me, and let me know thy love’s success,
That I may ever after stifle mine. (Otway 1.189-192)

Though this may initially seem to display his trust in Monimia’s virtue, the play does not support this reading. In his later argument with Monimia about his encouragement of Polydore’s passion, Castalio never once mentions her virtue or his trust in her love for him; rather, he reveals that he went along with Polydore in order to protect himself: “I, knowing him precipitate and rash, / To calm his heat and to conceal my happiness, / Seemed to comply with his unruly will;” (2.356-58). Castalio’s lack of trust in Monimia’s virtue demonstrates its fragility in

¹⁸ Marsden cites Charles Gildon’s claim that Barry commented to him “that she could not speak the line ‘Ah poor Castalio’ (5.304) without weeping” (*Fatal* 85).

the economy of the play and reflects the general distrust of the strength of female virtue exhibited by the society of the play. This fragility also points to the risk inherent in society's over-privileging of female virtue. Though the play itself does not question this model of virtue, its pointed articulation of it allows for the possibility of questioning the overvaluation of such a fragile exemplar.

Conspicuously absent from the exchange between Monimia and Castalio, Monimia's virtue only comes into the play when it is under attack. When Polydore is declaring his passion for her, Monimia defends herself on her knees, declaring, "For though to fortune lost, I'll still inherit / My mother's virtues and my father's honor." (1.337-38). However, hers is not the first mention of virtue; that belongs to Polydore when he exclaims against her "peevish virtue" (1.330). The other important exchange in this respect is between Monimia and her brother Chamont. Again, Monimia is forced to defend her virtue after an attack on it. When Chamont accuses her of behaving dishonourably on account of a dream that he has had, she reacts with understandable resentment: "And for this cause my virtue is suspected! / Because in dreams your fancy has been ridden, / I must be tortured waking!" (2.236-238). This impassioned defence comes shortly after Monimia has challenged "envy, / Malice, and all the practices of hell, / To censure all the actions of [her] past / Unhappy life, and taint [her] if they can!" (2.216-291). The use of the word "envy" here is both revealing and potentially misleading. Monimia, in response to Chamont's accusations of dishonour, clearly means these emotions as subjective expressions of a hypothetical individual who

would seek to besmirch her honour. Clearly such an individual is hypothetical as Chamont is finally convinced of his sister's virtue, and, as Hume puts it, *The Orphan* is a play that "has no villain" (218). However, the plot of the play itself fulfils the villain role in that the events are woven in such a way that Monimia's exemplary virtue is truly destroyed, and not just in reputation; yet no one can be said to be fully responsible. Taking the destruction of his female exemplar outside of the realm of subjective villainy, Otway's play allows her fate to be read as a product of her social/dramatic environment, thus opening the possibility for a critique of that environment through the affective structure of the play, though not itself offering that critique. The destructive envy, scorned by Monimia's speech, is triumphant in the end. Otway's play prepares the audience for this success by the distrust of Monimia's honour that occupies the initial acts of the play.

After the fatal bedtrick in which Polydore masquerading as his brother Castalio, unknowingly commits incest with his brother's wife, the play narratively establishes the pleasure the audience can take in Monimia's degradation. Although the event itself takes place off stage near the end of Act 3, Act 4 stages the effects of the rape, showing Castalio's cruel treatment of his wife and even further describing this mistreatment narratively twice after it has occurred, thus allowing the audience to enjoy it three times over in a short span

of dramatic time.¹⁹ At the time of the encounter between Castalio and Monimia, neither of them is even aware of the bedtrick; Castalio's anger is prompted merely by his belief that he was purposely barred from his wife's chamber the night before. Yet the audience, fully aware of the dramatic irony, can relish the fall of an exemplar while simultaneously being sympathetic toward Monimia's cruel mistreatment at the hands of her husband. Certainly the spectacle of Monimia in tears on her knees in front of Castalio, pleading with him as he drags her across the stage must have been intensely pathetic, as is her language after his exit:

Oh, my heart breaks – I'm dying – oh – stand off –

[...]

I feel him in my breast, he tears my heart,

At each sigh he drinks the gushing blood.

Must I be long in pain? (4.144, 4.158-160)

Yet the narrative repetition of the events so shortly afterward shows that this is also a moment of pleasure for the audience, repeatedly played out for full enjoyment. The fact that Barry's portrayal of Monimia was being praised years later by Colley Cibber as her "Master-piece" because of her skilful performance

¹⁹ This is particularly true of the theatregoers who would have just arrived, paying only their aftermoney. Skipping the lead up to the destruction of virtue, these audience members would jump straight in to the height of the dramatic and affective intensity.

Though Derek Hughes has argued that the bedtrick in Otway's play does not constitute a rape as it is merely "intercourse achieved by false pretenses" (227), I agree with Marsden that this indeed constitutes a rape (See "Rape" 191). As an act that removes the very possibility of female consent (since Monimia believes that she is sleeping with her husband), the bedtrick is an intentional rape on the part of Polydore, even if the incest is unintentional. Though this is clearly not the place to rehash such arguments, Hughes' definition of rape as necessarily "forcible" (227) seems to me to be disturbingly narrow.

of “the softer Passions” (92) underscores the importance of the actress’s performance in creating the audience’s pleasure in the fall of female virtue. A closer look at the language of the narrations which follow and describe the pathetic exchange also provides evidence of Monimia’s role as fallen exemplar.

The first narration of the scene between Monimia and Castalio is given by Monimia herself to her brother Chamont. The language she uses is quite similar to the language of the encounter itself and was most likely played for maximum pathetic impact:

MONIMIA. He threw me from his breast,
Like a detested sin.

CHAMONT. How!

MONIMIA. As I hung too
Upon his knees, and begged to know the cause,
He dragged me like a slave upon the earth,
And had no pity on my cries. (4.242-246)

However, a comparison of the above passage with the second narration, spoken by Chamont to Acasto, Castalio’s and Polydore’s father and Monimia’s guardian, reveals an important distinction between the way that Monimia experiences her suffering and the way that her suffering is viewed by the rest of the society within the play. Chamont uses an extended metaphor, likening Monimia to a “little tender flower” (4.296) that:

Grew sweet to the sense, and lovely to the eye;

Till at the last a cruel spoiler came,
Cropped this fair rose, and rifled all its sweetness,
Then cast it like a loathsome weed away. (4.301-304)

The use of figurative language here reifies virtue, emphasizing Monimia's role not merely as a character but as the embodiment of feminine virtue, and, by this point in the play, as a physical symbol of the impossibility of maintaining the poetic ideal of feminine virtue.

Describing the critical potential of envy, Ngai writes that its:

potential [...] resides in its ability to highlight a refusal to idealize quality X, even an ability to attack its potential for idealization by transforming X into something nonsingular and replicable, while at the same time enabling acknowledgement of its culturally imposed desirability. (161-62)

Chamont's transformation of Monimia into a metaphor highlights the replicability of her situation, while her own innocence in her downfall and her language, which emphasizes her personal, singular experience, serve to question the idealization of a trait in which the individual has limited agency.²⁰ Otway's play, like many of the other tragedies discussed in this chapter, deepens the affect by denying any agency to its heroine. All of this is united in the pleasurable affective experience created by the affect of envy and established by the narrative repetition of Monimia's fall. While the pleasure of the play could be

²⁰ The notion of "restricted agency" (2) is integral to Ngai's understanding of ugly feelings, which can only be produced in a situation of limited agency.

seen as upholding the ideology behind its representation of virtue, the display of the tragic destruction of that virtue exposes that ideology, opening it up to the examination which is the first step in any potential critique.

The Rape: Furthering the critical model

Though the dramatic spectacle of fallen female exemplarity is seemingly everywhere in late seventeenth-century drama, there are important differences in the representation of this popular trope. Brady's "aptly named tragicomedy, *The Rape; or, The Innocent Imposters*, [not only] presents the archetypal representation of rape" ("Rape" 191), as Marsden has argued, but also clearly demonstrates another method that the stage employed to create dramatic enjoyment through the fall of female virtue. Like *The Orphan*, Brady's play establishes the pleasure of its central act, narratively going one step further than Otway by giving the audience the perspective of the rapist, Genselaric, a verbal description of the victim Eurione's terror by the supposed prince Agilmond accompanied by her offstage screams, and a narrative emphasis on Eurione's simultaneous blameless innocence and physical defilement after the rape. Immediately after the audience has heard Eurione's offstage shrieks, Genselaric appears on stage with one of his accomplices, Almeric, with whom he discusses the pleasure of rape:

ALMERIC. My Lord, your joys

Have made you wanton, But methinks 'tis strange

That pleasure forc'd shou'd give such vast delight.

GENSELARIC. I hate a tedious Siege, but love to Storm;

'Tis Soldier-like: (27)

Genselaric's pleasure in his deed is contrasted with the horror expressed by the other characters over Eurione's defilement – phrases such as “so much injur'd Virtue!” (30), “Could the Gods look on / And unconcern'd see so much Goodness suffer?” (33), “poor injur'd Innocence!” (52) echo throughout the second half of the play. Yet Genselaric's pleasure and the other characters' distress both contribute to the affective pleasure for the audience, emphasizing the fallen exemplar's personal faultlessness in her destruction. The affect is heightened in performance by the reputation of Anne Bracegirdle, the actress who originally played Eurione. As I will discuss in greater detail with regard to Manley's play, Bracegirdle's reputation as the “virgin” actress outside the playhouse would have intensified the audience's response to her virtuous character's fall.²¹

Brady's play goes even further than Otway's, however, in its use of spectacle and dramatic tableau. Although the rape itself occurs off stage, its aftermath is displayed for the audience in what Marsden calls an “elaborately

²¹ Diana Solomon treats this idea from a different perspective in her article on Anne Bracegirdle, the actress who played Eurione and many of the other raped heroines during this period. Emphasizing the importance of the victim's innocence in this type of tragedy, Solomon argues that Bracegirdle's “credible virgin persona” supplied a necessary backdrop that contributed to the believability of the innocent character and which “emphasized the significance of the crime [rape] through ennobling the victim” (“Breaches” 233). The importance of Bracegirdle's reputation is also emphasized by the revived epilogue written by Thomas Shadwell which bears little thematic relevance to the play but emphasizes Bracegirdle's popularity in this type of role as the thing that will keep the audiences in town against the lure of the French campaign.

coded tableau" ("Rape" 191): "*The Scene draws, and discovers Eurione in an Arbour, gagg'd and bound to a Tree, her hair dishevel'd as newly Ravish'd, a Dagger lying by her*" (Brady 25). *The Rape* does not merely use the body of its heroine as a location for pathos, it adds to this a physical representation of sexual defilement that is both pathetic and erotic, physically opening the stage shutters to "enhance[] the sense of the actress's body being offered to the audience as a piece of erotic entertainment—a kind of pornographic painting brought to life" (Howe 46), in effect giving the body of Bracegirdle, the virgin actress, to her audience who are implicated in the pleasure of her defilement. As if this initial scene of dishevelment is not enough, Brady repeats it two more times in the remainder of the play, first revealing Eurione in her chamber "*discover'd lying on a Couch, her hair dishevel'd (as before)*" (29), where she is displayed by her mother, Rhadegonda, to the Goth lords (and again to the audience): "Behold, my Lords, the Ruines of your Princess!" (29). Near the conclusion of the play, immediately before Euroine's requisite suicide, she is again brought on as a physical spectacle of her own defilement. This appearance is less erotic; Eurione's mourning clothes emphasize her wronged virtue over the sexual voyeurism presented in her earlier appearances. Her speech emphasizes the hopelessness of her situation and her inability to enter into the society of the play once she has been defiled:

Let me forever hide my Face in Darkness:

I am not fit for Light; a stain like mine

Should seek for Everlasting Night to cover it.

[...]

I cannot bear their eyes; already see

All turn and gaze, as if they saw a Monster. (53)

Although she is completely blameless for her fall, Eurione, even more than Monimia, is permanently stained by it and unable to exist in a society that views virtue as the paramount female attribute.²² Like other seduction story heroines, who are “rarely free of blame for sexual transgression” despite their innocence, Eurione “accrue[s] all the guilt” despite her fully “subordinate [...] position” (Bowers 35). Again the heroine’s lack of agency illuminates the structures of the seventeenth-century construction of female virtue, while the representation of her fall in the play enables the affect of envy for the audience in the visual and aural pleasure established through the fall of an exemplar.

Masculine virtue as inalienable

Although the fall of female virtue figures in most of the tragedies of the late seventeenth-century, male virtue also gets its due in a number of plays. Settle’s *Distress’d Innocence: or, The Princess of Persia* is an interesting instance of a work that is concerned with both male and female virtue; the differences between their representations demonstrate the ways that women, while devoid of agency, are still held responsible for their own fall while men can be virtuous

²² The language of pollution here and in the following plays discussed also points to the irrelevance of agency in the fall of the heroines. As Mary Douglas has argued, “A polluting person is always in the wrong [...] Pollution can be committed intentionally, but intention is irrelevant to its effect – it is more likely to happen inadvertently” (113).

even in a fallen state. In other words, male virtue is portrayed as inalienable by Settle; it is untouched (and untouchable) by external circumstances beyond the control of the hero. Because the male hero's virtue resides in his actions rather than in his physical body, his agency is portrayed by Settle as powerful enough to maintain complete control over his virtue in direct contrast to the heroine whose subordinate state and complete lack of bodily control become more and more exposed through the course of the play. Arguably this difference demonstrates that while the destruction of the female exemplar activates the affect of envy, the destruction of a male counterpart does not have the same effect because, as we shall see, it is never actually fully destroyed. More than the plays that focus solely on female virtue, the contrast in Settle's play reveals the gendered nature of Restoration ideologies of virtue and the link between particular affective structures and ideology.

In the few lines Hume dedicates to Settle's play, he places its success squarely in the hands of the actresses: "Mrs. Barry exults in vengeance; Mrs. Bracegirdle suffers. That the play succeeded is testimony to their skill" (400). Though Barry played the innocent sufferer in Otway's play, the plays of the 1790s see her in her more famous tragic roles as vengeful villain against Bracegirdle's innocent victim. The Barry/Bracegirdle pairing has received a lot of critical attention recently and has been well-discussed elsewhere (and will be an important factor in my discussion of Manley's play, *The Royal Mischief*).²³

²³ See Bush-Bailey and Howe in particular.

However, in Settle's play, the emphasis is not on the pairing of the actresses but rather on the virtuous hero/heroine pairing at the centre of the plot. Bracegirdle as Cleomira again plays the innocent victim stripped of her agency while William Mountfort plays her virtuous husband, the Christian general Hormidas, who, as I shall argue, retains his virtue despite being stripped of all his titles and worldly possessions (including his wife).

The representation of Cleomira follows along the same lines as the heroines previously discussed. Throughout, the play narratively establishes her virtue and her innocence in her own destruction. Isdigerdes, the Persian King, acknowledges her innocence – “Thy innocence, poor persecuted Fair, / Has undeserv'd his [Hormidas'] Fate” (28) – even as he is giving her to her husband's enemy Otrantes. When she resists the idea that she can wed any other man but her current husband, crying, “Oh canst thou think my Vertue and Religion, W'all in my heart so weak!” (29), Isdigerdes plots to overcome her resistance through the use of the occult arts of his magi. His words again bring into focus for the audience the inherent fragility of female bodily virtue: “Well, thy Sexes Prodigy, / The Vertue, my coy *Lucrece*, shall not guard thee;” (29). Though the method is different (in this case Cleomira is raped through the use of a magic ring and philtres), her fall follows the same pattern discussed in relation to both Monimia and Eurione. The one difference in Settle's play is that Cleomira is already a married woman, not an innocent virgin, when she is raped by Otrantes. Despite this, as Solomon has argued, “Cleomira's virtue is reconstituted” before the rape

by the loss of her child (who is taken and sent into slavery by the King) while “in the aftermath [of the rape], images of virginity surround her” (“Breaches” 235). Despite her sexual knowledge as a wife and mother, Cleomira is still depicted by the play as chaste and virtuous before her rape.

Similar to Otway’s and Brady’s heroines, Cleomira is regarded by the other characters as polluted after her fall, despite her innocence. In a scene reminiscent of *The Orphan*, Cleomira is initially held responsible for her fall by her husband Hormidas, who berates her in the strongest language: “thou Gangreen’d Mass of foul Dishonour / Thou purple Plague, with all thy spotted deaths!” (42). Cleomira’s confusion and distress in the face of her accuser heightens the pathos (and audience pleasure) in the scene, which continues at length before Cleomira realizes that she has been defiled by Otrantes without her knowledge and falls down in a swoon.²⁴ Even when Hormidas has been informed that his wife sinned against her will, the language of her pollution persists: “What though her canker’d Veins run all Contagion; / And all my blasted hopes for ever die? / Her spotless Mind’s all White,” (45). The division between a pure mind and a polluted body emphasizes the paradoxical position of a woman in a society that holds bodily purity as the ideal. Like Monimia, the whitest, most spotless mind cannot save Cleomira from falling, and it cannot save her from the poetic destiny reserved for a character of her type. Unsurprisingly, she ends the play dead, not even given the dignity of death by

²⁴ The scene covers two pages in the printed text of the play and, of course, would have been even longer in performance than it is in the reading.

her own hand but stabbed by an accomplice of Otrantes; this ending further highlights the complete lack of agency that she has had over her own life throughout an entire play that has seen her lose her status and her child because of the supposed sins of her husband, be given as a prize to her husband's enemy, and lose her virtue through occult means. Again the juxtaposition of the exemplary virtuous female with the pleasurable pathos of her complete, though utterly blameless, destruction sets up an affective relationship of envy for the audience members.

Though Settle's play is typical in its representation of fallen female virtue, it presents a model of inalienable male virtue that is unseen in the other plays already discussed. Settle highlights the importance of this model of virtue in his dedication to the printed play, writing that "[h]eroick Virtue is of that Universal Attraction, that in the crowd of her Admirers, the Muses in dutious Homage must make a part of her Train" (A2). Though gendered female, Settle makes it clear that heroic virtue, that "Noblest Theme" (A2), is a masculine trait, linking this virtue with his dedicatee Lord Cutts' martial triumphs. Triumph in war is also the first virtue that characterizes Hormidas, the hero, on his initial appearance in the play; he is described to Isdigerdes (and the audience) as the "Victorious General" (4) and "this shining Leader of your Arms" (5). His virtue is further solidified by his humility despite his glory, as he spends much of his first scene on his knees before the king and Orundana, the king's daughter and heir. When the king confronts Hormidas with the rumours, spread by Otrantes, that

he seeks to supplant Orundana, Hormidas demonstrates his desire for honour over and above all worldly things. To the king's declaration that the rumours come from a source "below your [Hormidas'] sword" (7), he responds in a manner that both emphasizes his masculine virtue and foreshadows his fate in the play:

Is that all? Unworthy!

No, Royal Sir, let not that bar your Justice;

Take all my Titles, all my Wreaths of Glory;

Umplume me, rifle me, degrade me. Oh!

Be kind, and strip me naked, that my Sword

May right my Honour by the Traytor's Blood. (7)

The use of terms like "rifle" and "degrade" feminizes Hormidas in a way that links him to his wife's own degradation later in the play; however, this similarity only serves to highlight the essential difference between masculine and feminine honour because Hormidas is incapable of being rifled or degraded in the way that Cleomira suffers.²⁵

When Isdigerdes does strip Hormidas of all of his titles and wealth, after being deceived by Otrantes, Hormidas' honour remains untouched. Even

²⁵ Hormidas and Cleomira are paralleled throughout the early scenes of the play. Both display a similar, emotional aversion to the villain Otrantes: *Hormidas*: [...] A strange aversion rooted in my Soul / Sets thee the eternal Object of my loathing; [...] *Cleomira*: Alas my Lord! Nor can I see that Face; / But something rises in my Blood against him," (11). After Hormidas is stripped of his titles, Cleomira joins him "in a Poor Slave-like Habit," disavowing her husband's claim that she has come "To Visit Wretchedness": "No Sir, the partner of your Joys. For Woe's / A Stranger in these Arms; my Love, my Soul / My more than all." (25). The play's emphasis on their unity, of feeling, of fate, of soul, makes the eventual separation of their fates all the more surprising and effective both in terms of Cleomira's fall and Hormidas' restoration to honour.

further, he becomes more of an exemplar than he was before his fall. In response to his friend Prince Theodosius's horror at his fallen state, Hormidas claims that he has lost nothing of value and demonstrates his continuing loyalty to the king despite his disfavour:

[...] The kind King
Has left me Vertue, Patience, Innocence,
Obedience, and fair spotless Truth, young Prince,
Treasures above the fading Jems of Crowns;
Which not the frowning World can e're take from me. (23)

Hormidas' enduring virtue in the face of dishonour is what eventually leads to the destruction of his wife, as his own honour is untouchable through any worldly means. As Theodosius describes him, Hormidas is "a matchless Miracle!" (24), an example that cannot be stripped of its goodness through any earthly power.²⁶

Hormidas' essential goodness and humility infuriate the king who rages against him: "[...] proud of his Raggs, / Affects a vanity from Shame and Beggary, / [...] he courts / The Popular Eyes, and wantons in their Pity." (26). It is Hormidas' enduring honour that pushes Isdigerdes to send his child into slavery and to give his wife to Otrantes. The implication is that the only way to

²⁶ The key difference here between the virtues as displayed by Settle is sexuality - a woman's sexuality is always related to her virtue, in contrast to a man, who is easily capable of displaying sexual desire and maintaining his virtue. Even further, the woman's sexuality also impacts the virtue of her husband and thus makes her a pawn in the power struggles between men.

truly injure Hormidas' honour is through others, and, in particular, through his wife. As the king exults to his magi:

But if this last home Blow thro' *Cleomira*
Strike him not tottering, groaning, bleeding, dying,
Let him brave Fate; set up a Counter, second
To fam'd *Atlas*, and his untir'd Souldiers
Bear the whole Hell. (30)

Not only does Cleomira fall through no agency of her own, she is further objectified by being merely a tool in the king's revenge on her husband. Though Hormidas dies at the end, stabbed by the same villain who takes Cleomira's life, he dies having been restored to his titles and honours by the king. His final worldly position reflects the inalienable virtue that he has displayed throughout the play, in stark contrast to the position of his wife, whose virtue is incapable of being reconstituted and, even further, has been sacrificed in an attempt to damage the inalienable virtue of her husband. Cleomira's position as a mere tool in an attack on her husband, a tool completely devoid both of personal agency and of self-importance in the play, makes her fall perhaps the most affective (and effective) that we have seen thus far.

Envy takes the stage

In *The Royal Mischief*, Manley uses the critical and pleasurable potential of envy that pervades the pathetic tragedies, but heightens it dramatically by

placing the agent of destruction on the stage in the figure of Homais. In its original performances, the tone of envy would have been brought to the fore by the casting of Elizabeth Barry in the role. As Homais, Barry would also “ghost” Monimia, a reminder of previously destroyed virtue now brought into an agent of destructive envy.²⁷ In her “To the Reader” attached to the published playtext, Manley draws attention to this casting, claiming that Mrs. Barry “made the part of an ill Woman, not only entertaining, but admirable” (A4). A number of critics have commented on the ways that Manley qualifies Homais’s villainy in the play, seeing her as “a sympathetic adulteress” (Corporaal 48), and ultimately, a product of masculine society. Melinda Alliker Rabb argues that “[u]nlike characters who simply *are* wicked, Homais becomes wicked [...] in response to a world that has few constructive options” (“Angry” 147). Rebecca Merrens agrees and goes even further, claiming that Manley’s play “blames male characters and the oppressive demands of the patrilineal system for tragedy, even for the tragedy that Homais creates” (42). Though sympathetic to the feminist project that drives these sorts of arguments, I would argue that it is exactly Homais’s unapologetic and inexcusable villainy that makes her both “entertaining” and

²⁷ Marvin Carlson describes “ghosting” as similar to the way that genre relies on memory and recognition of past interpretations and encounters with literary texts. However, he argues that “ghosting” is a specific function of the theatre in that the thing encountered is not merely similar but in some ways identical to past encounters, as in situations common during the Restoration period when theatre audiences were presented night after night with the same small group of actors playing different roles: “ghosting presents the identical thing they have encountered before, although now in a somewhat different context. Thus, recognition not of similarity, as in genre, but of identity becomes part of the reception process” (7). Thus Barry’s body, her physical presence, carries traces of her past roles into each new performance and these ghosts become stronger or weaker depending on the cultural strength or influence that the particular roles ghosted had within the theatre community.

“admirable.” Rather than accepting the feminist need to make Homais a sympathetic character, I find it more productive to read Manley’s play through Ros Ballaster’s articulation of narrative movement. In *Fabulous Orientals: Fictions of the East in England 1662-1785*, Ballaster argues:

[...] narrative ‘moves’ the psyche, or transforms its readers’ emotional states – less through patterns of identification and recognition of ‘selfhood’, than through pleasurable abandonment of the sense of self to an other in a space in which such activity is virtually free of risk. (14)

Though Ballaster is writing about prose, her argument is even more apt for the theatre, which, as I have argued, worked even harder to prevent identification between audience member and character. As the central figure of the play, Homais stages the power of envy over exemplarity not to invite audience identification but to interrupt the possibility of identification in a way that, even more than the other tragedies discussed thus far, opens a space for affective enjoyment that is based on the complete rejection of audience absorption.²⁸

In addition to drawing the reader’s attention to the cast, Manley’s “To the Reader” also highlights her play’s central opposition: the difference between Homais’s and Bassima’s characters. However, this hint in her prefatory material is almost superfluous, as the play itself opens with a strong demonstration of the tension between these two figures. Homais’s second speech in the very first act is

²⁸ This relationship between the audience and the play is assisted by its Persian setting which “establishes a critical distance between the English audience [...] and a wild, unstable and oppressive Asian nation” (Orr 129).

a repudiation of the virtuous princess Bassima: "Name her not, she's a Disease to all my hopes," (1). Based in her own desire for the Princess' husband, Levan Dadian, Homais's hatred for Bassima is fuelled by her passion and by the implication that, in the economy of the play, only one of them can be triumphant: "For *Bassima* or I must make *the Prodigy*." (5). Though Homais certainly wants to take Bassima's place at Dadian's side, this does not mean that she seeks to become Bassima; quite the contrary. Homais is open and unapologetic about her own passionate (sexually and otherwise) nature:

What to conceal desire, when every
Atom of me trembles with it, I'll strip
My Passion naked of such Guile, lay it
Undrest, and panting at his feet, then try
If all his temper can resist it. (20)

Manley's depiction of Homais's desire is, as Laura Rosenthal has argued "on a heroic scale" (177) and is in direct contrast with Bassima's refusal to admit her love for Osman and, once it has been revealed, her refusal to act upon that love.

Unlike *The Orphan's* relative silence on the subject of Monimia's virtue and Brady's and Settle's reverence and pity for the virtue of their heroines, Manley's play exaggerates Bassima's. Though she does not even speak until Act 3, Bassima's first lines reveal her self-conscious desire to be an example ["Do you not know that I am fond of Glory?" (23)] and her love of strict virtue ["Am born a Noble, Vertuous Princess, / Just married to a Royal-Husband, / Whose Love and

yours admit of no compare;" (23)]. This exaggeration of virtue reaches almost comical proportions in Bassima's death scene, as she rejects Osman's attempts to seduce her as she dies, citing: "That Faithfulness I owe my Royal Lord, / That Veneration all must pay to Vertue, / And a fair Conscience Peace [...]" (42). Though Osman begins the scene by rejecting her "empty, notionary Sounds;" (42) he is quickly convinced by her words, ending the scene by praising "This unexampled Vertue" (43).

Manley's over-the-top presentation of female virtue here has led a number of commentators to view the play as a satire. While I would not go so far as some with this label, there are definite satiric elements that call into question the representation of virtue in Manley's text. Bassima's virtue "ring[s] hollow" (Merrens 45) and is easily perceived as "insipid" rather than heroic (Rubik 170). As Bernadette Andrea insightfully notes, Bassima "resists the adulterous advances of Osman on the grounds of social conformity rather than ethical principles" (98), ensuring a sense of irony to Osman's pronouncement of her virtue as "unexampled." Thus even the exemplar set forth by the play, and ultimately destroyed, is already herself called into question and portrayed as non-singular.²⁹ Manley's critique thus works on two levels: satirically destabilizing the supposedly heroic value of female virtue and drawing on envy to implicate the audience in the play's enjoyment of the destruction of this virtue.

²⁹ Although Bassima does not actually lose her virginity in the play, her sullied reputation is enough to merit her death and, in effect, is just as powerful as an actual loss of virtue would have been. The importance and solidity of reputation will figure in the next chapter when I turn to the secret histories surrounding the theatre and in Chapter 3 when I look at the secret histories about Charles II.

Even further, unlike the other pathetic tragedies, Bassima's virtue is not destroyed through rape but rather through the agency of another female character, thus making explicit upon the stage what was merely an implicit affective relationship between actresses and audience members in the plays already discussed.

The casting is again calculated for particular audience affect. Like Eurione and Cleomira, Bassima was played by Bracegirdle, whose reputation as "the virgin actress," though often used in tension with her dramatic roles, in this case both strengthens the association of character with virtue and highlights the potential to read that virtue as hollow performance.³⁰ Though often praised for her virtue, that reputation was also called into question in print. The anonymous scandal novel *The Player's Tragedy. or, Fatal Love* (1693) – a text that will be discussed at length in the next chapter – is one instance of this type of criticism. In the novel, which is based on the true story of the death of Montfort in a duel, Bracilla (Bracegirdle) is accused of harbouring a secret love for Montfort (and thus not being truly virtuous), is phantasmatically enjoyed through the body of another woman, and in the end, is laid open to the accusation that her virtue can be overcome by gold. The insinuation of the novel is that the actress's reputation is purely a front and as hollow as the performances of virtue that she enacts on stage. The currency of this type of literary gossip alongside Bracegirdle's chaste reputation undermines her performance of Bassima's virtue at the same time that

³⁰ See Solomon "Breaches" for a discussion of Bracegirdle's roles that played on the tension between dramatic character and the actress's virtuous reputation

that performance is strengthened by her “ghosting” of her many other virtuous roles.

Even further, if we consider the manner in which fan culture operates, it is possible to see that Bracegirdle’s celebrity status would inform her performance of exemplarity. As the virgin actress, she herself was often seen as a model in life for what an actress should be, in contrast to actresses like Barry who were known mistresses. Bassima’s impervious virtue (whether it is read as hollow or heroic) remains strong even when Osman attempts to seduce her as she is dying. This only heightens Homais’s triumph in the end, along with the envious pleasure that the audience can take from virtue’s fall, while Bracegirdle’s reputation for virtue brings the envious destruction of exemplarity outside of the realm of dramatic performance into the historical moment of the players and audience.

