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EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FICTION AND THE PRODUCTION OF SHAME, 1680-
1753

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This dissertation argues that eighteenth-century fiction problematizes the relationships among virtue, modesty, and shame. Where the conduct manual and the moral novel demonize the shameless female subject, women writers such as Aphra Behn, Eliza Haywood, and Charlottle Lennox consistently decouple shame from virtue to expose the limitations of the virtuous principles in the world of the conduct manual and moral novel. The introduction considers the historical relationship between the conduct manual, the moral novel, and women's writing and the ways in which each engages in the production of shame, arguing that the moral novel of the mid-eighteenth century neither negates nor contains the power of amatory fiction but illustrates the inability of "virtue rewarded" to resolve the tensions within eighteenth-century fiction and the representation of female subjectivity. Chapter 1 argues that Behn's amatory fiction, *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* (1684), *The Fair Jilt* (1688), and *The History of the Nun* (1689), resist the culture of shame and guilt surrounding the sexually available, desiring, and dangerous woman, blurring the lines between the moral and the immoral and questions the conduct manual's insistence that virtuous behavior liberates the female subject. Chapter 2 analyzes the ways in which the heroines of Haywood's early amatory fiction test the limits of virtue and shame in sustaining a woman's reputation, arguing that public reputation is more important than a woman's internalized sense of honor. Haywood's fiction experiments with the heroine's recognition of the mechanisms of shame and her ability to manage her reputation and sexual subjectivity. Chapter 3 analyzes the anti-pamelist fiction by Haywood and Henry Fielding to argue that the virtuous example exalted by Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* exposes women *to*, rather than preserves them

from, sexual danger and endorses social expectations that demand the performance of virtue and shame as a means of economic and social survival. Chapter 4 explores the consequences of virtuous reading in Lennox's novel *The Female Quixote*, arguing that Lennox questions the moral novel's capacity to instill that sense of virtue which makes a heroine an appropriate wife and exposes the need to internalize shame to survive in the eighteenth-century world.

For my grandfather, Nathaniel, who inspired me;
For my parents, John and Patricia, who encouraged me;
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Introduction

VIRTUE.

1. Moral goodness.
2. A particular moral excellence.
5. Efficacy; power.
6. Acting power.
7. Secret agency; efficacy.

SHAME

1. The passion felt when reputation is supposed to be lost.
2. The cause of reason of shame; disgrace; ignominy.
 1. Reproach.¹

-From Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language*

In a letter to George Cheyne, Samuel Richardson claimed that his goal in writing novels was “to make the Story rather useful than diverting” and that “the cause of Virtue and Religion was what I wish’d principally to serve.”² Richardson’s professed aim to instruct and delight was also an attempt to “set VIRTUE in its own amiable light, to make it look lovely.”³ In making virtue look lovely, though, the novel fetishizes Pamela’s virtue. This fetishization of female virtue in the eighteenth-century novel is more about the fetishization of female shame. In calling attention to the fetishization of shame in the eighteenth-century novel, I posit that the history of the novel that circulates around Richardson’s *Pamela* circulates around limiting masculinist terms—virtue, domesticity, subjectivity, selfhood—all of which emphasize what women *should* be instead of what is realistically available to women. In using “shame” as the lens to view novelistic discourse, I argue that women’s writing of the eighteenth century records the struggle of women who are forced to internalize, create, and sustain a sense of self defined by male

¹ Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (London, 1756). ECCO.

² *Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson*, ed. John Carroll (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 54-55.

³ Preface to *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*, ed. Peter Sabor (London: Penguin, 1980), 31.

sexual interest. This dialectical engagement between virtue and shame is the focus of this project. While Pamela's matrimonial conclusion highlights the consequences of maintaining one's virtue, it assumes that virtue exerts itself even in the most dangerous of circumstances and ignores the reality of the eighteenth-century female subject's position in a system that simultaneously expects virtue but, through its idealization, makes it unachievable.

In placing shame at the center of novelistic discourse, I argue that the conditions of female morality become much more intricate than the opposition between virtuous and shameful. In order to successfully improve readers' morality, the moralizing novel needs its readers to possess a desire illicit thoughts and its content often encourages those thoughts in its readers in order to correct them. By inadvertently encouraging untoward thoughts and vicarious participation in illicit behavior, readers feel a sense of shame in the act of reading. This forces us to ask, though what virtue is supposed to do for the female subject. On the one hand, to be "virtuous" in novelistic terms is to carve out a specific internalized self-identity, one that is assumed self-evident, self-contained, and unassailable. However, it also establishes the female body and soul as an embattled citadel, constantly under attack and in need of protection.⁴ While the conduct manual might encourage virtue as a safeguard for woman's reputation, the identity "virtuous" implies that the female body and soul are never safe from lecherous advances and that something shameful awaits every woman right around the corner. In fact, in the progress

⁴ George Halifax warns his daughter that going "out of your House in the World [is] A dangerous step; where your Virtue alone will not secure you, except it is attended with a great deal of *Prudence*. [...] The Enemy is abroad, and you are sure to be taken, if you are found straggling." *The Lady's New-year's Gift: or, Advice to a Daughter* (London, 1724), 68.

of the novel from the scandalous fiction of the late seventeenth century, through the 1720s, to the “moral” realism of Samuel Richardson, and to the domestic fiction of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, countless women find themselves battling off and suffering the consequences of succumbing to, or resisting to a fault, dangerous sexual advances from men. Masculinist obsession with virtue provides only two outcomes for the sexually persecuted heroine: if she refuses to internalize the mechanisms of shame, she becomes a whore. If she successfully internalizes them, she becomes an idealized and eroticized paragon of virtue. Either way, masculinist desires define the female subject. For example, Moll Flanders, refusing to let shame control her desires, gives in to the advances of the older son in the house she serves only to be treated as a common whore. Pamela, however, fends off the very persistent Mr. B who stoops so low as to dress in drag to find the opportunity to rape her. The consequences faced by Moll are, on the surface, harsher than those faced by Pamela. When her lover offers her five guineas in exchange for sexual favors, Moll presents this as the beginning of her career as prostitute and criminal. Pamela is “fortunate” enough to marry the man who so relentlessly and violently pursues her. Moll’s failure to preserve her virtue from the voracious desire of her superior deserves punishment and she finds herself living a life of crime from which she cannot escape. Pamela’s virtue, though, is to be celebrated and her assailant is transformed into the perfect match for her.

Rather than rehash the myriad debates concerning the origins of the novel, I would borrow Brean Hammond’s and Shaun Regan’s astute claim that we cannot recreate a singular “true story” of the novel, as “our perception of phenomena alters depending on the vantage point that we adopt, and the ‘true story’ of the novel partly depends on when

and where one chooses to begin it.”⁵ Histories of the novel have begun in any number of historical moments with critics positing the novel as a genre that is spontaneously born with the introduction of “realistic” qualities, as the product of “dialogical progress” confronting “both intellectual and social crisis simultaneously,” and as a part of literary history with roots in Greek and Roman literature.⁶ My aim is neither to discover the mysterious point of origination of the novel nor to argue for a separate feminine history of the novel. Criticism since the mid- to late-1980s has made great strides in recovering works by women writers left out of seminal histories such as Watt’s and McKeon’s, creating alternative histories that focus on creating a female canon, question the representation of desire, or create a history of feminocentric writing by tracing it to French romance.⁷ More recently, others have crafted histories that connect the novel to less “fictionalized” forms like periodicals or the travel narrative.⁸ If Hammond’s and Regan’s study is any indication, we have progressed to a more multifaceted appreciation of “the novel.”

⁵ *Making the Novel: Fiction and Society in Britain, 1660-1789* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 16.

⁶ See Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1957); Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987), 22; and Margaret Anne Doody, *The True Story of the Novel* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1996).

⁷ Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (New York: Blackwell, 1986); Janet Todd, *The Signs of Angellica: Women, Writing, and Fictions, 1660-1800* (Columbia UP: New York, 1989); Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Desire and Truth: Functions of Plot in the Eighteenth Century English Novels* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990); Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women’s Amatory Fiction from 1684-1740* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992).

⁸ See Lennard Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (New York: Columbia UP, 1983); J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth Century English Fiction* (New York: Norton, 1990); and more recently Kate Loveman, *Reading Fictions, 1660-1740: Deception in English Literary and Political Culture* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008).

This is not to say, however, that this multifaceted model is any more complete than the teleological one offered by Watt. In focusing on the relationship between amatory fiction and “the novel,” I argue that our representation of critical tradition still needs redirecting. At best, most critics of the eighteenth-century novel have encouraged a segregated understanding of the novel’s development by elevating “moralistic”⁹ fiction as the standard by which earlier works are judged and treating amatory fiction as a form of literary counter-culture, a sexually transgressive literature that compels the birth of the novel.¹⁰ Armstrong’s, McKeon’s, and Warner’s studies all provide valuable contributions to our understanding of the dialogical preoccupations of the genre. This study, however, focuses on the women writers and their fascination with female shame as opposed to virtue.

I. “The Sin of Shame”: Defining Shame and Female (Sexual) Subjectivity

“Virtue” and “modesty” have long been placed at the forefront of our critical understanding of the novel’s thematic development, not the least because of Pamela’s *Virtue Rewarded*. Samuel Johnson’s 1756 *Dictionary of the English Language* defines

⁹ I use “moralistic” and “moralizing” as opposed to “moral realism” to emphasize the inconsistencies within the subgenre. While Richardson purports to have revised the immoralities within amatory fiction, he has actually internalized them and uses them to his advantage.

¹⁰ Though Richetti and McKeon both have revised their earlier claims regarding amatory fiction, their revised perspectives still tend toward downplaying the contributions and aesthetic qualities of early women’s fiction. Richetti does find amatory fiction “in some way” resistant to masculinist norms but still insists on its “looseness and artlessness” and thinks it “best approached as a formulaic and commercial product” (Introduction to *Popular Fiction Before Richardson*, xxviii, xxvii). Of Behn’s *Love Letters*, McKeon notes that “the change in narrative technique over the course of *Love Letters* is a paradigmatic shift in the emergence and development of the domestic novel” (538). See *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2005).

“virtue,” unsurprisingly, as “moral goodness” and “a particular moral excellence.” However, it also defines “virtue” as “efficacy; power, “acting power,” and a “secret agency.”¹¹ It is this power attributed to virtue in not only Johnson’s definition but the in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century conduct manuals and the eighteenth-century that creates problems for the eighteenth-century female subject. These works (typically male-authored) imbue virtue with the power to preserve reputation and safeguard women from the inappropriate advances of men. To lose that sense of virtue poses any number of dangers to a woman’s good reputation, almost all of them resulting in shame. Johnson’s definition of shame, “the passion felt when reputation is supposed to be lost,” suggests the relationship between virtue, reputation, and shame. It is in this relationship, I argue, that the discourse of the novel is established. Shame, not virtue, is the key player in constructing eighteenth-century female subjectivity. Reconsidering the place of “shame” both in the construction of female sexual subjectivity and in the novel’s development necessitates carefully defining “shame” in relation to “virtue” and “modesty,” terms that are quite slippery and difficult to pin down. In my usage of these terms as well as their usage in contemporary discourse, “virtue,” “modesty,” and “shame” often imply each other. A virtuous (or chaste) woman is a modest woman who has successfully internalized the mechanisms of shame to maintain her virtue and modesty. If shame is an important means of constructing virtue, referring to a woman’s “virtue” or “modesty” always refers to her sense of shame.

Though she focuses on the rise of the domestic, middle-class wife in the novel, Nancy Armstrong’s argument that the conduct manual establishes a female figure which

¹¹ Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (London, 1756). ECCO.

“awaited the substance that the novel and its readers, as well as the countless individuals educated according to the model of the new woman, would eventually provide” is relevant here. These manuals, she writes, rethink “at the most basic level the dominant (aristocratic) rules for sexual exchange. Because they appeared to have no political bias, these rules took on the power of natural law, and as a result, they presented—in actuality, still present—readers with an ideology in its most powerful form.”¹² In *Pamela*, Richardson assumes that shame, modesty, and female sexuality are a naturalized part of feminine sensibilities. Richardson’s Pamela is always instinctively virtuous.¹³ In its literal sense, shame is confined to internal experience as part of an internalized ideology. In conduct manuals, however, shame becomes an attractive and sexually desirable innate characteristic in women. It is both passive and active—simultaneously controlling feminine action and, potentially, male (mis)behavior, as well as creating a means of attracting the opposite sex. The conduct manual eroticization of shame naturalizes the sexually desirable but desire-less virtuous woman who Richardson elevates to the status of paragon.

In presenting Pamela as a paragon of female virtue, Richardson enforces the distinctions between virtue, shame, and modesty, but constructions of female morality are much more complicated, incapable of being neatly divided into the virtuous, the shamed, the modest, and chaste. Our awareness of virtue relies on our common knowledge of what shame is and what it reveals. The *OED* defines shame as “the painful emotion

¹² *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*, (Oxford U. Press, 1987), 60.

¹³ Rarely is Pamela’s behavior corrected. Early in the novel, however, she is admonished by her parents for accepting gifts from Mr. B for fear that she might “reward him with that jewel, your virtue, which no riches, nor favour, nor any thing in this life, can make up to you” (46). Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*, (London: Penguin, 1980).

arising from the consciousness of something dishonouring, ridiculous, or indecorous in one's own conduct or circumstances . . . or of being in a situation which offends one's sense of modesty or decency,” and specifically for women, as the “violation of a woman's honour, loss of chastity.” This definition leaves out any explicit indication of physical indications of shame. That it is defined as a “painful emotion” seems to imbue it with natural characteristics. Shame, in this light, is an internalized sensation which, though not visible, limits a subject’s behavior. However, the power of shame is not in its naturalized characteristics but in its insidious presence in what Norbert Elias would call civilized life as a public control for one’s private thoughts and behaviors. In *The Civilizing Process*, Elias declares shame as an emotion “which is automatically reproduced. . . by force of habit.” One does not naturally feel shame. Instead, in circumstances that would require a modest appearance, one performs, unconsciously, shame. This automatic performance implies the individual’s internalization of social rules which moderate behavior based on a “fear of social degradation or . . . other people’s gestures of superiority.”¹⁴ Shame forces an individual to “[recognize] himself as inferior.”¹⁵ Kathryn Shevelow employs a similar definition in the context of eighteenth-century English culture, adding that shame “is attached to that which cannot be expressed publicly.”¹⁶ For both Elias and Shevelow, a fine but clear delineation exists between the private experience of shame and its public ramifications. Shame is not simply experienced as a *result* of transgressive behavior but

¹⁴ *The Civilizing Process: State Formation and Civilization*, trans. Edmund Jephcott with some notes and revisions by the author. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), 292.

¹⁵ Elias, 292-3.

¹⁶ *Women and Print Culture: The Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical* (New York: Routledge, 1989). Shevelow cites David Bakan who argues that shame “plays a critical role in keeping public and private separate. It is precisely by means of the mechanism of shame that the distinction between public and private is maintained” (72).

is also a mechanism in place to keep private desires private. One's sense of shame (an awareness of what is socially/publically unacceptable) *keeps one from* exhibiting transgressive public behavior. Shame, therefore, becomes an internal motivator for one to act in a prescribed manner, to be the "good girl."

For the eighteenth-century conduct manual, modesty and shame are often interchangeable: one cannot possess a sense of modesty without an awareness of the threat of shame.¹⁷ Both *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* define modesty in such a way that emphasizes its relationship to the fear of public shame: "Modesty, therefore in a woman, has a certain agreeable fear in all she enters upon" and "is a kind of quick and delicate *feeling* in the soul, which makes her shrink and withdraw herself from every thing that has danger in it."¹⁸ Bernard Mandeville also connects shame to the fear of public judgment, but he also highlights the necessity of innocence and virtue in the experience of shame: when "obscene words are spoken in the presence of an unexperienc'd virgin," her fear that someone will suspect that she is less than innocent, will "bring upon her that Passion which we call Shame."¹⁹

¹⁷ In *Fictions of Modesty: Women and Courtship in the English Novel* (Chicago U. Press, 1984), Ruth Bernard Yeazell, similarly, acknowledges the relationship between modesty, specifically the blush, and public (not private) shame in Bernard Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees*: "Mandeville's subsequent acknowledgment that a young woman might blush in private would have been far from consoling [to the authors of conduct books who insisted on a woman's modest response to inappropriate social situations], since he continued to insist that her blushes would only signify her fear of exposure: . . . [the 'modest woman' blushes because] 'she'll be ashamed . . . tho' nobody sees her; because she has room to fear, that she is, or if all was known, should be thought of Contemptibly'" (71). For Mandeville, the blush is not a sincere display of a woman's modesty but of her fear that she will be publicly shamed.

¹⁸ *The Tatler* No 52 (August 9, 1709) and *The Spectator* No 231 (November 24, 1711).

¹⁹ *The Fable of the Bees*, (London, 1714), 52.

Where the periodicals and Mandeville emphasize fear and public consequences, Richard Allestree, in *The Ladies Calling*, defines the “Virtue of Modesty” more along the lines of Elias’s sense of shame, hinting at the ability of shame to create a sense of inferiority in the individual: “it being that which guides and regulates the whole Behaviour, checks and contrrolls all rude exorbitances, and is the great Civilizer of Conversation. It is indeed a Virtue of general influence, do’s not only ballast the mind with sober and humble thought of ones self, but also steers every part of the outward frame.”²⁰ Allestree emphasizes both the ability of internalized shame to control external behavior and to create a humbled sense of self. It civilizes “conversation” by making the subject enforce her society’s perception of what constitutes appropriate gendered behavior. In all these instances, though, whether these writers advocate or criticize the cultivation and internalization of modesty, shame and modesty are always attendant on each other.

The internalization of modesty further collapses the public and private divide because modesty, rather paradoxically, becomes an external physical attribute which is often highly eroticized and focused on the promise of male pleasure.²¹ *The Tatler* claims “that there is nothing in woman so graceful and becoming as modesty. It adds charms to their beauty, and gives a new softness to their sex . . . [and] is so necessary a qualification for pleasing, that the loose part of womankind, whose study it is to ensnare men’s hearts,

²⁰ *The ladies calling in two parts*. (Oxford, 1720), 5.

²¹ Yeazell argues that part of the appeal of a woman’s modesty is the man’s anticipation (46). She writes, “A proper reserve, the conduct books never tired of repeating, makes a woman more, not less, desirable. . . . they [authors of conduct books] were fond of pointing out that men desire most what is hardest to get—and that holding herself prudently in reserve, therefore, would only increase a woman’s value” (44).

never fail to support the appearance of what they know is so essential to that end.”²²

Allestree describes modesty’s physical manifestations as “calm and meek looks [in the face], where it so impresses it self, that it seems thence to have acquir’d the name of Shamefac’dness. Certainly, there is nothing gives a greater luster to a Feminine Beauty: so that St. *Paul* seems not ill to have consulted their Concerns in that Point, when he substituted that as a suppletory Ornament to *the deckings of Gold and Pearl and costly Array, I Tim. 2.9.*”²³ In collapsing the distinction between the internal emotional sensibilities and the external physical appearance of a woman, Allestree eroticizes a woman who possesses an appropriate shame or modesty. She becomes more physically beautiful and potentially more sexually gratifying for her future husband. By equating feminine shame with feminine beauty, Allestree begins to naturalize the notion of the sexually desirable (but desire-less) virtuous woman on which Richardson’s *Pamela* depends.²⁴

Doctor John Gregory’s 1774 *A Father’s Legacy to His Daughters* identifies modesty as a woman’s most alluring quality, one which draws attention to her sexual appeal: “One of the chief beauties in a female character is that modest reserve, that retiring delicacy, which avoids the public eye, and is disconcerted even at the gaze of admiration.”²⁵ The ability of modesty to preserve a woman from public visibility (Elias’ social degradation) and to produce unease at “gaze[s] of admiration” ironically emphasizes the woman’s ability to display publicly her modesty:

²² No 84, Saturday, October 22, 1709

²³ Allestree, 6.

²⁴ Allestree advocates, as Yeazell calls it, a “mental virginity” (52). Not all conduct manuals insisted upon this kind of mental innocence. See Yeazell, 51-53.

²⁵ John Gregory, *A Father’s Legacy to His Daughters*, 6th ed. (Dublin, 1774), 13.

When a girl ceases to blush, she has lost the most powerful charm of beauty. That extreme sensibility which it indicates, may be a weakness and incumbrance in our sex, as I have too often felt; but in yours it is peculiarly engaging. Pedants, who think themselves philosophers, ask why a woman should blush when she is conscious of no crime. It is sufficient answer, that Nature has made you to blush when you are guilty of no fault, and has forced us to love you because you do so.—Blushing is so far from being necessarily an attendant on guilt, that it is the usual companion of innocence.²⁶

The blush, then, becomes an external marker of internal purity. In courtship, according to Yeazell, the blush is a critical means of enticing the opposite sex because it is a genuine expression “not subject to her will and ..., therefore, be affected” evidence that a woman is “innocent of pretense or manipulation.”²⁷ Pamela’s blushing serves a means of sexually attracting a potential husband without her overtly desiring sex herself, all the while presenting physical proof of her virtue.

As contemporary conduct manuals would have it, it is in woman’s nature to be modest. Failing to possess modesty constitutes an aberration of femininity: “the total abandoning [of] it ranks them among Brutes [...] an Impudent Woman is lookt on as a kind of Monster.”²⁸ Richardson’s assumes Pamela’s virtue is a natural condition of her femininity, as well.²⁹ Possessing that virtue secures her reputation: “Fame is one of the

²⁶ Gregory, 13.

²⁷ Yeazell, 73.

²⁸ Richard Allestree, *The Ladies Calling*, (Oxford, 1720), 15, 16.

²⁹ I discuss the naturalization of virtue in Richardson, Fielding, and Haywood in chapter 3.

natural rewards of virtue.”³⁰ With a solid reputation, she becomes the ideal wife: “A woman of virtue, of good understanding, of family, skilled in, and delighting to perform the duties of, the domestic life, needs not fortune to recommend her to the choice of the greatest and richest man, who wishes his own happiness.”³¹ And while virtue serves as proof of a woman’s sexual innocence, it also simultaneously creates a sexual object out of her, fetishizing her virtue.³² A woman with a virtuous reputation need not feel the stings of shame, and a woman who lacks a proper sense of virtue is scorned.

While male-authored conduct manuals allow us an understanding of how the virtuous woman and her manifestations of shame are fetishized, they limit our understanding of shame in their overdetermination of shame as feminine, overshadowing shame with constructions of virtue and modesty. In order to understand shame as *construct* of virtue, as opposed to a product of the loss of virtue, shame must be historicized not in philosophical terms but in the gender specific terms of the conduct manual. In her poem “The Golden Age,” Behn criticizes moral and political ideology as responsible for the invention of shame and the repression of desire. The poem celebrates a prelapsarian world in which desires are unchecked by custom: “Monarchs were uncreated then,/Those Arbitrary Rulers over men/[...] Till then Ambition was not known,/That Poyson to Content, Bane to Repose;/Each Swain was Lord o’er his own will alone,/His Innocence Religion was, and Laws” (ll 51-52, 55-58).³³ In Behn’s “The Golden Age,” mankind’s natural state is autonomous, subject to no arbitrary law, only his

³⁰ John Greogry, *A Father’s Legacy to his Daughters* (London, 1774), 9.

³¹ Richardson, *A Collection of Moral Sentiments*, 288.

³² Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Fictions of Modesty: Women and Courtship in the English Novel* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991).

³³ Aphra Behn, “The Golden Age,” *Poems upon Several Occasions* (London, 1697). All subsequent references are from this edition and cited parenthetically.

desire. That desire, though, is not envisioned as a Hobbesian form of desire, self-interested and vicious, with every man out for himself. Instead, Behn criticizes masculine self-interest: “Right and Property were words since made,/When Power taught Mankind to invade:/When Pride and Avarice became a Trade;/Carri’d on by discord, noise and wars,/For which they barter’d wounds and scars;/And to Inhaunce the Merchandize, miscall’d it Fame” (ll 65-70). Desire, in Behn’s Golden Age, is a natural characteristic; however, when desire is overshadowed by political (masculine) self-interest, man’s natural state becomes corrupt, resulting in the repression of desire.³⁴

Behn imagines a “Blest Age! When ev’ry Purling Stream/Ran undisubt’d and clear” where “no Winds blew fierce and loud/The Skie was dark’ned with no sullen Cloud” (ll 1-2, 17). The poem depicts the state of mankind before the advent of (masculine) government, portraying a decidedly feminine utopia with an astonishing lack of violence: “The stubborn Plough had then,/Made no rude Rapes upon the Virgin Earth;/Who yielded of her own accord her plentious Birth,/Without the Aids of men” (ll 31-34). Behn figures violence as sexual assault, and the absence of that sexual violence simultaneously disempowers male sexuality while sexualizing the Golden Age: “Beneath who’s [sic] boughs the Snakes securely dwelt,/Not doing harm, nor harm from others felt;/With whom the Nymphs did Innocently play,/No spiteful Venom in the wantons lay;/But to the touch were Soft, and to the sight were Gay” (ll 44-48). Though Behn

³⁴ Behn’s vision of the fall demonizes the “Hobbesian political realm.” See Robert Markley and Molly Rothenberg, “Contestations of Nature: Aphra Behn’s ‘The Golden Age’ and the Sexualizing of Politics,” *Rereading Aphra Behn: History, Theory, and Criticism*, ed. Heidi Hutner (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1993), 301-321.

disempowers male sexuality, she maintains its erotic possibilities. Sexuality (both male and female) poses no danger and no repercussions.³⁵

Rather than subject one's desire to ideological controls (what Behn calls "custom"), one followed the laws of pleasure: "Than it was glory to pursue delight,/And that was lawful all, that Pleasure did invite" (line 81). Establishing custom, however, "set the World at Odds" (line 54) and, after the fall of the Golden Age, desire becomes subordinated to "Honour, the Error and the Cheat/Of the Ill-natur'd Bus'ey Great,/Nonsense, invented by the Proud" (ll 74-76). Honor becomes the great enemy of desire, demarcating a distinct period before custom in which "The Nymphs were free, [and] no nice, no coy disdain,/Deny'd their Joyes, or gave the Lover Pain" (ll 97-98). When maids tremble and blush, they do so because of their desire, "not [as] marks of shame" (line 100). Female desire is not only real; it is accepted and celebrated.

By validating and celebrating female sexual desire, Behn portrays the invention of honor, a social control that the conduct manual would have us believe is a natural characteristic of femininity, as unnatural and sinful: "Oh cursed Honor! thou who first didst damn,/A woman to the sin of shame" (ll 117-118). Behn rejects the masculinist version of original sin (Eve's disobedience of God's commands) and identifies ideology as original sin. Before honor, the nymphs "innocently played" with the dephallicized serpent and lacked coquettish behavior. Honor, however, "taught lovely Eyes the art,/To wound, and not to cure the heart:/[...]To Veil 'em from the Lookers on,/When they are

³⁵ Markley and Rothenberg note that Behn's disempowerment of male sexuality relies on the creative management of Biblical narrative: "the innocence of the nymphs and snakes defines itself in opposition to a phallic sexuality that is ostensibly a consequence of the fall from the Golden Age but in these lines *already* is inscribed in the series of negations [...] used to mark their 'play' (307).

sure the slave's undone" (ll 122-123, 126-127). While Behn does not excuse coquettish, manipulative constructions of female sexuality, "The Golden Age" poses those constructions as the result of an honor that oppresses, suffocates, and controls: "Honour! that hindered mankind first" (line 120) and "gathers up the flowing Hair,/That loosely plaid with wanton Air./The Envious Net, and stinted order hold,/The lovely Curls of Jet and shining Gold" (ll 130-133). It is honor, not desire, that creates sin: "Thou base Debaucher of the generous heart,/That teachest all our Looks and Actions Art" (ll 140-141). Honor demands that desire be denied, but "The Golden Age" understands desire as a "sacred Gift" that "should be confest" (lines 142, 145). From Behn's perspective, it is Honor, not desire, that produces shame.

Where Behn understands honor and shame as a part of a circularity of interior and exterior repressive structures and as a mechanism of self-policing, Astell, in *A Serious Proposal* (1696), defines shame as a fixation on one's beauty, a vacuousness created by custom's emphasis on superficiality: "For shame let's abandon that *Old*, and therefore one wou'd think, unfashionable employment of pursuing Butter flies and Trifles. No longer drudge on in the dull beaten road of Vanity and Folly which so many have gone before us, but dare to break the enchanted Circle that custom has plac'd us in."³⁶ Custom demands that woman preoccupy themselves with "what Colours are most agreeable, or what's the Dress becomes you best" rather than with improving their intellect and spirituality.³⁷ Ultimately, patriarchal expectations produce the eighteenth-century equivalent of Paris Hilton, a woman concerned with consumption as opposed to devotion.

³⁶ Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, ed. Patricia Springboard (Peterborough, ONT: Broadview P, 2002), 55.

³⁷ Astell, 52.

Astell criticizes the figure of the coquette (or, as Richard Steele defines her, “a chaste Jilt”³⁸) who hoards the very commodity she is expected “spend”: her body. Rather than encouraging the coquette to preserve her body, though, Astell denigrates the body in favor of improving the soul. Astell finds this hoarding and decorating of the body shameful as women age: “do not neglect that particle of Divinity within you, which must survive, and may (if you please) be happy and perfect, when it’s unsuitable and much inferior Companion is mouldering into Dust.”³⁹ Unlike male-authored texts, however, Astell sees herself not “expos[ing] but rectify[ing]” women’s shortcomings: “I love you too well to endure a spot upon your Beauties, if I can by means remove and wipe it off.”⁴⁰ Astell’s desire to rectify the shame of women’s social position illustrates an important difference between women’s writing and the conduct book tradition. While the conduct book tradition calls attention to women’s (sexual) shame in an attempt to eradicate desire, it simultaneously reinscribes sexual shame as a mark of virtue which should produce desire. Women’s writing, on the other hand, deconstructs the feedback loop of virtue and shame that masculinist tradition creates. This deconstruction, though, results in a variety of strategies for operating in a masculinist world obsessed with women’s sexuality.

Trying to reconstruct the definition of shame poses a “chicken or the egg” problem. For Behn, there is no such thing as shame if there is no such thing as honor. Only when man invents honor does shame exist, and yet, as will I argue in the subsequent chapters, a woman cannot understand honor and virtue until she has experienced shame. In the introduction to *Conjugal Lewdness* (1727), Daniel Defoe follows a similar pattern

³⁸ Richard Steele, *The Tatler* no. 107, *The Commerce of Everyday Life: Selections from the Tatler and The Spectator*, ed. Erin Mackie (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1998), 476.

³⁹ Astell, 53.

⁴⁰ Astell, 56.

of thought, presenting shame as something that is learned: “Modesty is no natural virtue; what the Latins call’d Pudor or Shamefacedness, is the Effect of a Crime.” Before their Fall, Adam and Eve “went naked, and blush’d not, and ‘tis most significantly express’d, they knew not that they were naked” and, therefore, were unashamed by their nakedness.⁴¹ Modesty and shame are the result of custom: “the untaught Savages [...] where Nakedness is no Offence on one side [...] but Custom being the Judge of Decency to them, takes away all Sense of Indecency in going uncovered.” When custom and decency collide, “a Sense of Shame comes in, with as much Force as if all the Laws of God and Man were broken at once.”⁴² Though Defoe deploys modesty, shame, and innocence in an explicitly Christian context, he recognizes, like Behn, that specific dictates of morality are the result of cultural practices. Twenty-five years earlier, in *Essays Upon Projects*, Defoe claimed that “Custom with Women ‘stead of Virtue rules” and “Only by Custom ‘tis Virtue lives.”⁴³ For Defoe, shame, not virtue, is the result of custom. Only in the experience of shame can custom be sustained, and it is shame that lays the foundation for virtue.

For my purposes, then, eighteenth-century femininity depends on the relationship *between* virtue and shame and not on a woman’s ability to display her “characteristic” virtue. A woman’s virtue is not self-evident. Women must constantly perform acts of shame and modesty to illustrate their virtue, most commonly in the form of the blush.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Daniel Defoe, *Conjugal Lewdness, or Matrimonial Whoredom* (London, 1727), 1.