Female virtue is not the only exemplar targeted in Manley’s play; Levan Dadian himself, the object of Homais’s desire, is set up as an exemplar of masculine honour brought down by Homais’s passion. However, in contrast to Settle’s Hormidas, Manley depicts Dadian as capable of falling by depicting his sexual weakness as necessarily connected to political rebellion through the body of the wife of his uncle, the king. The distinction maintained between her heroine’s and hero’s fall, however, is that Dadian falls through his own agency, a willing victim to Homais’s beauty. Thus the masculine exemplar is depicted by Manley as fallible yet still ultimately in control of his own fate. News of Dadian opens the play as he returns to Libardian a triumphant conqueror; in Homais’s

words: “’Tis finisht, and a work speaks loud as Fame, / Where Crowns and Scepters truckle to his Vertue,” (1). This masculine virtue is emphasized by his initial attempts to resist Homais’s charms. In argument with her agent Ismael, he holds fast to an ideal of honourable love, asserting that: “You speak of lawful Loves, were mine but such, / I’de gladly lose the Rank of Kings, yet find / More joys than ever circled in a Monarch’s Crown; / But Incest shocks my nature [...]” (21). Yet Dadian’s virtue, in the end, is no match for Homais’s female beauty and masculine passion.³¹ He is literally brought to his knees in front of her mere moments after he has asserted his virtue to Ismael. As the scene closes on the two lovers, there is no doubt that Dadian has fallen. His suicide at the end, once he has realized Homais’s treachery, merely completes this fall.

As the affective centre of *The Royal Mischief*, Homais brings about the destruction of pure female virtue and masculine honour. Yet unlike the other plays already discussed, the destruction of the exemplar does not result in pathos. Bassima’s death is rendered almost grotesquely comic by Osman’s somewhat necrophilic desire to possess her as she is dying, while Dadian’s suicide is brief and formulaic. The affective climax of the play is Homais’s death, which is as passionate and destructive as her life has been. After she has been stabbed by her husband, she rages against him, spattering him with her blood:

³¹ Throughout the play, Homais’ desire is aligned to that more often associated with a male rake figure (see Rubik 171). Both her excess of desire and her need for enjoyment combine with her more traditional feminine traits to make her a figure that escapes traditional gender classification. E.g. “My Life, my Soul, my All, is fixt upon Enjoyment, / Resistance but augments desire.” (4). It is her ability to occupy both gender positions that enables her to act as an agent of envy toward exempla of both genders.

“Thus I dash thee with my gore, / And may it scatter unthought Plagues around thee,” (45). At the end, she attempts to bring Dadian with her into death: “Thus with my utmost force I’le bear thee with me; / Thus strangle thy lov’d Neck, thus die together; / But O! a Curse on Fate and my expiring strength” (46). Even in death, Homais is a destructive force against the moral exemplars of her play. Without the death-scene pathos present in the other plays, Manley’s play becomes a triumphant celebration of the power of envy and the ruination of exemplars.

The tone of envy that pervades the play is complemented by the “virgin epilogue” that follows it.³² Spoken by a Miss Bradshaw, the epilogue begins with the young girl’s “Youth and Innocence” but quickly moves into a not-so-veiled allusion to her budding sexual charms, which will soon be available to the audience both on and off the stage. Rather than ending on a moral note, Manley’s epilogue wittily ties audience enjoyment to loss of virtue, destabilizing in a comic manner the exemplar of feminine virtue that has been destroyed in the play, “comically tainting” virginity itself (Solomon, *Bawdy* np):

The Play-House is a Hot-Bed to young Plants,
Early supplies your Longing and your Wants.
Then let your Sunshine send such lively Heat,
May stamp our Poet’s wok [sic], and Nature’s too Compleat.

³² I borrow this term from a forthcoming work by Diana Solomon, where she describes this type of prologue or epilogue as “featur[ing] the hymen as its virtual prop” (*Bawdy*).

The play's final word is a cheeky invitation to the male audience to assist in the destruction of virtue that will make both the play and the young actress "Compleat." Underlying its comic nature, the epilogue's appeal to the male audience members implicates their sexual pleasure in the continued dominance of the ideological picture of female virtue dissociated from agency, the exemplar which enables envy, on the Restoration stage, and, by extension, within late seventeenth-century British society.

Affect in the playhouse

In all of the pathetic tragedies discussed in this chapter, the text works to evoke the affect of envy in a way that establishes a relationship between audience and text, that sees affect as belonging neither to character nor audience member but rather "mantl[ing] the threshold" (Sedgwick 38) between the two. Although this relationship certainly can exist between an individual text and a reader, I argue that it is heightened for the audience member through performance.³³ On the most basic level, affective responses are heightened by the group nature of a theatre audience. Drawing on the work of Anne Ubersfeld, Susan Bennett argues that "[a]udiences derive pleasure from those who accompany them to a performance [...] and from the emission of 'barely perceptible signs of pleasure as well as loud laughter and secret tears – their

³³ I am following Susan Bennett's work here which stresses three necessary aspects which need to be taken into account when talking about the theatre audience: "audience-stage interaction in the field of fiction, audience-actor interaction, and interaction in the audience" (151).

contagiousness is necessary for everyone's pleasure'" (72). In addition to the visible signs of emotional response cited by Bennett, Brennan's theories of entrainment through hormonal and pheromonal means argue for the strong potential of affective contagion in a confined space like the crowded playhouse.

Furthermore, rather than relying on the reader's imagination of the characters, the playhouse uses actors and actresses to embody the characters, bringing to life the text in a way that is unavailable to a solitary reader. This is not to say, however, that the performance in some way gets to a truth of the text or that a particular actor's or actress's interpretation of a character should be privileged over a reader's. Rather, perhaps even more so in an instance where an actor's interpretation of a role may differ from a reader's expectation of the character, the playhouse works to separate the audience from the character, in many instances shutting down possibilities of identification in order to create the distance necessary for a non-subjective affective response. In the case of the late seventeenth-century plays discussed here, the playhouse established this in two central ways: through the body of the actress as character and through the audience's knowledge of the reputation of the actress behind the character.

In contrast to studies that emphasize the body of the actress as an object passively displayed for the (usually masculine) audience, recent work by Gilli Bush-Bailey challenges us to see the actress's body also as "the essential tool of her craft": "The actress's body is the canvas/paper on which she creates, her use of movement, gesture and voice the colours she uses to demonstrate her skill"

(17). The physical body of the actress does more than merely sexualize the Restoration stage – it can be used to manipulate audience response. The physical gestures of the actress can be powerful enough to actually overwrite an audience’s perceptions of the actress playing the role and were sometimes included by playwrights as part of the role as written. As mentioned earlier, when Barry performed the role of Monimia she was renowned for her ability to wring tears from the audience. As Cibber describes it, “[i]n the Art of exciting Pity, she had a Power beyond all the Actresses I have yet seen, or what your imagination can conceive” (92). Her use of gestures, voice modulation, and well-timed swooning are cited by Elizabeth Howe as key to the eventual success both of Otway’s play and Barry’s career (118-19), all this despite her reputation as a known mistress. It was Barry’s effective use of her physical body in performance that elided her personal reputation and allowed her to create not merely a believably virtuous character but one that could move an entire audience through her suffering.

Though the physical body in performance could overshadow the knowledge of the actresses’ personal lives that audience members brought to the theatre, the affective response in tragedy was most effectively heightened when the reputation confirmed and thus strengthened the character being represented. In the pathetic tragedies of the 1690s, this was most often accomplished by the pairing of Barry and Bracegirdle as villain and innocent, or as Rothstein more colourfully describes the casting pairing: “while Mrs. Bracegirdle languishes and

suffers, Mrs. Barry storms, stabs, poisons cordials and sherbets, concocts intricate slanders, and dies fuming" (143). The dramatic importance of this pair of actresses should not be underestimated in any study of late seventeenth-century London theatre; "between 1688 and 1706 [...] they were cast together in at least thirty new tragedies" (Howe 159). Bracegirdle's reputation as the virgin actress has already been discussed in relation to Manley's play, where it served both to emphasize the already exaggerated virtue of Bassima and, through the satires which undercut Bracegirdle's claims to virtue, also cast doubt onto that virtue. In the roles of Cleomira and Eurione, in contrast, Bracegirdle's reputation would serve to strengthen the audience's belief in the innocent sufferers, thus making the spectacle of her fall that much more enjoyable. While it is fairly standard to see Bracegirdle as strategically maintaining her reputation for virtue in order to maintain her popularity in her line of roles, the same has not normally been considered for actresses with less virtuous reputations. Yet, as Bush-Bailey argues, it is entirely possible "that Elizabeth Barry's public reputation was as carefully constructed as Anne Bracegirdle's and the reality/illusion of Barry's whorish activity as potent as the reality/illusion of Bracegirdle's virtue" (82). Given the tragic roles that Barry became famous for throughout the 1690s, it makes sense to consider that her reputation for passion off the stage would also, like Bracegirdle's reputation for virtue, heighten the audience's perception of her performance of passion on the stage. Again the conflation of the reputation with

the character would pleurably heighten the audience's response in performance.³⁴

Thus, by drawing on the group dynamics of the audience coupled with the physical body of the actress as character and the audience knowledge of the public persona of the actress behind the character, the pathetic tragedies of the late seventeenth-century created an affective response of envy more powerful than anything that existed in print at the time. The destruction of the female exemplar not only provided audience pleasure, it also opened up that exemplar to potential scrutiny, allowing the possibility that some of that audience might question the privileging of a virtue unattached to agency, though the plays themselves did not. The paradox inherent in the affective relationship itself took to the stage in Manley's play, and yet her critique of the relationship between envy and female virtue did not fully take shape until her *New Atalantis* (the subject of Chapter 4). The importance of the London theatre audience in the spread of affect, both within the theatre and in the public spaces outside of it in which the plays were debated and discussed, is a continued theme in the next chapter, where I will explicitly connect the theatre with the popular secret history genre through their shared emphasis on social reception practices.

³⁴ This popular desire to see the "real" actress onstage is demonstrated in an anecdote about Barry, which according to Kirsten Pullen was probably apocryphal, but is attributed by her to Thomas Betterton and so, true or not, had currency in the gossip of the time: "Barry and [Elizabeth] Boutell quarrelled over a scarf before a performance and Barry stuck a dagger about one-quarter inch into Boutell's side as the two actresses played a scene together. The audience, according to Betterton, believed 'Mrs. Barry was jealous of Mrs. Boutell and Lord Rochester [...]' (44). The currency of this anecdote points to the public's desire to see or to believe in the passionate/jealous actress behind the character on stage.

CHAPTER 2: SOCIAL READING PRACTICES: READING THE BODIES BEHIND THE STAGE AND THE PAGE

Moving away from my focus on pathetic tragedy's representations of female virtue, which revealed the ways that affect theory can open up our understanding of Restoration theatre, this chapter will introduce the importance of reception communities and their ability to heighten interest in a literary work to the link that I am making between the playhouse and the secret history. Beginning with a discussion of socially oriented reading practices in contrast to the solitary novel reader model, I will then take these theories into the playhouse by analyzing the anonymous play *The Female Wits* and George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*, both of which I will treat as forms of secret history. I conclude the chapter with the anonymous, prose secret history *The Player's Tragedy*, taking the reception community created by the London playhouses outside of the theatre proper and into other physical and virtual spaces.

The socially oriented reader

Recent work offering new ways of understanding reading practices in the late seventeenth century has opened up the way we can interpret the period's prose fiction. Both Kate Loveman and Melinda Alliker Rabb significantly alter the way that we, as critics, are able to view the readership of early novels of

amorous intrigue in general, and the secret history genre in particular. Loveman and Rabb are interested in different aspects of early eighteenth-century literary culture—Loveman focuses on the use of deception in a broad spectrum of political writing spanning 1660 to 1740 while Rabb is interested in forging a link between secret history and satire through the shared notion of secrecy; however, both projects argue for (and rely on) a socially oriented understanding of reading practices for early fictional categories. As Loveman makes clear, socially oriented reading does not necessarily preclude the idea of a solitary reader (the traditional model for the reader of novels), but rather complicates the motives for reading: “even when reading in silence and alone, individuals were alert to the possible social consequences of their interpretations and the social uses to which they might put the work” (6). Though the practice of private reading is acknowledged, Loveman is emphatic about its secondary status, claiming that for the Restoration period “a proficient reader [of prose fiction] was necessarily a social reader” (45).

Loveman’s theory of socially oriented reading practices is based on her analysis of deception as a form of social game in the Restoration. This emphasis on deception, both in the communal atmosphere of a coffeehouse, and in print, leads to the cultivation of the “sceptical” reader.³⁵ The sceptical reader is born out of the knowledge that he may be publicly ridiculed if he is duped by a text or in person at a coffeehouse, where the telling of “fantastic fibs” was a popular

³⁵ For Loveman’s detailed evidence for the emergence of this type of reader see Loveman 19-46.

pastime in the early part of the period (Loveman 64).³⁶ This model of reading is further defined by Loveman:

It was a reader's first responsibility to discern the truth-status of a work, thereby avoiding shameful misapprehension and lessening the risk of being deceived [...] readers sought to look beneath a writer's professed design to discern a hidden agenda – the truth about the work's origins and meaning. (20)

This mode of reading created “controversial” interpretations of popular texts that were “biographical, political or religious” (20). Furthermore, sceptical reading often led to “interpretation predicated on distrust, where readers not only suspected that the true meaning of a work had been disguised but also that the writer had a devious, possibly malicious design upon his audience” (20).

Although this mode of reading seems, at first glance, to be hostile to sociability, Loveman stresses that “the pleasures of testing a truth-claim were those of sociability” (40). In other words, one of the reader's primary goals would be to discern the truth of a text in order to broadcast that superior knowledge to other readers and thus gain recognition and belonging in the group of those in the know about a particular, popular text. The desire to belong to this social group would itself lead to heightened interest and excitement about the texts as they provided the passport to inclusion. The group of readers created by a text was often a product of their habitual pastimes and social haunts: this would be the

³⁶ Rather than use an awkward s/he formation for the third person singular, I have chosen to use the male pronoun since most, though certainly not all, coffeehouse patrons and readers of political secret histories in this period were most likely male.

case for the London theatre-oriented community created by the secret history *The Player's Tragedy* discussed at the end of this chapter and the communities created by social clubs like the Rota that met regularly at coffee houses and taverns.³⁷ A reader community could also form along the lines of political affiliations, as in the secret histories discussed in the next chapter, which, on one level, functioned as factional propaganda. Whatever the specific community, the pleasure of the secret history was integrally connected to its social possibilities and socially integrative mechanisms alongside its private pleasure.

Rabb also stresses the social aspects of reading in her discussion of secret histories and satire. The dominant pleasure in reading these types of texts was the production of intimacy: “sharing hidden meanings – ironies, confidences, allusions, inside jokes – creates a sense of community, what Swift calls ‘friends laughing in a corner’” (2). If one considers the popularity of published keys for the reading of secret histories, this “intimate” community could be extended

³⁷ For a history of the different types of clubs that gained popularity during the Restoration and eighteenth century, see Peter Clark's *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800*. As well as the more formal religious and scientific societies that were springing up during the Restoration, Clark also finds that “all the signs indicate a growing range of informal literary, musical, drinking, and other clubs, though details are fragmentary” (57). These informal clubs provide exactly the sort of social communities that would have been conducive to fostering socially oriented reading and groups of readers who could consider themselves above the ordinary tavern or coffee house patron in terms of their knowledge of the popular texts of the time because of their inclusion in these groups. For further information about Restoration and early seventeenth-century clubs and the social activities which characterized them see Timothy Raylor's *Cavaliers, Clubs, and Literary Culture* and Loveman 61-83.

quite broadly, though the keys themselves often required decipherment.³⁸ As in Loveman's argument, Rabb insists that the pleasure of reading comes from knowing the truth about a popular text and thus becoming part of a larger social community of those in the know. Rabb pushes the political implications of this larger community in her discussion of Delarivier Manley's secret histories (which she links with theories of gossip):

Gossip's secretive whispers have a potentially democratizing effect. Although gossip decenters narrative authority from a single source, it nevertheless acquires a new form of authority, a hidden source of consensus, a collective notion of many people permitted to speak and to share in what is 'generally known.' (54)

Rabb is far less interested in the actual truth of this type of writing (in contrast to Loveman) than in the truths that become socially current and thus have the potential to destabilize dominant discourses of power, most often in this period political and religious. In both cases, however, the emphasis is on the social importance of reading fiction, in particular secret history.

³⁸ Keys were often published by the same publisher as the secret history text, but initially separate from the text itself (though they were sometimes bundled together in later editions). As Nicola Parsons argues "one of the intentions of these keys was to increase the potential readership of the texts, by equipping all readers with the means to decode the political secrets that the texts uncovered" ("Secrecy" 152). However, as the key included with the preface to *The Female Wits*, discussed later in this chapter, reveals, the keys themselves often used blanks and gaps to obscure the names they purported to reveal. They thus acted more as further hints in the reading game rather than as answers which would, in effect, shut down the guess and gossip surrounding the texts. Furthermore, as Catherine Gallagher has argued, keys were often unauthorized, unreliable and "generally [themselves] had to be greeted with a certain amount of suspicion" (124).

This emphasis on the social is in stark contrast to earlier theories of reading that were primarily concerned with the relationship of the solitary reader to the text, and is fundamental, I would argue, in defining genre in the slippery world of criticism of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century prose fiction. Rather than connecting all early prose fiction with the later eighteenth-century novel, the problems of which are discussed in the next section, I argue in this chapter for a link between the reception practices and affective entrainment of the Restoration theatre audience and the socially oriented reading communities created by secret history, thus, in effect, closely aligning the two genres through their reception.

The long shadow of the novel reader

Traditionally, critics interested in reading practices during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries have approached the topic of genre through the lens of novel studies. Because the ultimate destination of these critics is the mid-century novel read by the solitary reader who has learned to identify with the fictional characters and thus become absorbed in the work of art (for better or for worse), they tend to read early prose fiction as leading up to this model reader and, in some way, educating readers toward that model. J. Paul Hunter's *Before Novels* is characteristic of this form of argument. In discussing the cultural contexts of the early novel, Hunter is interested in the way that young readers were trained to read the new novel form. In particular, Hunter

emphasizes that “novels from the beginning presumed to be dealing with one reader at a time rather than with a communal audience” (40).

An important question here, however, is what constitutes a novel and that is far from clear in Hunter’s text. Early works by authors such as Manley, Charles Gildon and Eliza Haywood are considered “significant works of fiction of the emerging kind” (22) and indications of “which way the wind was blowing” (16). Although they are not quite novels, it is unclear whether we are meant to apply the dominant mode attributed to novel readers – solitary, identificatory reading – back onto these early works of fiction. Setting aside for the moment the lack of genre clarity, from the perspective of reading practices Hunter does not offer any alternative to the solitary novel reader through which we could understand these early fictional works. Furthermore, Hunter’s work is not an isolated example; the model of the solitary reader is present throughout the major works on pre-novelistic prose fiction.

Though very different in their respective analyses, John Richetti and Ros Ballaster also implicitly rely on the notion of a solitary reader for works of this kind. Both authors emphasize the psychological aspect of the reading experience – Richetti from the standpoint of fantasy and Ballaster from a psychoanalytic perspective interested in the creation of readerly desire. Richetti, defining fantasy as “a personal mental reflex of individual readers,” claims that early scandal fiction was popular precisely because it was “aimed at a relatively naïve and impressionable mental norm” and provided a “predictable vicarious

experience" (124). Ballaster grants scandal fiction far more complexity than Richetti but her focus is also on the solitary reader, specifically, the female reader.³⁹ Arguing that amatory fiction (of which she considers scandal fiction a sub-genre) is constructed as "a mode of seduction" (24), Ballaster implies an intimate relationship between the author of amatory fiction and its reader. Again, the assumption is that early fiction reading practices were the same as those of the novel: solitary and absorptive.

The story of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century readership has been refined in the more recent works of William Warner and Michael McKeon but the picture is still one dominated by the mid-century novel and thus remains tendentious. In *Licensing Entertainment*, Warner describes the type of reader at whom novels of amorous intrigue are aimed – what he terms "the general reader" (89). Defined negatively, this reader

[...] does not have a clearly delimited ideological position within the cultural field: the general reader is not a subject with a defining difference of class, race, gender, or sexual preference; and the general reader does not have a specifiable identity, such that a novelist would know in advance how to move her or him. (89)

While this view opens up the much more narrow readership ascribed to amatory fiction by Ballaster, and goes a long way to explaining the immense popularity of these types of texts during the period, there are still problems. On the one hand,

³⁹ See Ballaster, in particular Chapter 2 "Observing the Forms: Amatory Fiction and the Construction of a Female Reader" 31-66

Warner is still assuming a solitary model of reading. More problematically, however, Warner's categorization of the novels of amorous intrigue is too capacious. The section that focuses on these novels encompasses both Manley's *New Atalantis* and Haywood's *Love in Excess* and thus conflates what I will argue are, from a reader's perspective, two very different types of works.⁴⁰

More than the other theorists under discussion, McKeon clearly distinguishes between secret history and other types of early amorous prose, dedicating an entire section of his most recent work, *The Secret History of Domesticity*, to the form. However, McKeon is still working very much in the tradition of the history of the novel. As such the solitary reader is implicit in his description of the operations of secret history despite the fact that he never explicitly addresses reading practices in his work.⁴¹ Additionally, McKeon privileges identification with characters who are conceived as concrete types over "identifying the real people who suffer these vices" (591). This prioritization of the concrete over the particular is understandable in the context of McKeon's larger goal but it also denigrates another, potentially just as complex, way of understanding how audiences read these texts. Given the inherent complexity of any large group of readers, it is important to investigate multiple possibilities of

⁴⁰ Even on the formal level of traditional genre categories, Warner's grouping is problematic. Arguably, Manley's novel, predominantly a secret history despite its use of amatory conventions, was heavily affected both in its writing and its reception by its categorization as Tory propaganda. Thus it would have a particular audience whom Manley was working to manipulate despite the fact that the text certainly exceeded that original particular purpose as propaganda.

⁴¹ This implicit theory of the solitary reader reveals itself in sentences such as the following: "The implication of these factors is a reading experience that involves [...] superficially but voraciously, identifying with exemplarily vicious characters" (591).

readership rather than privileging one particular model. These elements of his argument, together with the overarching narrative of McKeon's work, which is interested in arriving, again, with the full-fledged eighteenth-century novel, elide some of the features of secret history which truly set it apart from other forms of early prose fiction and which, I will argue, link it to the affective experience created by pathetic tragedy within the Restoration playhouse audience. Thus it seems that what is required is a new understanding of secret history as a genre, defined not by its relationship to the early novel, but rather by the ways that it was read and understood by its contemporary readers.

While the study of late seventeenth-century reading practices has been dominated until quite recently by one model, genre definitions for early prose fiction have been vague and hopelessly confused. In her work on amatory fiction, Toni Bowers rightly complains that "the very category 'amatory fiction' functions [...] as a kind of negative space, insignificant except as it helps to define the privileged category 'novel'" (50).⁴² Even for those authors who are primarily interested in pre-novelistic fiction, genre labels are far too capacious to have any true analytical value. The umbrella term "amatory fiction," used by critics such as Ballaster and Bowers, includes works as various as Aphra Behn's *Love-Letters between a Nobleman and His Sister*, Manley's *New Atalantis*, and Haywood's *Love in Excess*. Warner delineates the genre somewhat differently with his term "novels of amorous intrigue," but this designation is even more

⁴² Though there are certainly other generic categories used for early prose fiction, my interest is primarily with secret history and the umbrella genre that it has traditionally been ascribed to, amatory fiction.

capacious, encompassing as it does both mid-century novels and late seventeenth-century works.⁴³ Both terms refer to larger categories of prose fiction of which secret history is said to be a part; however, these larger categories are too broad for my argument, which relates only to the specific secret history genre. More importantly, as will be made apparent later in this work, the application of terms like “amatory fiction” to secret history can be quite misleading and can obscure the innovative practices of writers like Manley in their use of the genre.

In my delimitation of this genre I am following McKeon, who defines secret history as “includ[ing] not only the narratives of the Restoration and early eighteenth century that explicitly called themselves ‘secret histories’ but also those (like *roman à clef*) that signal their secrecy through allegorical, amatory ‘romance’ plots that sanction close reading to uncover their deepest public meaning” (471). Thus a text like Gabriel de Brémond’s *Hattige*, discussed in my next chapter, which calls itself a novel but is clearly a disguised relation of the intimate games played between Charles II and Barbara Palmer, Countess of Castlemaine, will be considered alongside plays like *The Female Wits* that broadcast their referentiality. In addition to McKeon’s description of the formal elements of the genre, secret history, I will argue, is also defined by the social reading practices it encourages in readers. Thus while *Hattige* is a short romance

⁴³ Warner adopts his label as a way of bringing together early prose works like Behn’s *Love-Letters* with novels such as Fielding’s *Joseph Andrews* and Richardson’s *Pamela*. Described as “critically useful rather than descriptively necessary” (xiii), Warner’s generic category is a subgenre of the novel and, as such, widens the generic field even more than the term “amatory fiction.”

and *The Female Wits* is a stage comedy, both, I will argue, were approached from a similar reception perspective, one that privileged the pleasures of the social with regard to the literary. And whereas both Manley's *New Atalantis* and Haywood's *Love in Excess* are novels of amorous intrigue or examples of amatory fiction, *New Atalantis* needs to be distinguished from Haywood's text by its position as a secret history.

From a traditional genre perspective, concerned only with the formal elements of the works, this may not seem to be an important distinction, but from the perspective of readership it is integral. *New Atalantis*, with its allegorical references to contemporary political and aristocratic figures, would be read and enjoyed in a social environment, where the pleasure would be in divining the secrets both hidden and revealed in the text. Though we can read both novels today as entertaining treatments of passion and explorations of female desire, these characteristics of amatory fiction would have constituted only part of the pleasure for readers busily trying to discern the secrets of Manley's text.⁴⁴ The social aspect of the secret history genre is thus obscured by the critics' desire to read it as amatory fiction, rather than recognizing it as a separate genre that may contain elements of amatory fiction within its texts.

⁴⁴ The interest in ferreting out the secrets of the text is apparent in Lady Mary Wortley Montague's oft-cited letter to Frances Hewet about the second volume and key to Manley's *New Atalantis*: "I am very glad you have the second part of the *New Atalantis*; if you have read it, will you be so good as to send it me, and in return I promise to get you the key to it. I know I can" (18). Not only does the passage show the interest in obtaining a key to Manley's text, it also is an example of the ways that texts moved between friends creating social, text-oriented bonds.

Rabb's and Loveman's emphasis on the social aspect of reading scandal fiction, externalized in the public spaces of the Restoration, connects the genre from the perspective of reading practices to the communal enjoyment of the public theatre audience. This link between print and London's public spaces has also been pursued along different lines in Paula McDowell's work, in which she emphasizes the need to "recognize the fundamental continuity of oral and printed forms" (299) during our period, and treats the pamphlet print market itself as a "mode of association" (17), blurring the boundaries of print, orality and sociality in a productive manner. The connections these realignments open up between some scandal texts and the pathetic tragedies of the previous chapter will be returned to in the last section of this chapter. However, before moving outside of the playhouse, it is necessary to consider the stage's own secret history, which was pioneered in the period and produced a significant legacy in dramatic history: the rehearsal play.

The secret histories of the stage

When George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham's play *The Rehearsal* hit the stage in 1671 it was "a howling success" (Baker 160). Though not as successful as Buckingham's play, the anonymous *The Female Wits: or, The Triumvirate of Poets at Rehearsal* (staged 1696⁴⁵, published 1704) was popular "having been Acted six Days running without intermission; and being likely to have continued much

⁴⁵ Although the exact date of performance is uncertain, *The London Stage* provides evidence that *The Female Wits* was most likely staged early in the 1696-1697 season, including the fact that the play's timeliness would have depended on its being performed shortly after Manley's *Royal Mischief* was performed (Van Lennep 467).

longer, had the company thought fit to oblige the Taste of the Town in General, rather than that of some Particular Persons;" (A1).⁴⁶ The rehearsal plays are so named because they depict an author rehearsing a new play in front of a few key spectators. The interactions of the author, the cast, and the spectators, and the depiction of the play within the play are all vehicles for parody and satire of popular theatrical trends, playwrights and particular actors and actresses. Buckingham's play set the model in 1671 and, more than any of the other plays that followed in the style, *The Female Wits* self-consciously fashioned itself in the mode of its popular predecessor.⁴⁷ These plays are often dismissed as light farces or burlesques by modern-day critics of Restoration drama, or are mined solely for historical evidence by theatre historians. However, the popularity of the rehearsal plays offers important insights into the Restoration audience's interpretive practices and the pleasure they took from recognizing the person—

⁴⁶ Both plays are believed to have been the result of collaborative authorship. After reviewing the available evidence, Hume's and Love's most recent edition of Buckingham's works concludes that he had "substantial assistance from [Martin] Clifford and [Thomas] Sprat, and ideas contributed by his literary circle" (340); however, Buckingham is still considered the primary author of *The Rehearsal*. While no single names have emerged with respect to *The Female Wits*, Lucyle Hook makes a convincing case in her introduction to the printed play for Jo Haines/Haynes, the star comic actor at Drury Lane, as the primary author. She does emphasize, however, that the play "has all the remarks of having been put together by group effort" and includes Colley Cibber, Hildebrand Horden, and George Powell as likely co-authors (xii).

⁴⁷ The importance of the model set by *The Rehearsal* is noted by the preface writer for *The Female Wits*, who bluntly states: "It [*The Female Wits*] is written in imitation of the Rehearsal" (A2). This imitation includes such features as an author who meets the audience members for his/her rehearsal outside of the playhouse, a rehearsal process that is satirically commented upon by those spectators, a play so absurd as to merit comment and complaint by the actors attempting to perform it, an author who is overbearing and interfering during the rehearsal, and a conclusion which sees the play abandoned by both spectators and performers and an author raging, threatening to take the play to the other house.

actual or concrete—behind the character in front of them on the stage.⁴⁸ Like the secret history, the rehearsal play allowed for a group of audience members (or readers in the case of the printed texts) in the know, thus creating a reception experience that was socially oriented and collective; in the case of the theatre, this community was physical as well as virtual.