⁴² *Conjugal Lewdness*, 2.

⁴³ Defoe, *Essays Upon Projects: or, effectual ways for advancing the interest of the nation* (London, 1702), 289.

⁴⁴ While Richardson intends Pamela’s blushes to reveal a genuine virtuousness, the blush is often an instable sign of a woman’s virtue. In Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing*, Claudio reads Hero’s blush not as “exterior shewes” of her “simple Vertue” but as

While virtuous performances are essential to survival, which I will discuss in detail in chapter 4, that ability relies on a woman's willingness to accept and perform shame as a component of her virtue. The insistence on performativity makes the position of the eighteenth-century woman particularly precarious.⁴⁵ In order to perform virtue successfully, a woman must be capable of performing shame and that cannot be done until a woman has "lost" her virtue or has, at least, has experienced her virtue in danger. A woman who has not experienced and come to terms with shame cannot be considered virtuous. To be virtuous, one's virtue must be tested, and the eighteenth-century woman cannot fully be virtuous until she understands the limitations of that virtue: those limitations cannot be known until she has crossed the boundaries of what is acceptable. Knowing where those boundaries are between what is virtuous and what is shameful allows women to display their virtue by successfully performing the signs of shame and modesty. The defining feature of women's fiction in this study is the woman writer's (and her heroines') struggle with the naturalization of virtue and virtuous performance.

evidence that "She knowes the heate of a luxurious bed;/Her blush is guiltinesse, not modestie" (IV.i.37, 35, 38-39).

⁴⁵ While my study is partially considered with external manifestations of woman's internal virtue and shame, the body, though essential for maintaining the ideological expectations of female virtue, is not my primary focus. Gail Kern Paster, in *The Body Embarrassed*, analyzes manifestations of embarrassment in the early modern humoral body, particularly on stage. Paster argues in favor of a "connection between the history of the outer body—physical *and* social, the body visible in different ways to self and other—and that of the inner body, the physical and social body perceived, experienced, imagined from within" (3). Paster's study, though, focuses on the shame of the physical products of the body (particularly bladder incontinence and lactation for the female body). While I plan to expand this project by reconstructing a more comprehensive history of physical shame and embarrassment in the female body, my primary concern is understanding the ways in which the eighteenth-century female subject manipulates conventional understandings of female morality in her body (both internally and externally) rather than the ways in which they are mapped onto her body.

This tension between the naturalization of virtue in conduct manuals and Richardson's *Pamela*, on the one hand, and the insistence on performativity in amatory fiction, on the other, becomes the defining feature of eighteenth-century female subjectivity.⁴⁶ My use of "subjectivity" refers specifically to women's sexuality and desire. Most commonly, "subjectivity" is short-hand for the modern contractual subject, an identity available to men.⁴⁷ In using "subjectivity," I refer not to the masculine privilege to agree to or to reject certain terms of subjection but to the tensions inherent in feminine identity.⁴⁸ These tensions are evident throughout the literature of the period, not only in conduct manual's insistence on inculcating virtue in women by insisting on it as a natural component of femininity but also in the woman writer's struggle to constantly

⁴⁶ Nancy Armstrong claims that "the modern individual was first and foremost a woman" (8). See *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*, (New York: Oxford UP, 1987). Armstrong, however, focuses on the domestic novel, a decidedly post-Richardsonian product which would exclude the women of amatory fiction. She does, however, acknowledge that "the history of the novel cannot be understood apart from the history of sexuality" (9).

⁴⁷ For Locke, men are "by Nature, all free, equal and independent" and subject to authority "by agreeing with other Men to join and unite into a Community" (330-331). *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988). Similarly, women agree to the "voluntary Compact" in marriage (319). They are, however, subject to their husbands. In tracing this to Eve's punishment, Locke finds it "the Womans Lot [...] that she should be subject to her husband, as we see that generally the Laws of Mankind and customs of Nations have ordered it so; and there is, I grant, a Foundation in Nature for it" (174). Helen Thompson uses Locke's theory of the modern contractual subject to argue that women's desire is reflected in their "free or ingenuous practice of compliance." As men consent freely to governance because they desire to do so, women, according to Thompson, "cannot freely or ingenuously obey power that does not solicit [their] desire" (9). *Ingenuous Subjection* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2005).

⁴⁸ See Dror Wahrman's *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England*, (New Haven: Yale UP, 2004). Wahrman uses the term *ancein régime* to refer to the limitations inherent in the conception of eighteenth-century gender identity: "the various reminders of these limitations of gender categories reinforced each other, forming together that soundbox in which any contemporary plucking of the violin strings of gender determinancy would have resonated" (40).

negotiate the tensions between internalizing or rejecting virtue, modesty, and shame. Desire has been a central term for understanding the relationship between the history of the novel and women's writing and how well it is repressed is often used as criteria for designating prose fiction as "novel."⁴⁹ While many studies of the novel expose the active *repression* and *redirection* of female subjectivity, this study focuses on reconstructing the *process* of that repression.

II. "Overwriting" Amatory, or The Critical (Mis)fortunes of Amatory Fiction

Just as the development of early prose fiction into "the novel" is a history of repression, so is the critical history of amatory fiction in novel studies. The history of the novel is a hotly debated one and critical studies reflect the myriad cultural tensions in categorizing a work of prose fiction as "novel." While modern readers often delight in listing the novels they have read, "novel" is a historically loaded term. No history of the history of the novel would be complete without beginning with Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel*, in which Watt argues that "The Novel" makes use of "formal realism,"

the narrative embodiment of a premise that Defoe and Richardson accepted very literally, but which is implicit in the novel form in general: the premise, or primary convention, that the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience, and is therefore under an obligation to satisfy its reader with such details of the story as the individuality of the actors are concerned, the particulars of the times and places of their actions,

⁴⁹ Building on the Foucauldian premise that repression breeds desire, Armstrong notes "writing actively conceals the history of sexuality by turning repression into a narrative form" (13).

details which are presented through a more largely referential use of language than is common in other literary forms.⁵⁰

Watt's reliance on realism as a distinguishing feature was not new,⁵¹ but his study set the tone for novel studies in the twentieth-century and, until the latter decades of the twentieth century, effectively shut out amatory fiction from the history of the novel. Numerous critics have since taken on Watt's "rise" and his insistence on, among other characteristics, the truth of individual experience and the psychological interiority of the novel's characters, all seemingly fulfilled by male writers and most completely by Richardson.

Exactly why amatory fiction is shut out of the novel's history has been a major component of the feminist recovery of the genre and reexamination of criticism has offered numerous explanations. Ros Ballaster faults both formalist and historicist accounts of the novel for their insistence on teleological narratives, always moving forward toward the established novel forms embodied by Richardson's fiction.⁵² Toni Bowers cites critics' tendency to disparage the quality of amatory fiction in addition to the genre's lack of conventional realism, an emphasis on women's sexuality, and its thematic repetitions.⁵³ Paula Backscheider and John Richetti attribute it to amatory

⁵⁰ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Richardson, Defoe, and Fielding* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1957), 32.

⁵¹ William Warner notes that "In the nearly three hundred years of novel criticism in English since Congreve, one question—'Is it realistic?'—has served as the most generally accepted criterion of value" (35). Warner, *Licensing Entertainment* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1998).

⁵² Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992).

⁵³ Toni Bowers, "Sex, Lies, and Invisibility: Amatory Fiction from the Restoration to Mid-Century," *The Columbia History of the British Novel*, ed. John J. Richetti (New York: Columbia UP, 1994). 50-71.

fiction's status as "precursor of modern mass market or popular fiction, highly readable and in effect disposable entertainment."⁵⁴ Attempts to legitimize its recovery and incorporation into the larger history of the novel trace both the novel, generally, and amatory fiction, more specifically, to French heroic forms and even classical forms.⁵⁵

Certainly, amatory fiction's critical reputation reflects its historical treatment. After Samuel Richardson's moralizing fiction of the 1740s was published, amatory fiction began to recede into the shadow of the "moral" novel. With the publication of *Pamela* in 1741 and *Clarissa* in 1748, the subject of fiction shifted.⁵⁶ Amatory fiction had been a genre that privileged women's fantasy and, as Catherine Ingrassia notes, "offered women discursive representations that challenged the dominant construction of gender and depicted women acting in empowering and at times transgressive ways".⁵⁷ Moralizing fiction, on the other hand, encouraged a literary culture that, conversely, reaffirmed the dominant constructions of femininity and became the foundation for the domestic novel of the early nineteenth century, reinforcing the notion of the de-eroticized angel in the house. Canonical fiction following Richardson became fixated on courtship and marriage rather than the sexual intrigue plots of Behn and Haywood. Following suit,

⁵⁴ Paula R. Backscheider and John J. Richetti, *Popular Fiction by Women, 1660-1730* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), xi.

⁵⁵ Ballaster, *Seductive Forms*; Richetti, *The Novel in English History* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Thomas DiPiero, *Dangerous Truths and Criminal Passions: The Evolution of the French Novel, 1569-1791* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1992); McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*; Margaret Anne Doody, *The True Story of the Novel* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1996).

⁵⁶ Bradford Mudge calls *Pamela* a "moral romance novel in which good triumphs over evil and all conflicts disappear into the happily-ever-after of the marriage ceremony. [...] The new romance novel takes as its aim the construction of the perfect, normal, British marriage, predicated on an ideal femininity." *The Whore's Story*, 187.

⁵⁷ *Authorship, Commerce, and Gender in Early Eighteenth Century England*, (Cambridge UP: Cambridge, 1998), 13.

literary criticism, until very recently, considered amatory fiction as immoral, trivial, or insignificant.

Though critics such as John Richetti, Michael McKeon, and William Warner have sought to incorporate amatory fiction into a coherent history of eighteenth-century fiction, they ultimately subordinate Behn and Haywood to canonical standards of moral “realism.” Richetti calls the “hysterical romance fiction of Mrs. Manley, Mrs. Haywood, and other lady novelists ... unreadable.”⁵⁸ Though he admits to “a condescension in [his] attitude to early fiction,” he still refuses to see it with “the complexity, density, and authorial singularity of particular novels by Defoe, Fielding, or Richardson.”⁵⁹ Not only is it unreadable, it is unredeemable “morally or aesthetically.”⁶⁰ In *The Origins of the English Novel*, McKeon analyzes various shifts in the period leading up to Fielding and Richardson’s “great debate” over *Pamela* but McKeon’s conclusion focuses on this “climactic” moment, implying that all of the history that he has given us to this point is simply a mechanism to continue justifying the elevation of these ‘great male writers.’ McKeon’s argument about ‘truth’ and virtue,’ then, in the novel amounts to an exploration of what men deem important in the question over truth and virtue. Though he identifies various social concerns such as economics, class, sexuality, capitalism as concerns in literature before the novel, the conclusion reaffirms the magical Wattian notion of a sudden explosion of the novel and its theoretical concerns.⁶¹ And though he argues against histories like McKeon’s, Hunter’s, and Richetti’s as they perpetuate the

⁵⁸ *Popular Fiction Before Richardson, Narrative Patterns: 1700-1739*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), rpt. 1992.

⁵⁹ Richetti, *Popular Fiction*, xix-xx.

⁶⁰ Richetti, *Popular Fiction*, 262.

⁶¹ McKeon, Michael. *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1987).

notion that these fictions fall egregiously short of being ‘the novel,’⁶² Warner downplays their ideological complexities.⁶³ Their novels, Warner claims, advocate sexuality without rules.⁶⁴ Warner’s phrase “novels of amorous intrigue” emphasizes not the ability of this literature to navigate social expectations of women but in its more masturbatory qualities: Novels of amorous intrigue are a “form of private entertainment that incites desire and promotes the liberation of the reader as a subject of pleasure.” They do not “anticipat[e] modern feminism” but “teach readers—men as well as women—to articulate their desire and put the self first, through reading novels in which characters do so.”⁶⁵ Ultimately, Warner’s insistence on these writers’ reliance on formula to take advantage of the market limits the ideological and aesthetic value of amatory fiction.

Conversely, feminist critics engaged in the admirable effort to recover amatory writers have more or less pitted male writers and female writers against each other rather than considering their tangled relationship. Ros Ballaster’s *Seductive Forms*, while giving the oft-maligned amatory fiction her full attention, results in establishing a dichotomized relationship between pre-Richardsonian and post-Richardsonian fiction. Jane Spenser, identifying amatory fiction as part of a women’s tradition of protest, claims that Manley and Haywood criticized the “prevailing sexual mores more effectively than the respectable early writers of feminist polemic [...] and more trenchantly, too, than the

⁶² J. Paul Hunter’s title *Before Novels*, alone, implies a distinct divide between the Richardsonian moment and prose fiction produced prior to that moment.

⁶³ William Warner, *Licensing Entertainment: The Elevation of Novel Reading in Britain, 1684-1750*, (Berkeley: U of California P, 1998).

⁶⁴ Warner claims that “the formal traits of these novels (their brevity, their subordination of all narrative interest to intricate plotting, and the shell-like emptiness of their protagonists) support their ideological content: a licentious ethical nihilism and a sustained preoccupation with sex, explicitly rendered” (93).

⁶⁵ Warner, 93.

respectable women novelists who succeeded [them] in the middle of the century” (113). However, Spenser ultimately argues that, in Haywood’s case, the only option women have is to opt out of society, a strategy Mary Astell advocates in *A Serious Proposal*. Paradoxically, arguments such as these unintentionally distract scholarship from the larger ideological critiques presented in amatory fiction and misrepresent its lasting impact on novelistic representations of the sexualized female subject.

These studies, quite dated, represent a variety of shifts in the critical landscape regarding amatory fiction: from Richetti’s dismissal, to McKeon’s Marxist inquiry, to Armstrong’s analysis of women *in* (largely) male-authored novels, to Ballaster’s and Spencer’s efforts of recovery, and to Warner’s analysis amatory fiction’s relationship to print culture. This study, however, belongs to a new critical tradition of feminist criticism, a tradition which has been revising the terms in which amatory fiction, specifically, and women’s writing, more generally, is discussed. Critics like Helen Thompson, Laura Rosenthal, and Melissa Mowry have applied a variety of discourses, often thought of as more masculine, to the study of women’s writing: Cartesian philosophy and domesticity; the development of modern capitalism, modern subjectivity, and the female prostitute; and eighteenth-century political ideology and pornographic representations of “the common woman.” Similarly, this study applies the conditions of masculinist expectations for female morality to women’s writing analyzes the ways in which Behn, Haywood, and Lennox deconstruct the assumptions about virtuous women.

III. Women’s Reading and Constructing Feminine Ideals

The act of reading for women, by mid-eighteenth century, was firmly established as dangerous and novel-reading women were thought to be susceptible to seduction.⁶⁶ Of the novel-reading young woman, Scribble, in George Colman's satirical 1762 *Polly Honeycombe*, says, "Miss reads—she melts—she sighs—Love steals upon her—/And then—Alas, poor Girl!—good night, poor Honour!"⁶⁷ When D'Elmont catches Melliora reading Ovid in Haywood's *Love in Excess*, he chastises her for "contradict[ing her] former argument [...] that these sort of books were [...] preparatives to Love" that "melted the soul, and made it fit for amorous impressions."⁶⁸ Because "the young, the ignorant, and the idle" read books "as lectures of conduct, and introductions into life," Johnson argues that "the best examples only should be exhibited."⁶⁹ While Richardson offered *Pamela* as a proper moral influence to replace the salacious novels of women writers like Behn and Haywood,⁷⁰ the conduct guides of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries devoted themselves to instructing women in proper behavior with

⁶⁶ Novels were held responsible for a number of social and moral ills, including nymphomania, prostitution, and masturbation. See G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992), especially 326-330. Whether or not women really were engaged in such voracious reading is questionable. Despite the number of prefaces dedicated to women in romances, the number of satires of romance reading, and moral proclamations against women reading romances, Helen Hackett argues that "ideas of a large Elizabethan female readership for romance are exaggerated," particularly because the evidence used to establish the presence of a large female readership is, itself, literature. Helen Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 9.

⁶⁷ George Colman, *Polly Honeycombe, a dramattick novel of one act*. (London, 1762), xiii. ECCO.

⁶⁸ Eliza Haywood, *Love in Excess; or, the Fatal Enquiry*, ed. David Oakleaf (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2000), 108.

⁶⁹ Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler, Volume the First* (London, 1752), 29, 31. ECCO.

⁷⁰ See Warner, *Licensing Entertainment*.

modesty at its core. Ruth Bernard Yeazell's *Fictions of Modesty* traces the relationships between narratives of modesty in conduct manuals with the narrative focus of the novel:

[M]odesty is a tempering of behavior that allows individuals to meet and come to terms with one another, whether for marriage or other purposes; and in this sense what we think of as a virtue can perhaps only be understood as a story. By adopting the modest women as a subject for narrative, the novelists were able to represent modesty not as a set of rules but as a series of changing responses—not as a fixed condition but as a passage in time. Both in the forward movement of the plot and in the persons who surround a heroine, novels could accommodate the aggressive energies and desires that her modesty might superficially appear to deny. Though novels shared with other kinds of writing the impulse to moralize the subject, at least some novelists were also capable of approaching its contradictions in a spirit of comedy or satire.⁷¹

I quote extensively to draw attention to several key components of Yeazell's argument relevant to this study. First, virtue is to be understood as a story, although that story begins long before the novels that Yeazell focuses on in her study. Not surprisingly, Yeazell begins her study of fiction with Richardson's *Pamela*, a reasonable starting point, with given her assertion that constructions of modesty circulated around courtship and marriage. However, and this is the second key feature to which I would draw attention, if virtue is a story, shame must be part of that narrative and part of the "series of changing responses" provided by the story's development. By focusing on conduct manuals,

⁷¹ Yeazell, ix.

amatory fiction, and the birth of the moral novel, this dissertation reconstructs that narrative to consider the influence of amatory fiction's management of shame on constructions of female virtue. While the women writers Yeazell analyzes are considered "critics and theorists of modesty," I would argue that those criticisms and theories are the result of a tug of war in the discourse of female morality that leads to the Richardsonian moment and begins with the exchange between amatory fiction and the conduct manual.

Of course, this focus on amatory fiction, the conduct manual, and anxieties over women's reading implies that a major concern for my argument is the real readership of these texts. Critics have often assumed that women were the primary audience of amatory fiction and that the act of reading amounted to an act of seduction.⁷² Bradford Mudge claims, "The feminization of the novel thus establishes a series of analogous relationships: Novels (and their writers and readers) are to literature (and their writers and readers) what Eve was to Adam and what all women are to men."⁷³ Based on the number of women writers of "scandalous memoirs," Richetti concludes "it is certainly likely that their most eager readers were largely women as well."⁷⁴ Though he concedes that literacy figures are "uncertain," Hunter believes that "we can be sure—as novelists were

⁷² Concerns over women's "recreational reading" were not new to the eighteenth-century and Richardson's desire not only to "Divert and Entertain" but also to "Instruct, and Improve the Minds of the Youth of both Sexes" (Preface to *Pamela*). Fears over what women might read abounded in sixteenth and seventeenth century, as well. See Suzanne W. Hull, *Chaste, Silent, and Obedient: English Books for Women, 1475-1640*, (San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 1982).

⁷³ *The Whore's Story: Women, Pornography, and the British Novel, 1684-1830*, (New York: Oxford UP, 2000), 69.

⁷⁴ John J. Richetti, *Popular Fiction Before Richardson: Narrative Patterns: 1700-1739* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 125-126.

themselves—that large numbers of female readers were ready for them.”⁷⁵ Recently, Jan Fergus has criticized arguments that readers were overwhelmingly female because evidence for such readership “is largely anecdotal or circular.”⁷⁶ Fergus, like Margaret Doody, emphasizes the criticisms against female reading advanced by proponents of moralizing fiction as a means of neutralizing the threat the novel posed.⁷⁷ For my purposes, I am less concerned about the true identity of factual readers and instead focus on the ideal female reader—a convenient fiction that writers deploy in a variety of complex ways. It is this figure who compels novelistic discourse and around whom ideals of femininity are constructed.⁷⁸

By emphasizing the ideal female reader, I do not aim to reconstruct “her” identity. Instead, I use this eighteenth-century obsession to turn my focus to literary constructions of femininity to understand the agency denied or offered women. Vivien Jones’s *Women in the Eighteenth Century* identifies “‘women’ as a culturally defined category which women had to negotiate and to suffer.”⁷⁹ The writers I have selected for this dissertation

⁷⁵ J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New York: Norton, 1990), 73.

⁷⁶ Jan Fergus, *Provincial Readers in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006), 12.

⁷⁷ Fergus, 12. See also Margaret Doody, *The True Story of the English Novel* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1996).

⁷⁸ Helene Moglen argues that the novel developed as a consequence of “the sex-gender system that emerged in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries” and that the burgeoning form “sought to manage the strains and contradictions that the sex-gender system imposed on individual subjectivities” (1). *The Trauma of Gender: A Feminist Theory of the English Novel* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2001). Moglen’s study focuses on the fantastic (to refer to both romance and Gothic) and the realistic and “stories about men and women that have been conceptualized by men” (14). I argue, though, that masculinist conceptions of femininity must be recontextualized in relation to the ways in which women writers understand, test, and revise these constructions.

⁷⁹ Vivien Jones, ed. *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity* (London, Routledge 1990), 6.

are themselves concerned with discovering the limitations of femininity: what they can negotiate in order to survive and what they must suffer with or through. Novelistic discourse, then, begins constructing ideals of femininity and makes available to women two types of “women” with which they can identify: good girl or the bad girl. Richardson’s *Clarissa* clearly divides the two for readers with Clarissa embodying the good, Mrs. Sinclair and her whores the bad.⁸⁰ This bifurcation of femininity seemingly implies that the “good” or virtuous girl preserves her chastity and that the “bad girl” has lost hers.⁸¹ Laura Rosenthal, though, argues that Richardson defines Clarissa’s virtue by her refusal to engage in the economic institution of prostitution after her rape rather than in her actual loss of chastity.⁸² Unfortunately for Clarissa, this rejection precludes survival.⁸³ Though Rosenthal argues that Richardson maintains Clarissa’s virtue despite the loss of sexual chastity, her construction as virtuous paragon is still troubling. While Clarissa’s death signals her virtuous refusal to commodify her sexuality, it simultaneously signals the limits of that virtue: “What defines Clarissa’s tragedy,” Rosenthal argues, “is Richardson’s fundamental observation that in the eighteenth century’s emergent capitalist economy, those who refuse contracts cannot survive.

⁸⁰ Moglen very succinctly summarizes the shifting representations of female sexuality in eighteenth-century England from the Renaissance idea that it “mirrored man’s” but was “more intense” to the detachment of sexuality and maternity to its being “displaced onto the prostitute, her abnormal counterpart” (3).

⁸¹ Ballaster attributes Fielding’s criticism of *Pamela* in *Joseph Andrews and Shamela* to “the reduction of the idea of ‘virtue’ in domestic fiction to nothing more nor less than ‘chastity—a passive virtue of resistance rather than an active heroism.’” (“Women and the Rise of the Novel,” 207).

⁸² Laura J. Rosenthal, *Infamous Commerce: Prostitution in Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2006).

⁸³ As a tragedy, Rosenthal notes, “Clarissa simply cannot survive in the London commercial world without contracting some kind of debt. No one could. All the other women in the novel accept some degree of negotiated self-alienation as necessary for survival” (153).

Everyone has to alienate *something*. Clarissa's quixotic heroism consists of her refusal to do so. Alienation may threaten abjection, but resistance can be fatal."⁸⁴ In order to be truly virtuous, Clarissa must opt out of the possibilities available to her, leaving a passive and virtuous suicide as the only option available to her. This model of virtue, though, is just as troubling as the model of chaste virgin. Amatory fiction has already recognized the near-impossibility of safeguarding one's virginity; a woman's honor is continually under attack. For each of the women writers concerned with here, it is her unique position as woman and "woman" that allows her to explore the possibility of survival, redefining the conditions of female morality along the way.

It is crucial, though, to understand what it means to be a "woman" in the eighteenth century in order to understand how Behn, Haywood, and Lennox redefine female morality. Modesty was essential in defining eighteenth-century femininity. In the section "On Virgins" in *The Ladies Calling*, modesty, along with obedience, is "essential to the Virgin-state" and "should appear in it's highest elevation [in virgins], and should come up to shamefacedness."⁸⁵ The virgin is free from indecent thoughts, impervious to scandalous conversation, and is refined and restrained in speech.⁸⁶ John Gregory's *A Father's Legacy* credits "a modest reserve" with being "one of the chief beauties" in a woman.⁸⁷ A modest woman is free from sexual desire, but her very modesty encourages desire for her.⁸⁸ Elaine Hobby calls modesty a "primary 'necessity'" and notes that being labeled "immodest" had dire consequences: "Whatever the initial

⁸⁴ Rosenthal, 153.

⁸⁵ Richard Allestree, *The Ladies Calling*, 160.

⁸⁶ Allestree, *The Ladies Calling*.

⁸⁷ John Gregory, *A Father's Legacy to his Daughter* (London, 1774), 13.

⁸⁸ Gregory, 13.

grounds of the attack on a woman's reputation, an association with sexual misbehavior, with a lack of concern for her family's 'honour', was always in danger of following. The terms 'honour', 'reputation', 'modesty', 'chastity' formed such a tight group when applied to women that the use of one of these words—or its opposite—would inevitably bring the others to mind, and into question.”⁸⁹ It is with this pattern of association in mind that I bring the term “shame” to the forefront of this study. When a woman is faced with dishonoring her family, losing her reputation, having her modesty or chastity called into question, she struggles with shame rather than virtue. “Honor,” “reputation,” “modesty,” “chastity,” and “virtue” all mean nothing if a woman is either shamed or shameless, or if she fails to understand what would constitute or the effects and consequences of shame. A woman who has compromised any or all of these virtues must feel shame.

A virtuous reputation was the crowning glory of eighteenth-century femininity and to gain and maintain that reputation was no easy feat.⁹⁰ In his *Collection of Moral Sentiments*, Richardson likens a woman's reputation to “a tender flower, which the least frost will nip, the least cold will blast; and when once blasted, it will never flourish again; but wither to the very root.”⁹¹ Many of the conflicts for the heroines in the novels I discuss revolve around their efforts to preserve their reputations. Isabella's fears that she will become the “the scorn of the town, who will look on her as an adulteress” when her first husband returns from the dead force her to take desperate action in Behn's *The History of the Nun*. Haywood's Fantomina conceals her identity from her lover with a multiple disguises, preventing any blight to her reputation. The lengths that these

⁸⁹ Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity; English Women's Writing, 1649-1688*, (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1989), 9.

⁹⁰ Hobby, 2-3.

⁹¹ Richardson, *Collection*, 68.

heroines go to preserve their reputations reflect the difficulty of not only establishing one's virtue but also maintaining it.

Undeniably, "virtue" played a significant role in shaping eighteenth-century prose fiction. The heroine of the "new moral romance" reflected a specific version of idealized femininity that never fully experiences the consequences of shame. Though heroines in the domestic novel of the latter eighteenth century certainly experience shame, the domestic novel tends to oppose virtue and shame: a woman who is virtuous does not know shame. For the early eighteenth-century women's writing, however, virtue and shame coexist. Maintaining one's virtue requires a woman know shame. She must not only know the consequences of losing her virtue, and she must fear those consequences. The eighteenth-century woman and the woman writer must not only know what is expected of her but must also be able to bend the rules of those expectations in order to survive.⁹² The woman writer's awareness of the circulating discourses of shame, virtue, and modesty inform her writing, and it is this awareness that structures the decisions that Behn, Haywood, and Lennox make about form, theme, character. In the late 1680s, Behn struggles with the limitations of typical romance tropes and feminine types, though she briefly employs the epistolary form in volume I of *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*.⁹³ Haywood experiments with generic expectations throughout her career, but this experimentation is less evidence of her "reformation" than it is evidence of her response to redefinitions of femininity. It is this ever-changing discourse of femininity

⁹² In making this argument about the flexibility of femininity, I am indebted to Hobby's argument that femininity is not the process of covering up a "true self" that restrains woman but part of an ever-changing cultural process.

⁹³ I will discuss Behn's rejection of the epistolary in volume I in favor of a third-person narrator by the beginning of volume III in chapter 2.

and female morality and the self-reflexive nature of the terms association with female morality which shapes early women's prose fiction. For this reason, I argue that understanding 'shame' as dialectically bound to 'virtue' more thoroughly encompasses the experience of the eighteenth-century woman and the eighteenth-century woman writer.

IV. Chapter Summaries

For Behn, Haywood, and Lennox, the difference between survival and suffering varies, and in the following chapters, I have positioned these women writers against the masculinist discourses of the conduct manual and the moralizing (domestic) novel to explore the contradictions of gender identity available to the heroines of these novels. Chapter 1 analyzes the prose fiction of Aphra Behn, specifically *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* (1684), *The Fair Jilt* (1688), and *The History of the Nun* (1689), and argues that Behn, her narrators, and her heroines must confront the limitations of the conduct manual's ideal woman. Behn's fiction challenges the conduct manual fantasies that shame reforms the "bad girl" and that internalizing highly oppressive rules of conduct ironically liberates women from the indecencies of a coarse, masculinist world. In her fiction, Behn's heroines struggle with the internalization of modesty, virtue, and shame that the conduct manual assumes. Confronted with myriad moral dilemmas, Behn's heroines lie, cheat, and even resort to murder to maintain some pretence of honor and virtue. Though their actions are never pardonable, their individual predicaments and the options available to them reveal the harsh realities of the eighteenth-century female subject's position. Behn's heroines are unable to consider critically the social limitations

imposed upon them and either unquestioningly internalize or outwardly reject contemporary ideals of feminine shame, exposing a system that suffocates women but offers no viable means of survival for the female subject.

Chapter 2 analyzes Haywood's *Lasselia, or the Self-Abandoned* (1723), *Fantomina* (1725), and *The City Jilt* (1726) and argues that these novellas illustrate a progression in Haywood's writing from the seemingly formulaic *Lasselia* to the revenge fantasy of *The City Jilt*. In the latter, Haywood rejects and revises the Behnian model of female subjectivity which is, ultimately, disempowered by her novels' conclusions despite Behn's recognition of the arbitrariness of moral codes. Haywood's fiction, conversely, moves beyond exposing the arbitrary nature of a contemporary morality and, rather, breaks apart the implications of a system that requires the external appearance of virtue and modesty, exploring the consequences of a virtue defined by a woman's sense of shame. *Lasselia* cautions against abandoning one's reputation in favor of desire, its heroine relinquishing control of her reputation to her lover. When her affair is exposed, *Lasselia* is doubly shamed: not only has she abandoned herself in relinquishing control of her reputation, she is also abandoned by her lover who returns to his wife, leaving her to the shame of exile. Haywood's later novellas leave behind the model of the ill-fated heroine in favor of exploring the possibilities of desire managed alongside reputation. *Fantomina* and *Glicera* both experience shame but reject the limitations imposed by shame, internalized or externalized. Haywood's early fiction recognizes the necessity of a virtuous appearance but suggests that that virtuous appearance can be managed successfully only by a woman who has compromised her virtue and felt the stings of shame.

Chapter 3 moves forward from the assumption that a woman can successfully manage her virtuous reputation only after she has compromised her virtue and analyzes the relationship between the performances of virtue and shame and the construction of eighteenth-century femininity in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, Henry Fielding's *Shamela*, and Haywood's *Anti-Pamela*. By including Haywood's *Anti-Pamela*, this chapter argues that Richardson and Fielding advocate paradoxically very similar ideals of femininity while Haywood deconstructs Richardson's virtuous paragon and Fielding's scheming whore. Finally, Chapter 4 analyzes the consequences of the "new moral novel" in Arabella's struggle with proper reading in Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*. While criticism of this novel has largely focused on the domestic closure to Arabella's "bad" reading in her proper marriage to Glanville, I argue, instead, that her cure highlights the irreconcilable tensions in the process of eradicating amatory fiction, a process which relies on an audience with an internalized sense of shame.

While questioning the realistic qualities of the eighteenth-century novel has been a fixture of literary criticism for decades now, I argue that the terms used to examine the novel ignore the reality of the eighteenth-century woman's experience. Though the title page attests to a "Foundation in TRUTH and NATURE," the realities of *Pamela* are that it advocates feminine ideals unrealistic in the eighteenth-century world and throughout much of history. Certainly, this is not a ground-breaking revelation in eighteenth-century studies. However, in challenging the terms of female morality that are commonly applied to the novelistic heroine, a fuller portrait of the eighteenth-century female experience can emerge. The struggle of the eighteenth-century woman is not the struggle to preserve her virtue but the struggle to balance properly her virtue with the threat of shame.

Chapter 1:

Navigating Honor and Shame in Behn's Amatory Fiction

In *The Rover*, Florinda, after a near-rape at the hands of Willmore, justifies entering into unknown lodgings by arguing “since nothing can be worse than to fall into his hands, my life and honour are at stake, and my necessity has no choice” (IV.iii.224).⁹⁴ Florinda recognizes that preserving her honor leaves her with no other choice than to enter into a house whose occupants she does not know. Though it happens to be her lover Belville's lodgings, necessity exposes her, in this instance, to what should be predictable danger. Florinda's dilemma illustrates just one configuration of a problem Aphra Behn repeatedly attempts to puzzle through in her writing: how does a woman's sense of honor dictate her choices or does a sense of honor mean a woman has any choice? Florinda's sister, Hellena, manages to avoid victimization and engages in libertine repartee with Willmore, and though she successfully negotiates her way out of taking vows in a convent through her courtship of the libertine figure, she has died when the second part of *The Rover* opens. By opening with a dead female libertine, Behn asks if female libertinism is a viable option for the Restoration woman and implies that female libertinism is not only dangerous but potentially fatal. Though the first part of *The Rover* holds Hellena up as witty heroine, her behavior is unsustainable in the real world, and the second part of *The Rover* reflects that. Florinda, controlled by an internalized sense of shame, has a limited set of options which force her to play the role of perpetual victim. Hellena, on the other hand, uses her wit to broaden her options but fares no better.

⁹⁴ Aphra Behn, *The Rover, or the Banished Cavaliers, Oroonoko, The Rover, and Other Works*, ed. Janet Todd. (Penguin: London, 1992).

The Rover, however, fails to answer fully the question of the viability of female libertinism and the choices available to a woman who has internalized the sense of shame touted in conduct manuals of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. In her amatory fiction, Behn begins experimenting with the narrative complexity prose fiction allows, exploring the psychological forces which guide women's modesty and shame and the choices they make. In a form with no established formula, Behn creates narrative complexities which consistently play with the accepted norms and set a foundation for early women's fiction. This chapter focuses on three of Behn's fictions: *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* (1684), *The Fair Jilt* (1688), and *The History of the Nun* (1689). Each work presents a woman who must reconcile the social normatives of female behavior, specifically the relationship between modesty and shame, with her own desires. To varying degrees, each woman internalizes or rejects these norms and Behn explores how that internalization or rejection defines the actions available to them. Together, these three works illustrate two very important concepts about women's shame in Behn's work: first, that shame can, ultimately, be used as a means of sexual conquest and as a weapon against other women, and second, that the overt rejection of internalized shame provides a woman with a certain autonomy not afforded to the "modest" woman even if that autonomy means rejecting moral behavior. Resultant from these two principles is a heroine Behn cannot help but revere, even if the heroine must face some sort of punishment. Sylvia, Miranda, and Isabella all must face punishment in one form or another, yet in each woman's exile or execution, each finds a means to preserve her reputation. I argue that Behn's amatory fiction, by addressing the shame and guilt attached to sexual, social, and monetary desires, tests the social dictates which restrict

feminine sexuality and action by exploring the ways in which women can manipulate their sexuality to challenge, if only situationally, masculine prerogatives. In these texts, Behn subverts (and erases) the dutiful wife/whore dichotomy, an opposition Richardson later reinforces. Ultimately, Behn's amatory fiction establishes extensive social and political commentary on the lack of choice women have in their public and private lives.

If love and honor pose a danger to women, women must learn to navigate the threats posed by both; and despite her recognition of the artificial construction of honor and virtue, Behn does not ignore the need for women to negotiate properly the social dictates of these moral codes.⁹⁵ Before turning to Behn's fiction, I would, first, look to Behn's poems, poems which explicitly articulate a theory of desire that is implicitly operative in Behn's amatory fiction. Behn's poems both recognize the artificiality of virtue and honor. In "On Desire," Behn chastises "virtuous" women as cold and manipulative. Those who "hid the kindling fire" of desire lack any real sense of desire,

⁹⁵ My argument is indebted to Susannah Quinsee's argument in her article "Deconstructing Female 'Virtue': Mariana Alcoforda's *Five Love Letters from a Nun to a Cavalier* and Aphra Behn's *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*." *Eighteenth-Century Women: Studies in the Lives, Work, and Culture*, 2.1 (2002): 1-21. Quinsee argues that Behn goes against the conduct manual's naturalization of virtue "as simply analogous with female chastity and silence [and] presents a much more complex image of the ideal of virtue which actually questions its validity as a social construct" (3-4). Quinsee depends largely on an etymological argument noting that the *OED* first records virtue in reference to female chastity in 1599 and she traces virtue back to its Latinate roots, "*virtus* [which] the *OED* defines as 'manliness, valour and worth.'" (4). My argument, though, pursues the implications of virtue, honor, and modesty throughout all three volumes of *Love Letters*. Quinsee, conversely, stays within the confines of volume one. Additionally, Quinsee's argument relies on the androgynous implications of the term *virtus*, arguing that "Behn uses 'virtue' to consider gender transgression, advising the reader to look beyond the prescriptive, and oft cited, model of virtue as simply 'a chaste, silent, and obedient female.'" The 'virtuous' woman, then, can be seen as an androgyne who combines 'masculine' strength and vigor with 'feminine' fragility and modesty" (4-5). My argument depends heavily on the gender distinctions of implicit in virtue.

making “all [their] virtue's but a cheat/And honour but a false disguise/[Their] modesty a necessary bait/ To gain the dull repute of being wise.”⁹⁶ “The Golden Age” celebrates a time when “the amorous world enjoyed its reign” (line 81) and the construct of “honor,” “Nonsense, invented by the proud,” (lines 75) held little sway.⁹⁷ It is honor, Behn claims, that “first didst damn/A woman to the sin of shame” (ll 117-118). Additionally, honor, not hedonistic sexual desire, must take the blame for encouraging what becomes a naturalized representation of female modesty in conduct manuals and later in Richardson’s *Pamela*, or what amounts to female sexual manipulation for Behn: “Honor! who first taught lovely eyes the art/To wound, and not to cure the heart” (line 123). Honor, not female nature, becomes responsible for teaching coquettish behavior.

Behn’s poems “Honour” and “The Loss,” poems which chronicle the love affair of Lysander and Aminta from her collection *The Land of Love*, similarly assume an artificial quality in honor but paint a much more terrifying image of honour as a spectral force. In “Honor,” Lysander and Aminta encounter Honour, a “Phantom” (line 1), at the gates to Love’s Bower, blocking their way inside.⁹⁸ Honor “rarely ever takes its flight” (line 5), “plays the Tyrant o’er their Souls” (line 14), and is a “necessary Evil” women obey “most for Fear, as Indians do the Devil” (ll 29, 30). In fact, when Honour speaks to Aminta, it is a “Goblin” which “the lovely Maid alarms” (line 38). Honour warns her of the consequences of an excess of love: her “Fame, Content, and Lover [would all be] lost” (line 42) if she gives in to her desires; her beauty, “stript of Virtue, [would] grow

⁹⁶ “On Desire. A Pindaric,” *Oroonoko and Other Writings*, ed. Paul Salzman, (Oxford UP; Oxford, 1994), 256-259, lines 90, 103-106.

⁹⁷ “The Golden Age,” *Poems Upon Several Occasions*, (London, 1697), 1-12.

⁹⁸ “Honor,” *The Land of Love. A Poem*, (London, 1717), 62-65. All references are from this edition and are cited parenthetically.

abhorr'd" (line 49) and would die "like a Flow'r, whose Scent quick Poyson gives" (line 50). Honour's warning strikes fear in Aminta, who stands "Surpriz'd" and "like an Image, dumb" (line 54). In "Honour," Aminta has not internalized a moral sense of honor as conduct manuals encourage women to do and as Richardson's *Pamela* will later assume of its idealized heroine. Instead, honor acts as a rather frightening external force which manipulates female emotion.

"Honour" not only emphasizes the artificial nature of honor, but also proposes a theory of honor's origins:

Some cross proud Woman, old, and out of Fashion,
Too ugly for the Trouble of Temptation;
Unskill'd in Love; in Virtue, or in Truth,
Preach'd his false Notions first to plague our Youth. (ll 23-30)

The poem, rather strangely, attributes honor's birth to a woman but she is a woman clearly at odds with what Behn represents as nature. This woman's professions of honor go against notions of love, virtue, and truth. In opposing honor to virtue and truth, Behn reinforces an earlier charge that honor's "chiefest Attributes, are Pride and Spight,/His Pow'r is robbing Lovers of Delight,/An Enemy to human kind,/But most to Youth severe" (ll 15-18). As I will later argue about shame, this woman's construction of honor becomes a weapon to wield against her own sex. Honor, then, appears vengeful, dangerous, unbending; it does not preserve reputation but, in debauching young women, dissuades them from becoming self-aware, desiring subjects.

Behn's poetry recognizes that possessing a sense of honor necessarily entails possessing a sense of shame. In fact, Aminta upbraids Lysander for his sexual

presumption and her honor-inspired admonishments cause Lysander to repent: “I saw my Error, blush’d, sigh’d, wept, and vow’d,/And all the Marks of deep Repentance show’d” (ll 66-67). Lysander’s blushing and the signs of deep repentance imply that Aminta’s honor has forced Lysander to feel a sense of shame. Once Aminta has fled with honor, though, Lysander seems to have lost his sense of shame, regretting that he did not “Hymen’s Priests obey;/And for the Marriage-Ceremonies stay” (ll 13-14), though he does confess that he “should have us’d more soft and pleasing Words” (line 26).⁹⁹ Love pursues Aminta and pleads with her to return, asking her why she has followed honor, “this fantastick Sprite,/This faithless *Ignis fatuus* of the Light?” (ll 51-52). The complicated tug-of-war between love and honor, in which both Lysander and Aminta are caught, illustrates not simply that honor is falsely constructed or that it is a detriment to a woman’s sexual identity.

Behn’s representations of honor emphasize the tenuous hold that honor has on female sexual autonomy, which presses the question as to whether there is such a thing as female libertinism, an incredibly complicated question with no clear-cut answer. Susan Staves claims that “a central problem [for Behn] was to work out the sharply different consequences of libertinism for women.”¹⁰⁰ Libertinism, an ideology that inherently privileges male pleasure, disregards the consequences of sexual liberty for women and implicitly endorses practices dangerous (both physically and socially) for women.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ “The Loss,” *The Land of Love. A Poem*, (London, 1717), 65-72. All references are from this edition and cited parenthetically.

¹⁰⁰ Susan Staves, “Behn, Women, and Society,” *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, ed. Derek Hughes and Janet Todd (Cambridge UP: Cambridge, 2004), 12-28. 21.

¹⁰¹ Staves notes that “While libertinism authorized women’s free enjoyment of sexual pleasure, a serious problem for Behn was that libertinism was a masculinist ideology. It was hostile to marriage or any other long-term commitment, typically figured women as

While Staves adroitly parses out what Behn sees as the difference between male and female desire, I would like to push her examination of libertinism not only to consider what Behn sees as the differences in male and female sexuality but also to assess the viability of a female libertine ethos. Behn's use of the phrase *ignis fatuus* in her poetry gestures, not so subtly, toward the Earl of Rochester's "A Satire Against Reason and Mankind," but it also contrasts strongly with Rochester's use: where Rochester calls reason itself "an *ignis fatuus* of the mind" that leads man astray,¹⁰² Behn refers more specifically to sexualized "honor" as an illusory social construct detrimental to women in particular. In redeploying Rochester's terminology, Behn insists upon an elaborate gendered difference between male codes of honor and female codes of honor. Nevertheless, Rochester's argument that reason leads man down dangerous paths applies to Behn's usage of it, as well, and implies that "honor" is as contrived as reason. Rochester completely rejects reason because it contradicts instinct, and he dares his reader to prove him wrong. If Rochester can be proved wrong by a truly virtuous counterexample, he says he will "Adore those shrines of virtue, homage pay,/And, with the rabble world, their laws obey" (line 218-219). In comparison, Behn not only asserts that honor is a man-made moral construct but simultaneously recognizes that women must operate within its system. Behn's transgressive women rarely go unpunished for skirting social conventions, but her narrators often distance themselves from such judgments, and her fiction is rife with ambiguous endings. *Love Letters*, *The Fair Jilt*,

provided by nature for men's pleasure, and sometimes did not scruple to resort to violence to gratify male desire. [...] libertinism regarded marriage as a betrayal of the good [...] it countenanced sexual practices that had fewer problematic consequences for men than for women" (21).

¹⁰²Lines 12-15.

and *The History of the Nun* pursue the question of female libertinism from different angles: while Sylvia, Miranda, and Isabella, ultimately meet with different fates, their individual circumstances allow Behn simultaneously to critique both the patrilineal ideology of female honor and modesty and the potentially exploitive quality of Rochesterian libertinism.

I. *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*

Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister criticizes the arbitrary nature of honor and virtue in the first volume, carrying out the themes found in Behn's poetry. Early in the first volume, Philander criticizes honor for the same phantasmagorical qualities "Honour" attributes to it: "A fit of Honour! a fantome imaginary and no more."¹⁰³ For Donald R. Wehrs, this exclamation is part of Philander's attempt to encourage Sylvia to "'deconstruct' all the uses of language that locate identity anywhere other than in private will or individual desire."¹⁰⁴ While this declaration is certainly part of Philander's attempts to manipulate Sylvia rhetorically, this sentiment is not without precedent in Behn's work. While Philander does want Sylvia to follow her private will for his own benefit, the image of honor as a "fantome imaginary" contextualizes honor and other moral concepts like virtue as false yet powerful, a force which, though socially constructed to limit desire, still maintains a strong influence over its devotees. Sylvia finds herself "unresolv'd between violent Love, and cruel Honour" (24-25). She "was all despairing raging Love, jealous, fearful, and impatient" but his letters "dispers'd those

¹⁰³ *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*, ed. Janet Todd (Penguin: London, 1993), 12. All subsequent references are from this edition and cited parenthetically.

¹⁰⁴ "Eros, Ethics, Identity: Royalist Feminism and the Politics of Desire in Aphra Behn's *Love Letters*," *SEL* 32 (1992), 461-478. 462.

Damons, those tormenting Councillors, and [gave] a little respite, a little tranquility to my Soul.” “That Traytor Honor” is “warm’d and reviv’d by thy new protested flame, makes War against Almighty Love” and Sylvia finds herself returned to “Honour’s side” (25). While Wehrs claims that Sylvia entertains Philander’s arguments because she is “already inclined to accept the vision of selfhood that Philander offers,”¹⁰⁵ I argue that reading Sylvia’s struggle in the first volume in conjunction with the poems from *The Land of Love*, forces us to reconsider Sylvia’s internal struggle with private desires and public constraints. While she is certainly susceptible to Philander’s advantageous rhetoric, *Love-Letters* is not merely about Philander’s sexual pursuit and the potential love has to ruin Sylvia; it is also about her struggle with her own sexual identity, an identity which must define itself within a system reliant on the internalization of false moral concepts meant to instill fear in women.¹⁰⁶

This fear manifests itself as a sense of shame and it is this threat of public shame that exerts control over a woman’s actions, not her sense of honor. As Aminta faces the shameful consequences of losing her fame, growing “abhorr’d,” and dying “like a Flow’r, whose Scent quick Poyson gives,” Sylvia recognizes her erotic indulgences could bring public shame not only upon her but also upon her family:

¹⁰⁵ Wehrs, 463.

¹⁰⁶ Janet Todd analyzes the evolution of Sylvia’s self-identity from a singular, child-like, idealist in Volume I to a multifaceted female rake who has learned to manage “mutable identities so inauthentic that they achieve a kind of authenticity” (217). “Who is Silvia? What is She? Feminine Identity in Aphra Behn’s *Love Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister*,” *Aphra Behn Studies*, ed. Janet Todd, (Cambridge UP: Cambridge, 1996), 199-218. Todd notes that part of Sylvia’s evolution as a character involves “learning that [...] the femininity of softness and trembling doves she sets out with is a fiction and that she must author herself in another mode” moving from “naïve girl self-conscious adult employing the codes of femininity” (202). While Todd sees Sylvia’s character evolving, Warner writes her off, claiming that her “character is subordinated to the artifice of intrigue, coolly and cunningly performed” (*Licensing Entertainment* 94).

[I]ndiscreet was I; was all for Love, fond and undoing Love! but when I
saw it with full Tide flow in upon me, one glance of Glorious Honour,
makes me again retreat. I will—I am resolv'd—And must be brave! I can't
forget I'm Daughter to the great Beralti, and Sister to Mertilla, a yet
unspotted Maid, fit to produce a race of Glorious Hero's. (25)

The threat of facing shame causes Sylvia to profess that she would rather “dy before [she would] yield [her] honour” (29), and she sees her resistance to Philander as the means to “redeem the bleeding Honour of [her] Family, and [her] great Parents Vertues shall shine in [her]” (30). Sylvia's does struggle with her sense of honor and it does slow down, though it does not stop, her yielding to Philander's desires.

In resisting Philander, Sylvia's honor befits her position, but despite the honorable control she tries to exert over her desires, she still finds herself “grow[ing] wild and know[ing] not what [she] say[s].” She is betrayed by an “Impatient Love” to “a Thousand folly's, a Thousand rashness” and dies “with shame” (38). Though she “know[s] [her] danger,” she realizes she must give in to her suitor: “Love soft bewitching Love will have it so, that I cannot deny what my feebler Honour forbids” (30). The consequences cannot outweigh her desire. While she waits for Philander to arrive for a late night liaison in her bedroom, she confesses that she is “fond of being undone [and suspects she will face] either the loss of *Philander*, my Life, or my Honour, or all together.” She imagines the consequences: “What but death can insue, or what's worse, eternal shame? eternal confusion on my honour?” (49). Though she fears her sister Mertilla's jealousy, she still permits Philander into her chambers and all her internal struggles over her honor, shame, and familial obligation to this point become insignificant in light of her excessive desire

for Philander: “My heart beats still, and heaves with the sensible remains of the late dangerous tempest of my mind, and nothing can absolutely calm me but the approach of the all-powerful Philander; though that thought possesses me with ten thousand fears, which I know will vanish all at they appearance, and assume no more their dreadful shapes till thou art gone again” (55). Her confession recognizes that, while she might face emotional consequences following her liaison with Philander, her sexual desire is far too great to be repressed by a sense of honor. Though Sylvia recognizes that she might face repercussions from her excessive desire, her inability to thoroughly repress them signals her ultimate inability to thoroughly internalize shame.

Following her late night liaison with Philander, Sylvia’s guilt and shame do return, but she is still consumed with thoughts of him. She wonders where to hide her “guilty blushing face” (63) and claims that “to shew desire is such a sin in vertue as must deserve reproach from all the world” (65). Sylvia faces not only internal admonishments over her transgressive desires but also external ones, as well, from Mertilla who insists on both the social ridicule Sylvia will face and the familial shame Sylvia’s actions produce. Mertilla tells Sylvia to “[c]onsider [. . .] the infamy of being a Prostitute” and that her affair comes with the added shame of an incestuous affair with her sister’s husband (74). In fact, Sylvia’s actions are so abhorrent that Mertilla insists Sylvia “must obscure thy self in some remote corner of the world, where honesty and honour never are heard of: No thou canst not shew thy face, but ‘twill be pointed at for something monstrous: for a hundred ages may not produce a story so lewdly infamous and loose as thine” (74). Mertilla’s admonishments direct a sense of shame at Sylvia by asserting that she has no

place in moral society. Even her physical appearance indicates her shame: she can never show her face and will be marked as monstrous.

Though Sylvia struggles early on with her own sense of shame and Mertilla attempts to reinforce the social contempt Sylvia could face, Behn and her heroine reject an internalization of shame by the end of the first volume in favor of sexual desire.¹⁰⁷ As early as Sylvia's failed liaison with Philander, Sylvia's sense of shame is overpowered by the thrill of sexual desire. Despite her internal virtuous conflict, she "can think of nothing but" Philander and "loath[es] the sound of Love from any other voice" (66). Judith Keegan Gardiner notes that Sylvia "does not rejoice or repent [at avoiding shameful ravishment]. Rather, she glories in her new desires. Throughout *Love Letters*, Behn alludes to the traditional battle between love and honor only to undermine it and the social laws that uphold it."¹⁰⁸ Though she confesses that she is prepared "for the worst that can befall me [. . .] being rendered a publick shame" (107) in a letter to Philander after learning that he has been arrested by her father for their affair, her next letter further rejects the shame of desire and places blame on custom instead. She writes, "'tis not my love's the criminal, no nor the placing it on Philander the crime; but 'tis thy most unhappy circumstances—thy being married, and that was no crime till man made laws" (110). In recognizing the arbitrary construction of moral code based on manmade laws, Sylvia begins the process of rejecting the shame associated with flouting social convention and praises the integrity of a match made by choice:

¹⁰⁷ Todd claims that Sylvia avoids the common eighteenth-century representation as "asexual and fetishized" and "has no need of the eighteenth-century's fictional abstractions of virtue, virginity and chastity" (201).

¹⁰⁸ "The First English Novel: Aphra Behn's *Love Letters*, the Canon, and Women's Tastes," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, (8) 1989: 201-222. 213.

that's a heavenly match when two Souls toucht with equal passion meet
(which is but rarely seen)—when willing vows, with serious
consideration, are weigh'd and made [. . .] who find the beauty of each
others minds, and rate 'em as they ought, whom not a formal ceremony
binds [. . .] but well considered vows from soft inclining hearts, utter'd
with love, with joy, with dear delight when Heaven is called to witness;
She is thy Wife, Philander, He is my Husband, this is the match, this
Heaven designs and means [. . .] (112)

Sylvia's insistence on Heaven's role in their union rejects the social convention which threatens to shame Sylvia and keep her and her lover apart. Philander finally proposes marriage to Sylvia at the end of the first volume, though it is not to him and is only intended "to save thee from being ravisht from [his] arms." Philander's proposal is that Sylvia marry Brilljard and assures her "it is but joining hands—no more" as "Brilljard's a Gentleman [...] handsome too, well made, well bred [...] and he'll pretend no farther than to the honour of owning thee in Court" (113). While the marriage is sold to Sylvia as a means to protect her, it is more beneficial to Philander as it provides him sexual access to his lover and cannot preserve Sylvia from Philander's abandonment or Brilljard's sexual pursuit in the second volume. Though I will return to the question of marriage's ability to preserve women from danger later, the first volume closes in ambiguity, leaving suspect the ability of Sylvia's pretend marriage to protect her. The volume closes with Philander's proposal, and the reader can only assume that Sylvia has agreed to his plan. Her willingness to take part in a sham marriage signals the end of her struggle with shame.

While volume I uses plot to signal Sylvia's impending rejection of internalized shame, volume II uses narrative form to reinforce Sylvia's rejection. In the second volume, Behn begins abandoning the epistolarity of the first volume.¹⁰⁹ Sylvia's letters in the first volume reveal her struggle with appropriate emotion, her struggle with "the violent effects of Love and Honour, the impetuous meeting tides of the extreams of joy and fear" (32). She confesses her shame and her letters present a sympathetic portrait of a young woman struggling with the potential shame of not meeting her social responsibilities. By the time the second volume opens, though, Sylvia feels little need to dwell upon the consequences of her actions and the letters become less frequent. Her circumstances have surpassed worrying over the social repercussions of her affair. To dwell on the shame theoretically attendant on her actions would create a static identity¹¹⁰ for Sylvia, one in which she was forever (passively) ruined and never (actively) vindicated.¹¹¹ When the second volume opens, Behn abandons the exclusive use of the epistolary and begins to narrate between letters. Ros Ballaster attributes this shift to a mix of epistolarity and narration as "a response to the problem of authenticating voice in first-

¹⁰⁹ Quinsee claims that "the epistolary is highly suited to this more radical discussion of female virtue because it epitomizes female defiance of cultural codes" because of its private implications and the implied distance between the "author [who] is absent and isolated from the addressee and subject" (5). *Eighteenth-Century Women: Studies in Their Lives, Work, and Culture*, 2002 (2), 1-21.

¹¹⁰ Gardiner claims that Behn's portrait of Silvia as a "changing, choice-making female subject" contrasts Mary Wroth's limited portrait of a "woman's change as vicious inconstancy and a woman's expressed choice as immodesty" (211). She claims that "[b]y allowing a woman to change, even at the expense of her virtue, Behn propels her narrative forward into the greater linearity of the novel form. Moreover, she makes Sylvia take responsibility for her own choices and dignifies her actions, even foolish or vicious ones, with effective consequences" (211).

¹¹¹ See Quinsee, 15-16. "Sylvia's attraction stems from her ability to seem natural and virtuous, when in fact, her 'languishing' position is contrived. In manipulating such a pose, she takes an active role when she initially appears passive" (15).

person epistolary writing [...] The lack of third-person commentary on the nature of lovers' passion means that the reader has no information about the motivations of the two lovers, other than the accounts they offer, not the eventual results of the affair."¹¹² As Ballaster notes, the first volume's epistolarity is "centrally concerned with the attempt to inscribe and engender sexual desire. These epistolary writings seek both to stimulate desire in the other, lover or reader, and to represent the specific 'difference' of female desire."¹¹³ While Sylvia's and Philander's letters certainly stimulate desire in one for the other, I would argue that Behn's shift from the epistolary signifies Sylvia's rejection of internal shame. Because she no longer struggles with her shame in volumes II and III, her voice becomes less important. Sylvia's rejection of internal shame negates the need to rely on the epistolary in volume II. By rejecting Sylvia's voice, Behn forces the reader to think about mediation between Sylvia's actions (or Philander's actions) and the judgmental faculties reliant on the status quo expectations of female virtue, honor, and sexuality.¹¹⁴ In abandoning the epistolarity of the first volume, Behn forces her readers to think carefully about the situations her characters find themselves in and the conditions which produce them. To effectively comment on a patrilineal system which frames

¹¹² "Love-Letters: Engendering Desire," *Aphra Behn*, ed. Janet Todd, (St. Martin's Press: New York, 1999), 143-157. 149.

¹¹³ Ballaster, "Love Letters" 145.

¹¹⁴ Jacqueline Pearson argues that "Behn's narrators offer a critique of the inequalities encoded in the gendered language of society. [...] *Love Letters*, and many other Behn tales and plays, criticize society's language of gender not only by explicit statements of the equality between men and women—they respond to sexual passion with 'equal fire, with equal languishment,' with 'equal ravishment'—but also by allowing women to appropriate for their own uses a sexual vocabulary in which they have previously been the objects of male language. [...] *Love Letters* and other tales thus imply a biological equality between the sexes, but also allow their narrators to explore the socially constructed inequalities" (44). "Gender and Narrative in the Fiction of Aphra Behn," *The Review of English Studies*, 42.165, (Feb. 1991), 40-56.

Sylvia's behaviors, Behn's readers *need* a narrator who comments on and frames narrative action.¹¹⁵

Volume II chronicles Sylvia's complete transition from passive victim to calculating seductress. The marriage intended to protect Sylvia incites Brilljard's desires for her, placing her in direct danger. Brilljard's proximity to Sylvia encourages fantasies and ever-increasing jealousy at his inability to possess the woman he imagines to be his wife. He "often wisht his Lord wou'd grow cold as possessing Lovers do" and "he cou'd not see her kist without blushing with resentment" (125). Eventually, Brilljard seems completely under the delusion that "she is his wife, and has forgot that he's her creature, and Philander's Vassal" (126). Brilljard seizes every opportunity he can to manipulate circumstances to gain access to Sylvia. He finds the perfect opportunity when Sylvia confides in him and shows him a letter she has written to Philander expressing fear that he no longer loves her. Brilljard encourages her fear, telling her "[t]is evident, that he's the most ungrateful of his Sex!" (148). Sylvia, overcome, faints in Brilljard's arms and becomes the passive victim Brilljard desires. Brilljard takes advantage of her swoon and "give[s] himself the pleasure of grasping the lovely'st body in the World to his Bosome, on which her fair face declin'd cold, dead and pale" (148). He lays her down on the bed nearby and, as he is about to rape her, "some kinder God awaken'd Silvia, and brought Octavio to the Chamber door" (148). Brilljard, fantasizing he has all the rights of a husband, attempts marital possession of Sylvia's body. The very marriage that Philander

¹¹⁵ Pearson contends that the intervening narrator in the second and third volumes of *Love Letters* create "an increasing complexity in the presentation of character, especially Sylvia's, and an increasing ironic distance between the reader and the characters" ("Gender and Narrative," 53).

arranges under the premise of protecting Sylvia from being forcibly removed from him has become the very thing that presents the most danger to her.

Upon realizing the imminent danger she had been in, called to her attention by Octavio, Sylvia begins the shift from passive victim to calculating seductress. When Brilljard returns, Sylvia “lookt upon him as a Ravisher, but how to find that Truth, which she was very curious to know, she call’d up all the Arts of Women to instruct her in, by threats she knew ‘twas vain, therefore she assumed an Artifice, which was indeed almost a stranger to her heart, that of gilding him out of a secret which she knew he wanted generosity to give handsomely” (157-158). Sylvia becomes flirtatious with Brilljard to encourage a confession from him which reveals his fantasies that her body is passive and excessively available. He recalls “the lovely Victim [...] ready for the Sacrifice” and “[his] lands [sic], [his] eyes, [his] Lips, [...] tir’d with pleasure, [and the] joys beyond those ravishments of which one kind Minute more had made me absolute Lord.” His confession prompts Sylvia’s complete transition from victim to aggressor and she “Snatch[es] a Penknife that lay on her Toylite, which she offered so near his bosome that he believ’d himself already pierc’d, so sensibly killing were her words, her motion, and her look” (158). However, Sylvia takes pity on him, remembering that he has preserved her secrets, and instructs him to “have a care you never raise your thoughts to a presumption of that Nature more [...] repent your Crime” (159). In making Sylvia’s most imminent threat come from her sham marriage, Behn exposes the danger an eighteenth-century woman faces not only from libertine ethos but also from adhering to legitimate social institutions. Sylvia’s participation in both realms forces her out of passive participation and into the role of a self-aware, calculating seductress. In order to

successfully manage herself in a world driven by masculine sexual desires, Sylvia must take charge of herself.

Having shed her identity as a passive victim, Sylvia writes to Philander, rants against his infidelity and laments her gullibility, implying she should have known better than to believe her lover all along. In doing so, she finds agency in her victimization.¹¹⁶ Sylvia acknowledges the social scorn she has reaped in “the accusation of all the good, the hate of all the Virtuous, the reproaches of her kindred, the scorn of all chaste Maids, and curses of all honest Wives; and in requital had only thy false Vows, thy empty love, thy faithless embraces, and cold dissembl’d kisses [in return]. My only comfort was to fancy that they were true; now that’s departed too, and I have nothing but a brave revenge left in the room of all!” (219). She makes her plan for revenge clear to Philander: “there remains about me only this sense of Honour yet; that I dare tell thee of my bold design; a bravery thou hast never shew’d to me, who takest me unawares, stab’st me without a warning of the blow [. . .] I will expose myself to all the World, Cheat, Jilt, and flatter all as thou hast done, and having not one sense or grain of Honour left, will yield the abandon’d body, thou hast rifl’d to every asking Fop” (219). Sylvia’s innocence has, undoubtedly, left her vulnerable and open to Philander’s advances. However, Sylvia refuses to play the social pariah, and instead accepts her newfound identity, taking control of her circumstances. While her actions are not endorsed by the text, she is hardly chastised by the narrator, particularly when the novel closes.