Staging the rivalry between the playhouses

Though *The Rehearsal* set the stage for *The Female Wits*, the satirical strategies of the latter are more direct and, thus, we will begin with the later play. Unlike the multivalent referentiality of its predecessor, the targets of *The Female Wits* are, for the most part, well established. The preface to the first print edition provides a basic key to the play: “the Lady whose Play is rehears’d, personates one Mrs. M---ly [Manley] [...] and those that go under the names of Mrs. *Welfed* and *Calista*, are Mrs. P---x and Mrs. T---r [Mary Pix and Catherine Trotter]” (A2). While the preface writer does not presume to judge the accuracy of the satiric portraits, he does make a point of saying that “the Auditors thought the Pictures were true” (A2) when the play was performed. The personal satire extends

⁴⁸ There was some interest in *The Rehearsal* in the 1970s and 80s, which saw critics reading it as political satire (McFadden, Stocker), more general literary satire (Baker), and proto-theatre of the absurd (Gravitt). However, the interest was sparse and has been even more lacking in current criticism. Hopefully this interest will increase with the publication of Hume’s and Love’s collected edition of Buckingham’s works in 2007. There has been more recent interest in *The Female Wits* due to the rise of scholarship on Manley (the central target of the play) but this criticism has almost exclusively used the play for evidence about Manley’s life and reputation, while more general feminist theatre studies have used the play as evidence, both for women’s importance in the theatre but also for the virulent attacks these same women faced from men who were not happy with their new prominence. See Carnell, Marsden, Bush-Bailey, Finke.

beyond the female authors to encompass a number of the leading actors and actresses at the time, as the Drury Lane performers mimic the acting styles of Barry, Bracegirdle and Betterton, the stars of the competing theatre at Lincoln's Inn Fields.⁴⁹ The one-to-one link between character and living individual is continued with regards to the play-within-the-play as it is a clear satire of Manley's *The Royal Mischief*. Though we have to no way of knowing for sure, we can safely assume with the preface writer that the audiences for this play could quite easily recognize the implied individuals behind the characters they were watching on stage. Thus, the pleasure for the suspicious reader/auditor was less in the decoding of the satire and more in the recognition, which would allow for a feeling of belonging or being part of the theatrical community being satirized on stage – the same sort of belonging that texts such as *The Player's Tragedy* sought to play on in their propagation of scandalous theatre gossip. The laughter of those who got the joke in the theatre audience would create a level of interest or excitement for those not in the know such that the excitement would lead to an "amplification" (Tomkins 76) of their own desire to know the secrets behind the text or the play and to participate in the affective community.

The play's depiction of Manley as Marsilia is certainly scathing – she is overdramatic, vain, selfish, overbearing and highly susceptible to flattery. The *Dramatis Personae* glosses her character as "A Poetess, that admires her own

⁴⁹ The Drury Lane actors who played themselves, while mimicking the acting styles of the stars at Lincoln's Inn Fields, are particularly praised by the preface writer for their performances (A2). This emphasis highlights the importance of the actors' physical performances to the impact of the satire.

Works, and a great Lover of Flattery,” and the play opens depicting her intolerance with the “faults” of her maid, aptly named Patience. Her inappropriate ranting over her unfinished toilet is clearly conveyed in stage directions that have her stamping and crying while she utters lines satirizing Manley’s own brand of ranting heroine: “Mount, my aspiring Spirit! Mount! Hit yon azure Roof, and justle [sic] Gods!” (1-2). This type of behaviour continues throughout the play, particularly in her interactions with the actors and actresses rehearsing the inset play, who, to her mind, can do nothing right. In response to the performance of one of the prologue speakers, she cries “O Heav’ns! You shou’d have every thing that is terrible in that Line! You shou’d speak it like a Ghost, like a Giant, like a Mandrake, and you speak it like a Mouse.” (27). Later in the play, when the actors rebel against being forced to perform a “Dance upon all Four” (64) she throws a tantrum: “Oh! the Devil; you have spoilt my Plot! you have ruin’d my play, ye Blockheads! ye Villains, I’ll kill you all, burn the Book, and hang my self! (*Throws down the Book, and stamps upon it.*)” (64-65).

The virulence of the satire leads Laurie A. Finke to call it “antifeminist as well as generic, collective as well as personal” (64), and to argue that the anonymous playwright is not merely attacking three particular female playwrights but rather “condemn[ing] all women to a kind of silence, [...] suggest[ing] that literary creativity is itself alien to women” (64). This view sees *The Female Wits* as a response to the newly found power/popularity of the three female playwrights, Manley, Pix and Trotter, a reactionary text seeking to defend

the boundaries of masculine literary privilege. While the misogyny of the satire is not to be denied, I believe, with Jean Marsden, that the unbalanced nature of the satire (focused far more on Manley than on the other two women signified in the title) implies something other than a generalized attack on female authorship.⁵⁰ The satire against Pix and Trotter is biting but somewhat simplistic. As Mrs. Wellfed, Pix is satirized as a fat, somewhat stupid woman who loves her food and drink, while Trotter (Calista in the play) is satirized as having pretensions to learning above her actual merit. Though certainly these are not flattering portraits, the depiction seems to be more for cheap laughs than for serious critical purposes. The overarching satirical thrust seems to be a direct product of a moment in Restoration theatre history, a specific incident chosen for its ability to encompass a bigger conflict within the theatrical community of the time and thus provide the audience with a secret history of their theatrical milieu, albeit a fairly transparent one.

When Betterton, Barry and Bracegirdle split from the United Company in April 1695, London once again had two rival theatre companies: Betterton and Company at Lincoln's Inn Fields and the remnants of the United Company under Sir Thomas Skipwith and Christopher Rich at Drury Lane. As many critics have pointed out, the presence of two companies created opportunities for new playwrights such as Manley to have their work produced and created a great

⁵⁰ In defense of her reading of the tone of the satire, Marsden argues that rather than being a serious threat to the male theatrical establishment, Manley, Trotter, and Pix were "all new playwrights with little or no clout in the theaters" and thus were, at the time of the play, "less threats, perhaps, than anomalies" (103). Thus she reads the play "as slightly less freighted with sinister overtones" (103).

deal of competition between the companies for audiences and, by extension, for new and exciting plays. Manley's first play, *The Lost Lover; or, The Jealous Husband* (1696), was performed at Drury Lane. However, her second play, *The Royal Mischief*, was performed just a month later at Lincoln's Inn Fields. Taking *The Female Wits* as evidence, Carnell claims that Manley was originally rehearsing her second play with the company at Drury Lane but took it to the other house after disagreements in the rehearsal process (98). Because *The Female Wits* is very much a mirror of its famous predecessor *The Rehearsal*, which also ends with the playwright stomping out of rehearsal, threatening to take his play to the other house, I am hesitant to affirm Carnell's supposition that this element of the play is factual. Be that as it may, the fact that her plays were performed within the same year at two different houses, could easily give rise to audience speculation that there was a break of some sort between the author and the company at Drury Lane, speculation that the authors of *The Female Wits* happily exploit. Thus, the secret history being told by the play is that of the competition between the houses from the point of view of the players at Drury Lane who acted in, and probably wrote the "cleverly constructed piece of theatre politics" (Bush-Bailey 140).

The choice of Manley and her play, *The Royal Mischief*, as the butts of the satire clearly directs a knowing audience's attention to the rivalry between the two houses. However, more subtle and thus more interesting to an audience seeking to see the story behind the story, is the play's satire of Lincoln's Inn

Fields' star actors and actresses. As discussed in the previous chapter, Barry and Bracegirdle starred in *The Royal Mischief* as Homais and Bassima respectively. Betterton played Osman, Bassima's love, who ends the play in burning pieces on the stage after being shot out of a canon. The inset play of *The Female Wits* directly satirizes these characters as Lady Loveall, Isabella, and Amorous (played by Frances Knight, Letitia Cross, and William Penkethman as themselves). The direct relationship of the characters in the inset play to those in its target allows the audience to read the satire as extending also to the actor and actresses who played those original roles.

This is clearly intended and exploited by the Drury Lane performers, who are able to mimic and make ridiculous the acting styles of their more famous counterparts at the rival company. For example, when Marsilia coaches Mrs. Knight (playing Lady Loveall and satirizing Homais/Barry) to "speak that as passionately as you can, because you are going to Swoon, you know;" (30) and, after Mrs. Knight has swooned, commenting "There's a Clap for a Guinea" (31), she is calling attention to Barry's passionate style of acting and denigrating it as cheap theatrics designed purely to get a clap from the audience. There is an even more biting, if indirect, criticism of Barry's acting style when Marsilia coaches Mrs. Knight to "stamp as Queen *Statira* does, that always gets a Clap" (32). A knowing audience would realize that Marsilia is, in effect, coaching Barry to act like Bracegirdle (who played *Statira* in revivals of Nathaniel Lee's *The Rival*

Queens to Barry's Roxalna).⁵¹ A knowing audience member would not only see Bracegirdle's acting style being treated as cheap theatrics to "get a Clap" but would also see the insult to Barry as Mrs. Knight is coached to act like Barry's younger, perhaps more popular, fellow actress. Though Howe claims that the relationship between the two actresses was amicable, the authors are clearly trying to sow some division between the two through their satiric portrayal.⁵² The play treats Betterton's acting style in a similar manner when Marsilia coaches Pinkethman to "Fetch large Strides; walk thus; your Arms strutting; your Voice big and your Eyes terrible" (51), later commenting that "this speaking Loud gets the Clap" (57).

It is not only Bracegirdle's acting style that is satirized in the play; her chaste reputation also becomes a target to be called into question and mocked. In the middle of the rehearsal of the inset play, the actress playing the role corresponding to Bracegirdle's begs Marsilia to allow her to give up her part: "I shall get my self, nor you, no Credit by it." (38). Marsilia's response introduces the notion of chastity and opens the way for Cross to question and thus undermine both the chastity of the character and by extension the actress who played her:

MARSILIA. [...] my *Isabella!* Was there ever a Character more
Chaste, more Noble, or more Pitiful?

⁵¹ The London Stage places the date of the revival of Lee's play with Barry and Bracegirdle in the principle female roles somewhere between 1690-1692 (Van Lennep 400).

⁵² See Howe 156 for her comments on the friendship between Barry and Bracegirdle.

MRS. CROSS. Yes, very Chaste, when I am in Love with my Father-in-Law's Steward, I know not why, nor wherefore. (38)

The terms “chaste,” “noble” and “pitiful” are certainly appropriate for the types of heroines that Bracegirdle was noted for playing, including Bassima. But Cross's remark allows an audience member familiar with Manley's play to note the hollowness of the assertions of chastity made by Bassima, in fact highlighting what I argued in the previous chapter was an important aspect of the character. However, in the context of the satire, the accusation of false chastity is certainly meant to be critical of the celebrated virgin actress as well as the character she played.

Because of the direct nature of the satire, *The Female Wits* was not a play that needed a lot of privileged information or study to be decoded. However, like the political secret histories of the period, the play allowed its audience to take pleasure in their understanding of the “true” story behind the events on the stage and to feel as part of a privileged theatre community through that understanding. Thus, the play was very much socially oriented on both a physical and intellectual level – intellectual in terms of the community created through understanding of the story behind the story, and physical in the sense that the affective pleasure of the knowledge would create a strong group bond, which could be extended to other audience members not immediately aware of the extra-textual implications, who would be alerted to the second layer of meaning by the bodily reactions of knowing audience members and shared

verbal communication of that knowledge. Its famous predecessor, *The Rehearsal*, operated in a similar manner. However, the “true” story behind the play is much more complex and variegated in Buckingham’s play.

“A jest in scorn” or shamming on the stage

Opening his discussion of *The Rehearsal*, Sheridan Baker emphasizes two things: the play’s popularity and the audience’s knowledge of the story behind the story – “Everyone knew everything about everyone, and even the slyest hint was not lost” (160).⁵³ Like *The Female Wits*, *The Rehearsal* relied, at least in part, on the privileged knowledge (theatrical, social and political) of its London audience. In contrast to the later play, however, *The Rehearsal* “nevertheless remained one of London’s most popular plays for the next hundred years” (Baker 160), despite its apparent timeliness. The play’s continued popularity can be partially attributed to the continued success of its target genre, heroic drama, on the London stage. Even more important, however, are the many satirical possibilities

⁵³ Comparing the number of printed editions of the play to other popular plays of the time, Hume and Love conclude that “*The Rehearsal* was among the most popular plays of its time” (387).

opened up by Buckingham's characterization of the author figure, Bayes, generally accepted to be primarily a satire of John Dryden.⁵⁴

The character name "Bayes" refers to Dryden's position as the Poet Laureate, but, as a reference to that official title, could easily be updated to target other holders of the office by changing the mannerisms of the actor playing the role.⁵⁵ David Garrick added another level of satire to the role by targeting his fellow actors. His version of the role was noted for its physical mimicry of the prominent acting styles and mannerisms of his contemporaries, thus adding a level of direct, personal satire toward actors atop the general satire of playwrights (Hume and Love 373). Although Bayes is certainly an entertaining and central character of the play, the link between him and Dryden has perhaps caused critics to focus too much on his importance to the detriment of other characters who, I will argue, would have been just as satirically interesting for audiences of the period.

⁵⁴ There has been some dispute over who the character of Bayes was intended to represent. Both McFadden and Stocker emphasize the political angle of the satire in the play and argue for Henry Bennet, Earl of Arlington as the true target of the character. However, within the field of criticism written about Buckingham's play, most authors assume the obviousness of the allusion to Dryden (see Baker, Smith, Crane, Martin). Hume and Love provide the most nuanced treatment of the issue arguing that certain references within the play are clearly aimed at different playwrights of the time yet the satire which would have been most obvious to Restoration theatregoers would have been that of Dryden: "Bayes/Dryden as the proud parent of Drawcansir/Almanzor must have been instantly obvious to almost everyone" (345).

⁵⁵ The original actor to play Bayes was John Lacey who, according to a popular but, according to Hume and Love, "dubious" (355) anecdote, was specifically coached by Buckingham to mimic the mannerisms associated with Dryden and was dressed in "Dryden's customary browns and a wig" (Baker 162). Colley Cibber mentions some audience members' desire to see Susanna Verbruggen play the role of Bayes as a breeches part in an unspecified revival of the play (95) and a number of his own performances of the role in the early 1730s coincided, no doubt to the entertainment of his audience, with his actually being the Poet Laureate.

The other two members of the frame of *The Rehearsal* are the spectators, Johnson and Smith, invited by Bayes to watch the final rehearsal of his new play. These two characters have been largely overlooked by the majority of critics. Those who do note their importance tend to lump them together as a unit, considering the differences between them to be of minimal importance. However, a more considered interpretation of Smith and Johnson not only opens up a new way of understanding the satire of the play, it also provides a new way of addressing a longstanding critical conundrum regarding the play's targets, a conundrum caused by the fact that it was Dryden's own company, the King's Company, that staged *The Rehearsal*. As a number of critics have noted, it seems unlikely that the King's Company would seek to humiliate one of their most popular playwrights or seriously undermine a genre that was consistently filling their theatre. Thus, in contrast to *The Female Wits*, viewing *The Rehearsal* as corrective satire or even as biting in its intent is problematic given its performance history.

Johnson and Smith open the action of *The Rehearsal* and are immediately established as particular "types" – Johnson is a man of the town and Smith is a friend of his from the country who has just arrived in London. Although both are interested in being entertained, the play immediately distinguishes between what it is that each one considers entertaining. Smith, as someone who has not been in town for some time, wants news: "[...] I long to talk with you freely, of all the strange new things we have heard in the Country" (1.1.4-5). He desires

information. Johnson, in contrast, is bored with the news of the town but sees in Smith's interest and ignorance the potential for some entertainment of his own.

Dryden himself wrote a most revealing description of Smith and Johnson in his "Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire" (1693):

I answer'd not the *Rehearsall*, because I knew the Author sate to himself when he drew the Picture, and was the very *Bays* of his own Farce [...] because Mr. *Smith*, and Mr. *Johnson*, the main Pillars of it, were two such Languishing Gentlemen in their Conversation, that I cou'd liken them to nothing but their own Relations, those Noble Characters of Men of Wit and Pleasure about the Town. (8-9)

Noteworthy is the importance Dryden places on these characters, describing them as the "main Pillars" of the play. Furthermore, his description of Buckingham as "the very *Bays* of his own Farce" should not be taken to mean that Bayes is somehow a satire of Buckingham himself (a rather nonsensical notion) nor should it be dismissed as sour grapes on Dryden's part. Rather, the frame play of *The Rehearsal*, the part for which Buckingham stands most directly as author or Bayes figure, is itself a gently farcical version of a popular type of London entertainment, just as the inset play is a farce of an heroic play. The entertainment being burlesqued in the frame is the form of sociability associated with the London coffeehouses and, to a lesser extent, the taverns of the period and, of course, the playhouse itself – the milieu that a socially directed type of

reading was aimed toward and the milieu with which Buckingham's own circle (arguably the "noble characters" referred to in Dryden's description) was intimately associated.

From this perspective, Johnson becomes an intriguing and important figure in the play and, as such, needs to be understood as someone more than just an instructive audience figure (O'Neill 87-97) or a "common-sense perspective on the inner play" (Turner 134). In response to Smith's questioning as to how he spends his time in London, Johnson offers the following response:

[...] eat and drink as well as I can, have a She-friend to be private with in the afternoon, and sometimes see a Play: where there are such things (*Frank*) such hideous, monstrous things, that it has almost made me forswear the Stage, and resolve to apply myself to the solid nonsense of your Pretenders to business, as the more ingenious pastime. (1.1.22-27)

This is the very description of a man of pleasure about the town, a man who has time to spend leisurely drinking and socializing and going to plays. Given that this follows on the heels of Johnson's sharp satire on men of business, the audience can be sure that he is not in the least bit serious about forswearing the stage. Soon after this description, Johnson spots Bayes and, over Smith's protestations to "let him alone" (1.1.47), drags him over for the entertainment of himself and, supposedly, his friend.

Reading the frame play as itself satire necessitates a more careful definition of the type of satire present in *The Rehearsal*. As mentioned earlier, the tendency has been to read the play as critical of particular authors and plays, leading critics to try to reconcile the sharp satire with the problem of the King's Company as both performers and targets.⁵⁶ Yet there is another type of satire present in the play, a satire that becomes clear with a better understanding of a brand of sociality that was present and valued in the Restoration coffeehouses. As Loveman has argued, the sceptical reader described at the beginning of this chapter was created out of a delight in tricking the reader, a practice known within the period as "shamming". Though most of Loveman's argument focuses on shams in print, she also describes the way that this culture played out in the coffeehouses and taverns, which during the Restoration became "associated with the creation of mendacious, playful fictions" (61).⁵⁷ Though she notes that reports such as Edward Ward's about an actual Lying Club are "apocryphal" (64), there is evidence of this sort of behaviour in jest books and other print material linked to the social spaces of the taverns and coffeehouses. In this type of game a person tells an elaborate lie or mimics a behaviour to expose another person's gullibility for the amusement of their fellows in the coffeehouse who understood the

⁵⁶ For a general overview of these critical manoeuvres see Hume and Love, who conclude their discussion pretty much with the non-conclusion that "if Buckingham wrote with genuine animus and a desire to drive heroic rhyme off the stage, he must have been extremely disappointed with the results" (357).

⁵⁷ The association of coffee houses with lies can also be seen in William Wycherley's *The Plain Dealer* when Manly, facetiously telling Fidelia how she will prosper on shore in London, claims that she will, among other things, "out-lye a Coffee-house, or Gazet-writer" (400) effectively showing the assumed links between lying, coffeehouses, and popular print.

game.⁵⁸ Though certainly the game could be mean-spirited, a tone captured by John Wilmot Earl of Rochester's use of the phrase "jest in scorn" (28), it also served to expose ignorance and privileged the type of social understanding arguably needed to traverse the complex and dangerous religious and political currents of the time.

This type of sociality is notably similar to V. C. Clinton-Baddeley's definition of burlesque:

Burlesque must laugh not to burst – and best of all it likes to laugh among friends, for burlesque discovers laughter not in the objects of hatred but rather in the objects of its affection [...]. (1-2)

A burlesquer relies on the presence of his friends because their knowledge of the game is a necessary aspect of his own enjoyment and entertainment. This socio-

⁵⁸ Though the types of jokes that fall under this brand of sociability are highly entertaining and elaborate, I will limit myself to two examples, given solely for the sake of clarity. Loveman begins her book with the example of the elaborate trick that Samuel Pepys and Sir William Batten played upon Sir William Penn. Having stolen a tankard from Penn, Pepys and Batten counterfeited a letter from the thief, demand and collect a ransom of thirty shillings for the return of the tankard, and then treat a group of friends, including Penn, to a drink with the profits of their joke, all the while laughing behind their hands at Penn's discomfort over the entire affair (1).

Another example cited by Loveman comes from John Aubrey's *life of Sir Henry Blount*. Aubrey defines a shammer as "one that tells falsities not to doe anybody injury, but to impose on their understanding" (27). He gives as an example the tale of Sir Henry Blount, who, sitting in the Rainbow coffeehouse, told a fabricated story to two young gentlemen about the fantastical effects that a pig trough, made from a stone coffin, had on the pigs that drank from it. After being disappointed in their attempt to see this famous trough, the two men returned to the coffeehouse the next day and confronted Blount, to which he replied: "Why truly, gentlemen [...] I heard you tell strange things I knew to be false. I would not have gone over the threshold of the dore [sic] to have found you out in a Lye" (27). Aubrey completes the anecdote with a description of the reaction of the crowd at the coffeehouse who "laught at the two young Gents" (27).

Though strange, this type of social behaviour will be familiar to anyone today who spends a lot of time on large internet forums such as *4Chan* or *Reddit* where these types of games of gullibility are still played though they are currently referred to under the umbrella term of "trolling."

literary environment is described by Rochester in his “An Allusion to Horace, the Tenth Satyr of the First Book”:

I loathe the Rabble, 'tis enough for me
If Sedley, Shadwell, Shepherd, Wycherley,
Godolphin, Butler, Buckhurst, Buckingham
And some few more, whom I omit to name
Approve my sense: I count their censure fame. (120-24)

While Rochester is interested only in his immediate circle, the burlesque in Buckingham's play would have been recognizable to a wider group of social readers who regularly frequented the theatre and other spaces of sociability in London, and was thus very much a product of “the milieu in which it was produced” (O'Neill 51). It is a play to be enjoyed by a group of friends, and by a larger group of audience members who would have the social knowledge and cultural experience to recognize the real game being played out in front of them.

The link between the frame play and the coffeehouse is established early on in Scene 1 when Bayes lays out his rules for writing. This same scene reveals subtle but important distinctions between Smith and Johnson. The exchange begins when Bayes accidentally pulls his “book of Drama Common-places” out from his pocket thinking it is one of his plays. Johnson immediately makes this object the focus of conversation, disingenuously asking “*Drama Common-places!* pray, what's that?” (1.1.79). Since Johnson has spent the last few minutes before meeting up with Bayes explaining the new plays and the new way of writing to

Smith, the audience would naturally have taken this as a leading question on Johnson's part. Bayes, however, rises to the bait. As the dialogue progresses both Smith and Johnson react to Bayes' rules for writing but Johnson is always leading Bayes, prompting him to display more absurdities, whereas Smith often seems truly confounded by the claims that Bayes is making. Smith's lines are more expressions of perplexity – "How, Sir, help for Wit?" (1.1.82), "What Rule can that be?" (1.1.117) – whereas Johnson is encouraging Bayes and playing along with him: "Well, we hear you: go on." (1.1.104). At the end of Bayes' explication of his obviously ridiculous three rules, Johnson caps the exchange with the facetious words "Indeed, *Mr. Bayes*, this is as sure, and compendious a way of Wit as ever I heard of." (1.1.125-26).

This sort of scene – the knowledgeable wit playing upon the fool for the enjoyment of both himself and his somewhat less experienced companion – would have been highly familiar, as we have seen, to a frequent coffeehouse patron or even to a reader of the pamphlet literature which sprang from coffeehouse culture. However, just to make sure that the joke is apparent, Buckingham includes an even more specific reference to the coffeehouse in Bayes' second rule of writing, "the Rule of Record":

BAYES. As thus. I come into a Coffee-house, or some other
place where witty men resort, I make as if I minded nothing;
(do ye mark?) but as soon as any one speaks, pop I slap it
down, and make that, too, my own.

JOHNSON. But, Mr. *Bayes*, are you not sometimes in danger of
their making you restore, by force, what you have gotten
thus by Art?

BAYES. No, Sir, the world's unmindful: they never take notice
of these things. (1.1.105-112)

That Bayes' lifted wit is the raw material for plays such as the one that is about to be rehearsed before the audience does not speak highly of the type of wit to be found in the coffeehouses. Furthermore, Bayes' belief that no one notices his stealing, in other words that theatregoers are not suspicious readers, is deeply ironic given what seems to have been an important reading paradigm of the time. His interpolated "do ye mark?" underscores his misunderstanding of his audience (both Johnson and the theatre audience) while it also serves as a prompt for the actual audience to "mark" the link being cleverly made on the stage before their eyes. Johnson, of course pretending to take Bayes very seriously, is linked to the audience in that he is presenting Bayes' absurdity for their and his own pleasure: "to a connoisseur like Buckingham's suavely ironic Johnson, Bayes is a pretender to relish rather than abominate" (Hume and Love 390). However, he also bears some of the ridicule aimed at Bayes in that he clearly cultivates this type of absurdity.

The gentle satire aimed at Johnson is evident in the fact that, by playing along with Bayes, he becomes implicated in Bayes' absurdities. Although he begins by manipulating Bayes for his own amusement, the ongoing joke requires

that he appear to take Bayes' side in exactly those opinions that are being held up to ridicule. As O'Neill notes, Bayes "believes he has an ally in Johnson – and Johnson does what he can to encourage this belief." (100). As a result, Johnson becomes implicated in the satire. Although the alert audience member would recognize the "shammer" in Johnson, he could also be seen as being just as absurd in his apparent agreement with the comic butt of the play. By the end of the first act, Bayes has decided that Johnson is of the same mind as himself – "I, but how do you like it? (for I see you can judge)" (1.2.126) and, to keep the game going, Johnson must reinforce that belief. This gives rise to numerous instances where Johnson must praise Bayes' writing. For example, an absurd passage directly satirizing a metaphor from Dryden's *Conquest of Granada, Part 2* is followed by words of approbation from Johnson and complete silence from Smith:

BAYES. 'Tis an allusion of love.

So Boar and Sow, when any storm is nigh,

Snuff up, and smell it gath'ring in the Skie:

Boar beckons Sow to trot in Chestnut Groves,

And there consummate their unfinish'd Loves.

Pensive in mud they wallow all alone,

And snort, and gruntle to each others moan.

How do you like it now, ha?

JOHNSON. Faith, 'tis extraordinary fine: and very applicable to
Thunder and Lightning, methinks, because it speaks of a
Storm. (1.2.147-56)⁵⁹

Not only does Johnson praise the lines, he rationalizes Bayes' absurdities, pretending that there is a logic to such a metaphor being spoken in a prologue (or epilogue, as Bayes hasn't quite decided which is to be said when) by personifications of Thunder and Lightning. Because Johnson does not merely agree with but rather furthers Bayes' designs he could easily be seen as somewhat absurd in his own right, though the knowing audience member would also see that he is "shamming" his approval. Because not all audience members will be in the know (some may be country dwellers like Smith), Johnson is both the agent and the partial target of satire.

Buckingham's play has an amused, tolerant tone in its treatment of Johnson and his brand of entertainment, but playwrights were not always as gentle with the popular pastime. A few years later, William Wycherley's *The Plain Dealer* (1676) directly criticizes the type of humour displayed by Johnson. When the hero, Manly, expresses ignorance at a lawyer's claim that "Shamming! [...] 'tis all our way of Wit Sir," his companion Freeman offers the following,

⁵⁹ The passage being satirized is:

So, two kind Turtles, when a storm is nigh,
Look up; and see it gath'ring in the Skie:
Each calls his Mate to shelter in the Groves,
Leaving, in murmurs their unfinish'd Loves.
Perch'd on some dropping Branch they sit alone,
And Cooe, and hearken to each others moan. (1.2.128-33)

satirical, explanation: "Shamming, is telling you an insipid, dull Lye with a dull face, which the slie Wag the Author only laughs at himself;" (459). The target and meaning of both playwrights are the same, but the key difference in *The Rehearsal* is that the author does not laugh alone. The humour in Buckingham's play includes the depiction of an amused author-figure (Johnson), the implication of the amusement of the true author(s) of the play (Buckingham *et al*) and the experience of the knowledgeable audience members, who, through their understanding of the game, author their own version of the play's entertainment. Ideally this form of understanding would have been spread to other audience members not immediately in on the joke through the laughter and bragging of those who did get it.

The Rehearsal's satire of the shamming entertainment is further developed to include the suspicious reception process associated with the print secret histories as well as their stage and oral counterparts through the use of the whisper. At the beginning of the second act, after the inset prologue/epilogue has been viewed, the inset play begins with its exposition. After some pleasantries, the Physician says, "Sir, to conclude," (2.1.24) which draws, predictably, an outraged response from Smith: "What, before he begins?" (2.1.25). Bayes explains that the two characters have actually been talking for some time off stage which, funny in its own right as a satire of dramatic exposition strategies, also brings more sharply to mind the overheard conversation in general. This lack of exposition is followed with what promises

to be the real exposition until the Physician, in mid-line, "*Whispers*" (2.1.40). Not only does Bayes helpfully point out to his audience that his characters are whispering, he clearly expects them to derive some meaning from this:

BAYES. Pray mark.

USHER. Then, Sir, most certain 'twill in time appear.

These are the reasons that induc'd 'em to't: First, he – [*Whispers*
(2.1.46-48)

Though this is but a small part, the scene is no more intelligible as a whole and both characters eventually "*Exeunt Whispering*" (2.1.54).

Though Bayes boasts to his audience about the oddness of his play's beginning, it is really just an exaggeration of the strategies of secret history, which expect and require their readers/auditors to fill in a great deal of the knowledge that is only hinted at in the text itself. By removing any pretext the audience may have for the guesses/interpretations they are creating about the plot referred to by the characters in the inset play, the play leads the reader/auditor to question their interpretive processes in general, but more specifically in regards to the popular literature of the time, popular for the very fact that it requires a great deal of filling in the blanks on the reader's part. The play satirizes the instability of this knowledge created by half-heard conversations and guesswork. Thus, on top of all the other targets of satire present in Buckingham's referentially dense play, we can see a playful burlesque of London sociability and interpretive practices. Because the tone of this is

amused rather than biting (unlike the later satire in Wycherley's play), *The Rehearsal* could have been viewed as staged shamming; as long as an audience member understood the joke, the play would have been amusement rather than attack, and truly, what audience member would want to admit to not getting the joke?