¹¹⁶ Of Sylvia’s early lamentations over her “ruine”, Quinsee notes that “rather than signifying [her] passivity, [they] provide her with agency [which] actually arises from the experience of being ‘inevitably lost’” (17).

That the narrator is not critical of Sylvia, though, is not a simple either/or assertion. Gardiner notes that “*Love Letters* overtly condemns Sylvia and covertly admires her erotic successes: Behn is cheerfully, contradictorily of her devil’s party.”¹¹⁷ The third part of *Love Letters* opens with a narratorial catalogue of Sylvia’s faults:

[Y]et to render her Character impartially, she had also abundance of disagreeing Qualities mixt with her Perfections. She was Imperious and Proud, even to Insolence; Vain and Conceited even to Folly; she knew her Vertues and her Graces too well, and her Vices too little; she was very Opinionated and Obstinate, hard to be convinced of the falsest Argument, but very positive in her fancied Judgment: Abounding in her own Sense, and very critical on that of others: Censorious, and too apt to charge others with those Crimes to which she was her self addicted, or had been guilty of: Amoriously inclin’d and indiscreet in the Management of her Amours, and constant rather from Pride and Shame than Inclination; fond of catching at every trifling Conquest, and lov’d the Triumph tho’ she hated the Slave. (257-258)

This overt condemnation of Sylvia’s negative characteristics far outweighs the following assertion by the narrator that “she had Vertues too, that balanc’d her Vices” (258).

Though the narrator similarly catalogues these virtues (she “lov’d Philander with a Passion, that nothing but his Ingratitude could have decay’d in her Heart”), Sylvia’s

¹¹⁷ Gardiner, 215. Gardiner’s goes on to note that the “deepest contradictions” in *Love Letters* are not about “sexuality or class mobility” but in its suppression of “conflicts about motherhood and about the bonds between women.”

faults quickly become the focus again. She is “Cunning [enough] to dissemble her Resentment the best she could to her generous Lover” (258).

At the novel’s close, Behn leaves Sylvia with a very ambiguous fate. Though she and Brilliard become “the Talk and the Town, insomuch that the Governor 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). Such an ending, with social judgment implied and narratorial commentary conspicuously absent, leaves opportunity to read Sylvia as a variety of female stereotypes. In his highly politicized reading of the novel, Wehrs finds Sylvia the ever-available whore, claiming that “by allowing neither practical judgment nor royalist principles to constrain her education, Silvia transforms herself into the sexual, feminine equivalent of a delegitimated throne, that every fool may aim at.”¹¹⁸ Wehrs’ attention to Silvia’s consciousness of her character seems to find more at fault with Silvia than with the social practices that encourage the formation of identity. Gardiner provides a dualistic reading of Sylvia. She notes that Sylvia “maintains her integrity through desire, a perfect conviction of her right to her own sexual and narcissistic pleasures,”¹¹⁹ but Gardiner also argues that the novel challenges the “traditional happy ending of the English novel” by “localiz[ing] the contradictions between gender and class that meet within its edifying bonds” while Brilljard ultimately “assumes for himself the sexual rights of patriarchal marriage” rather than remaining the cuckold Sylvia’s exploits have made him by becoming both her “confidante and pimp.”¹²⁰ Ballaster finds Sylvia an “an anti-heroine, a survivor” who “adapts every

¹¹⁸ Wehrs, 470.

¹¹⁹ Gardiner, 215.

¹²⁰ Gardiner, 214.

available resource to hand” for her advantage.¹²¹ Behn, she argues, uses the novel form as a “critique of women’s enslavement to a variety of fictions of feminine identity, and offers an escape route beyond retreat into silence and spurious claims to authenticity.”¹²² Conversely, Dorrego reads “ironical discrepancy between the fate hoped for and by these characters and the one they actually get. For their part, Philander, Silvia, and Brilljard, who lead a conventionally objectionable life throughout the narrative, and are recurrently criticized by the narrator, are left unpunished. There is no poetic justice in this prose fiction whereas it is common in romance and most literature of those days.”¹²³ These readings, which rarely take a middle ground, illustrate how easily Behn’s ambiguous endings can be read to different advantages, but this multiplicity in readings highlights the advantages of ambiguity for Behn. She nods to the social norms, providing social judgment of Sylvia, while allowing her to remain her own sexual agent.

Yet, simply focusing on her ultimate (and intentionally ambiguous) fate at the novel’s close should be carefully read against other events in the novel, not simply as a moment of textual criticism or exaltation by the narrator. Before reading Sylvia’s ultimate fate, I would turn to her confrontation with Calista, her rival for Philander’s affections, at the convent. In this confrontation, Behn challenges readers’ assumptions about what constitutes prostitution and what constitutes virtue. Wehrs, reading Sylvia’s

¹²¹ Ros Ballaster, “Love-Letters: Engendering Desire,” *Aphra Behn*, ed. Janet Todd, (St. Martin’s Press: New York, 1999), 143-157. 155.

¹²² Ballaster, “Love Letters,” 155.

¹²³ Jorge Figueroa Dorrego, “Reconciling ‘the most Contrary and Distant Thoughts’: Paradox and Irony in the Novels of Aphra Behn,” *Re-shaping the Genres: Restoration Women Writers*. Ed. Zenón Luis-Martínez, (Peter Lang Publishing: New York, 2003), 233-259. 246.

transformation into man-eating whore following her abandonment by Philander, claims that

[j]ust as Sylvia is apprehended as vulnerable to ‘typical’ patterns of masculine seduction, so she transforms herself into a ‘typical’ seducer. Her pursuit of Octavio [...] is explained by the narrator in terms of a general law of psychology, ‘it being natural to women to desire conquests, though they hate the conquered; to glory in the triumph, though they despise the slave.’ Like Philander, she is progressively diminished through a succession of increasingly sordid affairs.¹²⁴

By using the narrator’s explanation that women “naturally” desire conquests, Wehrs assumes Behn’s reliance on a particular masculine fantasy to villainize Sylvia, but Silvia’s “nature” is not something Behn endorses. As with the eroticization of Calista’s innocence, Wehrs’s reading reveals a particular masculine fantasy which has dangerous consequences for the seventeenth/eighteenth-century woman—consequences of which Behn is critical. The eroticized virgin, who in Behn’s novel is not desireless as she will become in Richardson, is in danger of the male predatory sexual ethos. Silvia was, at one point in the novel, the apparently innocent and virtuous Calista. Sylvia and Calista are two sides of the same coin: one, seduced and abandoned, becomes a nuanced version of the female rake Behn portrays on the stage, refusing the limitations of eighteenth-century femininity; the other, seduced and pregnant, “resolved never to quit the Solitude of the Cloysters,”¹²⁵ her social withdrawal a resignation to standards of virtue.

¹²⁴ Wehrs, 470-471.

¹²⁵ *Love Letters*, 315.

Behn's attempt to balance the representation of her heroines is reinforced in the contrasts between Sylvia and Calista. Gardiner claims that, in this relationship, Behn subverts the virgin/whore dichotomy, something Behn continues to do in later fiction. Of Sylvia's and Calista's faceoff in the convent, Gardiner argues that "Calista is not the heroine but the 'other woman,' so that the stereotyping identifications between protagonist and virtuous woman fail,"¹²⁶ but Behn sets up an essential difference between the two women early, a difference which blurs the boundaries between virgin and whore. Sylvia, abandoned by Philander, has acquiesced to revealing herself as a cheat and a jilt. Calista, conversely, is inexperienced, which initially inspires Octavio's worry: Calista "not [having] learnt the little connings of her Sex, he guest by his own Soul that hers was soft and apt for impression, [...] that she had a simple Innocence, that might betray a young Beauty under such circumstances" (178). In the end, he decides against preserving her, deciding that her "ruin has laid a foundation for my happiness" and will "secure my Empire over Silvia" (178). For Philander, her innocence, as Sylvia's was in volume I, becomes erotic fuel:

I told you before she had from her infancy been bred in a Monastery, kept from the sight of men, and knew no one art or subtilty of her Sex: But in the very purity of her innocence, she appear'd like the first born Maid in Paradice, generously giving her Soul away to the great Lord of all, the new form'd man, and nothing of her hearts dear thoughts did she reserve [. . .] Oh what an excellent thing a perfect Women is [sic], e're man has taught her Arts to keep her Empire, by being himself inconstant? all I

¹²⁶ Gardiner, 214-215.

cou'd ask of Love she freely gave, and told me every sentiment of her heart [. . .] so innocently she confest her passion that every work added new flames to mine, and made me raging mad. (236-7)

The erotic potential of the innocent woman becomes ironic here, as Calista is already married to Lord Clarinau, where Sylvia was unmarried at the beginning of her affair with Philander. Calista's status as a married woman implies a lack of chastity, counter to the representations of Calista as sexually innocent that both Octavio and Philander perpetuate.

When Sylvia arrives at the convent, her sudden (though temporary) sympathy for Calista, contrasted with Calista's vindictiveness, reinforces the portrait of Sylvia as wronged woman and Calista as whore. When Sylvia first sees Calista, the narrator reveals that Calista so resembles her brother, Octavio, that Sylvia "was ready to faint at a sight so charming, and a form so angelic" and that "she found a majesty in her looks above all censure, that awed the jealous upbraider, and almost put her out of countenance; and with a rising blush she seemed ashamed of her errand" (314). Sylvia's emotional range confounds her intent and she seems immobilized. Though she does not abandon her original purpose, "to reproach [Calista]," Sylvia does seem to temper it. When Calista urges her to speak, she tells Calista why she had come:

I am the unfortunate, who am compelled by my hard fate to complain of the most charming woman that ever nature made; I thought, in my coming hither, I should have had no other Business but to have told you how false, how perjured a Lover I had; but at a sight so wondrous, I blame him no

more, (whom I find now compelled to love), but you, who have taken from me, by your charms, the only blessing Heaven had lent me. (314)

Sylvia's address to Calista is not without calculation and does, ultimately, chide Calista. However, in complementing her, Sylvia couches her complaint in innocuous flattery. Furthermore, she does not mention Philander by name, leaving it up to Calista to invoke their shared lover's name. When Calista replies, she says that she will give over "the World to [Sivlia], so it allow [her] Philander. This she spoke with a little Malice, which call'd up all the Blushes in the fair Face of Silvia." By having Calista be the one to speak Philander's name and to do so maliciously, Behn softens Sylvia's reproach and emphasizes Calista's spite. Sylvia, in response, displays what appears to be a genuine blush, inspired not by sexual desires but by a perceived threat.¹²⁷ Sylvia leaves letters revealing that Philander has exposed Calista and has continued courting Sylvia, but Behn has taken great care to distort, possibly erase, the distinctions between the virgin and the whore. By shifting the balance between the representation of virgin/whore, Behn leaves room for an ambiguous ending and concludes with Sylvia "forced to remove for new Prey, and daily makes considerable Conquests where e'er she shows the Charmer" (439).

¹²⁷ Though blushes are often dubious signs of modesty and virtue, Sylvia's blushes can indicate genuine emotion. In Volume I, Melinda describes, in a letter to Philander, that the visiting Duchess discovers a letter in her comb-box. She begins to read it aloud and Melinda says that Sylvia began "to blush and change Colour an Hundred times in a minute" (52). In Volume III, she "blush[es] with Anger at the Presence of a Man [Octavio's uncle, Sebastian] who had contributed to the having brought her to that place" (286). Conversely, Miranda's blushes in *The Fair Jilt* often signify her sexual desires, not her genuine modesty or emotion, which I discuss later in the chapter.

II. *The Fair Jilt*

While Sylvia spends the first volume of *Love Letters* struggling with her sense of shame to ultimately reject its internalization in volume II, *The Fair Jilt* begins with a heroine who has already rejected the internalization of shame as a control for her behavior.¹²⁸ Miranda, a “galloping nun” who has taken only temporary vows, finds herself taken with Francisco, a new priest. Upon seeing him in church, Miranda’s “face was overspread with blushes of surprise; she beheld him steadfastly, and saw in his face all the charms of youth, wit, and beauty.”¹²⁹ While the blush is assumed by the conduct manual to be a visual signal of a woman’s modesty, Miranda’s blush functions as an explicit signal of her sexual desire.¹³⁰ Miranda’s surprise comes not from being caught gazing on the priest’s body but from her inability to control her desire for the priest. Filles-devotes like Miranda frequently received addresses and gifts from men of quality, and “to manage these gallantries, there is no sort of female arts they are not practiced in, no intrigues they are ignorant of, and no management of which they are not capable” (79). Miranda, “naturally amorous, but extremely inconstant,” “make[s] it her business to wound” but will not “give away that lovely person to the possession of one who could please it with so many” (80). Rather than signify a shame which would control her action, her blush signifies a sexual desire over which Miranda has little control.

¹²⁸ Hobby calls Miranda “the perfect romance heroine [...] supremely desireable, unflawed in body, soul and mind” (98).

¹²⁹ *The Fair Jilt, Oroonoko and Other Writings*, ed. Paul Salzman, (Oxford UP: Oxford, 1994), 74-119. 81. All subsequent references are from this edition and cited parenthetically.

¹³⁰ Chapter three discusses, at length, the blush in contemporary conduct manuals, a blush which most commonly illustrates a woman’s internalized shame intended to attract the opposite sex in its representation of her virtue.

Miranda, shamelessly, gazes on Francisco's body, until he returns her blush: "She gazed upon him, while he bowed before her, and waited for her charity, till she perceived the lovely friar to blush and cast his eyes to the ground. This awakened her shame" (81). Like the blush which illustrates Miranda's recognition of an uncontrollable desire, her sense of shame does not restrict her action. Instead, Miranda's shame signals sexual compulsion:

[S]he put her hand into her pocket and was a good while in searching for her purse, as if she thought nothing less than what she was about; at last, she drew it out, and gave him a pistol, but that with so much deliberation and leisure as easily betrayed the satisfaction she took in looking on him, while the good man, having received her bounty, after a very low obeisance, proceeded to the rest, and Miranda casting after him a look all languishing, as long as he remained in the church, departed with a sigh as soon as she saw him go out[.] (81)

Though *The Ladies Calling* labels modesty "a Vertu of general Influence" which "steers every part of the outward frame," Miranda lacks such control.¹³¹ Her shame neither gives her opportunity to repress nor attempt to deny her sexual desire. Her shame, instead, compels her to indulge not only in self-pleasure but to indulge in public self-pleasure in church. Additionally, she makes a show of her sexual attraction, "easily betray[ing] the satisfaction" the priest's body makes available to her. Miranda's final sigh

¹³¹ In chapter three, I argue that "modesty" and "shame" are attendant on each other. A woman's outward signs of modesty are a reflection of her internalized shame.

as the priest leaves the church signals the completion of sexual conquest and Miranda's gratification.¹³²

As shame does little to deter Miranda from desiring the priest, the priest's status as a clerical figure does little to discourage her, either. In fact, his priesthood even encourages her desire. After learning of Francisco's prior life as Prince Henrick, a young man who lost the woman he loved to his scheming brother, Miranda finds his religious status alluring and "looks on his present habit as some disguise proper for the stealths of love; some feigned put-on shape with the more security to approach a mistress and make himself happy" (87-88). Ideologically, Francisco's priesthood should preclude her sexual desire for him, yet Miranda's rejection of ideological control on her desires extends to Francisco. In imaging that his religious status acts as a cover for rather than an exclusion from sexual desire, Miranda assumes that desire is naturalized, that ideology cannot control it. His status as priest is not a prohibition but an invitation. She desires not because she cannot have him but because he has the perfect cover for an affair.

In her fantasy, Miranda imagines that Francisco's priestly attire does not negate Henrick's sexuality but that it is always ever-present underneath the exterior rejection of that sexuality. Reminiscent of Philander's eroticization of the virginal female bodies of Sylvia and Calista, Miranda eroticizes the non-priestly body of Henrick. She images that, without his priestly attire, "she has the lover in his proper beauty, the same he would have been if any other habit (though never so rich) were put off" and that in "her arms he loses all the friar and assumes all the prince." Without the priestly attire, he can partake of

¹³² Miranda also blushes when her maid, Cornelia, asks her if she noticed the Francisco: "Miranda blushed, and the finding she did so redoubled her confusion, and she had scarce courage enough to say, 'Yes, I did observe him.'" (82).

“thousand dalliances for which he youth was made: for love, for tender embraces, and all the happiness of life” (88). Francisco’s status as a priest creates a separation between his previous life as Henrick and his current life as Father Francisco, yet Miranda rejects this dichotomization of self, believing “Henrick [not Father Francisco] would be glad at least to quench that flame in himself by an amour with her, which was kindled by the young princess” (88). Miranda’s inability to accept the priest as off-limits based on his social standing overtly rejects ideological control over one’s sexual subjectivity.

If Miranda rejects an internalization of shame which limits her sexual subjectivity, it stands to reason that she also rejects the ideological precept that shame, external or internal, is reformatory. When Miranda confesses her attraction to Francisco in the confessional and makes sexual advances toward him, he attempts to shame her: “Go, vain wanton, and repent, and mortify that blood which has so shamefully betrayed thee, and which will one day ruin both thy soul and body” (94). In rebuking her, Francisco attempts to repress Miranda’s sexuality, using shame to reform her wantonness. His rebuke is an attempt to create a reformatory sense of shame in her which would force her to deny her status as a sexual subject. However, the rebuke compels her to seek revenge for the prohibition, and she appeals to the sense of shame expected in her by others. Miranda does not repent her desire but punishes Francisco’s denial of her desire by crying out, “Help, help; a rape; help, help!” (95). Miranda’s cries draw the attention of the other priests who come to her rescue, yet it is a perceived sense of shame in Francisco, not Miranda, which lead the men to ultimately assume his guilt: “he bore with an humble, modest, blushing countenance all her accusations, which silent shame they mistook for evident signs of his guilt” (96). Instead of acting as an exterior force

controlling interior desires, shame becomes a weapon Miranda can wield against those who would shame her. As Miranda's earlier recognition of shame signaled her sexual compulsion and the ability to provide herself sexual gratification, Miranda finds gratification in revenge predicated on Francisco's shame as it leads to the presumption of his guilt. Once Francisco is sentenced, Miranda "cured of her love, was triumphing her in revenge, expecting and daily gaining new conquests" (97).

Echoing Sylvia's fate at the conclusion *Love Letters*, Miranda's history has barely begun. Where *Love Letters* ends ambiguously, Miranda seems to play out the consequences of Sylvia's fate, possessing an unnatural, even masculinized, predatory sexuality contrary the nature of female libertinism. Her desire shifts from sexual to monetary. When she learns of the arrival of Prince Tarquin, Miranda, intrigued by the local gossip, "fell in love with his very name" and "doted on the title, and had not cared whether the rest had been man or monkey" (98). Miranda plants herself in church "just over the prince, so that, if he would, he could not avoid looking full upon her. She had turned up her veil and all her face and shape appeared such, and so enchanting, [...] and her beauty heightened with blushes" (99). Miranda's use of the blush, like her earlier blushing, signals a desire but means something different for Tarquin than it does for Miranda. As John Gregory would later suggest in his *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*, a woman's blush, as a signal of her modesty and guiltlessness, is her "most powerful charm" for which Nature "has forced us to love you."¹³³ The blush naturally attracts men to women, yet Gregory's recognition of it as a charm seems to imply women's calculation in deploying it, a calculation Miranda is all too ready to make.

¹³³ John Gregory, *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters*, 2nd ed. (London, 1774), 26, 27.

Miranda, never averse to guerilla tactics, has exercised “good management and care,” in placing herself for Tarquin to see, and her display of her blush is no different. It is not, however, the only tool at her disposal. To woo Tarquin, Miranda puts on a show of modesty and shame designed to trap him. Once Miranda does catch Tarquin’s eye, she looks at him and “feign[s] so modest a shame, and cast[s] her eyes.” As she leaves the church, she passes him and “force[s] an innocent look, and a modest gratitude in her face.” Her approach seems a textbook example of Richard Allestree’s roughly contemporary description of the allure of feminine modesty:

Yet when they have strain’d their Art to the highest pitch, an innocent Modesty, and native simplicity of Look, shall eclipse their Glaring Splendor, and triumph over their Artificial Handsomeness. On the other side, let a Woman be dek’d with all the embelishment of Art, nay, and care of Nature too; yet if boldness be to be read in her Face, it blots all the lines of beauty, is like a cloud over the Sun, intercepts the view of all that was otherwise Amiable, and renders it’s blackness the more observable, by being plac’d near somewhat that was apt to attract the eyes.¹³⁴

Allestree assumes innocent modesty is more alluring than a feigned modesty, but his use of “innocent” implies the naturalization of female modesty when contrasted with the artifice of female beauty, particularly in the assumption that false modesty can show through beauty. Miranda’s display of modesty, though, contradicts Allestree’s naturalization and, despite her reputation otherwise, she successfully entices Tarquin by assuming an air of modesty. Staves claims that “Behn’s representations of male desire for

¹³⁴ *The ladies calling in two parts*. (Oxford, 1720), 5, 6.

courtesans in *The Rover* and in *The Feign'd Courtizans* remind her audiences that the idea that only female chastity can evoke male desire cannot be true. Behn's male libertines typically insist that they prefer a mistress to a 'dull wife.'" ¹³⁵ Like Sylvia, though, Miranda is a more nuanced version of the women Behn stages, and her manipulations of modesty and shame illustrate that it is not only female chastity that attracts men, but the *appearance* of chastity. Tarquin, despite warnings about Miranda, succumbs to her seduction. ¹³⁶ Her modest displays so entice Tarquin that "he was wholly ravished and charmed" by her (99) and she

had the art to wind herself about his heart, and make him unravel all his secrets, and then knew as well by feigned sighs and tears to make him disbelieve all. So that he had no faith but for her, and was wholly enchanted and bewitched by her. At last, [...] he married this famous woman, possessed by so many great men and strangers before, while the world was pitying his shame and misfortunes. (99-100)

Though he marries her, it is her ability to feign modesty and shame that attracts him to her. She has "strain'd [her] Art to its highest pitch" and come out on top. Furthermore, Miranda's rejection of shame results not in her shame but Tarquin's. Though he becomes the object of social shame, Miranda is not without her own social consequences. Miranda might now be a woman of quality, but her status does "not acquire 'em [Tarquin and

¹³⁵ Staves , 26.

¹³⁶ Quinsee makes a similar argument about Philander's attraction to Sylvia. Philander's sexual descriptions of Sylvia "appear inconsistent with her declaration that she is a 'Virgin quite disarm'd' by Philander's advances [and] is in fact highly typical of how virtuous appearance could be manipulated in this period. [...] An appearance of 'virtue' could increase the female lover's attractiveness and moral standing in the eyes of her lover when in reality she had no intention of refusing his amorous advances" (14).

Miranda] the world's esteem; [the world] had an abhorrence for her former life, despised her, and for his espousing a woman so infamous, they despised him. So that though they admired, and gazed upon their equipage and glorious dress, they foresaw the ruin that attended it and paid her quality very little respect" (100).

Not only does Miranda possess a sexual desire which crosses the line between natural and unnatural, feminine and masculine, she develops a seemingly masculine financial desire once she becomes her sister Alcidiana's guardian. Alcidiana, who has been wooed by many men who have all been turned away because of Miranda's desire for her sister's fortune, falls in love with a count and wants to marry him. Miranda, having spent a much of Alcidiana's fortune, plots to kill her sister to avoid discovery. She assigns the task to her page, Van Brune, who poisons Alcidiana, though she survives. After his arrest, he confesses and implicates Miranda. He is hanged and Miranda is forced to stand under the gibbet where he hangs with an "inscription in large letters upon her back and breast of the cause why, where she was to stand from ten in the morning to twelve" (105-06). Once Miranda is released, Alcidiana demands her inheritance be returned to her and Tarquin is placed under guard. Because he is unable to pay "bail or security [...], he was obliged at his own expense to maintain officers in his house" (107). Miranda, anxious over her inability to produce the money to secure Tarquin's bail, becomes genuinely distraught over Tarquin's fate and "if ever she shed Tears which she did not dissemble, it was upon this Occasion" (107). Though she seems to understand the severity of their situation, her concern is less for Tarquin than it is for material loss: "But she, who was not now so in love with Tarquin, as she was with the Prince, nor so fond of the Man, as his Titles, and of Glory, foresaw the total Ruin of the last, if not prevented,

by avoiding the payment of this great Sum” (107). Because Alcidiana still stands between Miranda and her complete control of the fortune, Miranda’s inability to separate morality from necessity clouds her ability to see responsibility and she places the blame for his misfortune squarely on the shoulders of her sister, a misfortune she can only get out of “by the Death of Alcidiana: and therefore, [...] she cried out *She could not live, unless Alcidiana dy’d. This Alcidiana [...] who has been the Author of my Shame*” (107). Miranda’s villainization of her sister, though, does not complete a villainous characterization of Miranda.

As Behn complicates the representation of Calista as innocent lover in *Love Letters*, she complicates the portrait of Alcidiana as innocent victim. Alcidiana has become the target of the ire of Van Brune’s family. Miranda receives letters from them threatening Alcidiana’s life. Instead of preventing Van Brune’s death, she attends his execution in full health, acquiring an “abundance of enemies on that account, because she might have saved him if she had pleased, but on the contrary she was a spectator, and in full health and vigour at his execution, and people were not so much concerned for her at this report as they would have been” (109). Of the opposition between Miranda and Alcidiana, Pearson argues that *The Fair Jilt* “emphasizes not the guilt of the attempted murderers and the innocence of the victim, but their essential goodness and her cruelty [...] The tale reveals the guilt of the innocent, the innocence of the guilty; and this problematizing of guilt and innocence works covertly on behalf of the guilty Miranda.”

¹³⁷ While this “problematization” certainly shifts the balance to Miranda’s favor, I would place pressure on the claim that it emphasizes Miranda’s “essential goodness.” By calling

¹³⁷ “Gender and Narrative,” 52-53.

into question Alcidiana's moral qualities, Behn blurs the distinctions between the persecuted innocent and the opportunistic whore.¹³⁸

Not only does Behn distort the virgin/whore dichotomy in *The Fair Jilt* as she does in *Love Letters*, she leaves Miranda with a similarly ambiguous ending, though one which does not leave Miranda as "free" as Sylvia's ending does. When *The Fair Jilt* ends, Miranda and Tarquin go to Holland to live with Tarquin's father. She is penitent, praises Heaven "for having given her these afflictions, that have reclaimed her, and brought her to as perfect a state of happiness as this troublesome world can afford" (119). Pearson argues that the narrator, like many of Behn's narrators, at once both moralizes and mocks moralizing.¹³⁹ In the case of *The Fair Jilt*, Behn creates distance between herself and Miranda's escape from punishment by attributing the knowledge that she is penitent to gossip: "the narrator offers a moral interpretation, but only tentatively, with none of the rich circumstantial detail found elsewhere in the novella, and she disclaims knowledge or responsibility for this part of her narrative, reporting only what 'They say...'"¹⁴⁰ Though I have argued that Miranda carries out the fate of Sylvia, both of whom are, at one point or another, free to make new conquests, Behn's ambiguity and distance from the fate of Miranda emphasize not the outcome each woman faces but the

¹³⁸ "Gender and Narrative," 52-53. Pearson further argues that "[w]hile the surface narrative presents Miranda as a monster of iniquity and Tarquin as a *preux chevalier*, and the fiction within which they move as a moral text, at a deeper level the narrator's voice questions and subverts this facile framework and creates a world more complex and disturbing in its ambiguities" (53).

¹³⁹ "Gender and Narrative," 52. Pearson writes, "Behn's narrators are torn between their desire to endorse the moral system that confines them and their sympathy with the female characters who rebel against it. Miranda, despite her sexual immorality and her attempts at rape and murder, finally escapes without punishment, and to the end the narrator's voice works to defuse its own simple moralizing."

¹⁴⁰ Pearson, "Gender and Narrative," 52.

circumstances which create her subjectivity, her awareness of her sexuality, her ability to navigate a system aimed at limiting her sphere of action. As Pearson notes, Miranda's fate lacks the "rich circumstantial detail" present in the rest of the novella and detracts from Miranda's willing exile in Holland. Her fate is not important. Though Pearson argues that "Behn's narrators are torn between their desire to endorse the moral system that confines them and their sympathy with the female characters who rebel against it,"¹⁴¹ I argue that it is less a struggle to endorse the system than it is a struggle to navigate it, a struggle Behn shares with her female heroines. By distancing herself from Miranda's fate, Behn gestures toward a system which expects the immoral woman to either be punished or to genuinely repent but also provides her heroine with the potential freedom within that system to govern herself.

III. *The History of the Nun*

Where Sylvia and Miranda seemingly escape punishment for their deeds, *The History of the Nun's* Isabella is executed for the murder of not one but two husbands. Isabella, sent to live in a convent at a young age after her mother's death, falls in love with the handsome Henault. Isabella leaves the convent to marry Henault who, in a bid to win back his father's esteem, joins the war against the Turks and is reportedly killed in battle. Isabella learns of her husband's fate from Villenoy, a suitor she had rejected because of her vows. Villenoy woos her, and after an appropriate period of mourning, Isabella agrees to marry him. Though they live happily "for the space of five Years, and Time (and perpetual Obligations from Villenoy, who was the most indulgent and indearing

¹⁴¹ "Gender and Narrative," 52.

Man in the World) had almost worn out of her Heart the Thoughts of *Henault*,”¹⁴² their happiness is soon destroyed when Henault “returns” from the dead, having lived the last few years as a prisoner of war sold into slavery. Confused and frightened, Isabella decides, rather than risk her reputation in revealing her bigamy, that “the murder [of Henault is] the least evil” and smothers him in his sleep (183). Villenoy returns from his hunting trip to learn that Isabella’s first husband is dead and, “resolving to save *Isabella’s* Honour, which was the only Misfortune to come,” he agrees to dump the body in the river (185). Isabella, “with thoughts all black and hellish” and “embolden’d by one wickedness,” stitches the sack covering Henault’s body to Villenoy’s coat and, when Villenoy tosses the body into the river, he is carried along with it and drowns (185, 186). Though she is initially above suspicion, Isabella is ultimately discovered and convicted of her crimes. The finality of Isabella’s execution contrasts with the ambiguous freedom rewarded to Sylvia and Miranda, women whose crimes are just as morally reprehensible as Isabella’s. Isabella’s execution seems particularly harsh when, of the three women, she is the only one who seems to express genuine guilt and remorse.¹⁴³ If *The Fair Jilt* plays out the consequences of *Love Letters* through a woman who embodies desires inappropriate for women in her rejection of internal shame and her privilege of money over sexual desire, *The History of the Nun* offers an alternative to both, exploring what happens when a desiring woman cannot overcome the internalization of shame and guilt.

¹⁴² *The History of the Nun, Oroonoko and Other Writings*, ed. Paul Salzman, (Oxford UP: Oxford, 1994), 179. All subsequent references are from this edition and cited parenthetically.

¹⁴³ Pearson claims that “Isabella’s capacity for guilt and her willingness to take full moral responsibility for her own actions are signs of her human subjectivity” (237). “The History of *The History of the Nun*,” (Re)Reading *Aphra Behn: History, Theory, and Criticism*, ed. Heidi Hutner (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1993), 234-252.

As a child in the convent, Isabella achieves a great deal of notoriety both inside and outside the convent walls. She becomes “the dear loved favourite of the whole house” and “was a great source of entertainment to them all.” The women teach her whatever arts they excel in (dancing, singing, and foreign language among others) “all [which] joined to complete the mind and body of this beautiful young girl, who [...] took to these virtues and excelled in all.” Her talent in these arts makes her fit to entertain “great men and ladies and strangers of any nation at the grate” and her grace and wit becomes well-known. In fact, she is so fine a young devotee that she is capable not only of entertaining great people but she is capable of instilling a sense of shame in others: “ladies brought their children to shame ’em into good fashion and manners with looking on the lovely Isabella” (142).

Isabella breaks the hearts of many potential suitors when she agrees to take on the life of a nun as a young woman and her conduct establishes her as a woman who has internalized the virtuous expectations of a woman in her position. Among Isabella’s potential suitors is her eventual second husband, the young Villenoy who, upon Isabella’s taking orders, becomes fevered with his love for her. Though she exchanges letters with Villenoy, her letters betray no moral ambiguity. Her letters “absolutely forbid him to love her; [...] incited him to follow Glory, the Mistress that could noblest reward him. [...]S]he, for her part, had fixed her mind on Heaven, and no earthly thought should bring it down; but she should ever retain for him all sisterly respect” (145-146). Villenoy continues “writing daily to her, but received no more Answers from her, she already accusing her self of having done too much, for a Maid in her Circumstances” (146). Though the letters Philander and Sylvia write serve, as Ballaster claims, to incite

each other's desire and illustrate Sylvia's struggle with virtue and shame, Isabella's act of writing attempts to assuage Villenoy's desire and assert her virtuous control over herself.

Isabella, however, is not immune to her own internal struggles with virtue and shame. After she has taken her orders, she learns that Villenoy is dying for her and his family pleads with her not to "enclose herself in a nunnery" (146). Isabella is moved to tears for Villenoy but insists that her tears only indicate her grief over her part in Villenoy's anguish: "She believed it was for her sins of curiosity, and going beyond the walls of the monastery to wander after the Vanities of the foolish world" and "fears she might, by something in her looks, have enticed his heart." She confesses "when she found her heart to grow a little more than usually tender when she thought on him, she believed it a crime that ought to be checked by a virtue, such as she pretended to profess." She vows a "severe Penance on her body, for the mischiefs her eyes had done him" (147). Isabella's guilt over Villenoy's languishment contrasts sharply with Sylvia's anticipation of breaking the moral code: "Oh Philander, I find I am fond of being undone" (*Love Letters*, 49). While the possibility of losing her virtue excites Sylvia, Isabella consistently recalls her virtue in order to control herself. In insisting on virtuous control, Isabella becomes not the "fair, cruel *Nun*" to whom Villenoy resolves to no longer write letters but the "most exemplary devout . . . giving such rare Examples to all the *Nuns* that were less Devout, that her Life was a Proverb, and a President that her name becomes synonymous with piety" (148).

Though she successfully manages the Villenoy affair, Isabella struggles with desire for Henault, the brother of Katteriena, a fellow nun, but finds neither public nor private shame a sufficient control for her desires. Her attraction to Henault is so strong that she

becomes melancholy and finally confesses her love for Henault when Katteriena shows her a picture of her brother. Seeing his picture so changes her demeanor that Katteriena asks her why the image is “so offensive.” Katteriena’s acknowledgement of the change in Isabella’s demeanor creates a strong sense of shame in Isabella which she is unable to control: “she was confounded with shame and the more she strove to hide it the more it disordered her, so that she (blushing extremely) hung down her head, sighed, and confessed all by her looks” (151). Isabella’s blush, coupled with her downturned head, indicate a genuine sense of shame which is properly internalized and reflective of her piety.

Though Isabella claims to be embarrassed by seeing the image of a man in her chambers, Katteriena recognizes the external signs of desire in Isabella’s face: “I believe that paleness and those blushes proceed from some other cause than the nicety of seeing the picture of a man in your chamber” (151). Katteriena recognizes not only Isabella’s desire for Henault but also the shame and guilt associated with improper desire, much like Sylvia’s “guilty blushing face” (*Love Letters*, 63). Katteriena attempts to console Isabella by confessing that she, too, was once in love. The account of her affair with Arnaldo, her father’s page does little to console Isabella; instead, it causes her to recognize that what she feels is, indeed, love, but that that love comes with shame: “No more, no more [...] thou blow’st my flame by thy soft words, and mak’st me know my weakness and my shame. I love! I love! And feel those differing passions” (152). Katteriena’s tale increases Isabella’s desire, much like Sylvia’s and Philander’s letters serve to increase each other’s desire, and Isabella is forced to recognize the impropriety of that desire is in direct opposition to her piety. Her confession, though, not only

recognizes her desire's impropriety but also emphasizes her internalization of shame. Because Isabella's confinement prevents, at this point, public shame for her desire, her shame comes from within. Katteriena indicates no sense of shame from her passion for her lover, Arnaldo, until after Isabella asks her the remedy for love: "They say possession's one, but that to me seems a riddle; absence, they say, another, and that was mine, for Arnaldo having by chance lost one of my billets, discovered the amour, and was sent to travel and myself forced into this monastery, where at last time convinced me I had loved below my quality, and that shamed me into holy orders" (153). Because Katteriena's shame is a result of the class difference between her and Arnaldo, her tale cannot effectively reproduce shame in Isabella. Isabella's shame must come from the internalization of codes of female morality, particularly because of her status as a pious example.

Though the shame Isabella feels is internalized, there are very public consequences for her desire. Isabella tells Katteriena that Henault has "ruin[ed] all the glory I have achieved, even above my sex, for piety of life and the observation of all virtues" (153). Though Isabella's love is not public knowledge, her insistence that her love has ruined her glory indicates the potential her desire has to ruin her reputation. She resolves to see him no more in order to cure herself of her love. Her vow to never see him, however, cannot negate her desire. In fact, in forbidding herself, she only increases her desire: "the more she concealed her flame, the more violently it raged, which she strove in vain by prayers, and those recourses of solitude to lessen. All this did but augment the pain, and was oil to the fire, so that she now could hope that nothing but death would put an end to her griefs and her infamy" (154). Now that she has removed herself from Henault's

presence, madness becomes a greater danger: “she found life could not long support itself, but would either reduce her to madness and so render her a hated object of scorn to the censuring world, or force her hand to commit a murder upon herself” (155). She discovers it is “impossible to cure her despair” and all “her fervent and continual prayers, her mortifications [...], all her acts of devotion” not enough to “abate one spark of this shameful fever of love that was destroying her within” (155). Katteriena’s absence from Arnaldo may have been enough to shame her into her orders and away from loving a man beneath her social standing, but for Isabella, the increase in desire in the absence of her beloved illustrates that her desire cannot be controlled.

Not only is her desire beyond her control, Isabella must struggle with the urge to fulfill that desire. Henault recognizes the natural qualities of Isabella’s desire when he tells Katteriena that “naturally [...] maids are curious and vain and, however divine the mortal mind of the fair Isabella may be, it bears the tincture of mortal woman” (156). Henault implies that, although Isabella’s piety demands she repress her desire for him, her natural curiosity will win out in the end. Unbeknownst to Henault and Katteriena, Isabella’s curiosity has already won out and has driven her to seek out Henault. Isabella has been listening to their conversation from the stairway and learns that Henault loves her. In knowing her love is returned, Isabella is able to gain control over her seemingly out-of-control desire:

[S]he knew she could dissemble her own passion and make him the first aggressor [...]. This thought restores her so great a part of her peace of mind, that she resolved to see him, and to dissemble with Katteriena so far as to make her believe she had subdued that passion she was really

ashamed to own. She now, with her woman's skill, begins to practise an art she never before understood and has recourse to cunning and resolves to seem to reassume her former repose. (157)

Where Isabella's absence from Henault caused her distress and prevented her from controlling her excessive passions in private, the knowledge that he returns her love gives her the ability to exhibit public control. Though she is "really ashamed" to confess she still loves, shame does not prevent her from loving. Though she has properly internalized female shame, her pious reputation does not mitigate her "woman's skill." Knowing her love is returned converts Isabella from a pious and virtuous nun to a desiring female, one who employs cunning and art in order to fulfill her desires. However, she is neither the Sylvia nor the Miranda model: unlike Philander, Henault "loved not debauch, as [men] usually did" (149). Isabella is never relentlessly pursued by the hyper-sexualized womanizer. Nor is she the hyper-sexualized, predatory Miranda, who uses feigned modesty and shame as a tool of seduction. Isabella's piety is genuine; her aim is not seduction and conquest but requited love, and her sense of virtue provides her with the means of controlling and keeping her desire private.

With Isabella's desire publicly under control, the burden of shame shifts from Isabella to Henault. Katteriena insists that, if Isabella faces public ridicule, Henault is responsible: "if you will be content with the friendship of this young lady and so behave yourself that we may find no longer the lover in the friend, we shall resume our former conversation and live with you as we ought; otherwise, your presence will continually banish her from the grate and, in time, make both her you love, and yourself, a town-discourse" (160). If Henault is unable to give up his love for Isabella, it is his love, not Isabella's, which will

make her the center of town gossip. Not only will Henault bear the responsibility for making Isabella grist for the gossip mill, but he is also subject to the control of external shame. Katteriena threatens to expose him to their father, “a man of temper so very precise that should he believe his son should have a thought of love to a virgin vowed to Heaven, he would abandon him to shame and eternal poverty by disinheriting him of all he could” (160). Henault is unconcerned with the threat of fatherly and public shame. He “was not without his thoughts, but did not consider in the right place,” concerned, instead, with how “to establish himself as he was before with Isabella” (160, 161). He decides, much like Isabella decides, to “dissemble patience” in the hopes that he might get the chance to speak to Isabella himself and does not return to the convent for several days. Katteriena’s admonishment recognizes that men can be publicly shamed like women but that their shame comes from a different place. If Henault’s love for Isabella is discovered, it threatens not to “ruin [his] glory,” like it would Isabella’s, but his financial prospects. The threat of future financial ruin does nothing to abate his desire, though it should, and he and Isabella will begin their marriage with no money. He pretends, like Isabella, to harbor no more passion for her and bides his time.

Though both Isabella and Henault possess inappropriate desire and they both face the potential of shame, neither one’s desire is effectively controlled by the potential for shame. In fact, when Henault finally returns to the convent to see Isabella, each is overwhelmed with emotion by being in the other’s presence:

Who can guess the confusion of these two lovers, who wished, yet feared, to know each other’s thoughts? She trembling with a dismal apprehension that he loved no more; and he almost dying with fear that she should

upbraid him with his presumption, so that both being possessed with equal sentiments of love, fear, and shame, they both stood with dejected looks and hearts that heaved with stifled sighs. (162)

Like Isabella's earlier struggles with shame, the shame the lovers experience here is purely internal, motivated by the other's presence and the fear that each other's love will not be returned. When Isabella confesses to Henault that she does, indeed, love him, she tells him that her vow has made her "so miserable to have fallen thus low as to have confessed [her] shame" (163). Though her confession recognizes the relationship between her status as a nun and her shame, that she must confess it emphasizes its internal nature. To this point, Isabella has faced only internal shame rather than an application of shame from public exposure, a shame which Isabella might or might not feel. When Henault suggests that they run away, Isabella admits that she could "fall to so wretched a degree of infamy and reprobation" (164) by breaking her vows and running away with her lover but does not go so far as to identify the repercussions as "shame." If shame is internal, the public consequences stop short of *instilling* shame though they certainly threaten to tarnish her reputation.

Though she has successfully negotiated her internalized shame this far, Isabella's shame begins to straddle the boundary between internal and external becoming more difficult to control once Henault returns from the dead. His mere presence is enough to invoke her very private and internal shame: "Shame and confusion filled her soul and she was not able to lift her eyes up to consider [his] face" (181). As Katteriena warned Henault in the convent, he has become the one responsible for bringing shame to Isabella: "She finds, by his return, she is not only exposed to all the shame imaginable, to all the

upbraiding on his part when he shall know she is married to another, but all the fury and rage of Villenoy's, and the scorn of the town, who will look on her as an adulteress" (181). Though she recognizes the public repercussions of having two husbands, her shame seems to be generated internally and directly related to Henault, not by the threat of social or public consequences.¹⁴⁴ The narrator's use of "shame" implies that social judgments are separate from internalized self-awareness. Though Isabella recognizes there are consequences outside her private sphere, the narrator's very careful arrangement of the consequences highlights the internal nature of Isabella's shame. She realizes not that she will face public shame but that she is "exposed to all the shame imaginable." This sense of shame is not only generated in Isabella's imagination but is directly connected to her awareness that Henault will upbraid her. While Henault's upbraiding is obviously external, it all occurs, in this passage, within Isabella's imagination. Furthermore, the potential "fury and rage of Villenoy's" and the threat of being labeled an adulteress by the town are carefully and distinctly separated by the narrator from her imaginable shame and Henault's upbraiding. Isabella's awareness of the consequences of having two very alive husbands recognizes that shame can occur on multiple levels and

¹⁴⁴ Isabella's legal options are of little or no concern to Behn. Though she could, legally, choose one husband over the other, Behn's focus on her psychological distress emphasizes the problem inherent in adherence to arbitrary moral codes. In *Family, Sex, and Marriage*, Lawrence Stone notes that spouses missing and not heard from over a seven-year period were assumed to be dead, leaving the other to remarry. In the event that the "deceased" returned, "either the first marriage took priority over the second or the woman was permitted to choose which husband she preferred" (38). Stone, *Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (New York: Harper Row, 1977).

that, to some degree, shame requires an external agent. For Isabella, this external agent comes in the form of an imagined upbraiding by Henault.¹⁴⁵

Isabella's actions, however, are explained through a complicated discourse between her internal shame and the public consequence, a discourse which requires one to accept a certain standard of female behavior and which exposes the lack of options Isabella has. Once one accepts unquestioningly the standards of female morality, one's sphere of action is instantly limited. Isabella's only options once she has come to terms with Henault's return are suicide or murder because she cannot, according to the model of the "good girl," live with two husbands. Isabella's contemplation of suicide results from the desire to "rid herself of the infamy that she saw must inevitably fall upon her." Because Isabella has internalized the "good girl" identity, she is compelled by the threat of infamy. Though infamy is the result of shame,¹⁴⁶ Isabella is not compelled by public expectations of female behavior but by her internalization of those expectations. If the threat of infamy were merely sufficient to control female behavior, Sylvia and Miranda would have had dramatically different stories. While Sylvia and Miranda consciously flout convention, Isabella struggles with the varying degrees of shame that she could experience, shame that she continually imagines befalling her but never actually does.

¹⁴⁵ Craft argues that Isabella realizes "that both men will unite in blaming her, making her the scapegoat for their mutual jealousies [...] so, the narrator implies, she smothers Henault before he can smother her" (827). Though not explicit, Craft's assertion that Isabella smothers Henault before he can smother her implies that Isabella acts to avoid the shame associated with her bigamy. "Reworking Male Models: Aphra Behn's *The Fair Vow-Breaker*, Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina*, and Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*." *The Modern Language Review*. 86.4 (Oct. 1991): 821-838.

¹⁴⁶ The *OED* definition emphasizes its relationship to public identity: "Evil fame or reputation; scandalous repute; public reproach, shame, or disgrace."

Her decision to kill Henault provides no satisfying outcomes, either, and further limits her options to act.¹⁴⁷ To kill him means “she should run mad,” but not to kill him means “she should be frantic with the shames and miseries that would befall her” of having two husbands (186). Once she smothers Henault, she does run mad, swooning “with the horror of the deed”(184), “fancies the phantom of her dead lord pursues her,” and imagines a knock at the door to be “officers of justice and that ten thousand tortures and wracks are fastening on her to make her confess the horrid murder” (185). Her guilt, a genuine emotion on her part, drives her nearly mad and, once she confesses to Villenoy's what she has done, she realizes that she has no other course of action but to kill him, as well: “She imagined that could she live after a deed so black, Villenoy's would be eternal reproaching her, if not with his tongue” (186). Isabella's attempt to imagine life after Henault's murder illustrates an awareness of the intricate discourses of shame which circulate around her pious identity. As she plays out the possible outcomes in her imagination, she conflates the external and internal forces which create shame. She imagines the external reproaches from Villenoy's tongue, as she similarly imagined Henault's upbraiding, but she also imagines reproaches from Villenoy's heart, which rely on an imagined loss of affection and an internal awareness of her own perceptions of Villenoy's love. Isabella's heightened internalization of shame fails to reform her, much like Francisco's attempt to externally shame Miranda fails to reform her. Miranda responds by seeking revenge, but Isabella, having internalized “good girl” sensibilities,

¹⁴⁷ Not only are Isabella's actions limited, so are, as Craft argues, Behn's options: “[she] could have concluded with Isabella's successful appropriation of her husband's wealth, but in 1689 such an ending was not possible: it would have too starkly threatened the social order” (828). Isabella's options are not a question of what the law does or does not allow but, rather, a question of what is a reasonable choice for both author and character.

sees no simple way out. The threat of being shamed by Villenoy's leads Isabella to one conclusion: she must kill him, too: "emboldened by one wickedness, she was the readier for another, and another of such a nature has, in my opinion, far less excuse than the first" (186). Her shame and guilt originate from an internal perception of imagined external consequences, consequences she never actually faces. Isabella, a perfect example of piety, acts not on public perception of what a "good girl" is but based on an internalization of the "good girl" identity. This internalization of what it means to be a good girl has so severely limited Isabella's options that the only way to deal with her incredible circumstances is to commit double-murder.

Once the two bodies are discovered and Isabella finally confesses to her crimes, the narrative, much like *The Fair Jilt*, hurries to its close and the narrator leaves her analysis of Isabella's psychological state, an awareness of the heroine's fragility which the narrator has previously taken great pains to portray. The narrator, instead, employs a similar "they say" model as the narrator does in *The Fair Jilt*'s closing and describes the difficulty the public has reconciling the "good girl" with the "murderess of two husbands (both beloved) in one night" (189): "The whole world stood amazed at this, who knew who like a holy and charitable life, and how dearly and well she had lived with her husbands" (190). In recounting the public reaction to Isabella's crimes, Behn creates distance from the narrator and the public moral reaction.¹⁴⁸ In asserting the public's disbelief, the narrator implies that nothing less should be expected when one assumes such a pious identity, however genuine it might be. The narrator never implies that

¹⁴⁸ Hobby similarly notes the lack of narratorial condemnation and that "the fault lies not with [Isabella], but with a society which has given her such dire choices in life" (*Virtue of Necessity*, 100).

Isabella's piety is a rouse and even reinforces her extreme piety during her trial, imprisonment, and execution by seeming to erase all sense of shame from Isabella. Though "everyone bewailed her misfortune, [...] she alone was the only person that was not afflicted for herself. She was tried and condemned to lose her head, which sentence she joyfully received and said Heaven and her judges were too merciful to her and that her sins had deserved much more" (190). It is in prison that Isabella seems the least confined and most happy: "she was always at prayers and very cheerful and easy" (190).

If the social rules that governed the behavior of the "good girl" are too severely limiting for Isabella in the exterior world, her imprisonment, however, brief, becomes liberation from that confinement.¹⁴⁹ It is in confinement that Isabella can truly be the pious "good girl," but this is precisely the problem which Behn criticizes: Isabella's problem is one in which an internalized sense of shame limits her sphere of action. Unlike Sylvia and Miranda, Isabella cannot govern herself. Her internal shame holds her prisoner and her literal confinement in prison rewards that shame. Isabella "joyfully receive[s]" her sentence and finds happiness there. On the morning of her execution, she

¹⁴⁹ The voluntary retirement of Mary Astell's votaries constitutes the "Pleasure, the Glory and Advantage of this blessed Reitirement." *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, ed. Patricia Springborg (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2002). Of Astell's retirement, Helen Thompson argues, "By occupying a compact motivated not by 'fear' but by 'desire, Astell's prospective votaries realie the promise of Locke's own modernizing pedagogy: the 'Pleasure' that substantiates their most binding 'tye' to Astell's 'Amicable Society' renders these women both 'voluntary and free'" *Ingenuous Subjection* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press), 29. Though Isabella's confinement is, technically, involuntary imprisonment as result of her confession to the murders of her husbands, that she makes her confession voluntarily is critical. Because she is "so admirable a life and conversation, of so undoubted a piety and sanctity of living, that no the least conjecture could be made of her having a hand in it ... the world, instead of suspecting her, adored her the more" (*Nun* 189). Isabella, compelled by her guilt, chooses confession and, indirectly, her confinement.

appears “very majestic and charming and [with] a face so surprising fair, where no languishment of fear appeared, but all cheerful as a bride” and gives a speech warning against breaking one’s vows. Her image before her execution emphasizes the fact that the only possible outcome as the “good girl” that she tries so hard to be is a tragic martyrdom. The beautiful Isabella who willingly kneels before the executioner dies for her piety but also because of it. The narrator’s matter-of-fact presentation of the public reaction to her crimes and death (the narrator closes with “she was generally lamented and honorably buried”) carry with it a critical angle. Isabella’s extreme piety prevents her from understanding the dire nature of her situation. Her pious nature and sense of shame prevent her from realizing the injustice of not only her execution but her limited choices, as well. Instead, her punishment becomes one of the few pleasures in her short, exemplary life. As a woman who has internalized the naturalization of the good girl, confinement becomes a better option for Isabella than anything she has been offered as her previous choices have always resulted in disaster. Confinement is the only sphere in which Isabella’s genuine piety can be appropriately maintained.

IV. Conclusion

With *The History of the Nun*, Behn makes a bold assertion in period inundated with conduct manuals which argue that adherence to cultural norms are not only liberating for women but natural.¹⁵⁰ In all three works, Behn calls attention to the constructedness of

¹⁵⁰ Marilyn L. Williamson’s response to issues of social controls, female sexuality, and narrative form are rather dismissive: “Isabella [...] illustrates the power of female sexuality [but] the story is artistically flawed because Behn masks her favorite theme of the power of love with a moral about Isabella’s broken vows. [...] In the novellas, [Behn] did not resolve the conflict between the romance structures she has used effectively in

these naturalized norms and exposes the ways in which these expectations confine women. Her amatory fiction works out this problem only to understand that, in the end, there are no positive outcomes. When women outright reject these governing norms, chaos ensues. Sylvia and Miranda create disorder around them and Miranda, especially, seems to thrive on that disorder. Sylvia is exiled because of her inability to behave as a “good girl” and Miranda becomes increasingly lawless, framing a priest for rape and plotting her sister’s murder. When women internalize the norms, their sphere of action is so limited that ethical action, at least for the unconfined woman, becomes impossible.¹⁵¹

Though Sylvia, Miranda, and Isabella all constitute types of female behavior, and though these types differ dramatically from author to author, Behn deploys types much differently than male authors deploy types. Richardson’s *Pamela*, for example, presents three very different types of women in Pamela, Sally Godfrey, and Lady Davers, but all are incredibly simplified portraits of women who need not negotiate their desires and constructed normative female behavior as Richardson does not question the norm. When women behave poorly in Richardson, there are clear consequences for their actions. In Behn, however, what appears to be incomprehensible immoral action is the product of women trying to negotiate their own desires and the normative modes of female behavior. Though Sylvia, Miranda, and Isabella each embody a female type, their behavior exposes the inconsistencies and hypocrisies in a discourse which naturalizes female modesty and shame. Behn’s fiction blurs the lines between moral and immoral behavior, and in her

[...] *Love-Letters* and the moral themes that she had tried to graft onto them.” *Raising Their Voices: British Women Writers, 1650-1750* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1990), 216.

¹⁵¹ Hobby notes Behn’s “blunt assumption of female impotence in the public world of law-making” in *The History of the Nun* and Behn’s insistence that “through the actions of her heroines[...], female choices were few and nasty” (100).

narrator's refusals to pass explicit judgment, *Love Letters*, *The Fair Jilt*, and *The History of the Nun* relentlessly deconstruct of what it means to be a whore and a good girl.

Chapter 2:

Eliza Haywood and the Progress of the Amatory Heroine

Of Eliza Hawyood's fiction, Sophriana in Clara Reeve's *The Progress of Romance* declares, "May her first writings be forgotten, and the last survive to do her honour!"¹⁵² Until recently, Sophriana's decree about the fate of Haywood's fiction has seemed true: her later "moral" fiction eclipsed her early amatory fiction until its recovery by feminist scholars in the last twenty years.¹⁵³ Recent trends in Haywood studies have successfully revised our literary and biographical understanding of one of the eighteenth century's most prolific writers.¹⁵⁴ Paula Backscheider explores "The Story" of Haywood's career—that her later fiction marks a not a genuine reform but a strategic reinvention of the author to take advantage of the literary market's turn toward moralism—and accounts for Haywood's role in the novel's history by analyzing her formal experiments and their cultural significance.¹⁵⁵ Patrick Spedding's extensive bibliographic research has reshaped our knowledge of Haywood's prolific publishing

¹⁵² Clara Reeve, *The Progress of Romance*, (London, 1785), 122.

¹⁵³ Some of the more well-known works recovering women's amatory fiction are Jane Spenser's *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen*, (New York: Blackwell, 1986); Ros Ballaster's *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684-1740*, (New York: Oxford UP, 1992); and Paula Backscheider, *Revising Women: Eighteenth-Century "Women's Fiction" and Social Engagement*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000).

¹⁵⁴ Christine Blouch attributes "more than seventy pieces in six genres over four decades" to Haywood. See "Eliza Haywood and the Romance of Obscurity," *Studies in English Literature*, 31(3): 1991, 535-552.

¹⁵⁵ In Reeve's *Progress*, Euphrasia claims that "Mrs. Heywood [sic] had the singular good fortune to recover a lost reputation, and the yet greater honour to atone for her errors" (125). For a critical reassessment of the story of Haywood's moral conversion, see Paula Backscheider, "The Story of Eliza Haywood's Novels," *The Passionate Fictions of Eliza Haywood: Essays on Her Life and Work*, eds. Kirsten T. Saxton and Rebecca P. Bocchicchio (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 2000), 19-47; *A Bibliography of Eliza Haywood* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2004).

history.¹⁵⁶ The last decade has seen an incredible number of publications which treat Haywood extensively and from a variety of critical lenses.¹⁵⁷ While Haywood studies has moved passed the all-too-simple representation of Haywood as two different authors, one the immoral authoress of Pope's *The Dunciad* who stands with "two babes of love close clinging to her waist"¹⁵⁸ and the other the penitent woman writer who "devoted the remainder of her life and labours to the service of virtue,"¹⁵⁹ we have yet to explore fully the consequences of this antiquated portrait of Haywood's later fiction. In this chapter, I move from the premise set out in the introduction that Haywood's early fiction resists neat placement into generic categories and, instead, tests the limits of eighteenth-century feminine ideals. While Behn plays with these ideals in her fiction to expose the arbitrary nature of social and moral codes, her fiction cannot offer a successful model for the female sexual subject. Her heroines and their adventures remain stuck in the space between the romance novel and the conduct manual. Haywood's fiction, however, offers

¹⁵⁶ Patrick Spedding, *A Bibliography of Eliza Haywood*, (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2004).

¹⁵⁷ A search in the MLA Bibliography yields 91 publications published between 2000 and 2010 with "Haywood" in the title. A search of the previous ten years yields only ten. On subjectivity and political commentary, see Melissa Mowry, "Eliza Haywood's Defense of London's Body Politic," *SEL* 43.3 (Summer 2003), 645-665. On the relationship between subjectivity and performativity, see Emily Hodgson Anderson, "Performing the Passions in Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina* and *Miss Betsy Thoughtless*," *The Eighteenth-Century* 46.1 (2005), 1-15. On subjectivity and narrative form, see Stephanie Harzewski, "The Fantomina Phenomenon: Eliza Haywood and the Formation of a Heroine," *The Eighteenth-Century Novel* 5 (2005), 175-196. On the aesthetic and instructional qualities of Haywood's fiction, see Kathleen Lubey, "Eliza Haywood's Amatory Aesthetic," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39.3 (2006), 309-322. On the influence of Haywood's amatory on the 1740 edition of Defoe's *Roxana*, see Nicholas Seager, "The 1740 *Roxana*: Defoe, Haywood, Richardson, and Domestic Fiction," *Philological Quarterly* 88: 1-2 (2009), 103-126.

¹⁵⁸ *The Dunciad* (London, 1743), line 158.

¹⁵⁹ Reeve, 125

a model of the heroine who has moved out of that space between genres and into a generic space that offers up new possibilities for the female sexual subject.

Published within three years of each other, Haywood's *Lasselia, or the Self-Abandoned* (1723), *Fantomina, or Love in a Maze*, (1725) *The City Jilt, or the Alderman Turn'd Beau* (1726) provide three very different portraits of women navigating sexuality, internalized honor, and their public reputations; in these novels, Haywood struggles with the intellectual and historical development of the female sexual subject that occupies Behn's fiction. Deceptively formulaic, Haywood's early fiction turns a critical eye towards women's social position that necessitates a multifaceted approach. On the one hand, *Lasselia* follows a very typical seduction narrative¹⁶⁰ in which Haywood seemingly endorses the dominant belief that women who do not safeguard their virtue should be exiled from polite society, while *The City Jilt* offers a fantastical revision of the seduction narrative, providing a vicarious revenge tale that allows its heroine to participate in the complicated and highly gendered financial and contractual discourse of eighteenth-century society.¹⁶¹ *Fantomina*, however, rejects both these narrative trends and, while not realistic in the way that Richardson's *Pamela* purports to be, exposes the contradictions within the very real ideologies of internalized virtue and public reputation. While both *Fantomina* and *Glicera* see some degree of success in managing their desires and reputations, *Lasselia* fares little better than Behn's heroines, echoing Isabella's struggle to reconcile idealized virtue with sexual desire. Haywood, unsatisfied with the

¹⁶⁰ Ballaster argues that the Behn's, Haywood's, and Manley's fiction rely on French fiction models and notes a "link between early British women's fiction and the imported French heroic romance" as "'feminine' modes of literary production and consumption" (*Seductive Forms* 42-43).

¹⁶¹ For a discussion of the role of fantasy in women's fiction and women's reading, see Ballaster (*Seductive Forms* 27-28).

limitations Behn's heroines face, provides new models of female subjectivity which break away from the helplessly doomed women of *Love-Letters*, *The Fair Jilt*, and *The History of the Nun*, and over the course of these three novellas, Haywood offers up more liberating, even if fantastical, models of the female sexual subject than those that Behn offers.¹⁶²

Though contemporary criticism has reshaped Haywood's reputation, her adherence to or rejection of dominant ideological assumptions remains a subject of debate. Feminist recoveries of Haywood from the 1980s to the late 1990s argue that Haywood's fiction celebrates the unchecked pursuit of sexual pleasure. Others, like Alexander Pettit, challenge this approach to her fiction, painting a much more conservative portrait of her fiction.¹⁶³ Pettit cites Catherine Craft's argument that Fantomina's removal to a convent allows her to join "a community of women" at the story's close which serves as a "continuation of ...female society" (153). Pettit, instead, argues that "claims [like Craft's] neglect Haywood's own sense of women's responsibility, specifically her belief that 'victimage' is not the action of patriarchy against inert young women but the consequence of wrong-headedness among young women in the first place" (146). He argues that Haywood recognizes "the necessity of 'rules' and 'customs' as safeguards against feminine error" and that Haywood's fictions

¹⁶² While it is reasonable to argue that Helena in Behn's *The Rover* is a liberating portrait of the female subject, we have to question that success in light of the opening of *The Rover, Part II*, as I have noted in the opening of the previous chapter.

¹⁶³ "Our Fictions and Haywood's Fictions," *Talking Forward, Talking Back: Critical Dialogues with the Enlightenment*, eds. Kevin L. Cope and Rüdiger Ahrens, (New York: AMS Press, 2002), 145-166.

advocate women conform to the expectations of polite society to avoid punishment.¹⁶⁴ While Pettit's approach is much more nuanced than early recoverist arguments which argue for unilateral rejection of patriarchal systems in Haywood's texts, I disagree with his conclusion that Haywood endorses what he calls a "tenacious gendered fatalism that Behn subverts: the belief that the sexual rebellion of the adolescent female ensures punishment rather than inviting correction or, more ambitiously, legitimation."¹⁶⁵ Pettit's reading of Haywood's amatory fiction as an endorsement of patriarchal morality treats her fiction as though it were a body of conventional seduction tales deployed uncritically. In adopting these modes, Haywood twists the limits of conventionality to criticize not the loss of reputation through amorous behavior but women's mismanagement of reputations. Rather than being forced to choose between willfully moderating their desires in accordance with social expectation or face drastic (even fatal) consequences, as Pettit argues, Haywood's women must learn to moderate their public reputations while indulging their private desires. While some women come to that realization earlier than others, the texts are less about the consequences of adolescent sexual rebellion than they are about how to manage the spheres of action available to them.¹⁶⁶ The difference between Behn's heroines and Haywood's heroines is not in one author's subversion and the other's endorsement of "tenacious gendered fatalism." If Behn calls attention to the

¹⁶⁴ Haywood's women "must either accept the social ideology of well-intentioned but unavoidably oppressive elders and temper (or tender) the biological imperative of desire, or they must face all manner of consequences, from internalized guilt to parental disapproval to ostracism and death." Pettit, 147.