A secret history about the stage

The links between the London theatre audience and the social dynamic created by the secret history genre are apparent both on the level of content and on more nuanced levels in the anonymous prose secret history *The Player's Tragedy; or, Fatal Love* (1693). This text is a thinly disguised narrative of the death of the actor William Mountfort, killed by Captain Hill, an admirer of Anne Bracegirdle whose love was unrequited. Mountfort's death (Monfredo in the text) is almost an afterthought in the story, which focuses instead on Montano's love for Bracilla (Captain Hill and Bracegirdle respectively) and his thwarted attempts to gain her as his mistress. The narrative includes a lengthy interpolated tale told to Montano by a hired bawd, which is a boastful story of her abilities to trick the most cautious husband and secure a desired mistress for her client. Though the tale, like many in books of this kind, initially seems extraneous to the main plot, it actually works to bring titillation into a text quite devoid of it and to obliquely slander Bracegirdle's character without actually depicting her in a compromising sexual position, thus, paradoxically, providing the reader the

pleasure of imagining Bracegirdle's sexual fall along with the protagonist while keeping her character virtually untouched in the narrative. Through the different depictions of the heroine within the text, *The Player's Tragedy* creates a complex layering of character/actress identity similar to, yet deeper than, that discussed in relation to Barry and Bracegirdle in the previous chapter. Furthermore, with its reference to a real-life scandal and its prurient interest in exposing the "virgin" actress's sexual fall to the reading public, *The Player's Tragedy* relies on both the pleasure of social reading and the envious pleasure of witnessing virtue's downfall.

The actress: the character, the person, the reputation

Despite being 'about' the players, the text actually depicts the actors from a distance. Like an actress on stage, Bracilla is distanced from Montano and, through Montano, from the reader, throughout the work. Her opening description, given by the narrator, is balanced between praise of her "Charms" and criticism of her "insensible" nature and "cold indifference" to "those Miseries her Eyes daily caused to all that beheld her" (4). Other than this description, most of the reader's experience of the actress is mediated through Montano's highly suspect narrative of their amours. Though Montano claims that he had been making progress with Bracilla before she purportedly became involved with Monfredo, this view is not at all borne out by the details of the story. In fact, what Montano's narrative reveals is Bracilla's reserve and his

twisted re-imaginings of that reserve in his own favour. Despite Bracilla's repeated rebuffs – she shuts down his speeches of love: “I vow, Sir, I'm as deaf to that, as the People to Virtue in distress” (14), mocks his view that in order to represent love on stage she must feel it herself (15), and responds to his letters with a stern rebuke and a kept promise that she will not respond to him again (24-25) – Montano insists on reading all of her actions as “words of course, and what Women will say at the beginning of an Intrigue” (25). For the reader, however, it is clear that Montano's burgeoning relationship with Bracilla is as much a product of his own imagination as the love that he claims is real which she acts upon the stage. Though we have little direct access to her, the reader can discern another Bracilla behind Montano's self-serving interpretation of the actress and her behaviour.

The Player's Tragedy adds another layer to the multivalent identity of the actress with its introduction of Clelia, the young woman at the centre of the tale told to the gentlemen by the bawd, Coromella. Clelia is a young lady of fortune who, “unwilling to live under the awe of any Relation, took a Lodging in the City, with only one Maid” (58). Clelia's trust in her maid and her own love of drinking ultimately precipitate her downfall when Hoffman, one of her suitors, bribes the maid to give him access to Clelia's drunken body. After being repeatedly raped in her sleep, Clelia becomes pregnant, suspects some cheat on the part of her maid, and eventually discovers Hoffman in her bed. Upon the discovery, Hoffman offers to marry her. Knowing the manner in which he won

her, Hoffman becomes a very possessive husband and the bawd's tale brags of her own ability to smuggle a young gentleman lover into Clelia, despite all the efforts of Clelia's husband to shut her up from the world. The lovers eventually run away together and when he dies, Clelia is left on her own again.

At first this tale seems to be merely a chance to describe multiple seductions for the pleasure of the reader, justified by the bawd's need to prove her abilities to Montano. However, after Montano hires Coromella to secure Bracilla as his mistress, the true import of her character is revealed – Clelia is called upon by the bawd to impersonate Bracilla to Montano in a series of amorous encounters. The woman acts the actress, substituting herself in the most intimate bodily role in a way that fools Montano yet is revealed to the reader. Montano's eagerness and easy belief in this situation further undermines the validity of his earlier belief in the affection of the real Bracilla. The cheat is revealed in the end, but it is sustained for a significant part of the text, in which Montano gazes upon the real Bracilla from a distance at the playhouse and holds the feigned Bracilla in her private chambers at night. The Bracilla that Montano enjoys and believes to be in his possession is an unseen creation of his imagination, who is only linked to the public actress through the belief created by his own mind.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ One of the reasons that the bawd's deceit is undiscovered for so long is that Montano is forced to agree not to look upon Bracilla when they are together at night and not to speak to Bracilla in public. Thus the visual and the aural/sensual are divided in a way that allows Montano to imaginatively re-unite the public figure with the woman he caresses in the dark. The cheat works because of Montano's belief in the amorous persona that he has created for Bracilla based on the roles she has performed on stage.

In *The Player's Tragedy*, readers are given a woman playing an actress, an actress playing roles in the theatre, a hero who conflates both the woman and the roles with the actress herself (exemplifying the public reputation given to the actress by her audience), and the actress behind the scenes who is both withheld from the reader and who, when she is allowed to speak, pushes against the hero's conflation of her self with her roles on stage. The importance of the text's presentation of an actress's public reputation will be returned to shortly; first, though, it is necessary to consider how the presence of these many layers of identity with regards to the actress in the text relates to the experience of watching an actress on stage. As discussed in the previous chapter, part of the pleasure that Restoration theatre audiences derived from watching the pathetic tragedies came from their knowledge of the actress behind the role. Far from a single entity, that actress was a construction of her previous roles and her public reputation and was in many ways just as much a fiction as the character she represented on stage. The actual actress could be seen to exist somewhere behind these other layers of public knowledge as a sort of secret always striven toward by her admiring audience but never truly knowable by them. This was well-illustrated by Bracegirdle herself and the conjunction of her tragic roles with her virgin actress reputation, which in turn existed comfortably alongside public attempts to discredit that reputation. The pleasurable envy experienced by the theatre audience as they watched her innocent virgins stripped of their virtue was augmented by the public's belief in her actual virtue.

The anonymous author of *The Player's Tragedy* creates a similar dynamic within the pages of the text. The many layers of identity, all constructions created around the figure of Bracilla, represent within the text the dynamic played out in the cultural space surrounding the Restoration playhouse. The reading audience experiences the theatre audience (in the character of Montano in particular but also in the remarks of his friends, the Count *de la Lune* [Lord Mohun] and Gerardo) and thus gets a bird's-eye view on practices that easily could mirror their own.⁶¹ The text exaggerates the detached nature of an actress's social reputation, actually embodying this reputation in another woman, Clelia, thus exposing the Restoration tendency to reify the actress's public reputation. This reputation was discussed in more positive terms in the previous chapter, where I argued that both Barry and Bracegirdle exerted a certain amount of control in cultivating their respective public personas. However, in *The Player's Tragedy*, the actress's public reputation is sexualized and is very much in the hands of the audience members. The author in his introduction credits "*Love, that mighty Leveller [as that which] has kept up their [players'] esteem among the Amorous of both Sexes*" (2, font reversed), while the Count *de la Lune* puts it clearly when he describes an actress as one "*whose Reputation, as well as Person is exposed for the Pleasure, and Diversion of the Audience*" (10). As Sarah Bull argues in an unpublished paper on the text, the male characters equate "*visibility with an*

⁶¹ Given the subject matter of the text, it would most likely be read by members of the London theatre-going community who would have been very familiar with the actual persons thinly disguised as characters in the text. Though its appeal could certainly stretch farther, this is most likely its core audience. The existence of only one edition implies a limited popularity.

invitation to bodily possession" (8) and further, I would add, with a right to define and control the public identity of the actress, much like the text itself is doing.⁶²

Virtue in distress: from stage to page

The multilayered representation of the actress becomes more complicated once we situate the text in its social/historical environment. Just as the audience members define the public reputation of Bracilla within the text, so the text itself offers a very specific account of Bracegirdle, in particular, but also of Mountfort, Captain Hill and Lord Mohun, defining these historical individuals in a self-serving way. Although there is no key provided for *The Player's Tragedy*, the events depicted would have been easily recognized by London theatregoers and the denizens of London's coffeehouses.⁶³ One of the few modern critics who mentions the text calls it "a barely disguised and sensational account of events" (Bush-Bailey 102), highlighting the ease with which readers are assumed to have been able to recognize Bracegirdle and the others behind the false names. This recognition of actual individuals represented by the secret history's characters,

⁶² This notion of the "right" of the public to manipulate and discuss the reputation of public figures is first established in the dedication to the text where the author writes that "*Public Merit*, as well, as *Public Infamy*, is free to the consideration of all men" (no page number, font reversed).

⁶³ In the entry for Bracegirdle in *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800*, the authors cite Narcissus Luttrell's description of events recorded on 10 December 1692 as evidence of the town talk over the incident; this was soon supplemented by Lord Mohun's trial which "brought out more details and corrected a number of errors" (272). Also see Solomon, "Infamy" 4-6 for further details of the responses to and intense interest in the incident and its aftermath.

far from being incidental or secondary as McKeon has claimed, is integral to a particular type of enjoyment of the text, which is intimately tied both to a community of readers sharing the “truth” about famous figures and to the affect created by the experience of seeing models of moral exemplarity denigrated, an affect that is strengthened in print through the association of a character with a particular historical individual.

The sceptical reading practices discussed at the beginning of this chapter were very well-suited to the reading of secret histories and measured their success by readers’ ability to identify the actual individuals referred to in the text and to share this knowledge among their social groups. Loveman cites a number of examples of annotated copies of secret histories that displayed the reader’s desire to identify the figures referred to by the texts, and even further, to compare their identifications with subsequent keys that were published (116-117). When particular characters were left out of keys, commentators would occasionally add them, with their particular references, to their own copies, thus demonstrating “to themselves and fellow-readers of the same copy that they were above ‘the meanest capacity’” (Loveman 116).⁶⁴ The point is that the secret history genre was very much a social prose genre; even if it was read by an individual reader, the point of the reading was to display one’s knowledge to a larger group, thus gaining praise for superior reading skills and sharing the thrill

⁶⁴ Though my focus is on the secret history genre, Loveman argues that “readers applied identical habits – discerning political intent, accumulating anecdote, identifying the ‘real’ protagonists” (125) to a number of popular prose genres of the period.

of inside knowledge about a particular historical figure (in our current case, a celebrity actress).

On the epistemological level, the pleasure is in knowing, but on an affective level, the thrill can be similar to that experienced by watching a model of virtue destroyed upon the stage before an appreciative audience. However, the two levels (epistemological and affective) are inextricably linked since to achieve this the reader must be aware of the actual actress hidden behind the character; otherwise, the text is merely a slightly raunchy story of seduction. It is only when the reader aligns Bracilla with Bracegirdle that he is able to experience the text as a destruction of virtue enacted by the author upon the public reputation of the actual actress. It is Bracegirdle's exemplary reputation for virtue that is attacked by the novel and it is the attempt to destroy that reputation that activates both solitary and social enjoyment of the text. And yet, the relationship between the multi-layered representations of Bracilla and Bracegirdle's public persona is handled even more complexly by the anonymous author, who maintains the tension between a seeming, 'acted' loss of virtue and an implication of 'true' virtue which survives unscathed. In this as well, the text seems to be trying to reproduce the tension between Bracegirdle's roles on the stage and her reputation off of it.

Although *The Player's Tragedy* seems to belong with a body of satirical writings that sought to sully the reputations of Restoration actresses, the text actually manages to both attack and uphold Bracegirdle's public reputation for

chastity. As previously mentioned, Bracilla herself never actually takes part in the amorous encounters represented in the text; rather, it is Clelia personating Bracilla. Thus the text allows the reader to imagine a mistress behind the virtuous persona while separating the actual woman on stage from the one in the bedroom. The only places where the reader encounters the real Bracilla are in the playhouse and on the street where Montano's attempted abduction of her fails. In both cases, her reserve and her resentment of his behaviour toward her are plainly represented, as is her awareness of the manipulations made of her character by her audience. Bracilla's statement that she is as "deaf" to declarations of love "as the People to Virtue in distress" (14) can be read as an acknowledgement of the pleasure rather than pity felt by the theatre audiences watching her perform her tragic roles as well as a meta-commentary on the pleasure that the reader can take in seeing Bracilla's virtuous reputation soiled by his interpretation of text.

However, the salacious reading is not the only one available to the reader. Although the narrator relates the rumours about Bracilla and Monfredo at the beginning of the tale, he is careful to distance the teller from the report: "How happy she made him in private I shall not dare to Divine; yet the Publick Favours she bestow'd, discover'd she cou'd ill conceal the Passion she had entertain'd for him" (5). Bracilla's public action is described in a way that would allow a reader to assume her liaison with Monfredo, but it is up to the reader and to the text's main character, Montano, to make that assumption. Shortly after this quotation,

Montano does just that, and the narrator is careful to distinguish between what is thought and what is proven: “Whether this [Bracilla’s and Monfredo’s affair] were the true Cause of this [her indifference to Montano] or no, I’ll not pretend to determine; but this I’m sure was esteem’d so” (5). Right at the outset, the narrator carefully separates what may be believed about an actress and what is true while leaving the distribution of information between those two categories to the reader.

Leaving the burden of interpretation on the reader is a common strategy for both secret history and satire, whose most obvious tactic is the blank left in the text (e.g. L—). This technique allows “the author/speaker [to] relinquish[] demonstrable responsibility, thus asserting a kind of control over his/her interlocutors. The reader must perform the injurious speech act of filling in the blanks or completing the rhyme” (Rabb, *Satire* 65). Like with the pathetic tragedy, where it is the viewer’s knowledge of the actress’s reputation and past roles that is helping to heighten the affective response to the play in performance, in the secret history it is up to the reader to supply the knowledge of the actual individual and to actively arrive at his own interpretations (or to be convinced of those interpretations by other readers) in order to fully appreciate the affective pleasure caused by the destruction of virtue. In a way, this manner of reading the text puts the reader in the role of Homais in Manley’s *The Royal Mischief* as the one maliciously creating the interpretations that will destroy her virtuous rival.

By placing the burden of interpretation on the reader, the text gets to portray the virtue associated with Bracegirdle's public persona while insinuating against that virtue. If the reader chooses to believe that the actress's virtue is merely a front, he is aligned with Montano, who is the only character to claim that he has proof of Bracilla's and Monfredo's intrigue. However, as mentioned earlier, Montano's view of the actress is highly suspect. A reader who wants to believe that Bracegirdle's public reputation is a lie will most likely align himself with Montano despite the fact that he is clearly fooled by Clelia's deception. However, the text leaves a space for a reader to be critical of Montano's interpretation of events and thus to merely confirm himself in the belief that Bracegirdle/Bracilla is virtuous. Either way, the interpretation of the text relies on a relationship between the reader, the text and Bracegirdle's public reputation and itself points to the intrinsic instability of that reputation. The fragility of the virtue of a public actress, regardless of her own behaviour, is demonstrated by the competing interpretations. Like with Monimia and Cleomira, nothing that Bracegirdle herself does can control how the reading audience is going to read her public virtue. Her exemplarity itself opens her up to the tearing down, in print, of that virtue.

The Player's Tragedy provides a clear case linking the affective structure of the pathetic tragedies with a piece of secret history, and yet the relationship in this particular case could be seen as overdetermined. The parallel between an actress's depiction of the fall of virtue on stage, which activates the affect of envy

for the pleasure of the audience, and the thinly veiled account of that same actress, renowned for virtue, being imagined in compromising situations on the page also activating the same affect is fairly clear. Yet this is not the only secret history that can be understood in this fashion. As we will see in my final chapter, Manley's most famous secret history *New Atalantis* also makes use of this affective structure though in more notably complex ways. Before we reach the work of Manley, however, I wish to turn to a number of other secret histories popular in the Restoration period that do not take the theatre explicitly as their subject, but which more clearly expose the affective potential of social reading. These political secret histories that make a royal figure such as Charles II or James Scott, Duke of Monmouth, into a hero of romance create their own particular affective structure which I will define as a relationship of "spite." The affective relationship of spite, I will argue, is intricately linked with the reading practices of the period and its unstable political climate and, thus, is very much a product of Restoration society.

CHAPTER 3: THE RESTORATION'S "UGLY FEELING": THE POWER OF SPITE IN THE SECRET HISTORY

My first chapter looked at the role of envy on the Restoration stage, where the affect combines with the physical and social environment of the London theatres to diagnose a particular ideological conception of female virtue. My second chapter shifted the focus away from affect in order to investigate the nature of the connections between London theatre audiences and Restoration readers of secret histories, bringing these two genres closer together through the reception practices associated with them and the content of the texts discussed. Though I returned to the importance of envy in the reader's encounter with *The Player's Tragedy*, affect remained a secondary consideration to the elaboration of particular, historical reception of these genres. In this chapter I bring affect into the foreground of my argument again, exploring how it works in a particular subgenre of the political secret histories popular during the Restoration and early eighteenth century.

Most secret histories of the period were not about actors and actresses but instead focused on the ruling members of society, purporting to tell the secrets of the aristocracy and, even, the kings and queens who ruled Britain from 1660 into the early eighteenth century. Though these secret histories share the aspects of community present in the public literary spaces of London (discussed in the

previous chapter), they do not fit the pattern of envy. The thinly disguised pictures of the country's political leaders are portrayed as anything but exemplary; most secret histories delight in the weaknesses of their subjects, whether they are portrayed as harmless foibles or ruthless villainy. However, there is an affective relationship created through these texts that, I will argue throughout this chapter, is specific to both the genre of the secret history and the historical period within which it flourished. This particular affect, which I will define as spite, can be most clearly seen in the secret histories which draw on romance modes, but, as the final section of the chapter shows, it is available as an affect in any secret history provided the reader has the knowledge to understand the powerful figures alluded to by the seemingly fictional text.

Unlike the affect of envy in the pathetic tragedies, whose power was largely diagnostic and not necessarily critical of its supporting ideology, the texts covered in this chapter and the affective relationship that they create are more explicitly political, not merely in their content but more subversively in the perceived power relationships created by the affect of spite. The power inherent in spite is not active but rather is a power of assumption, of a feeling of a right to judge one's social superiors. How exactly this is created in these texts will become clear in the following pages; suffice it to say for now that while envy only exposes ideology more clearly, spite has the potential to move toward ideological shifts in ideas concerning who has the right to speak and to judge in political society. In other words, these political texts contributed to the shifts

going on in England, from 1660 through the 1687/88 revolution to the rise of parliamentary power later in the eighteenth century – shifts which radically changed ideas about who had the right to speak and to participate in the political processes of the time.

To clearly demonstrate the potential for ideological shift within the affective structure of these texts, this chapter will draw on a range of secret history texts (most of which utilize romance tropes), from Aphra Behn's well-known text *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* (1684-1687) and the authorially contested *The Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians* (1705), to Gabriel de Brémond's less-studied *Hattige: or the Amours of the King of Tamaran* (1683) and the anonymous *The Perplex'd Prince* (1682), in order to exemplify the steps of my argument.⁶⁵ The chapter begins with a preliminary definition of spite, leading into two integral elements of Sianne Ngai's more general definition of ugly feelings which clearly link the secret history genre with her particular articulation of affect. An extended definition of the relational affective structure of spite, which explains the axes upon which the relationship is created and intensified – knowledge (both individual and spread through group dynamics) and intimacy – and the specific tropes of the Restoration secret history that enable these axes of reception, follows. Next, I focus in on the particular role of

⁶⁵ Although *The Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians* is included in *The Selected Works of Delariver Manley* published in 2005 by Pickering and Chatto, the editor of that volume, Rachel Carnell questions the attribution in her later biography of Manley (See Carnell 137-145). Because the case against Manley's authorship is strong, though no strong argument can yet be made for another author, I will treat *Queen Zarah* as an anonymous text rather than as part of Manley's work.

romance tropes in creating the intimacy necessary to this affective relationship. The importance of romance modes is illustrated through a case study of Charles II as both king and romance hero. Finally, the chapter will conclude with another method of activating spite present in the many hero-less secret histories like *Queen Zarah*, *The Amours of Messalina* (1689), and Delarivier Manley's version of the Beau Wilson story in the first letter of *The Unknown Lady's Pacquet of Letters* (1707). This will refine the affective relationship of spite by revealing its particular pleasure in fictionally disempowering those figures raised from lowly origins to positions of power.

Secret history as an "ugly" genre

Spite as affect

I have chosen the term "spite" for the affect created specifically by the Restoration and early eighteenth-century secret histories for a number of reasons. Defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "a desire to hurt, annoy, or offend someone," spite combines a pettiness with pleasure (desire) and a sense of the powerlessness of the individual who embodies this position. As both a noun and a verb, spite encapsulates the multivalent status of affect, consisting of both a motion and a static description. On the one hand, this seems an apt term for the overall tone of many of the secret histories in the Restoration, whose primary aim seems to be to tarnish or even destroy the public character of the author's

political rivals. The term also uniquely captures the position of the Restoration reader: the subject in a relationship of spite may desire to hurt or offend but does not have the agency or necessarily the intention to act on this desire. This lack of agency seems particularly apt for readers who are socially and politically powerless in comparison with the objects of their spite, which would certainly be the case for most readers of the Restoration secret histories, who would only view the historical individuals referred to by the secret history, like their monarch Charles II and other members of the court, from a distance if they had any contact with them at all. Thus the desire associated with spite is frustrated and unreleased because of the reader's lack of social standing and power.

To be clear, the affective circuit of spite – comprised of affect, judgement, feeling/description – does not necessarily lead to a feeling of spite, though it certainly can. I use the term spite because it best captures the overall tone of secret history texts, but the true import of spite as affect is in the relationship it creates between readers and their social and political superiors by fictionally representing those leaders as subjects of narrative. Although the reader (or group of readers) is relatively disempowered, spite somewhat paradoxically enables the illusion of power in the reader's ability to feel this desire in relation to their social superiors, an illusion created both by the virtual knowledge communities created through the secret history and by the integration of actual royalty into the romance structures of the early secret history texts, which created a false feeling

of intimacy between readers and the historical individuals/objects recast as textual subjects.

Non-closure

The affective relationship encompassed by the word “spite” is best understood through an extended analysis of the secret history and its readerly effects. However, it would be helpful to make a few preliminary observations about the role of ugly feelings in literature and in society before turning to the elements that define the affect of spite in particular. Sianne Ngai differentiates ugly feelings from their more dramatic counterparts (e.g. fear, anger, pity) in a number of ways that are relevant to their alignment with the secret history mode. On a literary level, ugly feelings are, according to Ngai, the province of non-canonical texts and minor genres. The traditional canon, she argues, “seems to prefer higher passions and emotions – as if minor or ugly feelings were not only incapable of producing ‘major’ works, but somehow disabled the works they do drive from acquiring canonical distinction” (11). Put another way, the traditional canon is driven by what Philip Fisher calls “vehement passions,” rather than minor affects.

Moving from literary categories to effects created by particular texts, Ngai further differentiates ugly feelings from the higher passions by their restricted agency, discussed in my first chapter and clearly evident in the generally

disempowered status of secret history readers relative to the subjects of the texts, and their persistence. In contrast to the higher passions, which allow for the cathartic release of emotion, Ngai writes: “the feelings I examine here are explicitly [...] *noncathartic*, offering no satisfactions of virtue, however oblique, nor any therapeutic or purifying release” (6). Unlike the passions, ugly feelings are continual, remaining throughout and after the encounter with art, as an irritation more than an emotion. Because they are not released through the experience of the art form, ugly feelings, though seldom attracting attention, have the potential to form the basis of a powerful ideological diagnosis through their exposure of the less visible yet still present tensions created by a given society at a particular historical moment.

The secret histories of the Restoration mirror affective non-closure formally, thus intensifying the affect, through the immediacy of their plots and characters to historical events and individuals. Any attempt at narrative closure in these texts is forestalled by the ongoing nature of the crises they allude to and the actual presence in society of the historical figures they reference in their pages, thus also forestalling any emotional closure or release from the text. A reader of the first part of Behn’s *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* (1684) is left with as little certainty about the future for the hero and heroine, Silvia and Philander, beyond the fact that they escape France, as the reader familiar with the story behind the story would have regarding the general whereabouts and actions of the characters’ historical counterparts, Ford Lord

Grey and Lady Henrietta Berkeley, after his escape from the Tower and their flight from England.

Even the death of an historical individual does not necessarily provide closure in Behn's text, as Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, lives on as Tomaso in Part 3, *The Amours of Philander and Silvia* (1687), after his actual death in 1683. Although the inset tale of Cesario's (James, Duke of Monmouth's) failed rebellion and eventual death closes one small part of the narrative formally, this closure is undermined by the continued historical presence of Lord Grey and the open ending provided for Silvia, who at the end is described as the "Talk of the Town, insomuch that the Governour not permitting her stay there, she was forced to remove for new Prey, and daily makes considerable Conquests where e'er she shows the Charmer" (439). There is no ending for Silvia, just the daily repetitions that make up a life, albeit a scandalous one in this particular case. The last lines of the novel further underscore this lack of progress through their description of Philander: "Philander lay sometime in the *Bastile* [...] and was at last pardoned, kiss'd the King's Hand, and came to Court in as much Splendour as ever, being very well understood by all good Men" (439). Staying the same "as ever," Philander is the perennial courtier able to conform to any King who may happen to rule the country, ever constant because he is so changeable. The cynicism created by a "nothing ever really changes" view of politics is recognizable throughout the secret histories, whose lack of closure leaves the affective impression long after the text has been put away.

Restoration secret history improves upon the link between the historical and the fictional, adding formal narrative structures that further block an ending or release and creating an impression of continuity of affect outside the confines of the text. *Hattige*, for example, uses the strategy of the inset tale within a traditional romance frame narrative of a knight coming to the aid of a lady in distress. However, because the frame tale and the inset tale are narratively intertwined – the heroine of the inset tale is the lady rescued in the frame and allowed to continue her journey at the end of the tale – neither one actually concludes. *The Perplex'd Prince* leaves its hero at the end contemplating his proper course of action in light of all that has come before, clearly implying that the action is ongoing. And finally, multi-volume secret histories like *Amours of Messalina Late Queen of Albion* and Behn's *Love Letters* use the connection between the living individuals referred to in their texts and their fictional heroes and heroines to fuel ongoing scandal narratives, putting out serial multi-volume works in tandem with the changing fortunes of their historical subjects.⁶⁶ This open, repetitive, often quotidian quality makes these texts particularly interesting in a political context as the affects created linger and are amplified by further encounters with the particular heroes and heroines of the genre. As we shall see, these lingering affects are varied and unpredictable – they can provide

⁶⁶ I am following William Warner here in asserting the importance of reading the multivolume fiction of the Restoration period as essentially serial rather than treating the multiple volumes as mere parts of a whole. As he argues in relation to Behn's *Love-Letters*: "Because *Love Letters* stays open to the unfolding of an historical crisis and a scandalous affair, each sequel offers the next chapter in an ongoing real-life drama" (53). It is this close proximity of secret history to actual events that is lost when the parts of serial publications are taken together and treated as a whole.

the grounds for propagandistic manipulation of the reader by a factional author or they can be completely dismissed by, and thus powerless toward, a reader strongly prepossessed on the issue being written about. Beyond this propagandistic purpose, however, lie the assumptions these texts rely on readers to make for their affective pleasure, assumptions that empower readers to sit in judgement on the behaviour (usually sexual) of their leaders.

The constructed object of spite

Another defining element of an ugly feeling is the “indistinctness if not absence of object” (Ngai 22) for the feeling. This renders problematic the neat affective triangle of subject, affect, object, in that the object is indistinct, undefined and often unknowable. Ngai’s most extreme example of this is paranoia, which is created by the ominous nature of the unknown object coming to bear on the psyche of the subject. Though clearly different from paranoia, spite, like the other ugly feelings, is characterized by its particular relationship to its object. The object of spite, though seemingly solid and objective, both on a textual level as a character and a historical level as a being in the world, is actually quite fluid, comprised of shifting layers of belief and knowledge created by the text itself, mediated through social communities, gossip and shifting reputations. Though the object may seem distinct, that illusion is easily dispelled when different interpretations of particular characters and texts come into contact with one another. In other words, the object of the secret history is merely

an externalization of the reader's subjective understanding, which has varying degrees of seeming solidity depending on the extent of the reader's previous knowledge (itself textually and orally constituted) of the individual alluded to by the text. Much like the theatregoer's creation of Anne Bracegirdle's public persona, discussed in the previous two chapters, the reader's understanding of the historical individual implied by the secret history exists separately from the actual historical personage: the implied object/individual is often as much a creation as the character on the page.

The reading community's role in facilitating spite: the authoritative reader and intimacy

The subject's own activity in creating the object of spite is masked through the literary text and through the communities that debated and discussed those texts. The familiarity of names bandied about in conversation intensified the ability of the reader to falsely imagine that he or she genuinely knew the person alluded to by the secret history. As seen in the previous chapter, the secret histories of the Restoration (on the stage and on the page) created a community of readers that could be constituted physically by a particular London public space or virtually through a shared understanding of a particular text. This shared community was not merely a by-product, a potential, created by the secret history; rather, community was the secret history's mode, that which marked it out as a particular type of literary text. One of the aspects of this

virtual knowledge community is its creation of an illusionary egalitarianism and, as a result, its real potential for change. The democratizing tendency of these types of communities, described by Rabb in her link between secret history and gossip and mentioned at the beginning of my previous chapter, bears repeating here:

Gossip's secretive whispers have a potentially democratizing effect. Although gossip decenters narrative authority from a single source, it nevertheless acquires a new form of authority, a hidden source of consensus, a collective notion of many people permitted to speak and to share in what is 'generally known.' (54)

If, as Loveman argues, one of the primary pleasures of reading these types of texts was social, that is, the ability to discern the true events and people behind the text and to test that knowledge against the views of other readers, then this feeling of sharing in what is known, attributed by Rabb to gossip, would intensify in a coffeehouse or at a club meeting and would spread, as those who had not initially been able to decipher the text learned from the conversations of others. The spread of this knowledge within groups of readers would itself intensify the individual's sense that they had the epistemological authority to then go and tell others the "truth" of the text.

The figure of reader as author is enabled by secret history's elision of a single textual authority. This is established through an initial posture which, traditionally, disavows any possible relationship between the text and current

conditions in England through assertions of the text as translation, as fiction, or as true tales from other far away kingdoms. By obscuring the authority behind the text, the authors of secret histories like *Hattige*, whose “translator” claims to have read a French translation (though not the original Dutch text) before offering his own translation in English, leave an opening for the readers to claim their own epistemological authority. A sceptical reader like those described by Loveman and discussed in the previous chapter would recognize the generic feints set out by preface writers and immediately begin the task of decoding the historical referents of the text, thus privileging their own interpretation of the text over that of its narrator. In this way the English reader and his community of fellows seem to create or even author the true English story being alluded to by the supposedly foreign romances. This, of course, is the original aim of the author, who hides behind the genre conventions which through their conventionality display their falsity to the educated reader.