¹⁶⁵ Pettit, 165.

¹⁶⁶ In this regard, my argument bears some similarities to Ballaster's claim that "[b]y dehistoricizing and mythologizing the public sphere, the romantic fiction writer provides the female reader with a sense of feminine power and agency in a world usually closed to her participation" (*Seductive Forms* 34-35).

arbitrary nature of naturalized female characteristics, Haywood accepts these arbitrary constructions as an unavoidable condition of living in a patrilineal system but provides alternative narratives of women successfully managing private desire and public reputation by redefining female morality for themselves.

I. The Mechanics of Shame

Before reading the various ways in which Haywood's heroines redefine virtuous and moral behavior for themselves, I turn to two modern critical discussions of morality and subjectivity in Haywood's work: Helen Thompson's *Ingenuous Subjection* and Joseph Drury's "Haywood's Thinking Machines" to reframe the moral context in which Haywood's heroines operate. In her book, Thompson argues that the female subject in the domestic novel uses her position as an ingenuously subject wife to create political agency,¹⁶⁷ and defines a woman's "ingenuous practice [as] a person's reconciliation of mechanical passion and virtuous will."¹⁶⁸ Thompson's argument that a woman practices ingenuous subjection by reconciling mechanical passion and virtuous will is important as it reveals the complexities of eighteenth-century "feminism": the compliant female subject "exposes the persistent arbitrariness of contractarian men's conjugal authority." It is in this exposure that Thompson locates "the eighteenth-century domestic novel's 'feminism': not in the necessity of feminine resistance, but in wives who might, sometimes despite their best efforts, extend Hobbes's egalitarian person into domestic modernity."¹⁶⁹ Though Thompson discusses some of Behn's and Haywood's early

¹⁶⁷ Thompson, 4.

¹⁶⁸ Thompson, 11.

¹⁶⁹ Thompson, 21.

amatory fiction, her primary focus, particularly in part two of her study, is on post-Richardsonian fiction: Haywood's *Miss Betsy Thoughtless* and Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*, yet her argument illustrates the significance of feminine survival in eighteenth-century fiction. While the strategy does not produce the same type of female sexual subject of interest for my study, Thompson provides just one example of the ways in which women, when resistance is impossible, survive oppressive masculinist ideology.

Drury's essay builds on claims that Haywood's characters behave mechanistically but not moralistically by arguing that "Haywood's mechanical fiction also privileges the intensity and complexity of female consciousness produced in the material experiences of subjection over the straight arrow of masculine desire."¹⁷⁰ Based on this analysis of female consciousness, Drury identifies Haywood's work as exemplary of a "dialectical development of the novel's distinctive interior spaces, in which the heroine's resisting consciousness challenges both the amoral determinism simulated by libertine machines and the amoral model of the novel with which they had become identified."¹⁷¹ Haywood's women possess a heightened sense of passion, creating in them a heroic quality above and beyond that of men, and Drury argues that women's (and men's) mechanistic behavior in matters of love and lust is above moral condemnation.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ "Haywood's Thinking Machines," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 21.2 (2008-9), 201-228.

¹⁷¹ Drury, 204.

¹⁷² Drury notes that Locke, in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, allowed for the inability of one to exert self-control when faced with an excess of passion: "'If any extreme disturbance [...] possesses our whole Mind, as when the pain of the Rack, an impetuous *uneasiness*, as of Love, Anger, or any other violent Passion, running away with us, allows us not the liberty of thought, as we are not Masters enough of our own Minds to consider thoroughly, and examine fairly; God [who] sees what was not in our power, will judge as a kind and merciful Father'" (210-211).

Together, Thompson's and Drury's arguments provide a context for Haywood's fiction which presupposes, first, that her heroines are not *limited by* expectations of feminine virtue but are rather afforded a much broader sphere of action than Behn's heroines, as I argued in the previous chapter. Second, this context offers an alternative moral context for female sexual action.¹⁷³ Building upon Thompson and Drury, then, I argue that Haywood's amatory women work within the conventional expectations of female virtue not as a means of resistance but as a means of existence. If these modes of behavior are unavoidable conditions of life in a male-dominated sphere, Haywood's women move beyond deferential internalization and outright rejection to finding ways in which to navigate limitlessly an intrinsically limiting system. In the transition from *Lasselia* to *Fantomina* to *The City Jilt*, Haywood progressively moves further away from the Behnian model of female sexual subjectivity which is inevitably shut down by the end of Behn's novels. Haywood's heroines illustrate her progress toward a female subject who simultaneously recognizes her social position but understands how to navigate the limitations arbitrarily imposed upon that position without ruining her reputation. In negotiating such a complicated system, Haywood's women might behave outside our "moral sympathies" but they must also confront what it means to be virtuous and redefine "virtue" for themselves.

¹⁷³ Pettit, conversely, argues that "Fantomina's rejection of 'docility' inspires her to claim a latitude for her behavior that lies outside the pale of her creator's moral sympathies, or, indeed, of any set of moral sympathies that one may reasonably expect to encounter in early modern literature" (149). While Fantomina's behavior certainly goes against the pervasive contemporary beliefs regarding appropriate female behavior, Drury's essay illustrates that a contemporary philosophical context exists in which we can read a certain moral authority in Haywood's women.

II. Haywood's Sexual Conservatism in *Lasselia*

In Haywood's 1724 novella *Lasselia, or the Self-Abandoned*, a young woman, orphaned and under the guardianship of her aunt, lives and is educated as "necessary to accomplish a Maid of Quality for Conversations such as were suitable to her Character" at the French court.¹⁷⁴ While there, the King pursues her relentlessly; she resists but must face the persecution of her jealous aunt who happens to be the King's lover. In order to preserve her reputation in her aunt's eyes, Lasselia exiles herself from the court to the countryside where she meets and quickly falls in love with the handsome but already married Monsieur de l'Amie. Lasselia fights her attraction until she can resist no longer and she and de l'Amie run away together. In a not-so-fortuitous coincidence, de l'Amie's jilted lover, Mademoiselle Douxmourie, recognizes him and exposes the affair to his wife. Madam de l'Amie and several friends, including the de Valiers who took the self-exiled Lasselia in, discover the two lovers in bed. Madam de l'Amie offers her forgiveness in exchange for Lasselia's promise that she "immediately retire into a Monastery" as insurance that Lasselia can wrong her no more. The once virtuous, now fallen, Lasselia agrees, and in the convent, "was wean'd from those sensual Delights she had before too much indulg'd herself in, and became an Example of Piety even to those who never had swerv'd from it" (80). Lasselia's story concludes with punishment, gradual persuasion toward repentance, and re-elevation to the position of virtuous role model. While her seduction, exposure, and punishment are conventional elements in a cautionary seduction tale, *Lasselia* does not serve up the conventional warnings to guard

¹⁷⁴ *Lasselia, or the Self-Abandoned*, London, 1724. All subsequent references are from this edition and cited parenthetically.

one's virtue by being diligently celibate; rather, *Lasselia* warns against carrying on an affair without actively managing one's reputation.¹⁷⁵

While at court, Lasselia displays an admirable sense of virtue, particularly in light of the economic advantages that come along with being the King's mistress. When the King makes clear his attraction to Lasselia, she resists, "maintain[ing] that cool Reserve, that Majesty of Modesty, which all Women, tho' in the lowest Rank of Life, owe so much to themselves to wear even to the highest, when their Virtue is assaulted" (6-7). Her resistance is unsurprising, though, as the narrator has already categorized her pleasure in male company as "a cold Respect, or, at most, a bare liking of their Company." She is so removed from romantic excesses that she never "imagine[d] she should ever be brought to entertain any other Notions of that uneasy Passion [...] that it was all Chimera" (4-5). Because Lasselia is unswayed by the prospect of love, she is able genuinely to resist the King. He, however, is undeterred and imagines her virtue as nothing more than performance, as a pretense motivated by fear of retribution from her aunt: "he consider'd her Refusals only as the Result of what she might fear from the Indignation of her Aunt Madam de Montespan." The King's belief in the pretense of Lasselia's virtue encourages him to try a new approach, bribery: "if she pleased, she had it in her power to be greater than the Person she at present had a Dependance on, and to make her an Offer of a very fine Castle near the River Sein for her residence." The King treats Lasselia's virtue with a commodity to be bought and, even though she refuses, his

¹⁷⁵ In making this point, I am indebted to Lubey's assertion that Haywood's "erotic subject matter [...] fixes with the utmost force a reader's comprehension of the perils of seduction" (310). Lubey, however, bases her analysis of Haywood's fiction on the instructive qualities of the aesthetic experience, whereas I am concerned with the ways in Haywood's fiction internalizes and revises ideological assumptions.

gentleman reminds her of “the Advantages there were in being Mistress to a King.”

Despite what might have been an enticing offer for previous mistresses, Lasselia “was not to be moved, nor had Grandeur any Charms when it was to be purchas’d at a Rate so dear as loss of Virtue” (7). No amount of money is worth the loss of Lasselia’s idealized virtue.

Despite Lasselia’s unassailable conduct, her exchanges with the King do not go unnoticed and when her aunt receives word that he has been wooing her niece, Lasselia must face the fact that successfully preserving her private virtue does not preclude a tarnished reputation: “[Her aunt] upbraided the innocent Lasselia with Falshood and Ingratitude, and vow’d a Vengeance suitable to the Cause; and it was to no purpose for a long time, that the other endeavour’d to clear herself from these Aspersions. Rage is always deaf” (8). Lasselia’s protests of innocence fail to alleviate her aunt’s suspicions—Madame de Montespan doubts the virtuous restraint Lasselia has so genuinely deployed. Lasselia’s virtue, intact, cannot sufficiently ward off her aunt’s suspicions. In Lasselia’s confrontation between internalized virtue and public reputation, Haywood dramatizes the dilemma women face in a male-centric world, anticipating a directive issued by Rousseau regarding women’s virtuous conduct:

Thus it is not enough that a wife should be faithful; her husband, along with his friends and neighbours, must believe in her fidelity; she must be modest, devoted, retiring; she should have the witness not only of a good conscience, but of a good reputation. In a word, if a father must love his children, he must be able to respect their mother. For these reasons it is not enough that the woman should be chaste, she must preserve her reputation

and her good name. From these principles there arises not only a moral difference between the sexes, but also a fresh motive for duty and propriety, which prescribes to women in particular the most scrupulous attention to their conduct, their manners, their behaviour.¹⁷⁶

I quote at length to illustrate the complexity of Rousseau's definitions of virtue and reputation and of Lasselia's dilemma. Though Lasselia highly regards her virtue, she has failed to manage the damage that the King's advances have done to her reputation. It matters not that she has resisted his attempts to woo her; what matters now is that her aunt suspects her: "She could scarce believe, there was a Possibility of for ever resisting the Address of a Monarch so every way agreeable, [...] But if there were, the Attempt was enough" (9). Even if one can resist the King's advances, Madam de Montespan believes that, eventually, Lasselia will have to give in to a man as (economically) irresistible as the King, no matter how virtuous she is.

Knowing her presence to be a discomfort to her aunt, Lasselia offers a solution that seems at once to ease her aunt's pain and to preserve her virtuous image. She willingly removes herself from court—"the only thing I can do to contribute to your Peace, is, to take away the Cause; and by this voluntary Doom I pass on myself, may have the hope you will pardon a Crime which is involuntary"—and offers to retire to the country where her friend Mademoiselle de Valier lives (10). Lasselia's exile follows the pattern of Behn's heroines—Sylvia, Miranda, and Isabella all face exile—but where Sylvia and Miranda are exiled by others as punishment, Isabella and Lasselia choose exile. Isabella exiles herself in her chambers while Villenoy is away hunting, receiving

¹⁷⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emilius or Sophia or, a new system of education*, Trans. By Barbara Foxley, (London: Orion, 1995), 389.

“no visits, not even the ladies’, so absolutely she devoted herself to her husband” (*Nun* 179). However, Isabella’s self-exile fails to preserve her from the return of a dead husband, and Lasselia’s self-exile is, similarly, risky.

In choosing exile, Lasselia gives up any autonomy, effectively abandoning herself to the whims of a jealous woman, a practice which becomes a pattern in her exile.

Jealous women abound in *Lasselia*, and the country suffers no shortage. After arriving at the de Valier’s, Lasselia and her hosts are playing cards at Madam de l’Amye’s when Monsieur de l’Amye returns. The card game stops and his wife greets him “as was suitable to his great Merit, and long Absence” (14). De l’Amye greets the rest of the company, and as he greets Lasselia, “three Drops of Blood fell from his Nose, which stain’d a white Handkerchief she happen’d to have in her hand.” The entire company laughs when de Valier says that the incident could be an “Omen of a future Union between him and the young Lady” were it not for de l’Amye already being married. His wife, however, finds little amusing in the joke: “the Jest was not so agreeable to Mademoiselle de l’Amye as they, perhaps imagined; being naturally pretty much addicted to Jealousy, these kinds of Discourses gave her an Uneasiness which she was not able to disguise” (14-15). De Valier tries to put her at ease, but “the Poison had too great an Influence to be easily expell’d, she knew her husband to be of a Disposition amorous enough, and the charms of Lasselia were too prevailing not to make her think there was a Probability, that what had been spoke in Raillery, might one Day prove too true in Earnest” (15). Though Lasselia’s virtue intervenes and she “resolv’d never to make a Visit there again,” she lacks an understanding of the codes which require she actively manage her desire (17). Her most basic understanding of her honor is predicated

on what appears to be a one-way attraction. Unaware that de l'Amye finds her attractive, she finds "the greatest Security she cou'd have for her Honour, was the Insensibility de l'Amye seem'd to have of her Charms" (20). While an unrequited love would certainly preserve Lasselia from the loss of her honor, the honor which she believes safe is her virginity, not her reputation. In fact, because she imagines he does not return her passions, she indulges in the fantasy that he does: she "believ'd she might, without a Crime, indulge herself in those Felicities which at present appear'd so innocent" and "wou'd frequently sooth Imagination with a Belief he lov'd her: and in giving way to these destructive Tendernesses, Fancy took the Part of Passion, in Dreams, wou'd represent him to her, dissolving, melting in amorous Languishments—Nor were her sleeping Thoughts the only ones that err'd this way" (20). The narrator acknowledges that "at her guarded hours, Honour was her chiefest Aim" and that she only allows herself to imagine de l'Amye returns her love because of her confidence in "continuing Mistress of her Resolution." Yet, her obsession with the physical qualities of her desire and honor set her up to fall: "how little do they know the Hazard they run, who depend on their own Strength alone for Protection. Love is a subtle, and a watchful Deceiver, and directs the Votary he designs to bless, to make the Attach when the Fair is least capable of Resistance" (21). Lasselia's reliance on her own virtue depends on two types of power: her own sense of emotional fortitude as an internalized manifestation of virtue and her ability to resist physically any sexual advances that de l'Amye might make as a socially-mandated performative virtue. However, in allowing herself to fantasize about giving her

physical body over to her passions, Lasselia relinquishes any performative power and is predisposed to catastrophe.¹⁷⁷

Haywood collapses the internalized and performative qualities of virtue when a quaint “Country-Fellow” delivers a letter from de l’Amye to Lasselia. Believing the country messenger to be genuine, Lasselia lets down her guard, and when she recognizes the handwriting as de l’Amye’s, she begins “blushing with Shame, then [becomes] pale with Fear” and opens the letter. Her performance of desire intensifies as she reads de l’Amye’s passionate letter:

alternate Joy and Shame, Surprize and Fear, and sometimes a Start of virtuous Pride and Indignation, sparkled in her Eyes—a thousand different Passions succeeded one another in their turns—all too fierce to be restrain’d, and too sudden to admit Disguise. But, alas! she took no care to do it; she suspected not that she has a dangerous Observer in the Person who deliver’d her the Letter; nor ‘tis possible, in the Confusion she was in, remember’d any body was near her—Again she attempted to read over the Lines, but had not power; the strange Disorder of her fluttering Heart, depriving the Blood of its usual Circulation, all her Limbs forgot their Function, and she sunk fainting on the Bank. (23)

Reading de l’Amye’s letter, Lasselia experiences an overwhelming series of physical consequences. She tries to control her body but her passions can neither be restrained nor

¹⁷⁷ In taking her as his mistress, Schofield argues, de l’Amye “reduce[s] Lasselia to a mere sexual object used to gratify his own appetites, but he has also taken away her feminine selfhood.” See ““Descending Angels”: Salubrious Sluts and Pretty Prostitutes in Haywood’s Fiction” *Fetter’d or Free: British Women Novelists, 1670-1815*, (Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 1986), 196.

disguised.¹⁷⁸ Faced with de l'Amye's declaration, Lasselia loses not only her physical control but her emotional control, as well. In collapsing the physical and the emotional, the performative and the internalized, Lasselia's body becomes a site of unpremeditated performance.¹⁷⁹ Lasselia assumes the messenger to be a genuine country messenger, not her beloved de l'Amye. His disguise creates the illusion of privacy and Lasselia, assuming there is no threat in his presence, gives into the performative display of her passion, arousing de l'Amye's desire for her. He throws off his disguise and, through "a Thousand Liberties," tells her how happy he is that she returns his attractions. Her impulsivity gives de l'Amye the power to view and her sexuality is defined in terms of his desire.¹⁸⁰

In giving de l'Amye the power to view her and to define her sexuality in relation to his, Lasselia begins the process of relinquishing her autonomy to her lover, a process which will have dire consequences. Though the threat of public exposure prevents de l'Amye from "the utmost Gratification of his Wishes," knowing that someone might interrupt them, he secures "a promise from her to make him fully blest the next Opportunity should offer" (24-25). The narrator admits that Lasselia's "early

¹⁷⁸ For Oakleaf, Lasselia's blood indicates an overabundance of passion which she cannot control: "[c]irculating or hesitating, blood defies decorous containment, overwhelming the formerly self-possessed heroine's 'cool Reserve, [and] Majesty of Modesty,'" an instance in which "Lasselia's blood betrays her" (491).

¹⁷⁹ Emily Anderson argues that Haywood, in *Fantomina* and *Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, exposes the problems of unpremeditated actions: "[Fantomina's] initial experiences demonstrate to her and to the reader the ways in which a woman's impulsive behavior can undo her own performance" (4). In losing control over the performance of desire, Lasselia gives up her ability to preserve her reputation: "The effective expression of Fantomina's desire must occur within a carefully planned performance, as unpremeditated, spontaneous behavior does not anticipate or enable repetition" (4). In

¹⁸⁰ Fantomina revises this moment when she invents her alias after her rape. See Anderson, 4-5.

Condescension” might “be of so great Prejudice to her Character, that it will take off the Pity which is really due to the Misfortunes it brought her; and I have nothing to alledge in her Behalf but that the long Suppression of a Passion which she had always consider’d as fruitless was now on a sudden let loose, was beyond the Power of Reason to restrain” (25). In excusing Lasselia’s submission to passion as a the result of a lengthy suppression of desire, Haywood not only condemns Lasselia’s suppression of desire but also her reliance on the strength of her virtue which has stripped her of her ability to manage not only her body but will her virtuous reputation.

In giving into unpremeditated performance, Lasselia becomes the self-abandoned woman of the novella’s title. In fact, Haywood introduces a letter written by Lasselia to de l’Amye as one “writ by a Woman in Love to Madness, and one who had abandon’d all things for her Passion” (25). Though she “reproach’d herself for suffering the Secret of her Soul to be so easily discover’d,” Lasselia cannot turn back: “she now had gone too far in the fatal Labyrinth of heedless Passion, to know how to retreat” (28). The labyrinth evokes images of Lasselia as lost, confused, without guidance, surrendering herself to a passion that cares little for the consequences to reputation. Wandering in such a labyrinth confuses Lasselia so much that, rather than taking care to preserve her reputation, she, instead, becomes wrongly fixated on preserving de l’Amye’s perception of her, a private image that will ultimately be powerless in preventing her public ruin: “She fear’d the easy Attainment of his Wishes, wou’d, in a little time make her seem cheap in his Esteem—and such an Apprehension was a Dagger to her Soul; she resolv’d, therefore, that in spite of the Promise she had made him, to delay the Performance of it and put him off till Time, Assiduity, and some further Proofs of his Sincerity, should render her

yielding more the Effect of Gratitude than Inclination” (28). Lasselia’s fear of losing de l’Amye’s esteem replaces the threat of public shame as her motivation for delaying de l’Amye’s gratification.

Lasselia’s conflation of her reputation with the identity created by de l’Amye of her leads to an inability to distinguish between two equally disastrous situations and creates the conditions under which her previously genuine virtuous resistance becomes merely a performance. It is, however, a performance which Lasselia does not think through and, instead, becomes a performance which others inscribe onto her. After having lost the King’s favor in Lasselia’s absence, Madam de Montespan implores her niece to return to court in the hopes redeeming herself in the King’s eyes. Lasselia appeals to the de Valiers for guidance in “avoid[ing] a Danger [posed by the King’s advances] which so imminently threaten’d her Virtue.” Unaware that Lasselia has already compromised her virtue in her affair with de l’Amye, the de Valiers “cou’d not enough extol her Bravery” to prefer “an innocent Obscurity” to the “guilty Greatness” of being the King’s mistress. Though she asks for their assistance in preserving her from Madam de Montespan’s dangerous request, she only appears virtuous, possessing “a Consciousness of not meriting what they said” but “waving all that might remind her how really Criminal she was, while she *appear’d* all Virtue” (31). Lasselia’s performance of virtue in front of the de Valiers is a very different performance from Fantomina’s, which I will discuss later. Fantomina consciously creates multiple identities which allow her to maintain the appearance of virtue, even in the eyes of Beauplaisir with whom she has behaved less-than-virtuously. Lasselia, on the other hand, does not consciously set out to create a virtuous image. She simply fails to put into place any means of preserving her

reputation. She allows others to create that reputation for her, and in allowing others to misinterpret her virtuous fortitude, she gives up all control of her reputation. Lasselia allows the de Valiers to assume she plans to take refuge in a monastery. The de Valiers help her disguise herself; Monsieur de Valier leads her away from their home and leaves her alone on the road. Lasselia's passive efforts at managing her sexuality and reputation constitute negligent mismanagement. She attempts to preserve her reputation at the expense of the King's desire, preventing his desire from prematurely ending her affair with de l'Amie, when she should be concerned with the potential the de l'Amie affair has to ruin her reputation.

These misdirected efforts at preserving her reputation lead Lasselia to leave this management up to de l'Amie, a strategy which turns out to be yet another fatal mistake. After de Valier leaves Lasselia at the side of the road, Haywood quickly reveals how ill-equipped Lasselia is to manage herself and her reputation. For the first time, she appears to recognize the gravity of her situation, keeping away from the road, afraid that she might be recognized even though she's disguised. Eventually, she finds a shelter in the fields and hides through the night there. When she ventures out the next day, she spies a man on horseback, and consumed with terror, she tries to run away but gets caught up in some twigs and falls. The man, who turns out to be de l'Amie, sees the accident and comes to help her. De l'Amie takes her to an inn where he believes she will be safe and Lasselia puts her trust in his ability to protect her. Here, Haywood draws attention to the potential complications in trusting someone else, particularly a male lover, with safeguarding a woman's reputation, blaming love for one's naïve trust: "Love is ever credulous, and inspires so good an Opinion of the darling Object, that it is not without

great difficulty the Heart which harbours it, can be brought to believe any thing to the prejudice of what it wishes, even where there is the greatest ground for Suspicion” (42). For Haywood, one of love’s greatest consequences is that it clouds judgment, and by placing her faith in de l’Amye, Lasselia runs a great risk. To trust him now leaves Lasselia vulnerable to losing all protection “when he [has] nothing more to obtain” in their relationship: “he might retain as little regard for the Person who so generously gave him all, as his Sex ordinarily do” and putting herself into his protection “was but a Chance [...] she shou’d not fall into the most miserable Circumstance to which a fond believing Woman can possibly be subjected” (42). Lasselia, though, happens to be lucky as de l’Amye turns out to be an exemplary man, certainly not representative of his sex at large, and taking greater care than she does to preserve her reputation: “To the End of his Life he lov’d her with an undiminish’d Ardour—was strictly careful of her Reputation, while there was a Possibility of preserving it” (42). Certainly, de l’Amye cannot be blamed for the loss of concern over her reputation after their liaison is exposed; his conduct to that point seems irreproachable. Yet, Lasselia has rather naively handed over complete control of her reputation to one who has significantly less investment in preserving it than she does.

While at the inn, Lasselia and de l’Amye have an unfortunate run-in with Mademoiselle Douxmourie while walking in the fields near the inn at night. Douxmourie manages to conceal herself from the lovers. Douxmourie recognizes de l’Amye and, being acquainted with his wife, as well, realizes that de l’Amye is carrying on an affair. Lasselia hides her face with a handkerchief, but she has, rather carelessly, “long ago thrown off her Pilgrim’s habit” (70). Aware that they run the risk of being exposed, de

l'Amie and Lasselia spend the night deciding where to go. Meanwhile, Madame de l'Amie arrives at the inn having been called there by Douxmourie, bringing the de Valiers with her, and they all wait outside the lovers' room. Believing it safest to leave before daybreak, de l'Amie opens the door to begin preparing for their departure and opens himself and Lasselia to ruin; even though their ruin is inevitable, he stays true to his promise to protect her:

[H]e had Presence enough of Mind to run towards the Bed, where he thought to defend his dear Lasselia from their View, or die to expiate the Disgrace she must suffer for his sake; but that unfortunate Lady, hearing a Noise, had rais'd herself in her bed to see what 'twas: which when she did, Surprise, and Shame, and Fear, took away her Senses so far, as to deprive her of any Thought in what manner she shou'd conceal herself; and sat still, stupid and motionless, expos'd to every body in the Room. (77)

His commitment to preserving her honor, though, fails miserably, and when she sits up in bed, Lasselia becomes solely responsible for her exposure. Lasselia has allowed love to cloud her judgment, has carelessly trusted her reputation to someone else, has thrown off her disguise, and as a result, sits exposed in the bed she shares with her lover.

While their affair's exposure has consequences for them both, the nature of those consequences differs, revealing the very different contexts in which de l'Amie and Lasselia circulate. In the confrontation between de l'Amie's affair and the small social circle that has invaded the bedroom, de l'Amie chooses to return to reintegrate himself into polite socety. He quickly reconciles with his wife, resigned to giving up Lasselia only because he fears that Madam de Montespan will learn of their affair and prevent his

seeing Lasselia again. This reconciliation implies that private action has little consequence for men's public reputation. In fact, though de l'Amye must give up Lasselia, his relationship with his wife benefits: "he was indebted to his Wife for almost every thing he was possess'd of; her Love, her Faithfulness to him, her Good-nature, her condescending Temper, making an Allowance for that one Foible, Jealously, won so far on his Gratitude" (79). De l'Amye does owe all he owns to his wife. A young widow, Madam de l'Amye was "vastly rich" and it is her wealth that "paid off the Mortgages of the Estate which was to descend to him" (67). Without her money, de l'Amye would have been permanently exiled from polite society and only by reconciling with her can he maintain it.

Lasselia, however, faces permanent exclusion from polite society. Taking advantage of a softening in Madam de l'Amye's anger and jealousy in response to Lasselia's visible anguish over the affair's discovery, de Valier convinces Madam de l'Amye to handle the affair privately in order to avoid public exposure for them all. She agrees but on the condition that Lasselia take refuge in a monastery. Though Lasselia's affair has been exposed, Madam de l'Amye's desire to maintain social appearances seemingly secures Lasselia's reputation at large. Haywood provides no indication that Lasselia's ruin extends any further than the confines of the bedroom. In the convent, Lasselia is "wean'd from those sensual Delights, she had before too much indulg'd herself in" (80). The consequence, then, becomes not only permanent exile from polite society but the removal of passion. This consequence, though, is not the result of Lasselia's indulgences in passionate excesses but the result of abandoning the concern for

her reputation. Without a sound reputation, the eighteenth-century woman finds herself unable to survive in polite society.

III. The Strength of *Fantomina*'s Virtue

In *Lasselia*, Haywood is forced to grapple with the generic limitations inherited from Behn. Though Behn allows her heroines to act outside bounds of moral expectations, she runs up against the generic constraints that demand her heroines pay the consequences. *Lasselia*, distinctly French both in generic convention and its setting, demands that the heroine pay a similar price for her bad behavior, though her bad behavior is not her failure to safeguard her chastity but rather her reputation.¹⁸¹ While Haywood resists the traditional confines of the genre, she finds herself the author and her heroine at an impasse that form alone cannot solve. In *Fantomina*, Haywood begins experimenting with genre, moving on from the Behnian and French models, testing the limits of something distinctly English both in place and in its social, rather than political, critique.¹⁸²

It is not until Fantomina's "severely virtuous" and disapproving mother appears at the end of Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina, or Love in a Maze*, that a female character

¹⁸¹ Among the various forms of French romance, Ballaster identifies the *chronique scandaleuse*, or the scandal chronicle, which narrated the "sexual intrigues of the French aristocracy" with a "directly political and often incendiary purpose" (*Seductive Forms* 56) and featuring power-hungry, lust-driven women like Madame de Montespan and aristocratic men as "duplicitous villain[s], seducing and corrupting innocent ladies" (60).

¹⁸² Ballaster, *Seductive Forms* 154. In "Women and the Rise of the Novel," Ballaster notes that Behn, Manley, and Haywood often portrayed "Whig politicians [... and their] activities as dangerous seducers plotting to destroy female sexual innocence are equivalent to their design upon the English state." In *Fantomina*, however, Haywood leaves behind this model in favor of a model in which the heroine obtains the "power of scripting in [her] own person" (203). *Women and Literature in Britain, 1700-1800*, ed. Vivien Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 197-216.

expresses a genuine sense of shame. When Fantomina begins to experience “those Pangs, which none in her Condition are exempt from,” her mother believes her daughter is dying and orders “her to be carried Home in a Chair.” A doctor comes to treat her and, recognizing her condition for what it is, reveals it to her mother: “Never was Astonishment and Horror greater than that which seiz’d the Soul of this afflicted Parent at these Words: She could not for a Time believe the Truth [but] was at length convinc’d of it --- All the Pity and Tenderness she had been for some Moment before possess’d of, now vanish’d, and were succeeded by an adequate Shame and Indignation.”¹⁸³ In the throes of her daughter’s labor, Fantomina’s mother is overcome by a sense of shame one might expect from Fantomina, ruined by Beauplaisir and about to give birth as proof of their trysts. Her mother’s discovery of her compromised virtue does not engage Fantomina’s shame, though, something she has taken great care to manage both publicly and privately. She has performed shame in the initial stages of her romance with Beauplaisir, but her performance in effort to garner his constancy. At various moments in their romance, Fantomina performs shame, particularly in her initial seductions, but her performance does not necessarily mean disingenuousness.¹⁸⁴ Fantomina’s performance also indicates a genuinely (and ingenuously) internalized belief in shame, modesty, and virtue which Fantomina must reconcile with her desiring self. Through Fantomina’s performance, Haywood confirms not only the need to perform various female behavioral

¹⁸³ Eliza Haywood, *Fantomina and Other Works*, Eds. Alexander Pettit, Margaret Case Crookery, and Anne C. Patchias, (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2004), 69. All subsequent references are from this edition and cited parenthetically.

¹⁸⁴ My argument is indebted to Anderson’s argument about Fantomina’s performance: “the moment of performance [is] a moment of expression—a chance for the woman to achieve an external representation of an internal emotion. By using performance in this manner, Haywood links the actress and her role: the emotion she has planned to display is not feigned” (3).

tropes but also validates the ability to internalize specific behavioral expectations. Fantomina's masquerading illustrates her deep understanding of the role of women in eighteenth-century society. Her myriad disguises acknowledge that an eighteenth-century lady of quality was not allowed the social freedom of the prostitute or the widow. That Fantomina dons these disguises allows her to act within expectations of her position as a "young lady of Distinguished birth" while simultaneously disregarding the arbitrary sexual standards of behavior (41). While *The History of the Nun's* Isabella internalizes notions of shame, modesty, and virtue to her peril, Fantomina's internalization of the same modes of female behavior provide her with a space to act.¹⁸⁵

Fantomina's disguises afford her a freedom that her "real" identity cannot provide, a premise parsed out in critical discourse of Haywood's use of the masquerade,¹⁸⁶ but because Fantomina has yet to shed patrilineal notions of the protective power of virtue, she is exposed to the dangers of male sexuality. As a "young lady of Distinguished birth," she is aware that "her Quality and reputed Virtue kept him from using her with that Freedom she now expected he wou'd do" (42). As the prostitute, however, she can express her desire and finds an outlet to express "a Turn of Wit, and a genteel Manner in her Raillery, beyond what is frequently to be found among those

¹⁸⁵ Anderson argues "[b]y repeating performances, the heroine creates the space to assert and reassert the fact of female desire." Fantomina's use of various disguises proves "the sincerity of her desire for Beauplaisir" (Anderson, 3-4).

¹⁸⁶ See Margaret Case Croskery, "Masquing Desire: The Politics of Passion in Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina*," *The Passionate Fictions of Eliza Haywood: Essays on Her Life and Work*, Eds. Kirsten T. Saxton and Rebecca P. Bocchicchio, (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 2000), 69-94; Catherine Craft-Fairchild, *Masquerade and Gender: Disguise and Female Identity in Eighteenth-Century Fictions by Women*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1993); and Ballaster, *Seductive Forms*, 188.

Wretches.”¹⁸⁷ Her virtue-less costume makes available to her “a vast deal of Pleasure in conversing with him in this free and unrestrain’d manner” (43). Once she has lost the mask of virtue, Fantomina finds space to act more freely; however, despite her virtue-less guise, Fantomina still adheres to a definition of virtue instilled by patrilineal privilege. Though she is resolved to entertain Beauplaisir as a prostitute “whatever the Consequence” (45), she is entirely unprepared for the implications of her disguise. Not only can she “neither assure herself [how to proceed or how to get away from him], nor whither or not in the last Extremity she wou’d do so” (45), she also, as naively as Lasselia does, believes in the power of virtue to preserve her: “She depended on the Strength of her Virtue, to bear her safe thro’ Tryals more dangerous than she apprehended this to be, and never having been address’d by him as Lady, --was resolv’d to receive his Devoirs as a Town Mistress” (44). In fact, her fantasy of the liaison’s outcome further illustrates her naïveté in sexual relations. She conceives of “a world of Satisfaction” available to her and “in observing the Surprise he would be in to find himself refused by a Woman, who he supposed granted her Favours without Exception” (44). Her fantasy that she can successfully refuse the man she has seduced is entirely dependent on her internalization of a virtue expected to disrupt the libertine prerogative. Fantomina’s belief in the power of her virtue to preserve her from Beauplaisir’s illicit advances is reminiscent of advice in *The Ladies Calling* on modesty: “Such an authority there is in Vertu, that where ‘tis eminent, ‘tis apt to controll all loose desires, and he must not be only lustful but sacrilegious, that attempts to violate such a Sanctuary.”¹⁸⁸ Because

¹⁸⁷ Croskery claims that Fantomina’s “masks reveal aspects of her own identity [which allow her to act] upon desires with which she could not otherwise identify” (86).

¹⁸⁸ Ricahrd Allestree, *The ladies calling in two parts*, (Oxford, 1720), 20.

she has internalized a conduct manual definition of virtue, Fantomina believes in the power of her virtue to control not only her desires but Beauplaisir's as well.

Unfortunately, Fantomina must quickly learn that her virtue has little power, not only over Beauplaisier who rapes the naïve "prostitute", but over her own identity: "Shock'd, however, at the Apprehension of really losing her Honour, she struggled all she could, and was just going to reveal [her identity] when the Thoughts of the Liberty he had taken with her, and those he still continued to prosecute, prevented her, with representing the Danger of being expos'd, and the whole Affair made a Theme for publick Ridicule" (46). While her disguise gives her certain freedom in action,¹⁸⁹ it limits her ability to preserve her sense of virtue by preventing her from confessing her true identity. To admit her true identity would mean admitting a lack of virtue and exposing herself not only to the physical threat posed to her virtue by Beauplaisir but also to social ridicule. She cannot invoke virtue to preserve herself from Beauplaisir's attack. The identity she has constructed to protect herself from the public ruin of her reputation simultaneously prevents her from invoking her virtuous reputation as a shield. If she reveals her identity, she will preserve her virtue but lose her reputation. The threat of public scorn results not in moderating her behavior but in the loss of her internalized virtue.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ Ballaster, 188.

¹⁹⁰ Though he does not parse out distinctions between private virtue and public shame, Jonathan Brody Kraminck reads this scene as a disparity between consent and action: "If the young lady attempts to postpone her consent by revealing the deception, she can do so only up to a point, since she has already committed acts (the conversation and the allowing of 'liberties') that would bring with them 'the Danger of being exposed, and [having] the whole Affair made a Theme for publick Ridicule'" (463). "Locke, Haywood, and Consent," *ELH* 72 (2005), 453-470.

The questions of honor in *Fantomina* play out the consequences of two ideals of feminine modesty. First, *Fantomina* tests the power John Gregory ascribes to virginity in *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*. On indelicate conversations: "Virgin purity is of that delicate nature, that it cannot hear certain things without contamination. It is always in your power to avoid these. No man, but a brute or a fool, will insult a woman with conversation which he sees gives her pain; nor will he dare to do it, if she resent the injury with a becoming spirit.—There is a dignity in conscious Virtue which is able to awe the most shameless and abandoned of men."¹⁹¹ While on the one hand, *Fantomina* has already engaged in indelicate conversations which potentially contaminate her virtue, Gregory's advice assumes something very dangerous which becomes *Fantomina*'s reality:¹⁹² that the power of her virginity is such that it should inspire a sense of awe in predatory male by simply naming it. *Fantomina* invokes the power of her virginity to save her but it is not enough to deter Beauplaisir: "he little regarded, or if he had, would have been far from obliging him to desist" (46). Her exterior appearance invalidates her internalized morality.

The second ideal that Haywood tests is Rousseau's distinction between a man's reputation and a woman's public reputation and private honor. Though *Lasselia* failed to manage successfully private virtue and public reputation, Rousseau's distinction between virtue and reputation is a distinction not entirely lost on *Fantomina*. She has, after all, secured lodgings "to which she [...] she might invite [Beauplaisir], without running any Risque, either of her Virtue or Reputation" (45). However, *Fantomina*'s

¹⁹¹ Gregory, *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*, 6th ed, (Dublin, 1774), 17.

¹⁹² Kramnick notes that *Fantomina* conflates conversation with sex (470, n12). "Locke, Haywood, and Consent," *ELH* 72 (2005), 453-470.

assumption that she can simultaneously preserve her virtue and reputation is faulty; she cannot preserve both. In order to preserve one, she must sacrifice the other.¹⁹³ The problem Fantomina is forced to confront (and that Haywood makes explicit) in her liaison with Beauplaisir is not the ability of her virtue to protect her but the fact that her virtue is powerless if her reputation is ruined. In choosing to maintain her disguise, Fantomina adheres to the privileged position Rousseau ascribes to reputation. To expose her desires to Beauplaisir risks the infamy Rousseau cautions women against and would negate the internalized sense of virtue she would maintain in resisting Beauplaisir's sexual advances. Fantomina must choose which is more important to preserve: her virtue or her reputation. In Fantomina's decision to choose reputation over virtue, Haywood exposes the contradictions of the idealized virtuous woman, a contradiction that Rousseau, later, takes to be the natural condition of the eighteenth-century woman.

Though her decision seemingly endorses Rousseau's argument that *appearing* virtuous carries more weight than *being* virtuous, Fantomina must still reconcile the differences between the two and must come to terms with the fact that Beauplaisir interprets her public appearance as prostitute as more genuine than the virtue that

¹⁹³ Many critics argue that Fantomina's first sexual encounter with Beauplaisir constitutes rape. Ballaster claims that "Beauplaisir rapes her" (188). *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992). Croskery claims that "Fantomina finds herself in the conventional trap of the persecuted maiden" (73). Stephanie Harzewski reads the text as "libertine *tour de force* [...] and a trauma narrative" (189). "The *Fantomina* Phenomenon: Eliza Haywood and the Formation of a Heroine," *The Eighteenth-Century Novel*, 5 (2005), 175-196. Kraminck complicates the rape reading by arguing that both Ballaster and Croskery willfully ignore the narrator's explanation that "the young lady is unprepared to resist [Beauplaisir] 'by the extreme Liking she had to him'" (470). While the nature of this encounter is not the focus of this argument, I agree that Beauplaisir's actions constitute rape. Kraminck's troublingly argues that "everything up to this point has suggested that the desire itself is consequential (and not harmless make-believe)" (470, n11).

Fantomina claims she possesses in private, assuming that “by the Beginning of her Conduct [...] that in the End she would be in Reality, the thing she so artfully had counterfeited” (48). Beauplaisir assumes private or internalized ideas of honor are evident in self-representation and laughs at Fantomina’s professions of virtue. Though she is distraught, he is perplexed by her emotional anguish. Her displays of modesty, virtue, and shame are entirely irrelevant. Beauplaisir’s inability to “imagine for what Reason a Woman, who, if she intended not to be a *Mistress*, had counterfeited the Part of one, and taken on so much Pains to engage him, should lament a Consequence which she could not expect, and till the last Test seem’d inclinable to grant” emphasizes the incompatibility between her internalized sense of virtue and her (presumed) public reputation (46-47). Beauplaisir’s inability to recognize Fantomina as a complex emotional subject highlights the fact that interior virtue is inconsequential if the exterior portrays a lack of virtue. Ultimately, virtue is so much more than moral conviction. Because the exterior belies the interior, Haywood’s definition of virtue is much more complicated than the conduct manual would have it.

Yet, Fantomina has not yet overthrown conduct manual understandings of virtue, understandings which cannot preserve her honor in Haywood’s world. When Beauplaisir offers money to assuage the slight, Fantomina still believes in the power of the persecuted heroine and, in a moment of emotional excess, invokes her private virtue rather than public reputation: “he pulled out of his Pocket a Purse of Gold, entreating her to accept of that as an Earnest of what he intended to do for her [...] This treatment made her quite forget the Part she had assum’d, and throwing it from her with an Air of Disdain, Is this a Reward [...] for Condescensions, such as I have yielded to?—Can all

the Wealth you are possess'd of, make a Reparation for my Loss of Honour?" (47).

Fantomina's use of "Condescensions" belie her virtueless appearance and indicate a sense of moral superiority over Beauplaisir, despite having decided her public reputation is of more value than private virtue. She depicts her actions as blameless and ascribes to Beauplaisir the responsibility for the repercussions which can only be repaired by his constancy, an approach which Glicera rejects in *The City Jilt*: "your Love alone can compensate for the Shame you have involved me in" (*City Jilt* 47). However, despite her virtuous invocations, Beauplaisir is unmoved. Her virtue cannot reform him.¹⁹⁴ Instead of repenting the rape, Beauplaisir sees Fantomina's virtuous tirade as an opportunity to find out her true identity. Realizing that revealing too much would put her at public risk, she gives him a phony history, "resolving, if he boasted of this Affair, he should not have it in his Power to touch her Character" (48). Fantomina seems to have recognized his inability to distinguish between her public reputation and private virtue and, once again, chooses to preserve her public reputation.¹⁹⁵

Fantomina's initial encounter with Beauplaisir draws attention to the dangerous division between public reputation and private virtue present a woman in eighteenth-century society. Additionally, Beauplaisir's belief that her behavior ensures the truthfulness of her prostitute disguise draws attention to another problem with representations of modesty, virtue, and shame as naturalized female characteristics.

¹⁹⁴ I discuss in chapter 3 Pamela's power to reform Mr. B through her ability to invoke his sense of shame at her moral superiority.

¹⁹⁵ Of this exchange, Anderson writes, "By 'quite forget[ting] the Part she had assumed,' Fantomina creates an opportunity for Beauplaisir to choose one for her. Teetering on the brink of disaster, she regains control just in time by returning to performance, crafting the alias and story of Fantomina. Her subsequent schemes show much greater foresight, proving that Fantomina learns quickly" (4-5).

While in *Anti-Pamela*, Haywood, as Ruth Bernard Yeazell claims, “effectively forclose[s] the possibility of female innocence” in Syrena’s ability to perform virtue,¹⁹⁶ *Fantomina* assumes that genuine innocence (or, more appropriately, naïveté) poses untold risks for the female subject. In *Fantomina*, the performance of immodesty seems more dangerous than the performances of modesty Syrena Tricksey engages in.¹⁹⁷ Her naïveté in donning the prostitute’s costume results in her rape, and yet it provides her the means of preserving her public reputation. It also affords her the ability to manage Beauplaisir’s desires. Not only does she maintain his constancy by creating for him the impression of inconstancy, she takes control of the way in which he accesses her body. In Bath disguised as a country girl, she has “no Apprehensions of any Amorous Violence, but where she wish’d to find it” (52). Though innocent, Fantomina learns how to manage not only her desire but also Beauplaisir’s from her unfortunate experience.

Ultimately, *Fantomina* exposes the irony of managing one’s public reputation and the pinnacle of management occurs when Beauplaisir fails to recognize the virtuous unmasked lady as the same woman as the prostitute Fantomina, the Widow Bloomer, the country maid Celia, and Incognita: “’tis difficult to determine, if Beauplaisir, or the Lady, were most surpris’d at what they heard; he, that he should have been blinded so often by her Artifices; or she, that so young a Creature should have the skill to make use of them” (70). Beauplaisir’s and the Lady’s shock comments on the fundamental irony of the eighteenth-century female subject: reputation, not virtue, is the result of pure

¹⁹⁶ Yeazell, *Fictions of Modesty*, (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1991), 84.

¹⁹⁷ Though Syrena is, initially sexually inexperienced, and as I argue in chapter 3, becomes a victim as a result of her inexperience, she hides her experience with performances of modesty as opposed to hiding her modesty with performances of experience.

performance. Because, as Rousseau argues, a woman's honor depends on her reputation, a woman can disregard her private honor but remain publicly virtuous, and it is this bifurcation between virtue and reputation in Rousseau that enables Fantomina's actions, which work in opposition to Rousseau's directive. Rousseau wants to prevent the loss of virtue and reputation, but in *Fantomina*, Haywood discovers the means of manipulating the rules of conduct. Fantomina's disguises create the space for her performances of sexual desire and maintain her ability to perform virtue outside her disguises. In this way, *Fantomina* reveals there is no referent, no signification for virtue, only the performance of. No matter her private desires, a woman can be virtuous as long as her performance reinforces a reputation that reflects virtue.

IV. *The City Jilt* and Fantasies of Male (Dis)Possession and Female (Self-)Possession

If *Fantomina* reveals the disjunction between virtue and reputation, exposing the performative qualities of virtue, *The City Jilt* dispenses with concerns over the conduct manual's representations of honor, shame, and reputation in favor of examining the gendered qualities of these virtuous principles. Much like *Fantomina*, Glicera in Haywood's 1726 novel *The City Jilt* becomes pregnant after an affair with Melladore. Unlike *Fantomina*, however, whose pregnancy marked the end of her story, Glicera's story has only just begun. Upon learning of her pregnancy, Melladore refuses to uphold his passionate promises of marriage on the grounds that it "was not consistent with his Circumstances to take a Wife without a Portion."¹⁹⁸ In succumbing to Melladore's sexual advances, Glicera has given up any currency she might have had in the marriage market,

¹⁹⁸ *The City Jilt*, (London, 1726). All subsequent references are from this edition and cited parenthetically.

making herself a worthless commodity. Glicera upbraids Melladore for rejecting her; he listens “with an Indifference the most stabbing to a Lover’s Soul” and casually takes his leave of her (9). Recognizing the precarious position she is in, Glicera seeks revenge against Melladore and succeeds in stripping him of his land and money by seducing the alderman Grubgard who controls Melladore’s estate. By chronicling not Glicera’s fall but Glicera’s manipulation of her sexual desirability to outwit both Melladore and the Grubgard, Haywood revises the traditional seduction plot and redefines the gendered terms of courtship and possession, giving her heroine the power to instill shame on her suitors.¹⁹⁹

Glicera’s progress from naïve lover to vengeful seductress parallels Sylvia’s progress in Behn’s *Love-Letters* from passive victim to calculating seductress and challenges the representation of women as naturally vindictive. During their courtship, Glicera attempts to be the exemplary romantic heroine.²⁰⁰ She is “one of the most lovely and accomplished Women of the Age” and she and Melladore “with equal Ardour, equal Languishment did both long for the Minute which was to crown their Loves, —the impatient Youth with fierce and vigorous Wishes burn’d, the tender Maid in soft Desires dissolv’d” (2). She fails to understand, however, that her worth is not determined by the strength of desire but by the desire returned to her. Rather naively, she trusts in Melladore’s “Love and Constancy” when her father’s death leaves her with no money,

¹⁹⁹ I am indebted to Kirsten Saxton’s claims that Haywood’s narrative manipulates the conventions of romance and other modes of fiction in *The City Jilt* to explore Glicera’s manipulations of social rules which confine and define her. See “Telling Tales: Eliza Haywood and the Crimes of Seduction in *The City Jilt, or the Alderman turn’d Beau*,” *The Passionate Fictions of Eliza Haywood: Essays on Her Life and Work*, eds. Kirsten T. Saxton and Rebecca P. Bocchicchio, (Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 2000), 115-142.

²⁰⁰ Saxton also notes, “Glicera longs to fulfill the role of the romantic heroine, to be loved and idealized” (120).

making her vulnerable to Melladore's advances, as Syrena's naivete in *Anti-Pamela* makes her vulnerable to Vardine's advances which I will discuss in the following chapter. When Glicera reveals her pregnancy to Melladore, his refusal to marry her changes her disposition: "Mild, and gentle as he had ever found Glicera, he now perceived her Soul could change as well as his had done. Never was Rage carried to a greater height than hers—she seem'd all Fury—and distracted with her Wrongs, beholding the cruel Author of them rather exulting than any way compassionating her Misery" (9). And when she learns that Melladore has moved on, marrying Helena, an heiress whose father has recently died, leaving her with a large inheritance, Glicera is initially despondent but, as she recovers her health, "the Memory of her Wrongs, however, left her not a Moment, and by degrees settled so implacable a hatred in her Nature, not only to Melladore but to that whole undoing Sex, that she never rejoic'd so much as when she heard of the Misfortunes of any of them" (20). Haywood explains Glicera's transition in clear psychological terms as unrequited, excessive passion transforms itself into rage. She has been so damaged that she cannot forget what Melladore has done, and though Haywood seems to naturalize this transition, her word choice implies that the change in Glicera's nature is anything but natural; it is, rather, something "fixed in her heart" by Melladore and his rejection of her.²⁰¹ Her shift to calculating seductress is marked by the emotional impact of Melladore's rejection of her in favor of another woman and Haywood refuses to criticize Glicera when she is nothing more than the victim of a social system which refuses to provide for her.²⁰²

²⁰¹ The *OED* defines "settle" as "to fix, implant (something) *in* (a person's heart, mind, etc.)."

²⁰² Saxton, 123.

Haywood admits that some “may have shar’d the same fate with poor *Glicera* [...] abandoned by the Perfidy of an ungrateful Lover to Shame, to late Repentance, and never-ending Grievs” and that it is these women who understand Glicera’s pain, not the “happy *Insensible*, or the *untempted Fair*” who might say that Glicera’s “*Misfortune* was no more than what her *Folly* merited.” In this warning, Haywood specifically genders her audience and, then, establishes oppositional conditions dividing her audience by their internalized psychological response, a response inherently divided according to a woman’s experience or inexperience. If Glicera’s tale is at all intended to be cautionary, it is a caution for these latter types, types Haywood envisions as specifically gendered and inexperienced, who should “take care to fortify their Minds with *Virtue*, or they will but vainly depend on the Force of their own Resolution to defend them from the same Fate [Glicera] mourn’d” (10). This warning, Kirsten T. Saxton argues, advocates virtue not as a means to “heavenly reward or abstract principle, but is a necessary precaution in a world in which yielding to sexual desire may lead to a very concrete loss of social and economic standing.”²⁰³ The pressure she places on Haywood’s use of the word “virtue” draws attention to the tensions between resistance of conventional morality and existence within a repressive system. Haywood’s insistence that women fortify their minds with virtue simultaneously acknowledges the importance of playing by conventional morality’s rules by advocating virtue and challenges the source of that virtue. It is not about the sexual body but about strategic and intellectual management of conventional morality. While Lasselia resists conventional morality, indulging in a torrid affair with de l’Amye and passively allowing others to manage her reputation for her, both

²⁰³ Saxton, 122.

Fantomina and Glicera not only recognize that they are breaking the rules but work hard to maintain control over their self-representation. However, Fantomina and Glicera are only capable of managing their self-representation successfully *after* they have experienced a threat to their virtue. Lasselia's inability adequately manage herself stems from the fact that she has yet to experience true social shame. This is the condition of the eighteenth-century woman: one does not know how best to manage one's reputation until that reputation has been threatened. Lasselia's reputation is never clearly in danger until the novel's end. Her inexperience forces her to jeopardize her reputation but she never reaps the benefits of learning from her experience, leaving her vulnerable to shameful exposure.

This warning redefines what it means to be virtuous by exposing the limitations of traditional conceptions of "virtue," preserving oneself from sexual experience. In fact, resolution is insufficient in preserving one from lecherous advances. In Haywood's construction, "virtue" is not necessarily attendant on the seemingly pure and inherently self-righteous but is a learned attribute. Women who rely on a conventional construction of virtuous resolve find themselves, as Glicera does, vulnerable to men's advances. When she learns that her wealthy father had "little more than would serve to defray the Expences of his Funeral, and pay the Debts he had contracted," Glicera "frankly let [Melladore] know that her Love and Virtue were her only Dower" (5), and yet, love and virtue cannot preserve her from becoming the "Victim of his lawless Flame" (7). Glicera banks on (pun intended) the virtues of her love, but because she deploys virtue within the accepted confines of conventional morality, she falls. Through this fall, Haywood

criticizes not her naïve heroine but the morality which prevents her from successfully managing desire and social consequences.

Once Glicera discovers she's pregnant, the narrator comments that Glicera "had not the least hope of receiving any Reparation for the Shame to which [Melladore] had reduced her" (8). Though we know Melladore has no intention of marrying Glicera, the use of "reparation" emphasizes Glicera's financial predicament. Haywood does not advocate marriage as a means of redeeming a woman from social scorn. In fact, Melldore becomes the mouthpiece for criticizing the virtues of matrimony as a system which "obliges the Pair once united by those Tyes to wear a *Show of Love*" (17). In her pleas for Melladore to uphold his promise to marry her, Glicera has yet to discard the expectations of conventional morality, and her naïveté begs the question, can there be sufficient reparation for shame? In a letter to Melladore, Glicera acknowledges the gravity of her loss—"My Innocence, my Reputation, and my Peace of Mind by thee destroy'd, no more to be retrieved!" (12)—and like Behn's Isabella, sees death as the only means of saving her from "Shame, Reproach, and never-ending Woe" (13). Recognizing the limitations within the system for her vengeance, Glicera leaves it to "Heaven [to] revenge my Wrongs, tho' it denies the power to The Miserable Glicera" (15).

But Glicera's seduction and fall from conventional virtue are only the beginning of her history. As Miranda in *The Fair Jilt* seemingly plays out the consequences of Sylvia's exile at the close of *Love Letters*, Glicera's desire for revenge revises *Fantomina's* ending. Glicera is unable to perceptively manage the predominant moral codes as Fantomina so astutely does, but where Fantomina insists that money cannot

repair the loss of her honor, only Beauplaisier's constancy; Glicera insists on money as a means to assuage the wrongs committed against her. Her ultimate accumulation of Melladore's fortune provides her with a self-possession unavailable to Fantomina who, in order to prevent the loss of her reputation, must give in to her mother's demand that she join a monastery. While Haywood opposes public reputation and internalized virtue in *Fantomina*, she dispenses with concerns over either in *The City Jilt* in favor of exploring the recourses available to the persecuted heroine and revises the vengeful seductress Behn explores in both *Love Letters* and *The Fair Jilt*.

Glicera's desire for and attainment of revenge parallels Sylvia's desire to ruin Philander, and yet Haywood does not acknowledge Glicera's faults as Behn does. In fact, when Melladore does marry, he marries Helena, who the narrator notes is "infinitely inferior to [Glicera] in every Perfection both of Mind and Body" (20). I have argued that Behn complicates her representations of Calista as innocent lover in *Love Letters* and Alcidiana as innocent victim in *The Fair Jilt* through the first's status as a married woman and the second's silent complicity in the execution of an innocent man, blurring the lines between innocent lover and female victim. Haywood, though, resists blurring the boundaries and, despite "despising the whole [male] Sex," Glicera's actions are less appalling than Sylvia's, who takes advantage of Octavio's genuine affection after Philander's rejection. Haywood's narrative carefully avoids lengthy descriptions of Glicera's conquests, reducing her efforts to nothing more than accepting "their Treats and Presents, smil'd on all, tho' never so Old or Disagreeable; nor indeed was it a greater Task, to feign a Tenderness for the most *Ugly* than the *Loveliest* of Mankind—for all alike were hateful to her Thoughts" (21). In these initial seductions, Haywood makes no

mention of the exchange of sexual favors for material goods and Glicera's seduction of Grubgard similarly excludes actual intercourse (he's too ridiculous for the narrator and Glicera to even think that sex is a possibility), a female fantasy that she can entertain financial proposals without sexually compromising herself.

In fact, Grubgard's ridiculous characterization belongs to a female fantasy that not only dispossesses men financially and sexually but also redefines courtship in favor of female agency, advancing the fantasy that women can control their reputation and their position as object.²⁰⁴ If courtship, for men, depends on the economic opportunities of a suitable marriage, it is essential that Glicera understand courtship as economic opportunity. Though she knows that her affair with Melladore means she cannot "make her Fortune by Marriage" (20), she recognizes that her body still has value as a commodity, redefining the nature of courtship and sexuality.²⁰⁵ Glicera's pursuit of financial revenge allows Haywood to tip the gendered discourse of shame and desire in women's favor. Certainly, the public consequences of Glicera's affair with Melladore cannot be ignored, and Glicera does experience some shame: though "she had not the least hope," she seeks "Reparation for the Shame to which he had reduced her" (8), feels the "sharpest Stings of late Repentance" (8), and pleads with Melladore to preserve her unborn child's "helpless Innocence from Shame and Want" (11). Haywood, however, seems to gloss over those social and emotional consequences. After her miscarriage, Glicera abandons emotional excess in favor of accumulation, a shift which redefines Glicera's desire as culturally masculine and opens up the possibility for her to dispossess

²⁰⁴ Saxton argues that Glicera "gains authority over her own representation, becoming a subject who manipulates male desire rather than an object that is governed by it" (129).

²⁰⁵ Saxton, 131.

the male body represented by the estate. Pursuing the dispossession of the landed male body, shame becomes a consequence for men who fail to control their desires. Predatory male sexuality becomes worthy of punishment and Glicera does not have to wait long for Melladore feel the force of punishment. His marriage to Helena results in his financial ruin, and in a gender reversal, she leaves Melladore penniless. Not only is Hellena revealed to be illegitimate and, therefore, not entitled to her father's fortune, she aggressively spends Melladore's money. He is forced to mortgage what he has left, and though the shame feared by men is financial, Melladore's financial shame is a direct consequence of his mismanagement of his sexual desire, a behavior normally punished in sexually excessive women, not men. In losing his fortune to Grubgard, Melladore finds himself in a position very similar to the one in which he left Glicera.

Glicera's seduction of Grubgard in an attempt to gain control of Melladore's estate further subverts the gendered expectations of desire and allows for female appropriation of masculine rhetoric. Possessing Melladore's fortune makes Grubgard equally vulnerable, reducing him to play the part of the seduced woman to Glicera's masculine financial desires. In this feminized role, Grubgard is susceptible to the masculine rhetoric usually wielded as a tool of seduction. Glicera does not seduce him rhetorically, leaving it to her friend Laphelia's "Wit, and the power she had of deceiving handsomely" (43). Glicera leaves Grubgard and Laphelia alone at cards and Grubgard reveals "the Troubles of his Mind" to her. Laphelia tells him that "Fortune has put in your power the only Means to gain Glicera's Favour" (44). Of course, Laphelia means a literal fortune, but Grubgard finds her rhetoric confusing, accusing her of speaking in riddles. Glicera's plan necessitates a redefinition of courtship/love according to the male

sexual/financial ethos, and in his new subject position, Grubgard cannot understand the exact terms Laphelia offers.

When he understands that the terms of possessing Glicera's body are to give up possession of Melladore's fortune, Grubgard's resistance to the terms Laphelia offers reveal the privilege that money gives men in sexual matters. When Laphelia threatens to tell Glicera confirm for Glicera that his love for her is phony, Grubgard defends his desire, claiming he has "spar'd no Expencc either of Time or Money to convince her" of his desires. According to Grubgard's masculine sexual/financial ethos, he has made a considerable investment in Glicera's body and expects returns on his investment in her acquiescence to his sexual desires. Laphelia objects to Grubgard's insistence that financial investment secures his right to Glicera's body, and she appropriates the masculine rhetoric of Exchange Alley to criticize the collapse of masculine desire and economic exchange. When Grubgard agrees to give up Melladore's fortune to Glicera if she will "put [him] into possession of her Charms" (47), Laphelia's rhetoric becomes more aggressive: "For shame, Alderman, recant what you have said.—I wonder how you could forget yourself and her so far, as to be guilty of such a Thought: —you talk as if you were in Change Alley, where they chaffer one Transfer for another.—Is such a Woman as Glicera to be had by way of Bargain?" (48). Though her proposal that he relinquish Melladore's fortune depends on the male commodification of the female body, Laphelia shames him for expecting sex in exchange for Melladore's fortune.

When Glicera does "win" possession of Melladore's fortune, Grubgard tries to exact (physical) payment for the (financial) favor, but she refuses, equating masculine sexual practices as a breach of proper social conduct: "It is not in the power of the

loveliest, wittiest, and most engaging of all your Sex, to tempt me to an Act of Shame” (53). The “Act of Shame” that Glicera refers to, however, is not the actual act of sexual intercourse but sacrificing her autonomy to masculine libertine desire. While she has used her body to gain financial independence, she stops short of treating her body as object, refusing to endorse Grubgard’s expectations of sex in exchange for money. Instead, she manages the conditions under which her body operates on the market.²⁰⁶ In repossessing her body and rejecting Grubgard’s rhetoric, Glicera redefines both female and libertine ideals of virtue and shame in economic, rather than moral, terms.²⁰⁷

V. Conclusion

The progression of Hawyood’s heroines from the seduced innocent to the jilted woman seeking retribution signals a shift in the representation of the amatory heroine. These new models of female subjectivity break away from the Behnian model, a model, though critical of the ideological constraints imposed on the female subject, resigned to the gendered fatalism Pettit claims Behn subverts. While Behn’s models exposes the inconsistencies inherent in the virtuous models championed by conduct manuals as liberating, her heroines find only chaos whether they internalize or outwardly reject the attributes of a “good” girl. Punishment remains inevitable.