Later secret histories and satires make use of the blanked out name to the same purpose, more clearly forcing the authority for the text onto the reader. As Rabb argues: “in these spaces the author/speaker ostensibly, even flagrantly, relinquishes control over language [...] asserting a kind of ‘secret’ control over his/her interlocutors” (65). The second part of *The Secret History of Queen Zarah, and the Zarazians* (1705) takes this strategy almost to the edge of absurdity, blanking out a wide range of often seemingly innocuous words. While some of these blanks, like “C–t” in place of the word “court,” are clearly meant to

suggest more obscene words in the minds of readers, many of the words blanked out do not suggest an ironic or obscene meaning. The sheer volume of blanked out words foregrounds the work that the reader must do to read the text at all and shifts the responsibility for the meaning onto the reader, who is literally filling in the blanks. This strategy, not used in the first part of the text, is signalled by the second part's inclusion of a preface disavowing any relevance of the text to contemporary politics.⁶⁷ Whether for legal or political reasons or from an understanding of the game of suspicious reading, in a secret history, the responsibility for truth is shifted from the author to the readers, both individual and communal.

The secret histories of the Restoration were largely concerned with political matters, particularly surrounding the various plots preceding and

⁶⁷ The first part of *Queen Zarah* was published with a note to the reader which was a direct translation of "Sur Histoire" from *Lettres curieuses de littérature et de morale* written by the abbé Morvan de Bellegarde in 1702 (Carnell 143). While interesting, this preface had little relation to the text that followed it. In contrast, the second part was published with a preface fervently disavowing any political reference of the text to contemporary England. Seeking to correct the "Misunderstandings some have conceiv'd, as if this was a Modern History, and related to several Affairs Transacted near Home," the translator reaffirms the existence of an ancient original manuscript in Rome and invites any who do not believe in such an original to "be satisfied there if they think it worth their while to go thither on Purpose" (123).

during the Exclusion Crisis (1679-1681).⁶⁸ Although after the Glorious Revolution (1688) the specific focus changed, first to the scandals associated with the end of James II's reign, then later to the rise of Sarah Churchill's influence on Queen Anne, royal and political figures remained the primary targets. From the anonymous text *The Perplex'd Prince* (1682) through to *The Secret History, of Queen Zarah, and the Zarazians* (1705), readers were entertained by the supposed misconduct (usually sexual) of their social superiors. In fact, "superior" in the context of the secret history mode is a misleading term, as the function of the mode was to place the reader in a moral position on par with the figures behind the stories. The epistemological authority pressed on the reader who had the knowledge to read the story behind the text contributes to the sense that, as authority, the reader could morally judge the text's implied subjects. In other words, the knowing reader of the secret history was temporarily allowed to sit in judgement on the purported actions of his rulers, though, of course, this sense of power was illusory.

⁶⁸ The Exclusion Crisis was, on the most basic level, the struggle between the country party of Parliament (led by Shaftesbury and Buckingham) and the royalists (headed by the king, Charles II) over the rights of succession. By law James, Duke of York was in line to succeed Charles II since the king had had no legal heirs of his own. However, the country party, alarmed by James' Catholicism tried to have him excluded from the succession in favour of the King's oldest bastard son James, Duke of Monmouth, who was a Protestant. Through a series of plots including the Popish Plot (1678 - supposedly a Catholic plot to kill the King but actually a plot to discredit Catholics at court) and the Rye House plot (1683 - a Whig plot to kill both the King and his brother James, in which Lord Grey was implicated) and three "exclusion" parliaments, the last of which, at Oxford, was prorogued by Charles, thus closing the question from a legal though certainly not a political standpoint, the controversy played out in parliament and in the public spaces and popular print of London. I will provide additional details as they relate to specific texts covered in this chapter, but for a convenient timeline and brief framework of the events see Holmes 3-14.

In addition to the sense of moral authority provided by the knowledge of the historical meaning of the text, the secret histories that are the focus of this chapter helped create a feeling of intimacy between their readers and their implied historical subjects, what Joseph Roach has called “public intimacy” or “the illusion of proximity to the tantalizing apparition” (Roach 44). Similar to the seeming proximity that the playhouse created between audience members and the actresses on stage that was exploited by the author of *The Player’s Tragedy* and that was an integral element of the public personae of actresses like Barry and Bracegirdle, the secret histories that form the subject of this chapter seemed to bring the royal figures of the Restoration into close contact with their readers. These particular secret histories created this effect by writing public figures of the day, for the most part royalty, as amatory characters. As characters, the historical individuals are made to conform to recognizable types while the readers are seemingly given access to their private thoughts and motives. Though most of the characters of the secret history genre would appear flat and stereotypical to a reader raised on the psychological depth of the nineteenth-century novel, to a contemporary reader who already had knowledge of the historical individuals alluded to in the text, the story could seem to provide private details of an already fully fleshed-out person as well as, through generic character lines, manipulating the reader’s overall view of the integrity of that historical person. This feeling of intimacy created through genre tropes would be further

intensified by the public discussions and circulation of the textual details as gossip already described.⁶⁹

Thus in *The Perplex'd Prince*, when the reader is introduced to the hero and heroine of the tale, Conradus King of Otenia and Madam Lucilious (Charles II and Lucy Walter, mother of James, Duke of Monmouth), the text gives only a perfunctory, almost non-description of Conradus, assuming his historical counterpart to be entirely familiar to its readers: "*Conradus King of Otenia, was tall, finely shaped; he was of a Princely port and carriage, and had the Soul as well as the Port of Prince, being inferiour to none in Courage and Valour*" (16). There is no need for the text to provide widely known, superficial details about the king; rather, its promise to the reader is to reveal the details of his private actions through the course of the plot. In contrast, Lucy Walters would have been less familiar to the reader, having died in 1658 before Charles II was restored to the throne. As a result, the text is at pains throughout to create a personality for her that conforms to the political slant of the author, who claims that Charles II did secretly marry her (and thus that James, Duke of Monmouth was his legitimate heir). Beginning with a lengthy description that emphasizes her beauty, the text goes on to extol the superior nature of her mind – "her Mind was richly fraught with the rarest qualities" (17) – and to portray her as humble and

⁶⁹ Laura Rosenthal has argued elsewhere for the "symbolic capital" that the writers of a secret history could accrue due to their knowledge of the secrets of the powerful: "[...] even Manley's scandalous writing declares a kind of symbolic capital (perhaps more social than cultural), for it records an intimacy with elite men and women at the same time that it exposes their foibles." (177). My argument builds on this, arguing for an affective transference of this capital from the author through the text to the reader.

virtuous in all her dealings with the king, even going to so far as to initially refuse his affection because of her lowly status (27). Allowing the readers to fill in the details of the historical characters where possible and providing embellished pictures of historical personages where such images might be supposed to be lacking in the community of readers, the secret history created an intimate relationship between readers and the royal figures whom they would only see from a distance, if ever, but who would always be before them in print and in conversation.

Faction in feeling

It has to be reaffirmed that the intimacy created through the secret history, like the power it provided to the reader, was entirely illusory and politically charged. It has been argued that the “secret historian who chooses to lie must do so with all his heart” (Maxwell 15), since, despite the editor/translator/author’s claim to the contrary, the secret history is supposed to relay previously unknown truths about those in power. In the case of the Restoration secret history, this claim to truth underlying the generic feints offered in prefaces and notes to the reader was always in the service of a particular political faction and always contained truth claims which had only a very questionable resemblance to historical fact. Thus the claims of a text could always be construed by astute readers as, if not outright lies, then at least as heavily slanted propagandistic assertions. However, one would expect that some readers who did see through

the surface tale might also believe the falsehoods asserted by the propaganda writers – or at least might want to believe, given their own political slant. The political nature of the secret histories combined with the false sense of intimacy and the readers’ potential to act as moral judges toward their social superiors meant that, in the Restoration, the affective relationship of spite created by these texts always had larger political implications.

Dedications and other paratexts signalled this political importance by the overly strident protestations of their unimportance. The *Perplex’d Prince* provides a good example of this strategy in its dedication when the author complains that the bookshops are so full of “Invective Pamphlets and Scurilous Libels, most of which are cunningly designed either to invalidate the Truth of a real Plot, or to insinuate and prove a fictitious one” (A2) that there is no room for an “agreeable Diversion” (A2) such as his text. Explicitly contrasting his story with the “Intelligencies, Addresses, Absolom and Achitophels” (A2), the author signals to the knowledgeable reader that it belongs in that company (though on the opposite political spectrum from John Dryden’s poem) while seeming to seduce them into reading it as a harmless romance. This particular text’s claim that Charles II had, in fact, secretly married Lucy Walter (thus legitimizing Charles’s popular bastard son James, Duke of Monmouth) and was only hiding this fact on bad advice from his brother the Duke of York was anything but harmless at the time of its publication.

For proof that contemporary readers read these seeming-fictions also as political texts, one need only look at the marginalia left behind by readers such as Sarah Allen and Narcissus Lutrell, both of whom assiduously filled in the proper historical names for the romance characters and places in their copies of texts such as *The Perplex'd Prince*.⁷⁰ Additional evidence is provided in other contemporary texts. For example, *The Fugitive Statesman, in Requitall for the Perplex'd Prince* (1683) openly avows its political nature in the note to the reader, claiming that the following tale is a response to that "Libel, call'd The Perplex'd Prince" whose aim had been "to poyson Peoples Minds" (A3), thus calling attention to the fact that the text being responded to was read, at least by the pamphlet writer, as a political rather than a purely fictional text.

Using these sorts of strategies, the skilled author of secret history sought to create an intimate relationship between readers and their political leaders that was moulded according to the author's own factional purposes. This type of propaganda, though relying on a certain degree of knowledge on the part of readers, could be extremely effective in creating the relationship that provided the illusion for the reader that he was in a position to judge the characters in the text. This is because skilful secret histories always straddled the line between the harmless illusion of fiction and the often potentially libellous political story beneath. As long as the fictional veneer was present, the reader could

⁷⁰ Lutrell's marginalia is easily accessible on a second edition copy of *The Perplex'd Prince* available at the British Library and online through EEBO. For more details on Allen's annotations see Loveman, who convincingly claims that Allen took "the task of interpreting the work very seriously" (116).

temporarily set aside the true social standing of the historical individual being referenced and relate to them merely as a fantasy figure, a fictional character. Under the cover of this deception, the text provided the author's version of the political events in such a way as to guide the reader's interpretation, ensuring the reader's harsh judgement of the "appropriate" villains and admiration of the set-upon heroes and providing an alternative historical narrative hidden under the guise of fiction.

A reigning king as romance hero

Like most prose forms in the Restoration, the secret history is a mixed mode generically speaking. However, of its potential modes (political satire/polemic, history, picaresque, romance), the most effective one for creating a sense of intimacy and thus intensifying the affect of spite is the romance.⁷¹ Though romance, even now, remains a largely denigrated genre, its potential as a powerful form of subversion has been noted by a range of scholars. Writing about Renaissance romance, Gordon Teskey argues that romance can act "as a source of disorder, or a potential for change" (7). Teskey is particularly interested in how romance as a genre combines with other genres to provoke innovation — in the case of the Renaissance, that combination is with classical forms, whereas

⁷¹ As we will see at the end of this chapter, spite is not only a product of secret histories that use the romance mode. Yet because romance tropes most effectively create the affective relationship between implied object and reader through the particular style of the narratives, texts which use those formal strategies will be the focus of this section.

in the Restoration romance is more often combined with history and with political polemics. In both cases, romance brings into a text a deceptively innocuous and thus powerful generic effect.

Yet the subversive power of romance does not rest solely in formal elements. Fredric Jameson's articulation of romance as "that form in which the *world-ness of the world* reveals itself" (142), despite its Heideggerian awkwardness, is particularly useful here as it accords the romance mode an ideologically powerful ability to reveal historical thought structures. According to Jameson, romance is defined by both its archetypal generic structures and its specific historical instantiations of those structures. Thus, the eternal struggle of good and evil, through the vessel of the hero, persists throughout romance as a mode, but how a text defines what is good and what is evil becomes particularly revealing of a specific historical moment and its dominant ideologies. Far from being just a formal exercise, closely studying the use of romance tropes can, according to Jameson, "provide clues which lead us back to the concrete historical situation of the individual text itself, and allow us to read its structure as ideology, as a socially symbolic act, as a prototypical response to a historical dilemma" (157).

The impact of the secret history as romance is even greater when the hero is a king. What is the effect of making a reigning king a subject of a narrative? How does a political subject relate to his monarch if that monarch is, himself, the subject of their leisure reading? Arguably, a romance aligns the sympathies of

the reader with its hero in his path to truth and right action. For the reader of the secret histories in question, the hero is always two figures at once: the subject of the text and the historical object. Never completely conflated for the knowledgeable reader, these two figures occupy the narrative such that the closeness the reader feels toward the hero is then temporarily translated to his feelings toward his actual monarch. The hero bleeds into the monarch such that it becomes difficult to separate the impression of knowing the character from the impression of knowing the actual king.

The key characteristic of a romance hero is his passivity; he is a vessel for the struggle of good and evil played out around him and through him.⁷² Jameson argues that “the hero’s dominant trait is naiveté or inexperience, and [...] his most characteristic posture is that of bewilderment” (139). In Restoration secret histories that use the romance mode, these traits become the complaisance and general good nature of the hero/king, particularly toward those he loves. In *Hattige, the King of Tamaran* (Charles II) is presented as “of a very peaceable humour” (23) which leads him into some difficulty in mediating the feud between his beloved mistress Hattige (Barbara Palmer, Duchess of Cleveland) and his “favourite” Osman (Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon).⁷³ In *The Amours of*

⁷² Given this quality of romance, Jameson goes so far as to question the use of the term hero in this genre, as it tends to imply heroic action. In contrast, “what we find in romance is something quite different, a sequence of events that are closer to states of being than to acts, or better still, in which even human acts and deeds are apprehended in relatively static, pictorial, contemplative fashion, as being themselves results and attributes, rather than causes in their own right” (139).

⁷³ I have not found any key for *Hattige* and there are no edited versions of the text. Thus all of the historical individuals posited as references for the text are my own educated guesses.

Messalina, Lycogenes (James II) is portrayed as a trusting hero brought down by his cruel counsellors, whose number includes his lascivious wife Messalina (Queen Mary of Modena). And in *Queen Zarah Volpone* (Sidney Godolphin) describes Albania (Queen Anne) as possessing “the Supreme Virtue of Moderation [and] Clemency” which he goes on to describe as “a Gift of Piety, a Sweetness of Spirit” (118). The extreme vilification of Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough as Queen Zarah makes it quite clear who is manipulating the too-complaisant Albania. Disguising their history within romance forms, the secret histories were able to implicitly criticize a reigning monarch without actually portraying him or her negatively. Casting the beleaguered monarch as hero also aligned the reading subject with the subject of the text, allowing him or her to feel connected to and sympathetic with the character and thus the historical monarch behind the character. The key in these texts is to make any questionable actions undertaken by the king/hero be the result of the counsel of one of the text’s villains, thus avoiding blaming the monarch for the political decisions and behaviour being criticized and hiding the potential criticism of weakness in a monarch behind the generic screen of the expectations regarding a romance hero.

As mentioned in relation to the factionalism of the secret histories, the most overtly political aspect of romance as secret history is the character alignment. Who is the hero? Who the villain? This initial choice manipulates how the reader will respond to the characters, certainly, but also can influence how a reader may then respond to the historical person behind the text. Because the

genre is a mixed one, the knowledgeable reader is always shifting between the romance plot and the application of the story to the historical individuals behind the text. This generic betweenness has important political and social implications, on the one hand allowing the author to manipulate the political allegiances of the reader more subtly than straight-forward political polemic is able to and, on the other hand, creating an even greater feeling of intimacy between a reader and his social superior that is a vital component in creating the affective relationship of spite.

Put another way, the effectiveness of the romance fiction narrative in making the secret history author's version of events more palatable and in seemingly bringing the individuals behind the story closer to the reader lies in its cover story, in its fictive nature. In *Why Do We Care About Literary Characters?*, Blakey Vermeule uses theories of cognition to investigate the reasons that readers come to care about characters in fiction, claiming that at the very outset of interacting with a work of fiction, we, as readers, "allow ourselves to be guided" (21). Though seemingly trivial, this first step in approaching a literary work, a letting down of boundaries, opens up the reader in such a way that he, albeit temporarily, is led by the story.⁷⁴ The implications of this when the story is merely a mask for a particular political standpoint are highly suggestive, as the fiction disarms the reader against arguments which he might vehemently oppose

⁷⁴ While a sceptical reader of secret histories might quickly see through the fiction, thus limiting the potential for him to be tricked into a sympathy with a political opponent or opposing faction, the potential to read the text as fiction will always be present and even the most distrustful of readers may at moments be lulled by a good narrative.

if he were to encounter them baldly as argument in another genre of writing. In other words, a reader who is vehemently anti-royalist could find himself initially sympathizing with a character whom he only later realizes is meant to be read as his monarch. Though the conflation of hero and monarch may be less effective in the case of historical figures whose own personalities are in stark contrast to the heroes of romance, in the Restoration period, authors had before them the perfect monarch and perfect court for translation into a romance mode.

Charles II: A king “but just as others are”

More than any of the later subjects of secret history, Charles II, both through his behaviour and in depictions of his character, enabled the virtual equality experienced by his subjects through these texts in the transformation of king to romance hero. Roach’s claim that Charles II was “the last sacred king [and] also the first modern head of state, at least on the score of flagrant public intimacy” (30), touches on the paradoxical status of the man who most fully occupied both of the traditional bodies of the monarch. On the one side was the physical body of the king, most famously articulated by Samuel Pepys’s oft-quoted observation, made on the instance of one of the King’s dogs soiling the boat in which Pepys was accompanying the King on his re-entry into England after the Restoration, that “a King and all that belong to him are but just as others are” (1.158). Linking the physical waste of one of the king’s possessions to the king himself, Pepys emphasizes the material body of the monarch.

The focus on the body of Charles II is also readily apparent in the public interest in his sexual activities, encouraged by his own open flaunting of his mistresses, and in his high visibility, most notably in the public playhouse, of which he was a frequent audience member. Though the quotation from Pepys seems to be a positive assessment in that he takes pleasure in imagining the king as a man (and this is certainly the impulse which the secret histories that star Charles as hero attempt to harness), the visibility of the king's physicality was also a source of turmoil in the period. As Tim Harris has pointed out, the Bawdy House riots (1668) had larger political implications made explicit by the crowd, which, after attacking a number of the bawdy houses in London over a series of days, "threatened that 'ere long they would come and pull White-hall down', presumably, in their eyes, the biggest bawdy house of the lot" (83). So, while Pepys and others may have enjoyed following the scandalous gossip centred on the court and the body of the king, others were not pleased with what they saw as a degradation of the sacred role of the monarch.⁷⁵

On the other side of the picture, the importance Charles II placed on the performance of kingship as a role both political and sacred has often been noted

⁷⁵ The most memorable criticisms of Charles in this respect come in the poetry of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, who emphasizes Charles's sexual body, collapsing the political role of monarch into the physical body of the king and describing the monarch as a slave to his passions, and thus to his mistresses:

Peace is his aim, his gentleness is such,
And love he loves, for he loves fucking much.
Nor are his high desires above his strength:
His scepter and his prick are of a length;
And she may sway the one who plays with th'other, ("Satyr" 8-12)

by literary and historical scholars.⁷⁶ The extreme theatricality and the elaborate nature of his coronation with its procession through London and its many elaborate arches and pageants attest to the importance of visible power to the public perception of the king, who, according to Paula Backscheider, insisted on approving many of the details personally (6).⁷⁷ Even more telling, however, was Charles II's frequent performance of the ritual of touching for the king's evil, "laying his comforting hands convincingly on tens of thousands of afflicted subjects during his reign, treating up to two hundred in a single ceremony" (Roach 34). As George Southcombe and Grant Tapsell put it, with what one hopes is a sense of irony, "Charles touched prodigiously" (62), thus frequently and visibly reminding his subjects of the sacred nature of the monarch. Although the visible separation of the King's physical body from its sacred and political functions arguably first occurred with the execution of Charles I, the first monarch to live and to manipulate that separation was Charles II.⁷⁸

Charles II's attempts (and for many of his admirers, his ability) to fully occupy both his symbolic role and his material body is the quality that marks

⁷⁶ See Paula Backscheider's *Spectacular Politics*; Southcombe and Tapsell 59-74; Roach; and Fraser.

⁷⁷ In a Diary entry that spans two days Pepys describes the procession and the coronation, beginning with his assertion that "it is impossible to relate the glory of that this day" (2.82), moving on to describe the elaborate clothing of both the people and the horses – "Imbroidery and diamonds were ordinary among them" (2.82) – then concluding the next day with description of the actual coronation ritual and celebrations that followed it. The impact of this royal performance on Pepys is readily apparent in his conclusion for the day's entry: "Now, after all this, I can say that, besides the pleasure of the sight of these glorious things, I may now shut my eyes against any other objects, or for the future trouble myself to see things of state and shewe, as being sure never to see the like again in this world" (2.88).

⁷⁸ See Southcombe's and Tapsell's argument for Charles's conscious manipulation of his sacred status for political ends (62-63).

him as one of the first celebrities, an early embodiment of what Roach calls “It,” a living icon who “exud[ed] the most intense of the contradictory qualities that reliably excite the fascination of It: vulnerability in strength, profanity in sanctity, and intimacy in public” (175). Because of his personal visibility, in the London playhouses and the public promenades, and his highly publicized romantic affairs, Charles II provided a tangible public persona upon which the secret history writers could then write their own fictional romances. For a London reader, the public persona of Charles II and the romance version present in the texts fed into and modified one another, together creating the celebrity. Yet even though Charles himself contributed to his paradoxical persona, it is necessary always to keep in mind that it is the reader, the consumer, who ultimately creates the object of his interest: “Like the mythical figure of Pygmalion, who modeled [sic] an image with which he promptly fell in love, the consumer of celebrity culture icons does the work of creating the effigy in the physical absence of the beloved” (Roach 40). Like Montano, who actively created his image of Bracilla, and the theatregoer, who created a public image of Bracegirdle through her performances upon the stage and the printed texts surrounding her, the individual’s perception of the monarch was created through the layering of the many different types of encounters – sightings, gossip, official new sources, secret histories – he had with the king. Of interest here are the ways that the secret history writers used romance, in particular, to write about their monarch

and, further, how the romance characters then helped to refine the public's perception of their king.⁷⁹

Dryden most famously articulated the good and forgiving nature of Charles II in "Absolom and Achitophel," casting the monarch as the biblical King David in his extended political allegory and describing him as "So willing to forgive th' offending age;" (941). Charles's reputation for forgiveness was cemented by his passing of the Act of General Pardon, Indemnity and Oblivion in August, 1660. The act pardoned all those involved in the opposition to the Stuarts during the interregnum, with the exception of 33 individuals most implicated in the death of his father Charles I (Holmes 3).⁸⁰ The similarity between the most noted personality traits of the actual historical individual and the literary characters based on his persona strengthened the illusion that the hero and the king were one and the same, making it more likely that elements of the romances would be conflated by readers with what they knew of the actual king.

The conflation between the king and the character is further demonstrated through a comparison between a memoir description of Charles and a romance

⁷⁹ Michael McKeon has articulated the political potential of the relationship between the king's two bodies during the Restoration in the contrast between publicity and authority: "Once the doctrine of the king's two bodies is subjected [...] to public-sphere inspection, the natural and the private body of the monarch becomes, not a fence against interference with the political and public body of the monarch, but the easiest access to it" (*Secret* 557).

⁸⁰ In his diary entry for November 19, 1660, Pepys relates a conversation he had with the Treasurer (whose name is not noted) about "those men who now stand condemned for murdering the King [the 33 not pardoned], he [the Treasurer] says that he believes that if the law would give leave, the King is a man of so great compassion that he would wholly acquit them" (1.296)

description of a hero based upon him. Recalling the early years of the Restoration court, Anthony Hamilton in his *Mémoires de la Vie du Comte de Grammont* described Charles II as “affable and easy by temperament and in mind”:

Capable of varying reactions, he was in turn compassionate towards the unhappy, inflexible towards the wicked and tender almost to excess [...] His heart was often the fool and more often still the slave in his flirtations. (5)

Mostly a chronicle of the gossip surrounding the various maids of honour to Queen Catherine and James, Duke of York’s first wife, Anne Stuart, Hamilton’s text has very little to say about the king other than this short character assessment, yet his description is of interest because his knowledge of Charles II was based on his own intimate knowledge of the court and the king.

If we compare Hamilton’s description with the descriptions used by Gabriel de Brémond, the author of *Hattige*, we can get a clear sense of why Charles II was such an attractive and effective figure to place in the role of romance hero. Speaking of the kingdom of Tamaran (England), Razy, the slave woman narrating the inset tale, says: “I rather think Subjects are such as their Kings make them. And the King of *Tamaran* being one of the most gallant Princes the World ever had, ‘tis no wonder there is nothing so much talked of in his Kingdom as Gallantry” (19). Later the author alludes to Charles’s tendency to be “the slave in his flirtations” (Hamilton 5), having Razy claim that “it may be said, without stretching too much, the King of Tamaran took his Crown from his head

to put it on Hattige's [Barbara Palmer, Duchess of Cleveland]" (21-22).⁸¹ Though the names are exotic, the resemblance to Charles in the features of the romance hero is strikingly clear. Given the superficial similarities, it is no wonder that authors began to delineate their romance heroes in an attempt to manipulate the ways that readers viewed their king. Yet, because of the generic expectations of the romance hero, the texts were able to do this without overtly criticizing their monarch. For the most part, Charles's easy nature – alluded to by depictions of the romance hero – is used to defuse any overt criticisms of the hero/king by deflecting them onto villains who are sufficiently ill-natured to take unfair advantage of such a good-natured monarch.

Within the context of a secret history that uses romance conventions, even the king's amorous nature is not necessarily negative. The mistresses and the scandals can be fully explored and yet remain fairly innocuous because of the generic assumptions that go into the reading of romance: it is expected for a romance hero to sacrifice all for the love of his desired mistress. Though the secret history use of this trope in the Restoration was far more about physical desire than the exalted love aimed at by traditional romance, the movement from love to desire was an easy one for authors; even well-respected English romances

⁸¹ This passage is also used almost verbatim by the author of *The Secret History of Queen Zarah*, but applied to Queen Anne and Sarah Churchill: "for it may be said without Exaggerating upon the Subject too much, *Albania* took the Crown from her own Head to put it on *Zarah's*." (114).

like Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* mixed aspects of physical desire in with their more modest representations of romantic love.⁸²

Hattige, seemingly the least political of all the texts covered in this chapter, provides a good example of the strategies used by the writers who turned to the romance mode as a cover for their "true" narratives. A modern reader unaware of Restoration history could easily read this text as a comic romance. As mentioned earlier, however, for a student of the Restoration period and presumably for a contemporary reader who was aware of the gossip surrounding Charles II's mistresses, the text tells the story of Charles II's (the king of Tamaran's) struggle to mediate between his foremost mistress Barbara Palmer, Duchess of Cleveland (*Hattige*), and his first minister Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon (the eunuch Osman), revealing gossipy details about Cleveland's infidelities (most notably with Henry Jermyn) as well as the king's transfer of affections from Cleveland to an actress, probably Nell Gwynn, as the text was first published in 1683.⁸³ The events described by the text occurred in the late 1660s yet the publication date, thirteen years later, actually broadens the potential targets of the text, as the less careful reader could easily substitute more

⁸² For instance, in *The Old Arcadia*, the hero Musidorus is only prevented from, in effect, raping his true love Pamela by the timely arrival of a "dozen clownish villains" (177). Using phrases such as "sucking the breath," "fainting force," and "fury of delight" (177), Sidney's original description could easily appear in the later secret histories, though it was revised out of the later versions of *Arcadia*. (This scene only appears in *The Old Arcadia*, not in the later editions referred to as *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*.)

⁸³ Though both the actresses Moll Davis and Nell Gwynn became mistresses to Charles II in the late 1660s (1668 and 1669 respectively), Gwynn held the king's affections longer and lived longer as the king's actress mistress in the public's imagination. Given the text's later date it seems safe to read the actress mistress as the more famous Gwynn.

recent historical individuals rather than the ones who would have occupied the described roles years earlier.⁸⁴ This potential slippage benefits the careful, sceptical readers whose discovery of the text's targets through a careful historical matching of text to individual allowed them to claim an epistemological superiority over the less careful reader who assigned contemporary individuals to the text.

Returning to the king, what *Hattige* clearly demonstrates is the romance's ability to create an illusory connection between the reader and their sovereign through the textual character. In the power struggle between Hattige and the eunuch Osman for control over the king, the reader's sympathies clearly align with the beleaguered king, whose affection for both causes him to displease both of them most of the time. When Osman intercepts a letter from Hattige to Rajep (Jermyn), her soon-to-be lover, the eunuch arranges for the king to catch the pair in the act of deception. Though Osman's plans are foiled initially by the king's desire not to catch his beloved mistress *in flagrante*, the scheme ultimately succeeds as he inspires the king's jealousy. Inflamed by Hattige's rebuffs, the king disguises himself as a woman and takes the intended lover's place, revealing himself only when Hattige has fully revealed her own perfidy. However, even then, the king is too enflamed with his passion for her to keep to his resolution to see her no more. Coming into her closet ostensibly to take back

⁸⁴ Given the references to Clarendon and an actress, it seems safe to suppose that the person with whom Cleveland is enamoured in the story is Henry Jermyn; however, the late date of the actual publication would allow less careful readers a number of options, including the more well known John Churchill, future Duke of Marlborough and husband to Sarah Churchill, the target of a number of later secret histories including *Queen Zarah* and Manley's *New Atalantis*.

the jewels he gave her, “he [falls] to viewing them over, and taking particular notice of them, as it were to give time to his perfidious Mistress to come, and appease him” (82). The hero’s resolution is as nothing in the face of his love for his mistress, and he forgives her all her infidelities.

The reader’s sympathy with the hero/king’s amorous trials is rewarded in the comic ending. The king, “who after he was convinc’d of the Falseness of *Hattige*, began to love her less, was very desirous of a new Mistress” (85). This desire finds its object when he catches a glimpse of the fair buttocks of Roukia (Gwynn): “’Twas in truth a Masterpiece of the kind, and (notwithstanding the unpleasing Function it was about) inflam’d the Heart of the Royall Spectator” (86-87). Complete with a scatological reference – perhaps alluding to the lowly origins of Charles’s actress mistress – the new intrigue offers a fresh example of our hero’s propensity toward all aspects of beautiful women’s bodies and allows him to take the lead in a romantic intrigue which includes an inadvertent mistress swap between himself and Roukia’s husband, and ends with *Hattige* banished from her royal quarters in favour of the king’s new mistress Roukia. The sympathetic link between reader and character is innocuous and enjoyable in the narrow context of the reading experience; however, a secret history’s implications are never confined to the actual text.

Whereas weakness and a propensity to affairs of the heart are expected and relished in a romance hero, these characteristics are problematic for a king. The problem is articulated by Brémond’s narrator, when she describes how the

king initially took Hattige's part against his advisor Osman: "Strange Weakness! But Kings in love are Men, and not Gods" (67). The reader's ability to feel an intimate connection with the character, and thus, along with the narrator, to feel an ability to judge the behaviour of that character, even if it is as slight as a sense of bemused tolerance with his foibles, is extended by the secret history to the actual individual always present behind that character, in this case the king. Thus, in reading the secret history as romance, Restoration readers were encouraged to view their sovereign as merely a man. This effect was strengthened by the contemporary interest in Charles II's physical body and love affairs discussed earlier, making it quite easy for his subjects to view him as a man rather than a god. Again the narrator of *Hattige* provides a clear image of this effect:

Such, Sir, is the fortune of Monarchs in love; when they are with their Mistresses they commonly lay aside that Majesty which dazles [sic]the Eyes, and affects the Hearts of Mankind; they go undressed into their Chambers, and make themselves so familiar with their Mistresses they afterwards use them as ordinary Men: (29-30)

In other words, the role of the secret history as romance is to undress the monarch, inviting his subjects into his most private moments and thus allowing them to feel an intimacy one would normally only associate with true-life lovers and friends. Though this intimacy is not necessarily spiteful in an emotional sense, it enables judgement and is crucial for completing the circuit of the affect

of spite, a movement that will become more apparent at the end of this chapter when we look at the secret histories that, like Manley's *The Royal Mischief*, bring actual agents of spite into their texts.

Certainly the illusion of public intimacy created here is just that – a feeling manufactured by a fictional text extended by the reader into his perception of his monarch, given solidity by the social interchanges between readers whose conversations might conflate the character and the public picture of the king. This conflation would then affect the way the public related to their actual monarch, whose visibility enhanced the people's feelings of "knowing" him. This feeling would further allow the public to pass judgement on Charles's behaviour. For those not predisposed to the monarch, and for those who resented the restoration of the Stuarts, the allowable weakness of a romance hero might then be reinflected through its interaction with the historical individual, such that foibles exposed in the romance hero became actual weaknesses in a reigning king. Thus the king as romance hero could tarnish the perceived majesty of the king by reducing him to a sexual being, emphasizing his physical nature over the sacred. Once the romance hero was collapsed into the historical individual, the generic conventions of character would lose their acceptability and become flaws and weaknesses.

On the other hand, a royalist reader might view Charles's weakness with regards to love quite tolerantly, extending to the monarch the sort of allowances they would also extend to a hero of romance. Yet the surface propaganda is only

the most obvious effect of the secret history. The very fact that the reader is being allowed to think of their reigning monarch as an intimate acquaintance, as a man rather than a monarch, changes the structure of the way they think about him. The very act of being tolerant toward the foibles of the king implies a belief that a political subject has the right to judge his sovereign, regardless of the actual content of that judgement. The intimacy, a particularly strong axis for enabling the affective relationship of spite, is fully established in these texts, and whether the judgement that follows the perceived intimacy is tolerant or critical, the pleasure created by the illusionary superiority granted through the text is present.

Satire within romance

Aphra Behn uses the tension between acceptable romance characteristics and the problems those same characteristics could create in real life royalty in her portrayal of James, Duke of Monmouth, in the inset tale of *The Amours of Philander and Silvia*, Part 3 of *Love Letters from a Nobleman to his Sister*. Capitalizing on the problems that romance characteristics could create when conflated with a historical individual, Behn, a life-long royalist, makes her historical villain,

Monmouth, the romantic hero of her tale.⁸⁵ By grossly exaggerating the generic traits, she writes her “hero” in such a way that his fulfilment of romance expectations in fact exposes their (and his) absurdity, creating a mock-romance tale which is also a secret history. The criticism inherent in the secret history is intensified through its connection with actual history as the absurdity in fiction becomes manifold when translated to actual life.

Making only a small appearance in Part 1 of *Love-Letters*, Cesario (Monmouth) finally becomes the centre of his own inset narrative in Part 3. This expansion of the character is made possible by the death of his father Charles II and by his own failed rebellion and death. In the text, the tale is told to the hero Philander by one of his co-conspirators, a trusted companion of Monmouth, Tomaso (Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury). In the relation, Behn uses the voice of a friend of Cesario to expose the absurdity of his romantic behaviour through the disapproval of his closest friends. Describing the hold that Cesario’s mistress has gained over him, Tomaso claims, “he grew to that excess of Love, or rather Doatage (if Love in one so young, can be call’d so) that he languishes for her, even while he possesses her all” (322). Not only has Cesario taken his romantic attachment to an extreme baffling to his friends, but the value of the object of that affection is also questioned in the narrative. As Tomaso bluntly

⁸⁵ Behn was playing here with the tendency to see Monmouth both as hero and as victim, as seducer and as seduced. Toni Bowers argues: “there was always a tendency to reserve the deadliest venom for others – Shaftesbury, especially but also Argyll, Grey, Sidney, Russell, even Monmouth’s rank and file rebels. Habitually they cast the beloved traitor in the role he claimed for himself – object of seduction more sinned against than sinning, a victim overwhelmed by his own guilelessness as much as by his transgressive desire” (*Force* 97).

puts it, “never was so great a Slave to Beauty as, in my Opinion, he was to none at all” (400).

Exaggerating the characteristics of the romance hero to expose their absurdity, Behn activates the scorn of the reader toward such weakness and extends that scorn to the historical individual signified by her text. The text is able to maintain Cesario as a hero figure despite its extreme exaggerations of the generic heroic qualities by creating supernatural origins for Cesario’s continued devotion to Hermione (Lady Henrietta Maria Wentworth).⁸⁶ Wrapping up the tale of the failed rebellion, Behn’s narrator cynically laments Cesario’s weakness in the face of love. Claiming to have received the story from a soldier who was there and close to Cesario, the narrator reports that “he protested he was ashamed to hear how Poor this fond concern render’d this great Man, and he has often pity’d what should have been else admir’d; but who can tell the force of Love, back’d by Charms supernatural?” (428). The final, crowning touch in Behn’s deflation of the romance hero comes on the scaffold when Cesario again fails to think of anything but his love:

even on the Scaffold, where he was urged to excuse, as a good
Christian ought, his Invasion, his Bloodshed and his unnatural
War; he set himself to justify his Passion to *Hermione*,

⁸⁶ In a section of the secret history narrated by Philander’s servant Brilljard to Silvia, he relates the details of an agreement between Hermoine and a master of the occult, Fergusano, to create a “Philtre to retain fleeting Love” (399). The enchanted object, a gold toothpick case, is then given to the prince.

endeavouring to render the Life he had lead with her, Innocent and
Blameless in the sight of Heaven; (438)

His last action is to give the enchanted toothpick case to one of his gentlemen
“command[ing] him to bear it from him to *Hermione*” (438).

Borrowing her hero's final moment from reports of Monmouth's actual execution, Behn not only exposes the absurdity of the romance hero when taken to the extreme, she also uses that absurdity to criticize Charles II's rebellious, bastard son.⁸⁷ Behn's text reveals the ease with which critics could manipulate a reader's attitude toward a historical figure through the use of romance, describing harmless weaknesses that become egregious faults when they bleed into a person's perception of the actual prince or king. Though Behn's depiction of Monmouth is clearly meant to be negative, a text like *Hattige* could easily be read as harmless or critical depending on the preconceptions of the reader. Yet even the royalist reader would be led to, at least temporarily, feel an intimacy with their monarch through the narrative that ultimately undermined his sacred majesty in reality.

The intensity of this effect provided by romance tropes in particular can be seen through a brief contrast between Behn's fictionalization of Shaftesbury and the picture of Shaftesbury provided by another royalist secret history, *The Fugitive Statesman*.

⁸⁷ See Bowers *Force* 88-93 for details of Monmouth's execution. For his speech about Lady Henrietta Maria Wentworth in particular see p. 92.

Romance versus satire: a case study in affect

The Fugitive Statesman was published in 1683, well after Charles II effectively ended the threat of Exclusion being pushed through parliament by dissolving the Oxford parliament (the third Exclusion parliament) in March 1681, and after Shaftesbury's flight to Holland and subsequent death in exile at the beginning of 1683. However, despite the victory of the royalist party and the loss of Exclusion's primary political advocate, the popularity of Monmouth, and his continued public progresses around the country kept the fear of popular rebellion alive. Thus, the political environment into which the text entered as a player on the royalist side was still volatile, particularly on a popular level, despite the main threat being officially averted and James, Duke of York's right to inherit seemingly protected. As mentioned earlier, the third part of Behn's *Love Letters* appeared four years later in 1687, after the deaths of Charles II, Monmouth and Shaftesbury, while James II was still on the throne. Possibly the recent deaths of her subjects allowed Behn more leeway in fictionalizing them in her text, yet the memories of these individuals would still be fresh enough in readers' minds to allow Behn's depiction to inflect the public characters of the historical individuals inferred by her text.

Despite its alignment with poetic satire and its open profession of its status as political prose, *The Fugitive Statesman* begins with a gesture toward romance. Turning the criticism of Charles II as overly swayed by his mistresses against his rival, Shaftesbury, the text depicts Achitophel as obsessed with the

princess, Jezebel (said to be the sister of the Queen), such that he tells her all of his plots and councils and promises his constant “Zeal for her Advancement” (6). While this leads into a short inset tale from Jezebel about her own frustrated desires with respect to the king, Achitophel quickly interrupts and returns to his own story. From this point on, the text is merely a thinly veiled relation of the political events in Britain over the preceding years, echoing John Dryden’s poem “Absolom and Achitophel” both in political slant and structure. Thus Achitophel, through his own relation, is depicted as integral to the death of Charles I and the chaos of the interregnum, as well as being a font of intentionally evil advice to Charles II – “I proceeded on to giving the Prince such Counsels, as I knew must of necessity lessen him in his Peoples Affections” (17) – and, of course, to James, Duke of Monmouth (Absolom in the text).

After the main body of the narrative, which includes lists of the allies of both Achitophel and David (also a structure taken directly from Dryden’s poem), the text concludes with an extended polemic against the supposed political manoeuvring behind the exclusion crisis and against a number of other, pro-exclusion pamphlets. At this point, the text has given up any attempt at narrative or plot and become straightforwardly political. Though *The Fugitive Statesman* ends by coming back to Achitophel’s desire for Jezebel and his sorrow in leaving her when he is forced into exile, it is a strained conclusion, which bears little generic or substantive relevance to the many pages which have come before. As a secret history *The Fugitive Statesman* uses so thin a veil that it would have been

read as pure political propaganda, a heavily slanted piece of contemporary history. The text is too easy and it seems unlikely that many readers would not immediately understand the historical figures allegorized by the narrative. Additionally, because there really are no plot elements other than the widely known events of political history and no real sense of character in the text, the affective element would likewise be fairly weak.

The public events that make up the content of *The Fugitive Statesman* dramatically contrast with the private tale told by Behn, which is limited to a detailed relation of Shaftesbury's escape from England into exile. Whereas the author of the former text deals with the event highlighted in his title quite succinctly, telling the reader about Shaftesbury's last visit to Jezebel, which is anything but amorous, and then concluding with "Thus after many other such like kind and tender Expressions and Assurances, he took his leave and departed for Tyre" (119), Behn appears to let her readers in on all the private details and adventures associated with his escape. In Behn's version Tomaso (Shaftesbury) tells his own story, thus lending a sort of authority to the relation not present in the earlier text. In the course of his relation, the tale takes on a picaresque quality as he visits his mistress (whom, as he conveniently reminds us, the "Royal Party" called "Nicky Nacky" [336]), is betrayed by her and takes refuge with a Widow, who has "a most violent Passion for him" (337).⁸⁸ After being betrayed to the

⁸⁸ The name Nicky Nacky would have been immediately familiar to readers from Thomas Otways's satiric representation of Shaftesbury as Antonio in *Venice Preserved* (1682). The Nicky Nacky scene depicts Antonio as a grovelling, masochistic lover who insists upon infantilizing his desired mistress, Aquilina, and repeatedly calling her Nacky.

guards by one of the widow's servants, Tomaso manages to elude capture by hiding on top of the tester of the widow's bed. His escape takes on mock-heroic qualities through the "Miracle" (339) of his hiding place, "when trying the trick again, [he] could not do it [...] without pulling down the Sconce and the Teaster [sic] also" (340). It is only after Tomaso hears that the king has proclaimed him traitor that he flees the country for Holland.

Behn's version of the story claims to relate the private circumstances of Shaftesbury's escape, in contrast to the public political events that make up the substance of *The Fugitive Statesman*. Thus, the effect of Behn's tale is to make the reader feel as if they have a more personal connection with the character and therefore with the now-deceased Shaftesbury. Behn manipulates readerly impressions and memories of the real Shaftesbury by portraying him as a failed romantic hero. His miraculous escape is tempered by the betrayal of both the mistresses he foolishly trusts. Both Nicky-Nacky and the widow Countess betray him – the first immediately taking up with a cavalier while Tomaso is still hiding out in Paris and the second pursuing another man as soon as he escapes the country. Tomaso's poor romantic choices, his criticisms of his prince Cesario, and details such as his open admission that he "had taken up Money out of the Orphans and Widows Bank from the Chamber of *Paris*" (336-37) all combine to create a fairly rich character with whom readers could easily conflate their already formed pictures of Shaftesbury.

In contrast, *The Fugitive Statesman's* Achitophel is cunning and manipulative, all his actions are cunning and manipulative, and the “secrets” revealed – that he intentionally gave damaging counsel and he “spread abroad Rumors” (20) – are the actions one would expect from a manipulative person and are, furthermore, in line with the royalist beliefs about Shaftesbury already current. There is no sense in the text of coming to know him better as a character or as a person, rather a deepening of already held beliefs about Shaftesbury on the part of a royalist reader. The text is almost a sketch of how a villain is expected to act – it has no real hero or action and does not create a relationship between the reader and the historical individual alluded to through the text. A political satire of this nature may provide additional knowledge for the readers but the relationship it creates between reader and character (and thus, by extension, between reader and historical individual) is less conducive toward an affective relationship of intimacy than is the secret history that uses romance tropes.

Coda: spite and the fickleness of favour

A final mode of secret history that needs to be considered features private, seduction narratives like the romance secret history but centres on what Michael McKeon has called “exemplarily vicious characters” (591) (or villainized historical figures) rather than royal romance heroes. Like Delariver Manley’s Homais in *The Royal Mischief*, characters such as Queens Zarah and Messalina

reveal the affective tone of their literary texts more explicitly than the secret histories discussed earlier in this chapter, playing out on the page an affective content of spite as well as creating the affective relationship. These characters' gleeful evisceration of their political enemies and disdain for their sexual partners in their quest to "Enrich themselves, though upon the Ruin of their Countrey" (*Zarah* 114-15) fully play out the desire to hurt included in the definition of spite, while the narrative voices of the texts systematically destroy the public perception of the individuals referred to by the characters through the process of vilification itself. The pleasure inherent in the scandalous sexual and political manoeuvrings of the characters is intensified by the understood critique of the historical figures and, even further, by the reader's ability to pass moral judgement upon those figures whose political status has been imaginatively reduced through their fictionalization. The destructive tendency of spite toward power and privilege reveals its similarity to the affective relationship of envy in that both affects seek to destroy their object. However, far from being imagined as exemplary, the objects of spite are framed as undeserving of their power, as usurpers of status and privilege.

At the beginning of *Queen Zarah*, the narrator directly sets up the contrast between political status and status conferred by birth, writing "This renowned Lady *Zarah*, (tho' of obscure Parents)" (91). The tension between "renowned" and the bracketed information about her birth immediately destabilizes *Zarah's* political status as favourite to the queen, reminding the reader that it is not based

on anything concrete like blood or birth but rather on favour. This emphasis makes it that much easier and potentially more pleasurable for a reader, also likely low born, to imagine himself as morally superior to the target of the secret history. Even when the target is actually a queen, as in *The Amours of Messalina*, the narrative undermines the royal status. Thus, while Messalina is depicted as excessively proud after Lycogenes' (James II's) ascension to the throne – “the Anointing Drops seem'd to have infused so strange a Spirit of Ambition and Haughtiness” (9-10) – she is also implied to be not fully a queen until she can bear a royal heir. Once she has decided to begin an adulterous affair with the Count Tomazo in order to supply the implied deficiency of her husband the King, she rejoices in her plan, saying, “*I will be a Queen now indeed, my dear Tomazo; the Count, the Count Tomazo, will make me a Glorious Powerful Queen*” (30). As we shall see in my next chapter, Manley also draws on the tension between status conferred by birth and political power in her satirical treatment of a number of prominent Whig politicians, including John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, in the *New Atalantis*. Before moving to Manley's most famous work, however, I will conclude this chapter with her version of the Beau Wilson story, the first letter in *The Unknown Lady's Pacquet of Letters* (1707).

The tale of Beau Wilson is paradigmatic of interactions between spite and the seemingly random upper class mobility that is conferred through favour. Edward Wilson, or Beau Wilson, was a young gentleman of small fortune who excited a great deal of London talk in the spring of 1694 when he was seen to be

living well beyond his fortune despite the fact that no one could ascertain how he was supporting his extravagant lifestyle.⁸⁹ Speculation and scandal intensified after Wilson was killed in a duel by John Law, purportedly over his sister who was mistress to Law. The combination of mystery, class mobility and violence was ripe for secret history treatment and at least two versions of the story appeared in the opening decades of the eighteenth century, Manley's in 1707 and an anonymous retelling in 1723. The later text, *Love-Letters Between a certain late Nobleman And the famous Mr. Wilson: Discovering the true History of the Rise and surprising Grandeur of that celebrated Beau*, attests to the longstanding interest in the mystery posed by a figure like Wilson and is particularly scandalous for the time in its claim that the favourite who "kept" Wilson was a man (purportedly Charles Spencer, third Earl of Sunderland).⁹⁰ Manley's version, written earlier, also attributes Wilson's riches to a powerful keeper but keeps the reader guessing as to the actual identity of Lady —⁹¹.

The Beau Wilson letter bears all the marks of a secret history, being a narrative sent from an unknown man to an unknown lady, based, according to the letter writer, upon the report of an older gentlewoman to whom the narrator was referred by a young lady acquaintance. The distancing narrative levels are firmly in place and the author claims only to be relating the story told to him by

⁸⁹ The scandal was such that it is mentioned in both John Evelyn's and Narcissus Luttrell's diaries. See Carnell's note 10 (307-08) to *The Unknown Lady's Paquet of Letters* and McKeon 569 for more information.

⁹⁰ See McKeon 826, n. 62.

⁹¹ Both Carnell and McKeon claim that the implied noblewoman is probably Elizabeth Villiers, a powerful mistress of William III (307, n. 5; 574).

the gentlewoman, who, because of her own resentments, he characterizes as a “malicious Person” (167). Yet despite the narrator’s insistence upon distancing himself from the claims made by the story, he still relates it, leaving it ultimately up to his reader to provide the authority for the claims being made through their interpretation of the individuals implied in the text.

Fittingly for a story about the meteoric rise of a young man, the narrator begins by emphasizing Wilson’s modest origins, describing him as “an obscure Person” and “an Useless, Illiterate, Unknown” (166). Wilson’s fortunes change, according to this version, when Lady – comes upon him in a park and must possess him. Keeping him ignorant of her appearance and identity, the lady makes Wilson her lover, supplying him with extravagant amounts of money to put him “*in a Condition fitting the Favourite of Love and hers*” (170). Her extravagance is so great that “the Town, said, none but a Queen could support [it], without ruining herself” (171). Eventually Wilson begins to push for the knowledge of his mistress’s identity, which she staunchly refuses to divulge. Yet after he reveals to her gentlewoman that he has guessed the lady’s identity, she flies into a rage; convinced that he cannot possibly keep the secret of her identity, she arranges to have him killed in a manner which cannot be traced to her. Despite being briefly the beloved of fortune, Wilson loses his “Goddess of Bounty” (169) and his life.

The rise to and fall from fortune of Beau Wilson conveys the affective tone of the genre of secret history as a whole. The narrative of his rise and fall mirrors

the intent of the form itself – the desire to tear down those arbitrarily raised by fortune to political power. While the particular secret histories discussed earlier in this chapter created the relationship which, through knowledge and intimacy, allowed for the illusory power to judge, later secret histories like Manley's version of the Beau Wilson scandal and her *New Atalantis* and *Memoirs of Europe* are more explicit in their vitriolic attacks on their targets. The combination of the affective structure created through the genre and the spiteful content makes for a potent and enjoyable critique of the late Restoration's political leaders. As we will see, Manley draws liberally on the pleasures of spite in her most popular work, the *New Atalantis*, multiplying the targets of the text and expanding its critical potential in innovative and highly subtle ways, which would have appealed to the sceptical secret history readers of her time.

CHAPTER 4: THE SECRET AUTHOR: DELARIVIER MANLEY'S AMATORY SECRET HISTORY; OR, INTERROGATING MODELS OF FEMALE VIRTUE

As we have seen in the secret histories discussed in the previous chapter, the affective relationship of spite is one which draws the reader into a sense of intimacy with the individual portrayed through the text such that the reader, through their understanding of the encoded meanings of the secret history, feels entitled to pass moral judgement on the behaviour of their social superiors. Furthermore, the relationship of spite becomes especially apparent in the content of a secret history when the targets of the text and the reader's disapprobation are themselves portrayed as of lowly origins despite their current position of power. Writing in this tradition, Delarivier Manley draws on these techniques but extends the critique beyond her texts' historical targets. Continuously referencing and rewriting the narratives of fallen female virtue so popular on the Restoration stage in her fiction, Manley invokes the affect of spite, enabling her readers' sense of their own powers of judgement while simultaneously interrogating the pleasure created in the fallen virtue narrative by the affective relationship of envy. In particular, Manley's *Secret Memoirs and Manners of Several Persons of Quality, of Both Sexes. From the New Atalantis, an Island in the Mediteranean* (1709 - hereafter referred to as the *New Atalantis*) combines the reception structures of spite and envy with a keen satire on ineffectual (or non-

sceptical) readers in order to expose the paradox inherent within the notion of female virtue valorized on the stage. Though the bulk of this chapter will be taken up with an examination of Manley's most famous text, the *New Atalantis*, and its serial reworking of the narrative of female virtue, I will begin with a brief discussion of the affective relationship of spite in the text.⁹²

Spite: The receptive power of "all sorts of people"

Like the secret histories discussed in the previous two chapters, Manley's texts create a community of knowledgeable readers whose sense of knowing the truth behind a narrative contributes to their ability to pass moral judgement on their social superiors. The political potential of this readerly community was noted during the period by the target of much of Manley's satire, Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough, in a letter to Queen Anne. In her letter, Churchill warns Anne of the types of rumours being spread about her relationship with Abigail Masham and insinuates that the queen being a subject of gossip for her subjects, either orally or in print, is itself a problem. Interestingly, the problem is linked by Churchill to the genre of the secret history itself – the low nature of Manley's text which is "not well written": "that looks so much the worse, for it shews that the notion is extensively spread among *all sorts*

⁹² The *New Atalantis* was "the bestselling novelistic fiction of the decade," going through six editions in ten years (McDowell 232).

of people" (*Private Correspondence* 244, my italics).⁹³ The idea that subjects may be judging the queen and her counsellors is clearly a notion that troubles the Duchess.

While the secret histories already discussed were fairly focused in their targets, Manley's *New Atalantis* encompasses a wide swath of political figures from both the text's recent history and its present. The very profusion of the characters and historical figures referenced has been used as evidence of Manley's satirical style and would have made the identification of some of her targets difficult. This difficulty is heightened by the fact that some of the tales seem to be purely fictional while others are quite obscure in their reference. Keys for both volumes were published simultaneously with the text (though not bound with it); yet, as Catherine Gallagher has pointed out, these keys were themselves incomplete and potentially misleading.⁹⁴ Thus the skilled reader of secret history who was able to figure out significant parts of the text would be quite entitled to a feeling of superiority in his knowledge. On the other hand, because there are so many tales within Manley's text, a contemporary reader could be fairly certain of the interpretation of at least a few of the tales and thus

⁹³ Paula McDowell points out that Churchill, relying on Arthur Maynwaring for the details of Manley's texts, sometimes confuses the *New Atalantis* with another secret history, *The Rival Duchess: or, Court Incendiary. In a Dialogue between Madam Maintenon and Madam M—* (270, n. 105). However, her confusion does not change the point being made that she was both aware and anxious about the effect that the secret histories could have in making the monarch an acceptable subject of gossip.

⁹⁴ See Gallagher 124-126. According to Nicola Parsons, annotations on the keys showed different guesses at names that featured blanks and dashes and some keys were copied out with the blanks intact showing that readers were "unable to decipher the tool that was supposed to make [] interpretation possible" ("Secrecy" 154).

the community of oral gossip and readers in the know would be quite large, as people compared notes on their understanding of different elements of the text.⁹⁵ The affect created for the knowledgeable reader though their epistemological authority is intensified by the sheer profusion of the targets.⁹⁶

As in the tale of Beau Wilson, the affective relationship of spite is further intensified in the *New Atalantis* by the text's attention to the lowly origins of a number of the more powerful targets of the satire. After Virtue and Astrea join up with Intelligence at the beginning of the *New Atalantis*, the first person they encounter is Count Fortunatus (John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough). Manley's choice of name for the Marlborough character aptly encapsulates her satire of him as both grasping and unworthy of his many advancements – "the disguise [the fictional name] is the slander" (Gallagher 100) – as he has achieved his high position through the support of Fortune rather than merit. Intelligence emphasizes the Count's luck and his lowly origins at the very beginning of her tale: "His name is Count Fortunatus, raised by the concurrent favour of two monarchs, his own, and his sister's charms, from a mere gentleman to that dignity" (14). The passive sentence construction accentuates Fortunatus's lack of agency in his own rise and feminizes the Count, who has risen based on his

⁹⁵ Paula McDowell argues that the texts themselves could be seen as part of this oral process as one of their main goals was "to participate in the ongoing interpretation of an occurrence or rumour of which one's public was already partly aware" (221).

⁹⁶ Although the *New Atalantis* contains a number of long inset tales, there are also episodes that function almost as satirical lists, moving from target to target in quick succession and building a sense of complete societal corruption through the profusion of characters (and thus historical individuals) targeted. One example of this method is the scene at the Prado, where Lady Intelligence's news moves from carriage to carriage as she describes the fashionable Angelians (Londoners) to Astrea and Virtue (90-110).

“charms” and on the assistance of his sister. As with Zarah and Beau Wilson, the arbitrary and sexual nature of Churchill’s rise from “mere gentleman” to Count makes him an easier mark for the reader’s judgement.

Manley’s texts draw on the affective relationship of spite, feeding and benefiting from the sceptical readers and reading communities discussed throughout this dissertation. While she expands her targets beyond those of most of the other writers already mentioned, her use of this aspect of the genre is not particularly different from other secret history writers. Where Manley does differ, however, is in her treatment of the trope of fallen female virtue, to which I will now turn.

Interrogating the virtuous female exemplar; or, envy interrupted

Introducing the frame characters of the *New Atalantis*, Delarivier Manley describes Astrea, who has recently returned to the earthly plane, being accosted by a seeming stranger, “pensive and forlorn” (4). Astrea, in some confusion, examines the stranger to “see if she could recollect who this dejected beauty was”:

Her habit obsolete and torn, almost degenerated to tatters, but her native charms, that needed not the help of art, gave to Astrea’s returning remembrance that it could be no other than her beautiful mother Virtue. But Oh! how despicable her garments! how

neglected her flowing hair! how languid her formerly animating eyes! how pale, how withered the roses of her lovely cheeks and lips! how useless her snowy arms and polished fingers! (5)

Degenerated to a state comparable with her stage votaries of the past decades, Virtue herself is depicted as fallen within the society of Atalantis. Moving from the pathetic stage into the pages of the secret history, fallen Virtue begins the text as an allegorical reminder of the many female characters destroyed by art and by their society through no fault of their own.

This association with the stage heroines of the Restoration pathetic tragedies is furthered when Astrea describes her reasons for returning to Atalantis from the lunar sphere. Leading up to the description of her mission, which is to learn of the ways of the world in order to educate her prince, Astrea describes the trials of his great grandmother, Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia.⁹⁷ Emphasizing the queen's lack of agency in her own sufferings, which were brought about by the "vain hopes and pride" of her husband, Astrea describes how her "heart melted at the complainings of this beauteous and upright princess" (6, 7) who was forced to live a life of continual exile through no fault of her own. Jupiter's response to Astrea's pleas on the princess's behalf combines

⁹⁷ Given that Astrea's journey in the *New Atalantis* takes place at the death of William III, Ros Ballaster argues that the young prince being educated is the future George II, as George I is already in his forties when William dies. See 270 n. 17 in Ballaster's edition of the text. However, Ruth Herman disputes this idea, arguing that would have been insulting to his grandmother, Sophia, Electress of Hanover, and thus would have been unlikely. She claims that "if Manley is referring to a specific prince at all, she is describing the future George II's son" (77), though she acknowledges that the dates do not exactly add up. Rachel Carnell in the most recent edition of Manley's text echoes Herman's argument. See 310 n. 33.

with the representation of Virtue at the beginning to establish the generic and thematic history in which the text participates. He tells Astrea that the princess “was not punished for her proper crimes, but for her husband’s ambition, and her father’s supineness” (6). In other words, like the heroines of pathetic tragedy, the Princess is forced by the gods themselves to bear the blame for the actions of others and to die alone, in exile. Though Astrea pities the fate of the princess, she does not question “this sentence of Jupiter’s” (7), leaving uncontested the proscription that the virtuous wife must suffer for the sins of the men who surround her.⁹⁸

By beginning the *New Atalantis* with fallen Virtue and Astrea, Manley sets up allegorically the intertwined themes of her text – fallen virtue and political scandal (and by extension political justice) – and her dominant secret history modes – amatory fiction and satire. Manley’s choice of Astrea carries a complex associational burden for the knowledgeable reader. As Ros Ballaster has pointed out, the name aligns Manley within a feminocentric tradition of Restoration and early eighteenth-century writing by referencing Aphra Behn’s literary persona “in order to authorize her own position of female satirist” (*Seductive* 114). As important as Ballaster’s argument for a female genealogy of pre-novelistic prose has been for many eighteenth-century feminist scholars seeking to reframe the importance of these early prose texts, in the case of Manley’s narrative, the other

⁹⁸ The Queen of Bohemia’s fate here is similar to that of Cleomira in Settle’s *Distress’d Innocence*. Both women are punished for the faults of others and are seen in instrumental ways by their punishers – Cleomira as an instrument to be used to further torment her husband Hormidas and the Queen of Bohemia as a vessel from whose body and sufferings a glorious prince will eventually arise.

literary associations of Astrea are equally important. Thus, as Aaron Santesso has pointed out, the figure of Astrea would also have been associated with Juvenal's sixth satire, Virgil's fourth eclogue and "a long line of prominent English writers [...], among them Spenser and Shakespeare," who "invite us to seek the trace of a central, classical tradition" (3) in Manley's text as well.⁹⁹ The opening also places the text within the recent political and dramatic history of her period, allowing Manley not only to critique the contemporary figures represented in the inset tales but also the ideological basis of Restoration and early eighteenth-century notions of female virtue, through the satirization of her frame characters.¹⁰⁰ This particular version of female virtue presented through the pathetic tragedies, certainly familiar to her contemporary readers, is treated by Manley in complex and multivalent ways through her use of multiple narrators, her frame characters who function as embedded reader figures, and her manipulation of the affective structures associated with pathetic tragedy and with secret history.

⁹⁹ Santesso focuses his argument for the importance of the classical tradition in Manley on her own claim in the dedication to the second volume of the *New Atalantis* that her text is "written like Varonian satires" (132). That this has become an important lens for viewing the text is evident in recent work by Rachel Carnell and Toni Bowers (See Carnell 10-13 and Bowers 163).

¹⁰⁰ This manner of reading Manley in the context of her print environment has been taken up in interesting ways by a number of scholars. Nicola Parsons, for instance, argues that many of Manley's narratives in the *New Atalantis* refer to scandal narratives which were already circulating in print as well as circulating through oral gossip (See "Secrecy"). Very recently, Carole Fungaroli Sargent has placed the pie throwing incident related in Manley's text in a history of print ballads and political satire, arguing that Manley's use of recent print history in her text acted as a sort of legal cover for her own satire. Though my argument places Manley in a context of generic tropes rather than arguing for any one-to-one relationship of influence with particular texts, I believe the approach fits into this recent, very productive tendency to see Manley's work as embedded in contemporary literary contexts.

A number of the interpolated tales in the *New Atalantis* are centred on pictures of virtue in distress. Through their relationship to the political figures being satirized, these tales create the affective relationship of spite for those with the knowledge to see the individuals behind the characters, but in the tales centred on female virtue this affective relationship is secondary to the central figure of the distressed heroine. In effect, Manley enables the intimacy of spite, opening the way for a reader to feel in a position to critique the leaders of his/her society. Relying on the sceptical reading practices of contemporary readers, Manley's creation of the affective relationship of spite would constitute the pleasure of the text for most readers, but for the most skilled readers of the genre the affect would act as a foundation of readerly confidence, a confidence that Manley redirects in order to display, then interrogate, the exemplar of female femininity. Her many tales of fallen virtue reference yet problematize the representation of the heroines in the tragedies of the preceding decades and, in the process, reveal the paradoxical and destructive nature of the exemplar of female virtue and the affective relationship which it triggers. Manley began this questioning of the exemplarity of virtue in her representation of Bassima in *The Royal Mischief*, a depiction, as discussed in Chapter 1, that can be read as purposely exaggerating the virtuous female exemplar to the point of absurdity. Manley does not turn to satire in her treatment of the virtuous heroine in the *New Atalantis* (that is primarily reserved for the many figures of vice who people the text and for the moralizing frame characters), but rather exposes the society

surrounding virtue – the society that has driven Virtue herself to the state in which we first meet her.

The perils of over-education; or, the paradox within narratives of virtue and desire

There are a number of tales devoted to female virtue in the *New Atalantis*, told by a number of different narrators to her embedded readers, Astrea and Virtue, the most famous of which is the seduction and ultimate destruction of Charlot (Stuart Howard) by her guardian, the Duke (Hans Willem Bentinck, first Earl of Portland).¹⁰¹ This narrative, told by Intelligence (the text's principal narrator/author figure) to Astrea and Virtue, exposes the problems with the view of female virtue as natural and exemplary by tracing Charlot's education into and then out of virtue at the hands of her guardian, what William Warner has called her first and second educations.¹⁰² Charlot begins the tale as a ward of the Duke, a powerful politician in the society of Angela (London), who is left the care of Charlot by a friend. As Intelligence confides to us, the Duke was not naturally an amorous man, having only "played with" passion before he was beset with desire for his ward (29). Originally, Charlot is intended by him for his son's wife and is thus brought up in all the virtues appropriate to that role. This

¹⁰¹ All identifications of the historical figures implied by the text are taken from the notes to Ballaster's edition. In cases where this edition differs in an attribution from Carnell's, the difference will be noted.

¹⁰² See Warner 100-109. My reading of Manley's *New Atalantis* is quite different from Warner's in our views of both the work's relationship to its readers and its form. However Warner's emphasis on education and reading in the Charlot episode is similar to mine, though it leads him to a very different place.

changes when the Duke sees her act Diana to his son's Acteon in a play put on within the family: "she acted with so animated a spirit [...] that awakened the Duke's attention; and so admirably she varied the passions, that gave birth in his breast, to what he had never felt before" (32). It is watching Charlot perform virtue, rather than merely being virtuous in day-to-day life, that arouses the Duke's hitherto dormant desires. Performance is highlighted here as itself a source of desire, a desire, it must be remembered, that is ultimately destructive of its object.

After the Duke's realization that he must possess his ward, he introduces Charlot to all of the suggestive and even erotic literature that was once denied her, re-educating her from a virtuous future wife into a willing mistress. The process is completed when he surprises her at his country house and rapes her: "Neither her prayers, tears, nor strugglings could prevent him, but in her arms he made himself a full amends for all the pains he had suffered for her" (39). Intelligence's ironic emphasis on the pains suffered by the Duke only serves to highlight Charlot's unwillingness before the encounter that completes her ruin. Though she becomes a willing and loving mistress afterwards, according to our narrator, Charlot's happiness is short lived as she refuses to take the advice of a female confidante, the Countess (Martha Jane Temple), to use her ascendancy over the Duke to force him to marry her. In the end, she is impregnated and abandoned by the Duke, who ends up proposing marriage to the more socially proficient Countess. Charlot dies "a true landmark to warn all believing virgins

from shipwrecking their honour upon (the dangerous coast of rocks) the vows and pretended passion of mankind" (45). Seemingly a straightforward tale of fallen virtue, Charlot's story is constructed by Manley not only as an exposure of Bentinck's, and by extension the Whigs', "degeneracy and corruption" (Ballaster, *Seductive* 130), but, through her use of narrative irony and a satirized moralizing frame, as an indictment of traditional narratives of blame in the fall of female exemplarity.

In plays such as *The Orphan* and *The Rape* the female exemplar is stripped of her agency and destroyed by forces completely beyond her control, whether through mishap (as in *The Orphan*) or through force (as in *The Rape*). Despite this, she is forced to bear the social consequences of her fall from virtue, activating for the audiences an affective relationship of envy as they take pleasure in, pity and generally are moved by this figure of fallen exemplarity. Intelligence's narrative of Charlot's fall is, on the surface, more akin to the later pathetic tragedies of Nicholas Rowe in that her virtue could easily be read as lost through her own actions and indiscretions, as the result, in Intelligence's concluding summary, of her role as a "believing virgin[]" (45). However, this reading is strained and ultimately untenable if one takes into account the attention paid by the text to Charlot's education in relationship to her virtue and the narrative manipulations of the particular narrator telling Astrea and Virtue this tale. In order to recognize these more subtle aspects of the text, it is necessary to do a close reading of a number of key passages in Intelligence's narrative.

Though Warner discusses both Charlot's first and second education at the hands of the Duke, he clearly emphasizes the second education or corruption of her virtue, highlighting the initial seduction of Charlot's principles through her reading of the story of Myrrha in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Ballaster also pays special attention to this scene of education, arguing that the text is shown as itself an agent of seduction: "it is art that seduces Charlot, rather than the Duke himself" (133).¹⁰³ I will return to the erotic description of Charlot's reading of Ovid shortly as it is an important element of the tale; however, reading Charlot's fall from virtue requires first reading her education into virtue.

Intelligence's description of Charlot immediately signals the tensions that persist throughout the tale between Intelligence's efforts to write a particular genre of story and the pressure exerted by Truth, who forces our narrator to expose the artifice of her storytelling:

Charlot was no great beauty, her shape was the best, but youth and dress make all things agreeable. To have prepossessed you in her favour, I should, as I was inclined, have advanced a system of her

¹⁰³ It is interesting to remember here that it is also art that seduces the Duke; though in his case it is an art which he has encouraged and in many ways created in his ward.

charms, but Truth, who too well foresaw my intentions, has
repelled 'em with a frown. (30)¹⁰⁴

The charms with which Intelligence wished to imbue her heroine would surely have been the standard heroine's characteristics of beauty, modesty, fidelity, and so on. As well as prepossessing an audience in her favour, however, these superior charms were just as often cited by villains of pathetic tragedies and amatory fictions as excuses for their assaults on the heroines.¹⁰⁵ The charms themselves seem to draw the punishment for perfection upon the heroines. Intelligence's desire to tell a story of this nature is explicit in her description of Charlot's rape, when the Duke makes "himself a full amends for all the pains he had suffered for her" (39). Intelligence "understands that language is power" (Rabb, *Satire* 121) and her desire to tell a particular type of tale should not be read as merely aesthetic.

¹⁰⁴ When Virtue first introduces Astrea to Intelligence, she is quick to separate the business of Intelligence from Truth, "which she is but rarely concerned with" (13). However, when Intelligence is called upon to join them and guide them through the society of Atalantis, Virtue restricts Intelligence's tendencies toward invention by also inviting Truth: "Truth is summoned to attend you on this occasion" (13). Never a narrator, Truth acts as a silent presence only occasionally brought to the reader's remembrance through the report of her restrictions placed on Intelligence, as in the passage quoted above.

¹⁰⁵ Recall for example the emphasis in Brady's *The Rape* on Eurione's perfections; she is described by the Vandal King as "Chast and Fair" with a "winning Sweetness" (12) and by the Vandal Queen as "Virtuous and Discreet" (14). Her perfections are such that Genselaric, her rapist, claims that he must "enjoy [her] or die" and after the rape he describes his transports as "The crowded joys of a long life's delight" (21, 27). The misogynist spin that places the blame for her own rape on the female, made particularly disturbing by the fact that her only sin is to excel in feminine virtues, is unintentionally highlighted by Eurione's ironic complaint after the rape: "Was this a fit return for chaste desires, / And virtuous Love like mine?" (26). In the world of Restoration pathetic tragedies, if this fate for the heroine is not exactly shown as "fit" it is certainly expected, and through the generic tropes surrounding the heroines' fall, it is normalized.

Despite the intervention of Truth at the beginning of the tale, Intelligence still manages to structure her narrative such that Charlot can play the heroine. Yet unlike the heroines of the stage, Charlot is not possessed of a natural virtue. Her ascension to the role of Diana, to the position of female exemplar, is a product of the Duke's education of her, which is a program of both denial and moderation. Thus he bans her from "whatever would not edify, airy romances, plays, dangerous novels, loose and insinuating poetry, artificial introductions to love" while introducing her to pastimes that are "innocent and simple, such as walking [...] music, in airs all divine: reading and improving books of education and piety" (30). He also teaches her to restrain "what seemed natural to her, a desire of being applauded for her wit" which would "often break out in dangerous sparkles" (30). Though not nearly so sexy as the erotic education outlined later in the tale, this first education is just as important to an understanding of the tale, as it emphasizes not only the importance of reading for a young woman's education, but also the natural impulses in Charlot which are stifled by the rather inflexible and thus fragile model of female virtue being created.

Warner notes the paradox that contributes to the fragility of any attempt to teach innocence: "to teach the innocent to protect themselves against vice, this program must inform; by offering an admonitory version of the desire it would shun, this discourse risks inciting the passion it would ward off" (103). However, the risk in Manley's text is not that Charlot will come to desire but that her

excelling through her education will incite the desire of men who view her perfections: female exemplarity is constructed by Manley as the cause of its own destruction, as it is in the pathetic tragedies, but the important distinction here is that Manley places the source of that original perfection not in nature but in an education motivated by the ideological construction of female virtue as “*desired*” (Bowers, *Force* 34). That Charlot’s virtue is meant to be exemplary is clear in Intelligence’s claim that “Charlot seemed to intend herself a pattern for the ladies of the degenerate age” (31). Yet this statement is disingenuous as it places the agency in Charlot’s hands, when the previous description of the Duke’s method of education makes it clear to whom his future daughter-in-law’s exemplarity is of the utmost concern. The “father” is revealed in this tale as both the creator and the destroyer of exemplary virtue, despite Intelligence’s attempts to structure the tale along generic lines that would place the blame squarely on Charlot. The exemplar itself is exposed as paradoxical—a gendered virtue constructed by society to incite the desire that leads to its own destruction, while also “accru[ing] *all* of the guilt” (Bowers, *Force* 35) for that destruction.

The tension between Intelligence’s desire to structure her narrative so that it falls within the stage and amatory tradition of fallen virtue and Manley’s subtle interventions—in the guise of Truth and in the inconsistencies which Intelligence allows into her narrative—continues in the description of Charlot’s second education. As she describes the Duke’s decision to corrupt his ward, Intelligence also notes the barriers to his desires, which are entirely of his own making:

“Those excellent principles that had been early infused into her were all against him” (34). It is her first education, not anything natural to Charlot, that provides the challenge and the excitement for the Duke, who has been drawn in by Charlot’s performance of virtue. The need, then, for a new education to combat the first one is clear and is aided, our narrator insists, by characteristics that are natural: “‘Tis natural for young people to choose the diverting before the instructive” (35).

Intelligence’s insistence that Charlot’s corruption is the work of her own nature can be read throughout the narrative of Charlot’s seduction. At the beginning of the infamous reading scene, the Duke’s plan is revealed to the reader with Intelligence’s commentary on why it will work:

By this dangerous reading he pretended to show her that there were pleasures her sex were born for, and which she might consequently long to taste! Curiosity is an early and dangerous enemy to virtue. (35)

Following on the claim that Charlot was “born for” certain pleasures, Intelligence situates the traits of curiosity, filial gratitude and affection as also natural in our heroine, who “had by a noble inclination of gratitude, a strong propension of affection for the Duke, whom she called and esteemed her papa” (35). However, earlier in her narrative Intelligence situates this affection and reverence for the Duke very much within Charlot’s first education, as he is her primary teacher.

The emphasis on nature also opens the scene of reading, but the natural

characteristics attributed to the female sex become more negative. After the Duke gives Charlot Ovid's text, the readers get another description of Charlot's "natural" tendencies:

Charlot saw the Duke entertained her with an air of consideration more than usual, passionate and respectful. This taught her to refuge in the native pride and cunning of the sex; she assumed an air more haughty. [The leaving a girl just beginning to believe herself capable of attaining that empire over mankind, which they are all born and taught by instinct to expect.]¹⁰⁶ (35)

Here Charlot is being "taught" to recognize characteristics supposedly "native" to her sex. The use of the word "taught" here serves to remind the alert reader that though Charlot is being framed as someone who is merely realizing her natural qualities, this is actually a gross manipulation of both the reader and Charlot on the part of Intelligence and the Duke.¹⁰⁷ The picture of Charlot as "cunning" bears no resemblance to anything that has come before in the tale and certainly is not borne out by the ending that sees our heroine ruined precisely because she does not possess the cunning of the Countess. In this scene, Intelligence is aligned with the viewpoint of the Duke, who is already rewriting

¹⁰⁶ Though grammatically incorrect to the point of confusion, this final sentence is as it appears in both modern editions of the text.

¹⁰⁷ As noted earlier, Melinda Rabb describes Intelligence as a character who "understands that language is power" (121). Though Rabb is more specifically referring to the revelatory power of gossip, her point extends further in my argument. Intelligence certainly is aware of her power to tell but is also skilled in knowing *how* to tell stories for maximum effect. Her deployment of genre is an integral part of her power in the *New Atalantis*.

the picture of his virtuous Diana into the cunning mistress who will deserve her fate at his hands. Furthermore, this view of female culpability relies on the language of nature, which Intelligence is at pains to forcefully insert into the scenes of education.

As many have noted, the scene of Charlot reading is certainly a voyeuristic scene of seduction. However, the eroticism is a front hiding a damning critique of the discourse of female nature:

She took the book and placed herself by the Duke; his eyes feasted themselves upon her face, thence wandered over her snowy bosom and saw the young swelling breasts just beginning to distinguish themselves and which were gently heaving at the impression Myrra's sufferings made upon her heart. [...] she dropped her book, tears filled her eyes, sobs rose to oppress her and she pulled out her handkerchief to cover the disorder. The Duke, who was master of all mankind, could trace 'em through all the meanders of dissimulation and cunning, was not at a loss how to interpret the agitation of a girl who knew no hypocrisy. *All was artless, the beautiful product of innocence and nature.* He drew her gently to him, drank her tears with his kisses, sucked her sighs, and gave her by that dangerous commerce (her soul before prepared for softness), new and unfelt desires. (35-36, my italics)

As the reader is distracted by the highly eroticized scene of reading being described, Intelligence inserts her judgement (italicized above) that “All was artless, the beautiful product of innocence and nature” (36). Yet, as Melinda Rabb has argued of Manley’s writing more generally, “the steamy scenes of sex and seduction should not cloud our critical judgement” (“Manl(e)y” 127). The irony of Intelligence’s description becomes apparent as soon as one thinks in terms of education rather than seduction, admittedly a difficult prospect considering the warmth of the preceding passage. However, to miss the irony is to be seduced by Intelligence’s artful narrative, because despite Intelligence’s desire to place Charlot within a discourse of female nature, this is undermined by other details of her narrative.

Intelligence’s sleight of hand narrative tricks continue as Charlot, inflamed by the kisses of the Duke, embarks on a crash course in erotic literature recommended to her by her Guardian. In the midst of this scene of re-education, in which Charlot is described as the best of students – “Her memory was prodigious. She was indefatigable in reading” (37) – our narrator again draws attention to female nature in an attempt to divert attention from the educative process being described: “[Charlot] even forgot [...] all those precepts of airy virtue, which she had found nothing to do with nature” (37). Highlighting what a skilled sceptical reader would already have noted, Intelligence inadvertently reaffirms the narrative’s position that virtue is taught while implying, through contrast, that the education Charlot is currently undertaking is more in tune with

her nature.¹⁰⁸ Yet one can see that neither education is rooted in Charlot's nature. The competing narratives of education and nature are kept in tension throughout the tale in order to allow the multiple layers of meaning which are necessary for Manley's highly complex satire – of Intelligence, who is blindly and insistently telling a conventional tale of fallen virtue that places the blame squarely on the heroine; of Bentinck, whose political corruption is implied through his sexual corruption of his ward; of non-sceptical readers, who would be seduced by the erotic scenes and the manipulation of Intelligence to take voyeuristic pleasure in the affective relationship of envy created by the destruction of the female exemplar; and finally, of Astrea, whose completely off-the-point moralizing exposes and satirizes a particular type of bad reader, to whom we will now turn.¹⁰⁹

After Intelligence provides the stock moral to her own tale (cited above), Astrea agrees with our narrator but furthers the moral commentary by adding her own gloss: “no woman ought to introduce another to the man by whom she is beloved. If that had not happened, the Duke had not possibly been false” (45).

¹⁰⁸ Although I have yet to find any evidence of whether the use was widespread in the period, Parsons' noting of Queen Anne's use of the name “Lady Charlot” for menstruation, one of the most natural of female bodily functions, in her letters to Sarah Churchill, provides a delicious level of irony to Manley's use of the name in this tale. Though it is suppositious at this point, it is too interesting a possibility to leave un-noted. See Parsons, “Inscribing” 174.

¹⁰⁹ The satire of the seduced reader itself implies that there would be many readers who were drawn to read the text as “an opportunity for extended erotic fantasy” (Richetti 146), but rather than being held up as model readers of the text, these readers were figures of satire for Manley, bad readers who only see the “myth, the destruction of female innocence by a representative of an aristocratic world of male corruption” (Richetti 125) without recognizing Manley's interrogation of that *topos*. The frame characters of her *Adventures of Rivoella*, on one level, are an extended satire on the readers of her texts who only see the erotic aspects of her writing (a point I will take up in my Coda).

Finding yet another way to place the blame on our hapless heroine, Astrea does not merely fail to express any sympathy for Charlot, as McDowell has argued. She goes much further, actively blaming Charlot for her own abandonment, focusing her moral not on the initial ruin of Charlot but on her subsequent behaviour and stating that the Duke's behaviour in the later stages of the tale was itself only natural: "I do not so much condemn the Duke for quitting as corrupting her; one is natural, and but the consequence of the other" (45). The ease with which Astrea places blame on Charlot for her own seduction has been enabled by Intelligence's description of Charlot's "guilty" sexual desire for the Duke immediately after her rape: "the ravished maid was not at all behindhand in ecstasies and guilty transports" (40). Intelligence's emphasis on Charlot's desire, as Toni Bowers has argued, "retroactively authorizes the duke's violence and deception; her collusion with his transgression guarantees her doom" (177).

Thus Astrea's moralizing seems bizarre, yet is firmly in line with the ideology expressed in the pathetic tragedies: virtue, though not at all in the hands of the female, who in this particular tale can be educated into and out of it by the guardian who is meant to protect her, is nevertheless wholly the responsibility of that heroine, who will bear the full consequences for its destruction. Astrea's adherence to a tradition of female blame, to the ideology responsible for the Queen of Bohemia's fate and, the text implies, the fate of Virtue herself, is darkly ironic given her professed role as educator of the young Prince. Though Astrea is ostensibly visiting the world in order to better equip

herself to educate her young charge, she herself is closed to education. As her moral to the Charlot tale demonstrates, she is already firmly set in her moral understandings and remains unmoved by the details of the individual stories set in front of her. As McDowell has argued elsewhere, Astrea's disdain for and downright boredom with the scenes set before her by Intelligence is clear throughout the text.¹¹⁰ Her close-minded and literal understanding comes through in her inability to use the stories she's been shown or to deviate from preconceived notions of what she needs in order "to render a hero" (8) in the education of her prince.

Justice's ideological blinders; or, Astrea as a bad reader

Though Intelligence persists in showing Astrea scenes of distressed and fallen virtue, Astrea's responses to these scenes reveal only her unthinking acceptance of patriarchal ideology regarding female virtue and her intransigence with regards to what will be useful for a prince's education. Though she follows Intelligence through Atalantis because she is in need of a guide, she is vocally sceptical of Intelligence's ability to guide her correctly, expressing her resistance to being taken to places like the Prado: "I cannot foresee any great use this will be to my design" (90). Astrea is unable to see the link between the private and the

¹¹⁰ See McDowell 234-236. McDowell's focus on the frame characters as writer figures is somewhat different from my own reading, which seeks to balance the ways that they act as both readers and creators of texts - a dualistic interpretation which I believe is necessitated by the structure of the secret history and its place within reading and popular print communities.

political that Intelligence is making with every scene and story.¹¹¹ Thus, after the story of Lady St. Amant and her unconsummated yet fatal love for Baron de Mezeray, the best friend of her husband, a love that remains chaste despite the death of that husband, Astrea comments that though “this story be entertaining, yet I find nothing in it of use to my Prince” (73).¹¹² This particular inset narrative quite closely resembles Madam de Lafayette’s *La Princesse de Clèves* in its events, but places more stress on the damage that can be done to a virtuous reputation by a jealous, tattling female. Despite the clear message about the destructive force of even unfounded gossip which a reader could take from this tale (and which is only the most obvious of many possible readings), Astrea dismisses it as “entertaining” but not “of use” (73). She is unable to read anything but the moral messages she is looking to find.

Astrea’s most damning dismissal is reserved for Delia’s tale; though this tale is privileged in the text as being one of only two in which the heroine is allowed to tell her own story, Astrea has no interest in what is the fictionalized

¹¹¹ Michael McKeon’s most recent work, *The Secret History of Domesticity*, offers a detailed and well supported argument for the view that the sexual body became, during the Restoration period, not merely synonymous with the political but actually “the easiest access to it” (557). With the conflict around the succession in the time of Charles II, it becomes increasingly apparent that “royal politics, being ultimately dynastic, were structurally inseparable from issues of ‘sexuality’” (303). This link between sexuality and politics is exploited by secret history writers to create erotically charged texts with clear political resonances. For more information about the link between the political and the private in secret history see McKeon, *Secret* 547-87. It is standard for literary critics who write about Manley to see her tales of sexual scandal as political; for discussions which focus on this aspect of her work see Gallagher, “Political”; Rabb, “Manl(e)y”; Kvand; and Connor.

¹¹² Lady St. Amant and her husband are identified as Cary and Edward Coke, an “immensely wealthy couple” according to Ballaster (276, n. 110). Baron de Mezeray has been identified as both Sir Wm. Bacon (in the printed keys) and Sir Edmund Bacon in manuscript keys and notes (276, n. 123).

narrative of Manley's own life. She greets the conclusion of the overheard conversation between Delia and the Grand Druid (Thomas Yalden, the second Duke of Beaufort's chaplain) with exasperation: "I am weary of being entertained with the fopperies of the fair" (228). The import of Manley's inclusion of her life in her texts has been often noted and well discussed.¹¹³ My interest here is less the role of Delia than the tension her tale exposes in relation to Astrea because, despite Astrea's frustration with the many tales of female frailty, she is still inspired to moralize upon Delia's tale in a manner that exposes the ideological cracks of her moral stance.

Ballaster reads Delia's tale as "an unabashed attempt at whitewashing Manley's complicity in her bigamous marriage" (*Seductive* 151). By placing the tale in the mouth of its heroine, Manley makes the self-serving nature of the story quite clear as Delia attempts to excuse her easy seduction by, and bigamous marriage to, her cousin Don Marcus (John Manley). However, coming fairly late in the text, Delia's tale feels merely like more of the same thing and one could easily be in agreement with Astrea's expression of boredom. Delia's narrative hits all of the appropriate notes for the inspiration of pity; she blames her "out-of-fashion aunt" for introducing her to notions of chivalry and romance: "This sort of conversation infected me and made me fancy every stranger that I saw [...] some disguised prince or lover" (223-24). This faulty education combines with a lack of experience to leave her an unwitting victim to her cousin's designs.

¹¹³ See, in particular, McKeon, *Secret* 588-615; Rabb, *Satire* 150-56.

When she finds out that she has been deceived and ruined, she again claims inexperience as an excuse for the fact that she stays with him, thus cementing her loss of reputation.

The knowledgeable reader of secret history cannot help but sense the formula here, especially because Delia's narrative is quite brief and unembellished with erotic detail (unsurprisingly, as she is telling it herself). The formulaic nature is put into further relief by the contradictions Delia introduces into her story, claiming that part of the aunt's influence was to give her "the honour and cruelty of a true heroine" (224), admitting that she was aware of the underhand manner in which Don Marcus had won his first wife, and at one point citing the education that her father, "a man of true honour and principles" (226), had provided for her. These details undermine her own pleas of ignorance and inexperience while simultaneously revealing Delia's ability to tell the "right" story. Though the contradictions of her tale come across starkly in print, the scene is framed by Intelligence's description of Delia "in tears" and "distressed" (222), and Delia's own pathetic phrases continue to hint at a tearful and emotional delivery:

To whom could I run for refuge, even from want and misery, but to the very traitor that had undone me? [...] a helpless, useless load of grief and melancholy! with child! disgraced! my own relations either impotent of power or will to relieve me! (226)

The Grand Druid in the text seems to respond to her delivery of her story rather than the story itself. Promising to make her “an exception to the general rule,” he claims to have been moved in her favour by “a penitence so sincere” and “a distress so moving” (227). It is not the details of Delia’s story that have moved him and he in no way excuses those details; rather, he is moved by her clear, physical signs of distress. Yet this response rings hollow to the reader who encounters only the text, not the pathetic spectacle of a female body in distress. The notion that Delia’s story is worthy of being an “exception” is ironic in the context of the many heroines who have come before her. Finally, the Grand Druid’s promise highlights the randomness of pity, a randomness that is unstable and tenuous once the immediate impressions of female distress have faded in memory. Certainly, Manley herself was not reintegrated into respectable society.

Manley’s presentation of her own story at this point in the text exposes the necessity of creating a particular narrative of fallen female virtue despite the futility of ever gaining true pity or understanding.¹¹⁴ Manley does not expect pity or sympathy for her tale; she exhorts her reader to see that the true problem is, again, the notion of female virtue itself. Yet this point is made through the spokesperson for the ideology that insists upon the female exemplar: Astrea,

¹¹⁴ The other important function of Manley’s inclusion of different versions of her own story in her narratives is to shield herself from the charges of hypocrisy levelled against those who expose the frailties of others. Defending herself from Virtue’s charge that she merely loves scandal for scandal’s sake, Intelligence asks: “is it criminal to expose the pretenders to Virtue? those who rail at all the world are themselves most guilty?” (137). By exposing her own failings openly (though of course placing herself in the camp of the unfortunate fallen rather than the vicious), Manley shields herself from the criticisms levelled within her own text.

who immediately undermines the druid's seeming sympathy through her expressed weariness with these types of tales. What is interesting is the content of Astrea's boredom—she sees no way to relate the tales of fallen virtue to her plan of education for her Prince. Her frustration at this point reveals the cracks in her own ideology and her inability to see beyond it as she frames the problem as insoluble: "What care shall my Prince be able to take to prevent the growth of forbidden love? How is it possible to hinder the women from believing or the men from deceiving?" (228). She even muses on the fact that didactic tales of fallen virtue have clearly not had an effect, as young virgins are "not to be wrought upon even by the exemplary ruin of others" (228), inadvertently acknowledging the emptiness of her own moralizing on earlier tales in the text.

Missing the suggestion of the earlier narratives, that perhaps it is the notion of female virtue itself that has to change, Astrea concludes that the only solution is to make the seduction of virgins punishable with death: "My Prince shall make it death to those who can be proved to have seduced a virgin, since sense of shame and reputation can't withhold 'em!" (228). Though much of the critical focus on the satire in Manley's texts has been on the use of gossip and the political satire within the tales, the representation of Astrea at this and other points in the text constitutes a broader satirical level that is just as devastating as the particular. Astrea's frustration with the insoluble issue of the protection of female virtue and her inability to see any recourse but the law shows her own

ideological blinders in stark relief: if men are by nature rapacious and women are by nature believing then what possible solution could there be other than death?

Manley's satire of these ideological blinders becomes more evident if we relate this scene to a similar moment in Jonathan Swift's later text *Gulliver's Travels*. In Book One of Swift's satirical masterpiece, Gulliver relates to his curious reader some details about the laws of the Lilliputian Society, which "if they were not so directly contrary to those of my own dear Country, I should be tempted to say a little in their Justification" (350). Emphasizing the extremity of the laws, Gulliver goes on to relate that the society of Lilliput holds both informing and fraud to be capital crimes. Like Astrea, the Lilliputians find no other way to deal with the base nature of their people than by putting those who succumb to that nature to death. The extremity of the solutions is shown to be absurd – both Gulliver and Astrea are satirized in their respective texts for an inability to see nuance and a tendency to swing between extreme positions such as these.¹¹⁵ The satire, though directed at particular narrators, is directed at them as representatives of specific ideological positions. Astrea's role as the voice of patriarchal justice turns the satire of the text directed at her back upon Tory patriarchy itself, exposing its cracks and inconsistencies.

The impracticality of Astrea's rigid stance is immediately exposed in a rare moment of moralizing by Intelligence herself. Though she is more frequently

¹¹⁵ Rabb has convincingly compared Manley's and Swift's narrative personae (as well as other aspects of their satire) in her article "The Manl(e)y Style: Delarivier Manley and Jonathan Swift," though she does not note the specific comparison made above. See Rabb "Manl(e)y" 149.

shown in the text as impatient and even dismissive of the moralizing of both Astrea and Virtue, Delia's story brings out a rare sympathy in our main narrator.¹¹⁶ Thus, Intelligence immediately responds to Astrea's plan with the fact that although the law is actually on Delia's side, the plan is impractical largely because of the social stigmas associated with fallen virtue and its proper passivity; the law that protects is overruled in practice by the ideology that condemns:

In Atalantis there are laws in force against plurality of wives, but they have found an easy evasion from the penalty. The woman who seeks for justice, after a great expense of time and money, meet [sic] nothing in return but censure and the imputation of being implacable and litigious and are ever after ridiculed as jealous and revengeful. (228)

Intelligence not only implies that Astrea's notion of justice is out of touch with reality, she also reaffirms the blamelessness of Delia in her own tale and spins her marriage in such a way as to persuade her listeners that the bigamous marriage was the best possible outcome of an unfortunate situation: "For though her [Delia's] advancement in the world be by that means prevented, yet are her principles and virtue uncorrupted whilst, innocent of her undoing, the deluded

¹¹⁶ McDowell situates this moment of sympathy between Intelligence and Delia as linked in their relationship to Manley herself: "She [Intelligence] feels for Delia because she *is* Delia. That is, both 'Intelligence' and 'Delia' are representations of Manley" (237). While Intelligence's response certainly works on this level, I want to argue further that Manley is using these two different representations of herself quite satirically, both poking fun at her own weaknesses and more radically using those weaknesses to expose Astrea.

maid is blameless as to honour" (229). Intelligence concludes her comments on Delia's tale and Astrea's solution by pointing out that even were the man who seduced a virgin to die, which "would indeed be a just punishment to him" (229), it would not help the victim; the seducer's death would be "too feeble an equivalent for honour lost" (229). Where Astrea speaks from a place of ideals, Intelligence here inserts the practical way that those ideals play out in society. And yet, in our text, no one is listening – except the sceptical reader. After Intelligence is done speaking, neither Astrea nor Virtue acknowledge what has been said; instead, Astrea reveals that she has not even been listening at all but has been looking at her surroundings – "Oh how pleasing is this retreat! Those beautiful delightful avenues, noble vistas, accomplished blendings of art and nature!" (229). What could be a truly educative moment about the practical workings of Atalantis society is completely missed by Astrea, creating a scathing satirical portrait of the educator of the future leader.

"Where in this bad world shall I find a protection for my unwary innocence?"

Manley's exposé of the ideological construction of female virtue and its internal contradictions is fully played out by the inability of her own text to find a place for a truly virtuous heroine. Besides Delia, the other heroine who is given the privilege of speaking her own tale in the *New Atalantis* is Elonora, but, unlike Delia, she tells her tale directly to Astrea, Virtue and Intelligence, who have just rescued her from a seemingly scandalous night-time encounter in the Tuilleries.

Although Intelligence immediately construes the situation in its worst possible light – “You shrieked! You called for help! how comes it that you were so reduced? How did you agree to so criminal an assignation? It has the appearance of being voluntary!” (162) – Elonora protests her innocence and is allowed by the divinities to relate her own tale. Even Intelligence herself is patient to listen rather than rush off to spread the apparent scandal she has just witnessed, and herself references Truth as a quality she prefers rather than is constrained by (as she was in the Charlot tale): “My business is indeed to give intelligence of all things, but I take Truth with me when I can get her” (162). Frozen into the posture of eager listener by the strange tale promised by the contradictions between the midnight garden setting and “the beautiful, the innocent Elonora” (162), Intelligence embraces Truth once she takes up the position of auditor rather than weaver of tales.¹¹⁷

The most frequently noted detail about Elonora is that neither contemporary nor modern scholars have been able to identify her historical counterpart.¹¹⁸ Ruth Herman argues that since Elonora was not identified by any of the contemporary keys, including the one by the antiquarian Thomas Hearne,

¹¹⁷ Intelligence’s desire to listen to Elonora’s story is remarkable when contrasted with other instances in which she has to quietly listen to other narrators in the text. For instance in Volume 1, when the goddesses meet a country woman and a count who both briefly inform the frame characters about the scenes before them, Intelligence is described as quite frustrated with their “usurping upon her province and forcing her to a long and painful silence” (86). Her impatience toward other narrators is also shown in the Mrs. Nightwork episode. As McDowell has pointed out, Intelligence shows a great deal of disdain for the midwife, who is characterized as socially inferior to Lady Intelligence, when Intelligence complains peevishly “I’m afraid you are taking my province from me, and engrossing all the scandal to yourself” (138). See McDowell 255.

¹¹⁸ Both Ballaster and Carnell, in the notes to their respective editions of the text, claim that if there is an historical individual implied by this tale, she is unknown.

who “meticulously copied out” keys for the first and second volumes yet “made no effort to identify who lay behind Elonora,” we can “surmise that Elonora’s romantic interlude was included without even the pretense of a basis in reality, political or otherwise” (69). Where Herman sees a purely amatory interlude empty of the political significance of the other tales in Manley’s text, Bowers calls us to “imagine” that “Elonora stands allegorically not for a still untraced individual but for the Tory party of Manley’s day” and notes that, while not completely tidy, this allegorical possibility is “*available* in the text” (188). While I agree with Bowers that the political resonances are available and potentially powerful, I see another role for Elonora’s tale within the context of Manley’s critique of the discourse of virtue, a role which reveals both the bite of the text’s satire and the inability of Manley herself to see a way beyond the paradoxes which her own text have exposed in the construction of exemplary virtue. Thus, while the narrative exposes the paradoxes and, as I will shortly argue, interrupts the pleasure to be derived from the construction of female virtue as perennial victim for the sceptical reader, there are no real alternatives suggested by the text.

If we accept that Elonora was not intended to have an historical counterpart, then we also need to think about what that reveals about her place in the text. Rather than just an amatory interlude, the deliberate inclusion of a non-referential character this late in a work that has continually exposed the cracks in the ideology of virtue is noteworthy. As already mentioned, Elonora is

privileged by the text in that she is allowed to relate her own story to the goddesses and the readers. She is also unique in being the only distressed heroine who retains that key indicator of virtue, her virginity. Though her tale is a continual struggle against the various men who would take that virtue, at the moment that we encounter her she has managed to succeed in her struggles, despite her own inclination toward one of the men who would be her seducer, and thanks in no small part to the timely intervention of Intelligence, Astrea and Virtue. On one level, then, the fact that the only virtuous heroine in the text (whose virtue is actually tested) needs to be fictional is a scathing indictment of the society from which Manley is drawing her characters – the implication being that the only heroine who could survive the many struggles through which *Elonora* has gone must be a figment of the author's imagination.¹¹⁹

Briefly, *Elonora's* tale begins with the death of her father and the promise of her eldest brother, Don Juan, to provide respectable dowries for his sisters. This draws a number of suitors, one of whom, Don Antonio, *Elonora* falls helplessly in love with. However, because he is a younger son, Don Antonio proffers his suit in private and stolen moments, which eventually lead to the first test of *Elonora's* virtue during a night-time tryst in her garden. Though the scene is warm, as she describes Don Antonio holding her "in his eager arms, wandering o're [her] face and neck with ten thousand ardent breathings!" (165),

¹¹⁹ It is important to note here that there are of course many virtuous Tory women mentioned in Manley's text, but the distinction with *Elonora* is that her virtue has been continually assaulted and tested. Presumably it would have been politically awkward to show the female figures whom Manley was supporting politically in any kind of virtue in distress situation, as merely to be placed in such a position could invite suspicion of their virtue.

Elonora denies his request for “more exalted bliss” (165) by translating that to a proposal of marriage, which Don Antonio clearly does not desire. After this first test, Elonora is discovered in her midnight meetings by her brother, who entreats her to reveal all to him. She obliges and Don Juan arranges to meet Don Antonio himself, promising to arrange things in such a way that they can marry while sending Elonora to her aunt in Angera (London). The meeting between the men ends in disaster when Don Antonio assumes that Don Juan is there to fight for his sister’s honour; fiery tempers prevail and Don Juan is killed, robbing Elonora of her intended dowry in the process, since her other brother is married and has no inclination to provide for his sisters. Left to the indifferent care of her aunt after the death of her mother as well, Elonora shows a weakness for gambling, is brought into compromising circumstances by her debt, draws the attention of a number of men interested in her favours, and finally comes under the power of Don Antonio, who makes a mercenary marriage with her aunt. Despite being constantly importuned, however, Elonora has managed to protect her virtue to this point and when we first meet her has been struggling with the Count to whom her “uncle” Don Antonio has sold her to settle a gambling debt.

In *Elonora* the readers get an example of a woman who acknowledges both the power of desire and the importance of her education for combating that desire. She emphasizes her mother’s large jointure, which was used “to educate and provide” (163) for herself and her sister and demonstrates her proper education in a number of moments in the text. For instance, unlike an amatory

narrator who would privilege the physical qualities of the loved one, Elonora minutely details Don Antonio's principles and the qualities of his mind, only coming to his physical description at the end in order to allow her listeners to "better judge of him" (165). When she is discovered returning from a midnight assignation by her brother, she is honest and defers to his authority and judgement—though her deference has fatal consequences, we can assume, she acts as she has been educated to act with regard to the male head of her family.

In contrast to this reverence for her honour and virtue, Elonora openly asserts her desire for Don Antonio, acknowledging, "Inclination has blinded me, and though some of his faults are obvious, yet I have loved him with 'em all, incessantly regretting that I could not also esteem him" (165). The contrast between her virtuous reason and treasonous desires continues throughout her narrative in statements such as "He spoke to the passions within me; they all echoed back a sympathetic answer" (165), "We readily believe what we desire" (166), and "I yet loved him though I hated him, a paradox that may easily be reconciled by those that know our passions are involuntary and the opposition of reason and inclination" (183). As Bowers has described her, Elonora becomes "something of a poster figure for a ubiquitous *topos*: the irrationality and gullibility, even helplessness, of women in love" (184). An important difference between a character like Charlot and Elonora, however, is that Elonora is clearly aware of her predicament: she both recognizes what is expected from her by her family and by the morals of her society and, more importantly, she recognizes

and understands her feelings, such that, although she cannot conquer them, she is not driven by them.

The piteous exclamation which began this section, "Where in this bad world shall I find a protection for my unwary innocence?" (186), comes at the end of Elonora's tale as she bemoans her lack of protection against men like the Count and Don Antonio, who would seduce her, seemingly at any cost. Although Intelligence is quick to offer the interest of Princess Fame, who would introduce Elonora to the protection of the Empress of Atlantis, this promise must be viewed with a certain degree of hesitation by the sceptical reader, who after hearing many of the tales of fallen virtue told with relish by our main narrator would question her ability to represent true virtue. This is furthered by Intelligence's own earlier admission of her narrative preferences when she is questioned by Virtue about a particular gentlemen on the Prado: "I must take leave to answer your Mightiness (without power), by a leer and a malicious smile, because I am infinitely pleased at your query, it borders so much upon my beloved diversion, scandal" (99). Both Intelligence and her Princess Fame thrive on scandal and the loss of virtue and thus seem scant shelter for Elonora.

The inability of the society depicted in the text to protect virtue is clear in its incapacity to incorporate Elonora herself into the frame narrative. Promised a suspect sort of protection by Intelligence and Fame, Elonora is given temporary shelter by Virtue, who, speaking for both herself and Astrea, declares that "We will not have her leave us until her establishment" (186). Although Elonora joins

the frame narrators at this point, she all but disappears from the text, narratively demonstrating the text's own inability to integrate the particular type of female virtue associated with virginity. As a silent member of the frame narrative, Elonora gets even less attention than Truth does, only being referred to once more by Astrea near the end of the tale when she is included with Intelligence as a figure who is blind to the divine presence guarding the family seat of Beaumont (Henry Somerset, second Duke of Beaufort) (230). This sole reference, aptly described by Bowers as "deflating" (189), not only reminds the reader that she has been present all along despite her silence, but also adds to that silence a description of blindness. Thus, blind and mute, the text's only heroine who has both suffered assaults on her virtue and protected that virtue hovers on the outskirts of even the frame narrative and is completely forgotten at the end. As a final irony, Manley's own text, which has directed the sceptical reader toward the paradox inherent in her society's construction of female virtue, is itself unable to integrate and thus preserve distressed virtue.

The whole female body: the desirable and the disgusting

The final satiric element in Manley's exposure of the standard narrative of fallen female virtue, her emphasis on the more grotesque elements of the female body, is perhaps the most Swiftian of her techniques, though she focuses it in a distinctively female manner, avoiding Swift's tendencies toward "scatology and misogyny" (Rabb, "Manl(e)y" 140). As Rabb argues, Manley

uses the female body's objectification to satirize society rather than to satirize women or women's sexuality per se. There is more to fear and loathe about the body than its need to excrete waste, such as its suffering during childbirth and its vulnerability to rape.

("Manl(e)y" 140)

While part of Manley's emphasis on the female body is evident in erotic scenes like the one discussed earlier with regards to the Charlot tale, the other side of this erotic body for Manley is the body in labour. Thus the scenes of eroticism are balanced in the text with scenes of childbirth. A number of critics have noted the profusion of painful and grotesque birth scenes in the *New Atalantis*, but most see them as contributing to the pathos, or the moral lesson, or the criticism of the Whig gentlemen who abandon women at such critical times.¹²⁰ The level of satire that I have been describing in this chapter, however, provides another possible reading of these horrific scenes, which vie with the eroticized scenes in their attention to the motions of the female body. Unlike Aphra Behn's *Silvia*, whose pregnancy is hardly noted and does not stop her from seducing two new lovers and an old one because, as the narrator writes, "she show'd very little of her Condition all the time she went" (365), the heroines in Manley's text undergo

¹²⁰ McDowell discusses the issue of unwanted pregnancies in the *New Atalantis* through the lens of class, noting how the upper-class women of the Cabal have the power to create for themselves a man-free space whereas many of the lower class women in the text are depicted as unable to escape the "tragic consequences" of illegitimate and unwanted children (see 253-54). Rabb views the scenes of unwanted children as a motif which "nervously connects sex and politics" (*Satire* 123) in its referencing of illegitimate succession and private sexuality: "Thus broken lovers' promises are also broken paternal promises (and broken women's bodies)" (*Satire* 123).

often gruesome but at the very least painfully drawn-out labours. And whereas Silvia's child was never mentioned again in the text, even as to whether it lived or died, the illegitimate children in the *New Atalantis* are clearly present, though often dead at the hands of their distressed mothers.

Just as Swift is on one level satirizing Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* when he has Gulliver discretely mention the manner in which he relieves himself while he is confined by the Emperor of Lilliput (331), Manley's introduction of the pains of childbirth into the tales of fallen virtue brazenly avows the part of female physicality ignored by traditional representations of fallen virtue. The strategy not only deepens our awareness of the severe consequences that can result for women who engage in sex outside of marriage (or in bigamous marriages), it can also introduce a response of disgust on the part of the reader which actually blocks the very possibility of a response of envy toward a fallen exemplar. "The active incitement of disgust," as Jonathan Dollimore has argued, "can be an effective strategy of satirical critique and political opposition: a confronting of culture with its constitutive repressions, a provocative violation of cultural boundaries and bodily properties" (47). Like the emphasis on education in the Charlot tale, Manley's use of disgust brings to the fore elements of the ideology of female virtue ignored by its traditional aesthetic narratives. Thus, in the pathetic tragedies discussed in Chapter 1, the female body, fully present to the audience in the body of the actress upon the stage, remains beautiful and

potentially erotic even in her fallen state.¹²¹ In contrast, Manley's inclusion of bodies "racked" and "in agonies" (136) interrupts the potential for desire toward the fallen female, thus revealing the aestheticized death scenes of pathetic tragedy as spectacles constructed for audience pleasure and prurience. Shifting the focus of the fallen virtue narrative, Manley complicates the pleasure that can be derived from an affective relationship of envy, which simultaneously relishes and pities the fallen female who has been held up as an exemplar, while glossing over the conditions which enable the narrative itself. She effects this by introducing scenes of disgust into her text which "explicitly [block] the path of sympathy" (Ngai 335) from reader to character, thus replacing an affective relationship of envy with one of disgust.

Manley's destabilization of notions of female nature versus education in stories of fallen virtue combines with her interplay of desire and disgust with respect to the female body most clearly in the tale of Urania's and Polydore's incestuous love. This particular narrative exists within multiple frames in the text, creating a proliferation of female bodies in pain surrounding the tale of seduced virtue. Intelligence relates the tale of Urania as background information to a scene of childbirth which the women stumble upon late at night in the woods. The tale serves to expose the hypocritical virtue of Harriat, the woman before them, who has been the ruin and ultimately the death of her cousins

¹²¹ Recall, for instance, the "spectacle of female sexuality" (Marsden, *Fatal* 79) displayed through Anne Bracegirdle as Eurione in *The Rape* when "The Scene draws, and discovers Eurione in an Arbour, gagg'd and bound to a Tree, her hair dishevel'd as newly Ravish'd, a Dagger lying by her" (Brady 25).

through her revelation of their lapse in virtue, yet who now “groans in a terrible manner” and pleads with her seducer to fetch a midwife: “I’m racked! I die in agonies! [...] I’m surrounded with horror, the rack of nature is upon me, and no kind assisting hand to relieve me” (136). Once the midwife, Mrs. Nightwork, has arrived and completed her business, she stops with Intelligence and the goddesses and relates a number of stories whose narrative focus is on the preservation of female reputation. These tales include numerous examples of the painful lengths women go to in order to safeguard their reputation when they seek to hide the recent delivery of a child.

Sianne Ngai has noted a number of artists and philosophers who “have demonstrated that desire and disgust are dialectically conjoined” (332-33); however, she cautions against seeing these feelings as too similar in their affect: “disgust is urgent and specific; desire can be ambivalent and vague” (337). The disgust response, as urgent as the pains of childbirth from which it arises, breaks the reader’s sympathy with Harriat immediately, a position reinforced by Intelligence’s utter lack of sympathy for the woman in front of her, and this response is multiplied by the quick succession of female pain stories that follow the initial encounter. The traces left from the disgust of the frame stories colour the description of Urania, who is “all sincere, tender, nice of the truth” and so beautiful that she eclipses her cousins; even “with all the advantage of fortune, ‘twas impossible they should have any lovers where Urania appeared” (142). Although the reader is drawn toward the typical virtuous heroine characteristics,

the frame of female pain, again brought to the reader's remembrance by the narrator's mention of Urania's young mother who died in the birthing of her and her twin brother, Polydore, taints the heroine within and keeps suspended the normal possibilities of sympathy and aesthetic desire.

Coming after Mrs. Nightwork's relation of a number of scenes of the physical pain associated with childbirth, referred to as a "rack of nature," the physical description of Urania, a name with classical, romance and contemporary theatrical associations, with its emphasis on the erotic side of female nature, is jarring in its juxtaposition of disgust and desire.¹²² Manley balances these competing movements with a continued attention to the dual discourses of female nature and education. Unlike Charlot, who could be considered overeducated, Urania is described as all nature with no opportunity for education. What is "natural" in the description of Urania, however, sits uneasily beside the natural childbirth pains of the frames, particularly as it is over-elaborated and exaggerated by our narrator:

a complexion so amorous, that it was but casting your eyes upon
the least glance of hers to read the fever of her soul, that disease of
nature! that enchanting warmth, which gave her blood a perpetual
ferment! her heart ten thousand sighs! her charming eyes a lovesick
languish! desire and disorders in her air! unintermitting wishes!

¹²² The name Urania along with its more general romance and classic associations was also the name of the heroine played by Anne Bracegirdle in George Powell's *Alphonso; King of Naples* (1691).

delicious dreams! delightful swimmings to her thoughts! and, in a word, so bright an idea of the pleasures of love, that nothing seemed so great a misfortune to her, as that they were only yet ideas. (142)

The language of the body that permeates Intelligence's highly eroticized description of our heroine connects her to the female bodies which have come before her in the text, and yet she surpasses all of them in her ability to radiate and to attract sexual desire. This female nature is restrained by nothing, as Urania is not only carelessly educated – "Urania [...] had too heedless an education" (148-49) – but is also barred from almost all society because her beauty outshines that of her cousins.

Whereas Manley uses the Charlot tale to satirize the narrative of fallen virtue by exposing the paradoxes of an ideology which creates the unwitting target of its own destruction, in the Urania tale she uses techniques of exaggeration and the grotesque to undermine the aestheticized picture of female nature upon which that narrative relies, problematizing the desire response through her inclusion of the violent scenes of childbirth. Described as an embodiment of desire itself, Urania is seduced by her twin brother Polydore into an incestuous relationship which is rationalized by that brother as natural: "Why my enchanting sister,' (would he say, 'must human laws and customs take the place of nature's? [...] Nature forbids it not, or rather gives a more endearing gusto to those born of the same blood. Did we err against her eternal

laws, would not instinct make the discovery?" (143). Although Intelligence wastes no time with a description of Polydore, as Urania's twin brother he is noted to be as beautiful and seemingly as erotically inclined as she is: "their faces and inclinations were alike, unhappy only in a distinction of the sex" (142). The "natural" progression of the narrative is fully in place by the time these two children of desire finally consummate their lust for one another, a lust "immediately" followed with equally natural results: "No sooner had they drank of this delicious poison, but Urania proved the effects of it! A guilty pregnancy immediately succeeded!" (145).

Although Urania's pregnancy does not interrupt the pleasures of the incestuous pair, they are eventually found out and exposed by their cousin Harriat (the woman whose own clandestine labour prompts the tale). Despite their pleas, they are separated from one another – Urania is sent incognito into the country for her confinement and forbidden any contact with Polydore. The scene of her labour is one of the most drawn out of the childbirth scenes in the text, if not quite the most grotesque.¹²³ Resolute in her desire to die in childbirth, Urania, "when the mother-pains came upon her, forbore to call! she forbore to groan! [...] She drank her tears, suppressed her cries, groaned inwardly with strongest woe" (149). Struggling with her pain, her guilt, and her confusion over

¹²³ That honour belongs to a very short tale in Volume 1 of the text when the frame characters come upon a woman nailed to the gibbet. She came to that fate after secretly giving birth to, then murdering, her illegitimate child. The description of the labour is haunting and grotesque in its vividness of detail: "Pain after pain, tear after tear, cry after cry. [...] after a few more labour pains, she is delivered all alone by her self of a brave boy. Lest he should cry, she tore out his bowels in the birth." (83).

the innocence of her child, who also carries the guilt of his incestuous creation, Urania endures a “bitter night,” and, finally “having passed that necessary point of time wherein the women’s assistance was absolutely necessary, she fell into strong convulsions, in which she was so happy as to lose her understanding” (150). The dreadful scene results in the death of both the child and Urania; Urania follows her own mother in the manner of her death but blocks the continuation of the narrative by bringing about the death of her child in the process. Insistently placing before the reader the full picture of female physicality, Manley plays with competing notions of desire and disgust in order to expose the one-sidedness of the narratives of female virtue placed before audiences of her time, which only see the erotic nature of the female body.

Once more the reactions of the frame characters to Urania’s tale are instructive. Virtue lays the blame on the Baroness (Urania’s aunt and guardian), who neglected her education and failed to properly read her amorous constitution and vigilantly police her interactions with the opposite sex. Astrea sagaciously applauds Virtue’s moral gloss on the tale and concludes with her own rhetorical appeal to nature: “I have pity and indignation at the weakness of the race! Oh nature! why are thou so potent and so faulty?” (151). Astrea’s statement of the futility of any action against nature is painfully ironic given her role as educator of the future leader; if nature is so powerful as to be unchangeable what chance does education have to change anything in Atalantis where “human nature is universally corrupted” (Manley, *New* 11)? Manley’s

ironic portrayal of the mouthpiece of the ideology of female virtue combines with her manipulations of the narratives of fallen virtue to provide a scathing satirical indictment of the ideological traps created for women living within these narratives. Though she is unable to provide a clear way out, Manley's exposure of the cracks, of the paradoxes, at least opens up possibilities for recognition of the perils of these ideologies for her careful readers.

Conclusion

Manley's use of framing within her secret histories allows her to write within the genre while pushing it further than any of the authors who came before her. On the level of political satire, her profusion of targets and the obscurity of some of her tales make the game of deciphering her work that much more of a challenge and, for an avid sceptical reader, one would imagine that much more fun. Given its popularity, it is not a stretch to say that the communities of readers linked by the circulation of the *New Atalantis* and its keys (both oral and print) would have been much more numerous than the works discussed earlier. The challenge of the text would have made the sense of superiority associated with its decipherment that much more powerful for readers. Marshalling the affective relationship that empowered readers to judge their political superiors, Manley's text pushes that judgement further, targeting the powerful ideological construction of female virtue dominant within Restoration and early eighteenth-century literature, art and society. Through her

satire of bad readers and her manipulation of the affective motions of desire and disgust, Manley creates a complex satire for her most skilled secret history readers. Though a full discussion of these readers is beyond the scope of this present project, I will gesture toward a larger concern about skilled and unskilled readers evident in Manley's work in my conclusion while clarifying some of the further implications of bringing Manley's work into conversation with the pathetic tragedies of the Restoration.

CONCLUSIONS AND CONJECTURES

In the preceding chapters, I have tried to expand the ways that we, as critics and teachers, can approach less-studied genres of the Restoration and early eighteenth century, opening new possibilities for the reading and interpretation of canonically minor works. Though my focus has been on particular modes of drama and secret history, the idea that we need to loosen our genre alignments when dealing with this literary period could and should be productively extended to other types of texts, work I hope to continue in the future.

By realigning traditional genres and focusing on the reception of those genres in the public spaces of London, I have demonstrated the importance of reception communities in shaping the drama and the secret history of the Restoration. Far from being a secondary aspect of literary production, audiences actively shaped the literature with which they engaged. For secret history in particular, success depended upon a community of readers, with the skills to accurately read the text, coming together, and then further spreading the requisite knowledge and excitement about that knowledge to other potential readers. The affective spread of excitement was not only a method of advertising the social cachet which could be associated with a popular text or play, but also an incitement to desire – desire to know, desire to belong with those in the know.

While this interest or excitement acted as an initial incentive to participating in social literary reception, I have argued that particular genres had the potential to create affectively specific relationships between performances, texts and audiences.

The activation of envy by pathetic tragedy contributed to audience pleasure in performance and revealed, for the most part uncritically, the paradoxical elements of an ideology of female virtue that created pleasure in its own, agency-less, fall. When Manley moved the figure of envy out of the audience and onto the stage, the potential for ideological critique offered through this affective relationship was foregrounded. In the political secret histories, the placement of the king, or other aristocratic leaders, as literary subjects fostered an illusory intimacy which enabled readers to judge their social superiors, an affective relationship heightened by the visibility of the Restoration court and by the social exchange of information, made up of layers of fiction, gossip and celebrity. This affect, that I call spite, not because it necessarily led to a negative judgement, but because it provided the ground upon which judgement itself could happen (and because it was clearly the tone of many of the texts themselves), played an important role in the rise of the notion of political subjecthood throughout the Restoration and eighteenth century. In both cases examined in this dissertation, the affect depended on the insertion of a historical individual, whether in the body of the actress or in the body of the king, for example, into the relationship created between the literary work and the reader.

Thus, far from being a secondary or distracting level of meaning in these works, the historical particularity of their representations was integral to the ways that contemporary readers experienced them.

Finally, with my concluding chapter on Delarivier Manley, I offer another way of reading her *New Atalantis* through the generic and affective literary tradition in which she is participating. Joining the growing number of critics arguing for a reappraisal of Manley's scandal fiction, I argue that her text is a deliberate and nuanced treatment of contemporary political figures and the dominant ideology of female virtue. Combining secret history, satire, seduction fiction, allegory and the critical exposure of ideology, the *New Atalantis* may not offer any definitive way around the dominant ideology of female virtue but it does expose and critique the paradoxes of that ideology, as well as the aesthetic tradition which shows but complicitly upholds those paradoxes.

An important implication of my reading of Manley's text, seen within the context of the secret history genre, is the need for an explicit discussion of the relationship between the secret history author and the community of sceptical readers to whom they address their texts. Implicit throughout my second and third chapter is the sense that the secret history author, whether he is George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, or an anonymous hack writer churning out political propaganda, is writing for a social community to which he himself belongs. The notion of a community comprising both author and "good" readers adds a further level of irony to Manley's satire of bad readers in her text evoking

the picture of the author sitting and laughing among the privileged few who understand the joke. This hostile relationship toward readers not in on the joke continues in Manley's later work, culminating in her choice to make the narrator of her fictional autobiography *The Adventures of Rivella* (1714) a hopelessly partial and undiscerning reader of her works and her self. Eschewing her clear flair for the political, Sir Charles Lovemore responds to his interlocutor's desire to know the amorous side of Manley by ending in the author's bedroom, descriptively bringing him "within the nymphs alcove, to a bed nicely sheeted and strowed with roses, jessamins or orange-flowers, suited to the variety of the season" (113). Like the reader seduced by the tale of the Duke and Charlot in Manley's *New Atalantis*, Lovemore and his listener, Chevalier D'Aumont, are easily taken in by their own desire for the illusion of an amorous author, of "the only person of her sex that knows how to live" (114). Yet while they pursue her into her bedroom, the author and her community of sceptical readers have their laugh at the outsiders' expense.

Though I can only touch on it here, the relationship between Manley and her community of readers bears further study. It is a relationship that needs to be understood in the context of a secret history genre constituted by reception practices. Her distinction between the "judicious Reader," referred to in *The Examiner*, Number 52, Manley's final edition of that paper, and readers like Astrea in *New Atalantis*, Lovemore in *Rivella* and the author of the *Medley* whom she ironically thanks for "so constantly explaining what he thought my Meaning in

any dark Allusions or Allegories" (*Examiner* 1) is a frequent element of her writing. This distinction between good and bad readers implies a community of readers with whom she shares an understanding of her often-complex texts. In contrast to the authors of early novels who often seek to educate their readers in the proper ways to read their texts, Manley's secret histories and the textual tradition in which she writes seem to privilege prior understanding and the social capital that allows a reader to take their place from the outset as a discerning sceptical reader. Thus, while the secret history communities do seem to have an inclusive element in bringing together individuals through the spread of knowledge, there also seems to be an elitist element to the texts in their scorn for those who just do not get the truth behind the satire.

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