²⁰⁶ Glicera learns to “manage her exchange of [her body’s economic] value on the common market for her best interest, becoming the sole proprietor and vendor of that which was previously managed by men” (Saxton, 129).

²⁰⁷ Tiffany Potter argues that “virtue, honor, and fear” are not only of concern to the persecuted heroine but “the Hobbesian libertine as well, driven as he is by these same points” (101). See “‘A God-like Sublimity of Passion’: Eliza Haywood’s Libertine Consistency,” *The Eighteenth-Century Novel* 1(2001): 95-126.

Lasselia, *Fantomina*, and *The City Jilt* illustrate Haywood's attempt to critically manage not only a limiting system but also to narrate a female subject's successful management of that system, the key to which is taking control of one's reputation. Lasselia repeatedly gives up control of her reputation, allowing misinterpretations of her intentions and others to manage her image for her. Fantomina's liaison with Beauplaisir reveals the problems with a system that requires a woman privilege her reputation over her virtue: reputation may be of the utmost concern, but a woman cannot understand how best to preserve her reputation until her virtue has been tested, often "lost" in the process. It isn't until Fantomina loses her honor to Beauplaisir that she learns the how to preserve her reputation. In disguising herself, Fantomina maintains the control that Lasselia resigns, carefully crafting self-representations that run counter to her true identity and provide her with the means of indulging her "wild and incoherent" desires (44). As Incognita, she is able to give into Beauplaisir "without even a Shew of Reluctance" (65). In controlling her self-representation, Fantomina not only controls her reputation and her desire, but her lover's desires, as well. Her performances keep "him always raving, wild, impatient, longing, dying" (65). Though Fantomina's initial encounter with Beauplaisir results in her rape, Haywood begins experimenting with the idea that women cannot successfully manage their reputation unless they have lost their virtue. In *The City Jilt*, Haywood continues to experiment with this predicament that threatens the eighteenth-century woman. Like Fantomina, Glicera learns from the consequences of her naïveté, managing the commodification of her body to secure her financial independence. Both Fantomina and Glicera succeed where Behn's heroines and Lasselia fail by engaging performances of virtue, modesty, and shame. Of the two, Glicera seems most successful.

And while she may not be the most favorable model of female subjectivity, Haywood continues to use this model to explore the limits of virtue, shame, and modesty. The next chapter analyzes Haywood's criticism of these limits in light of the publication of *Pamela* and the beginning of Haywood's "reformed" period.

Chapter 3:

“A shame-faced simplicity”: The (Un)Production of Shame in *Pamela*, *Shamela*, and *Anti-Pamela*

In 1755, Samuel Richardson published *A Collection of the Moral and Instructive Sentiments maxims, cautions, and reflexions, contained in the histories of Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles Grandison* a “General Index both of Maxims and of References . . . offered to the public in one pocket volume.”²⁰⁸ This over 400 page “pocket volume” distills Richardson’s best known works into short maxims followed by references to volume and page number from the corresponding work where the reader may find the maxim in action. Intended to placate readers who “are desirous of fixing in their minds those maxims which deserve notice distinct from the story that first introduced them,” *A Collection* “separate[s] [the moral advice] from that chain of engaging incidents that will sometimes steal the most fixed attention from its pursuit of serious truth.”²⁰⁹ One particular gem from *Pamela* claims, “Shame is a fitter, and, generally, a more effectual punishment for a child, than beating.”²¹⁰ A sentiment from *Clarissa* declares, “Would every one give Praise and Dispraise *only* where due, shame, if not principle, would mend the world.”²¹¹ Though both maxims direct readers to illustrative narrative moments, the maxims have a much larger significance for each novel and Richardson’s body of work than it might seem. Rather than encouraging virtue by virtuous example, these maxims

²⁰⁸ Samuel Richardson, *A Collection of the Moral and Instructive Sentiments maxims, cautions, and reflexions, contained in the histories of Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles Grandison*. (London, 1755), ix.

²⁰⁹ *Collection*, ix.

²¹⁰ *Collection*, 27.

²¹¹ *Collection*, 182.

underscore the novels' attempts make shame a key technology in controlling wayward thoughts and actions. Rather than setting Pamela apart as an exemplar of female virtue, *Pamela* makes apparent the paradoxical relationship between virtue and shame in constructing female morality. The result, then, is a novelistic discourse that, rather than exalting high standards of female virtue, highlights the fluidity within contemporary conceptions of female morality.

To explore this discourse, I turn to two anti-Pamelist satires: Henry Fielding's *Shamela* and Eliza Haywood's *Anti-Pamela*. In what might be the most well-known scene from Henry Fielding's *Shamela*, Shamela Andrews pinches her cheeks to fake a virginal blush at her and Squire Booby's wedding supper, a move which encourages his sexual desire for her: "My husband was extreemly eager and impatient to have Supper removed."²¹² Haywood's Syrena Tricksey similarly performs virtue, but her performances highlight the tenuous position of the eighteenth-century woman: virtuous performances are essential to survival but such performances are dependent on a woman's sexual desire and experience and the knowledge that she must (shamefully) disavow that desire and experience. Shamela (and by implication, Pamela) is inherently without virtue, shame, or modesty. For Haywood, Syrena's development into a woman of questionable morals depends on a complicated set of ideological expectations found in both Richardson and Fielding. *Anti-Pamela*, much like Haywood's earlier amatory fiction, criticizes the masculinist fantasies of the inherently "good girl" in *Pamela* and of the maliciously manipulative whore in *Shamela*, and attempts to explain, but not

²¹² Henry Fielding, *Shamela*, ed. Catherine Ingrassia, *Anti-Pamela and Shamela*, (Toronto: Broadview, 2004). 265. All subsequent references are from this edition and cited parenthetically.

condone, Syrena's performance of virtue. *Anti-Pamela* recognizes in the relationship between Vardine and Syerna that the disingenuous woman Fielding satirizes is a product of the dangerous rhetoric of the Richardsonian virtuous woman. Second, Syrena's subsequent sexual exploits posit disingenuous behavior as a means of survival, a means of preserving one's self from public shame.

In opposing *Anti-Pamela* to both *Pamela* and *Shamela*, this essay refocuses the ideological questions of the moral novel from a debate between Fielding and Richardson over class anxieties and feminine "virtue" to an opposition between Haywood and the gendered assumptions inherent in the Richardson-Fielding debate. While the traditional debate sustains itself bilaterally, this essay reconfigures the anti-Pamela debate as triangulated, replacing the Richardson-Fielding rivalry, one that possesses what Allen Michie identifies as a "tidy simplicity," with the complicated triangulation of these writers with Haywood.²¹³ *Anti-Pamela*, in conversation with both *Pamela* and *Shamela*, reveals as a construct what we have internalized as the established ideology of the novel: an ideology which manufactures an internalized sense of shame to mythologize and legitimate the sexually desirable yet seemingly desire-less "virtuous woman."²¹⁴

²¹³ *Richardson and Fielding: The Dynamics of a Critical Rivalry*, (Lewisburg: Bucknell U. Press, 1999), 13. Michie looks not at the content of the rivalry but at the historical and critical *construction* of that rivalry. He points out that most literary histories identify either Richardson or Fielding as the root of the novel's genealogy and that "sub-genres and narrative styles [tend to be lumped] into 'opposing' camps" based on the terms set up by these novelists (14).

²¹⁴ Pamela represents an ideal of the "passionless" woman frequently advocated as a means of handling male sexuality. Astell's monastic retirement and desire to cultivate women's interior spirituality as opposed to their exterior beauty is one manifestation of this female type. Karen Harvey notes that the "the desiring, appetitive early-modern woman was replaced by her prudish, passive and constrained nineteenth-century successor. Affectionate but asexual, this less lusty woman was a counterpart to the newly domesticated middle-class woman in the home." *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century*:

Together, Richardson's *Pamela*, Fielding's *Shamela*, and Haywood's *Anti-Pamela* illustrate a shift in constructions of female morality, privileging not virtue but shame. Pamela's power comes not from her ability to preserve her "virtue" but from her ability to use her shame to instill shame in Mr. B: Richardson's virtuous woman, a proper female subject, *does* feel the requisite shame that polices her knowledge/recognition of her own desires but she also creates shame in those around her. While Fielding and Haywood criticize from very different vantage points the Richardsonian virtuous woman, they both recognize the problems inherent in naturalizing feminine virtue, modesty, and shame. This essay suggests that Haywood's *Anti-Pamela* exposes and disrupts the assumed boundaries between virtue and shame, rejecting both the shamed, sexually naïve, and inherently vulnerable heroine in *Pamela*²¹⁵ and the shameless whore in *Shamela* to critique the ways in which Richardson and Fielding—whatever their ideological differences—endorse conventional gender roles.

I. The Anti-Pamela Debate

The anti-Pamela debate, as it has been understood by scholars focusing on the relationship between Richardson and Fielding, centers on anxieties over class boundaries and the ability, or threat, of the lower classes to transcend them. Ultimately, *Shamela*

Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 4. See also G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992), 329.

²¹⁵ Jane Spencer makes a similar argument regarding "scandal fiction": "In the typical seduction tale it was apparent that the heroine was seduced precisely *because* she was pure and innocent, and therefore unguarded: it was virtue that made her likely to fall" (112-113). *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen*, (New York: Blackwell, 1986). This essay argues that Haywood's *Anti-Pamela* more effectively fits Spencer's paradigm as a means of criticizing the moral novel.

reflects Fielding's anxieties over class mobility.²¹⁶ Parson Oliver articulates these anxieties when warning Tickletext that reading *Pamela* will have disastrous effects on servant-maids or heirs to estates: "The Instruction which it conveys to Servant-Maids, is, I think, very plainly this, To look out for their Masters as sharp as they can. The Consequences of which will be, besides Neglect of their Business, and the using all manner of Means to come at Ornaments of their Persons, that if the Master is not a Fool, they will be debauched by him; and if he is a Fool, they will marry him. Neither of which, I apprehend, my good Friend, we desire should be the Case of our Sons" (239-40). While Parson Oliver couches his argument under the pretense that servant-maids could be debauched by an opportunistic master, the real threat is to the ideology of partilineal inheritance. Though Fielding criticizes the potential of *Pamela* to encourage the upward mobility of servant-maids, Richardson is not without his own class anxieties.²¹⁷

The private relationship between Pamela and Mr. B can have grave consequences, and part of the function of shame in *Pamela* is to preserve the public and private reputations of both servant and master. For Richardson, a proper sense of shame for servant classes can protect a master from damaging gossip in which his servants might engage. The need for masters to maintain appropriate distance from their servants is a

²¹⁶ In his introduction to *Shamela and Joseph Andrews*, Thomas Keymer categorizes critical thought on *Shamela*, even between critics with disparate readings, as "an ideologically freighted attack on *Pamela*'s perceived agenda . . . by launching a nervous patrician defence of established hierarchies that refuses to admit inter-class marriage as anything other than devious contrivance and the prelude to social collapse" (xv). Keymer also notes Fielding's father's deathbed marriage to a servant woman which resulted in Fielding's disinheritance and his own, rather contradictory marriage to his own servant, Mary Daniels (xv-xvi).

²¹⁷ See Thomas Keymer and Peter Sabor, *Pamela in the Marketplace: Literary Controversy and Print Culture in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland*, (Cambridge U. Press, 2005), particularly pages 5-7. Keymer and Sabor note that "Richardson was careful to modify her lowness with traces of ancestral respectability" (6).

common theme in *A Collection Moral and Instructive Sentiments* “[b]ecause of the danger of gossip to the reputation of the master,”²¹⁸ ironically echoing the kind of sentiments Fielding puts in the mouth of Parson Oliver. Mr. B’s discovery of Pamela scribbling away as the novel opens addresses the problem of the letter-writing servant by creating a sense of shame in Pamela *for* her writing. Pamela tells her parents that, when Mr. B discovers her, she is “scared out of [her] senses” and hides the letter. She defends herself saying, “I said, in my Fright, Pray your Honour, forgive me!—Only to my Father and Mother.” Mr. B assures her that he is not angry. Pamela’s reaction to being caught in the act by Mr. B illustrates two important components of shame: first, her shame, quite simply, stems from the fact that she has been caught by Mr. B in the middle of “something dishonouring,” writing letters which could expose her master to social scorn. Second, the fright she experiences comes from, as Elias argues, the “fear of social degradation or, more generally, of other people’s gestures of superiority.” In other words, her fear is an external signifier of her internal shame and the threat of public shame to which Mr. B might subject her. In this moment, Pamela has recognized herself as inferior to Mr. B. Pamela’s recognition of her inferiority is complicated as Richardson’s representation of his heroine establishes her as Mr. B’s moral superior, though she never feels superior. It is Pamela’s unfamiliarity with proper behavior of those above her station, however, that instill her shame. The posthumously published 1801 edition even includes a warning against this type of behavior: “*though you ought to be wary what tales you send out of a family.*” Of this warning, Dussinger emphasizes the shame that might befall Pamela’s master: “In light of the cautionary advice in the *Collection of Moral and*

²¹⁸ Dussinger, 32.

Instructive Sentiments ...we may assume that here Richardson sympathizes with Mr B.'s predicament of losing his reputation through his servant-girl's reports."²¹⁹ Though Dussinger implies that the shame would fall on Mr. B if Pamela's letters were too revealing, the scene instills a sense of shame in women who might disclose too much in personal communication. Richardson provides this maxim from *Pamela* about the keeping of private letters, advice that ironically seems to encourage deceit: "A prudent woman will not preserve such letters and papers, however innocent, as she cares not her husband should see, lest any doubts, in case of his survivorship, should arise from them of her conduct, when she is *no more*, and which the papers themselves do not fully explain."²²⁰ While Mr. B's reputation is at stake if Pamela's letters were to fall into the wrong hands, Pamela's letter writing makes her vulnerable to posthumous shame, in this case, a sense of shame that would cast doubt about her chastity. While Mr. B's actions are clearly of a sexual nature, her letter writing *implies* that indiscrete sexual conduct and shame is much worse for Pamela than Mr. B's actions.²²¹

But in addition to protecting the public reputation of the master from the servant girl's transgression of public and private boundaries, shame has the power to transform men as well as women. Throughout the first volume of the novel, the virtuous Pamela is subject to the vulgar sexual advances of her master, but her virtuous resistance not only proves her moral worth (which justifies her economic worth as B.'s wife), it makes Mr. B

²¹⁹ "'Ciceronian Eloquence': The Politics of Virtue in Richardson's *Pamela*," *Passion and Virtue: Essays on the Novels of Samuel Richardson*, ed. David Blewitt (U. of Toronto Press, 2001), 27-51. (30-31)

²²⁰ *Moral and Instructive Sentiments*, 33.

²²¹ As Dussinger notes, the consequences that Pamela might face in the event her letters are exposed imply that "the woman has more to fear than the man from readers of posthumous letters" (32).

worthy of her. In fact, her resistance seems to exemplify a maxim from *Grandison*: “If women would discourage immodest men, shame, if not principle, would amend them.”²²² When Pamela discovers Mr. B had planned to deceive her into marriage and confronts him, he tells her, “when I further considered your unsullied virtue, and reflected upon the trials you had undergone, and the troubles I had involved you in, I was resolved, though I doubted not succeeding in this last part, to overcome myself.”²²³ Once married, he confesses, “if the riches of your mind, and your unblemished virtue, be set against *my* fortune . . . I shall not think I can possibly deserve you, till, after your sweet example, my future life shall become as nearly blameless as your’s.”²²⁴ Pamela’s virtuous behavior has made her deserving of marrying above her social class, but rather than simply providing her with the reward of marriage, her virtue transforms her husband. It encourages his self-reflection and leads to a desire to repent, or “overcome” himself, and results in his imitation of her virtue in constructing a “blameless” life. Pamela finds her reward not only in a marriage above her station but in shaming her husband into behaving in a way that compliments her virtue.

II. Economic Autonomy and *A Present for a Servant-Maid*

In one of the few articles that treats seriously both Fielding’s and Haywood’s satirical takes on *Pamela*, Scarlett Bowen frames her analysis of *Anti-Pamela* in the same class anxieties of *Shamela*. She argues that antipamelists “fear that behind [a servant-girl’s] gentlewomanly façade lurks a laboring woman’s motives and desires for economic

²²² *Collection*, 226.

²²³ *Pamela*, 305.

²²⁴ *Pamela*, 379.

enfranchisement” and that the depiction of the servant girl in both *Anti-Pamela* and *Shamela* is rooted in this fear of a servant girl’s monetary lust.²²⁵ Though the servant girl had the power to manage her own money, Bowen argues that both Fielding’s and Haywood’s representations of the Pamela figure indicate an anxiety over her financial power.²²⁶ While Bowen convincingly argues that recognizing the ability of a servant-girl to improve her financial position demonstrates her power, Haywood’s *Anti-Pamela* must be understood on its own terms outside of the masculinist interests represented by the Richardsonian and Fielding paradigms and, therefore, must be read as more than parody. Instead of reflecting the class anxieties that Fielding criticizes in *Shamela*, *Anti-Pamela* recognizes the dangers of a novel like *Pamela* in perpetuating the notion of the virtuous and sexually-desirable but desireless heroine.

Anti-Pamela, though, is not the only post-Richardson text in which Haywood attempts to expose the idealized “good” servant woman. Her 1743 *A Present for a Servant-Maid* presents the servant-maid with a set of rules intended to “mak[e] every Mistress of a Family perfectly contented, and every Servant-Maid both happy and beloved,” with the hope that the young woman who read the rules will “find it so much her Interest, as well as her Duty, to behave in a contrary Manner from what too many for

²²⁵ Bowen, 263. “‘A Sawce-box and Boldface Indeed’: Refiguring the Female Servant in the Pamela-Antipamela Debate,” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*. 28 (1999) 257-285.

²²⁶ Bowen argues that “we should not dismiss the fact that servant and other laboring women managed their own financial affairs, a capability denied to many leisure-class women. ...Fielding and Haywood, in presenting servant women whose only goal is to entice a wealthy man into marriage, seek to disavow and divert attention away from this economic self-sufficiency. Yet in acknowledging this aspect of servant women’s lives as threatening, they inescapably point to its power” (265).

some Years have done.”²²⁷ Published only two years after *Anti-Pamela, A Present for a Servant-Maid* needs to be read in conjunction with the earlier text to garner a more nuanced picture of Haywood’s attitude toward the working-class woman. While some scholars have deemed *Anti-Pamela* a conservative text and the Haywood who publishes after *Pamela* a “reformed” writer, *A Present for a Servant-Maid* illustrates the continuation of Haywood’s long-standing concern with the exploitation of disadvantaged women.²²⁸

Haywood’s warning in the preface focuses on the potential of the master to corrupt those in his employ: “It is not to be wondered at, that in an Age abounding with Luxury, and overrun with Pride, Servants should be in general so bad, that it is become one of our Calamities not to be able to live without them: Corruption, tho’ it begins at the Head, ceases not its Progress till it reaches the most inferior parts, and it is high Time to endeavor a Cure of so growing an Evil.”²²⁹ Haywood’s assertion that corruption begins at “the Head” refers both to the head or mind of the servant and to the master. A corrupt master breeds corrupt servants, and the servants’ corruption often becomes necessary for survival in a corrupt household. Haywood continues with a “caution against bad houses,”

²²⁷ *A Present for a Servant-Maid, or, the Sure Means of gaining Love and Esteem*, (London: T Gardner, 1743), preface.

²²⁸ Ingrassia argues that “texts like *Anti-Pamela* (1742) and *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751) . . . simultaneously supported and critiqued the dominant ideology inscribed in social, economic and discursive practices.” See *Authorship, Commerce, and Gender in Early Modern England*, (Cambridge U. Press, 1998), 109. Similarly, Deborah Nestor claims that what seems to be a moralizing ending in Haywood’s *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* is only “the surface narrative of this highly complex, multiplot novel” and “undermine[s] the accepted eighteenth-century bourgeois ideology regarding domestic relationships.” This narrative embedding, according to Nestor, can first be seen in *Anti-Pamela*. See ““Virtue Rarely Rewarded: Ideological Subversion and Narrative Form in Haywood’s Later Fiction.” *Studies in English Literature* 34 (1994): 580-581.

²²⁹ *Present*, preface.

noting that in a corrupt house “Temptations of all Kinds are offered her; she is not treated as a Servant but a Guest.”²³⁰ In fact, Haywood seems to describe conditions similar to those faced by Pamela following her mistress’s death: “her Country Habit is immediately stripp’d off, and a gay modish one put on in the Stead; and then the design’d Victim, willing or unwilling, is exposed to Sale to the first leud Supporter of her Mistress’s Grandeur that comes to the House: if she refuses the shameful Business for which she was hired, and prefers the Preservation of her Virtue to all the Promises can be made her, which way can she escape? She is immediately confined, close watched, threatened, and at last forced to Compliance.”²³¹ Though Pamela is not sold into prostitution as the generic servant in Haywood’s hypothetical example is, she is flattered by Mr. B’s attentions and the gifts of her mistress’s clothes, pursued sexually and confined. She is forbidden contact with her parents and faces constant threats to her safety from Mr. B and Mrs. Jewkes. Richardson’s preoccupation with Pamela’s “preservation of her virtue,” however, stands in stark contrast to Haywood’s warning to this “innocent young creature.” Where Richardson “rewards” Pamela with marriage to her pursuer, Haywood sees a restricted set of negative outcomes. The persecuted servant girl becomes “by a continued Prostitution withered in her Bloom, she becomes despised, no longer affords any Advantage to the Wretch who betrayed her, and is turned out to Infamy and Beggary, perhaps with the most loathsome of all Diseases.”²³² Though Haywood avoids using “shame” here, to be despised and subjected to infamy indicates the power of shame as a social consequence. Where Richardson argues that an experienced, worldly woman such

²³⁰ *Present*, 1.

²³¹ *Present*, 1-2.

²³² *Present*, 3.

as Sally Godfrey is destined to fall and an object of shame, Haywood implies that the innocent, virtuous woman is even more vulnerable to victimization and the attendant social shame; the potential that her master has to corrupt her *because of* her innocence is a greater threat to her than explicit warnings that might corrupt her innocence.

In addition to the warnings regarding potential corruption, Haywood provides encouragement to servants to resist their master's sexual pursuit, and while it seems that Pamela follows this rule, Haywood predicts a quite different result. As a servant, a young woman is excessively available to her master and "obliged to attend him at any Hour, and at any Place he is pleased to call" her, but her resistance "is less to be expected in [her] Station, [her] persevering may, perhaps, in Time, oblige him to desist, and acknowledge [she has] more Reason than himself."²³³ In her analysis of Haywood's *Anti-Pamela*, Bowen claims that the servant woman's ability to take advantage of a friendly job market leads to anxious representations of the money-grubbing servant woman: "Fielding and Haywood in presenting servant women whose only goal is to entice a wealthy man into marriage, seek to disavow and divert attention away from this economic self-sufficiency."²³⁴ Though Bowen does not make a direct connection, it would seem that this reading could be extended to *A Present for a Servant-Maid*. However, Haywood's evident sympathies for persecuted or disadvantaged heroines in her earlier amatory fiction extend into her post-Richardsonian fiction, and these sympathies lie behind her advice in *A Present for a Servant-Maid*.²³⁵

²³³ *Present*, 44-45.

²³⁴ Bowen, 265.

²³⁵ In *Fantomina*, Haywood's eponymous heroine is "punished" when she is sent off to a convent by her mother. She does not, however, face public scorn. See Catherine Craft "Reworking Male Models: Aphra Behn's *The Fair Vow-Breaker*, Eliza Haywood's

Much of Haywood's advice recognizes the autonomy available to a servant woman, an autonomy which seems unavailable to Pamela. Though Bowen claims the anti-Pamelists lacked tolerance for the servant woman's "capacity for verbal defiance," a tactic which Pamela deploys to her advantage,²³⁶ Haywood's warnings against this approach recognize the precarious position of a servant in the household. In *A Present for a Servant-Maid*, Haywood warns against the "*Giving pert or saucy Answers*" to one's mistress: because "to defend yourself by a saucy Reply, gives her a real Occasion of Offence, justifies her ill Humour, and perhaps will be more severely resented by her than the Fault she accused you of would be, had you been guilty of it."²³⁷ She does, though, encourage servants, if their masters are persistent in their sexual pursuits, "to go directly out of his House: He will not insist on your forfeiting a Month's Wages for his own Sake, for fear you should declare the Cause of your quitting his Service; and if he should be even so harden'd in Vice as to have no regard for his Character in this Point, it is much better you should lose a Month's Wages, than continue a Moment longer in the Power of such a one."²³⁸ That Haywood recommends servants relinquish their positions both denies the assumed rights a master has to their bodies as sexual property and provides servants with a viable means of self-management to resist exploitation. Haywood finds space for the servant girl to use shame as a tool to preserve her own physical and economic autonomy. Her master's "regard for his character," or his fear of shame, gives

Fantomina, and Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*." *The Modern Language Review*. Oct. 1991. 86(4): 821-838. Lasselia's affair with de l'Amye, in *Lasselia*, is discovered by his wife. Mde. de l'Amye promises forgiveness if Lasselia promises to leave her husband alone. Lasselia agrees and joins a nunnery.

²³⁶ Bowen, 265. For a discussion of Pamela's sauciness, see particularly pages 265-267.

²³⁷ *Present*, 21.

²³⁸ *Present*, 46.

her the leverage to not only leave his employ but to retain her month's wages. Furthermore, we must imagine that servant who leaves her master's house will have to find employment elsewhere. If we read this as coded dissent against the established social order, as Haywood's fiction has often been read, the recommendation to "go directly out of his House" assumes an economic agency of servants rather than reinforces the representation of the servant maid an economic threat. By preserving economic agency for the servant girl, Haywood draws attention to the economic implications of shame. Ironically, though, it is not *female* shame that holds economic possibilities for women but *male* shame, a trope also found in *Anti-Pamela*, which I will discuss in detail in the following section.

III. Rereading Haywood and Fielding

When Shamela pinches her cheeks to create a modest blush, Fielding calls attention satirically to an education in female modesty that teaches women to mask their sexual knowledge. Instead of satirizing the training of young girls in modesty, Haywood criticizes the cultivation of vanity in young girls and the "too great Indulgence and false Tenderness of their Parents."²³⁹ While both novelists place blame on the ways in which women are educated, each calls attention to a different problem. Fielding distrusts this education in virtue, an education which simultaneously hypersexualizes both male and female and encourages the manipulative potential of women's delaying male sexual

²³⁹ Eliza Haywood, *Anti-Pamela*, ed. Catherine Ingrassia, *Anti-Pamela and Shamela*, (Toronto: Broadview, 2004). 56-7. All subsequent references are from this edition and cited parenthetically.

gratification.²⁴⁰ Both the courtship manual and *Pamela* advocate a virtuous education which creates and encourages disingenuous behavior. Haywood also sees female education and training as problematic, but rather than criticizing Syrena's ability to "fake it," she suggests that Syrena's early naïveté is responsible for her fall. Syrena's inexperience, like Pamela's, cannot protect her from Vardine's advances, contrary to Gregory's declaration that a woman's "ingenuous modesty . . . is a natural protection from the familiarities of men."²⁴¹ By emphasizing the potential of the innocent woman to be victimized, Haywood questions Richardson's paradigm of "virtue rewarded." While Fielding focuses on the manipulative potential of the deceptively virtuous woman, Haywood exposes the sexual dangers faced by a virtuous woman. In doing so, she criticizes the ideology behind the Richardsonian heroine, and acknowledges the need for eighteenth-century women to be aware of the social repercussions of relying solely on virtue to preserve them from the dangers of predatory male sexuality.

To be certain, *Shamela* and *Anti-Pamela* share some common satirical targets and comments. Both Shamela and Syrena Tricksey are masters of performing virtue. In the second letter of the novella, Shamela writes her mother about Booby's flattering her by telling her she was a favorite of her mistress, his mother, as he takes her by the hand. Shamela writes that she "pretended to be shy," as any good coquette would do. When he kisses her, she pretends to be angry (243). Similarly, Syrena's ability to excel "the most experienc'd Actresses on the Stage" is not innate but carefully cultivated to "deceive and betray all those whom her Beauty should allure" (55). However, the construction of the

²⁴⁰ "For the man who woos her, the woman who says 'no' while consciously aware that she intends to say 'yes' is worse than a hypocrite: she is actively engaged in manipulation, a manipulation all the more dangerous for being concealed." (Yeazell 52).

²⁴¹ Gregory, 20.

two women's ability to perform virtue is dramatically different. *Shamela* begins with the heroine already in Booby's service, her manipulations of him already in motion. She is already a fallen woman and her fall is a part of the consequences of her maternal education. Haywood's Syrena, conversely, is in the process of her social/sexual education, an education predicated on the need to learn to perform virtue to preserve her from predatory desires.

Haywood argues that pretending virtue is not, as Fielding's characterization of Shamela suggests, "owing to [the] Inclinations [of women, but to the] too great Indulgence and false Tenderness of their Parents; who flattering themselves that by breeding them like Gentlewomen, and setting them forth to the utmost of their Abilities, and often beyond, they shall be able to make their Fortune by Marriage; give them Ideas no way to their Advantage" (56-7). Haywood condemns the problematic marriage market which places emphasis on the monetary value of a good match and the false hope of class mobility for a servant-girl through marriage that *Pamela* depicts. Instead of Fielding's anxiety that *Pamela* scandalously encourages servant maids to see their Masters as suitable husbands, Haywood focuses her attention on the social values that perpetuate women's self-interested, calculating self-representations as modest or "shamefaced"²⁴² to critique a economically-obsessed marriage market that encourages women (virtuous women included) to recognize the marketability of their blushes manipulate the system through performances of virtue.

Haywood's criticism of the marital prospects of servant-girls only skims the surface of *Anti-Pamela*'s ideological concerns. Haywood probes the ideological precepts

²⁴² For a similar argument, see Ingrassia's introduction to *Anti-Pamela* and *Shamela*, particularly pages 40-43.

which necessitate the performance of virtue. Vardine's rape of Syrena teaches her that performing virtue is the only way in which she can maintain her public reputation. Her relationship with Vardine is the only time she exhibits a genuine manifestation of shame because her innocent assumptions lead to her victimization. Yet, despite her shame, Syrena quickly learns that, in order to preserve herself from further victimization, she must scheme in order to survive. That Syrena learns that manipulating lovers has monetary rewards allows Haywood to criticize the premise of Richardsonian moralizing—the virtuous woman (or the over-idealized servant girl) will triumph. In Haywood's ideologically realistic world, the virtuous woman is simply a potential victim and her only means for survival, economically and morally, is to reject internalizing the masculinist fantasies of the desirable virgin and act the part—she learns to mime the performance of modesty.²⁴³

Haywood's descriptions of Syrena's parentage and her childhood propensities to act the part of the virtuous woman suggest that her training sets her up to be victimized. Like Shamela, Syrena is born to a woman of questionable reputation. Yet, it is not her pretend virtue which is a problem but her training in vanity. Syrena is taught the "Art of Decoying" from her mother. She is a natural and is trained to "deceive and betray all those whom her Beauty should allure" (54). Her victimization at the hands of Vardine shifts the focus of the criticism from her mother's attempts to "train" her to the masculinist fantasy which requires these virtuous performances. For Syrena, the vain

²⁴³ Helen Thompson, similarly, argues that Syrena Tricksey relies on performance: "In representing a woman who refutes *Pamela's* transitively modernizing agency, Haywood innovates an anti-Pamela whose mastery of passion enables her to fake ingenuousness itself." She concludes that "Syrena need only to learn how to act like *Pamela*." *Ingenuous Subjection: Compliance and Power in the Eighteenth-Century Domestic Novel*, (U. of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 130, 138.

pleasure she takes in Vardine's addresses works to her disadvantage. She finds "something pleasingly amusing in being address'd by a Man that admires One . . . Thus Vanity, Self-Conceit and Avarice, tempt her to despise the Admonitions of her crafty Mother and make her resolve to act henceforward of herself" (71). Haywood criticizes the social training of girls by arguing that indulging of their vanities make them susceptible to inappropriate and dangerous sexual advances. By teaching her daughter to believe that she can make an economically advantageous marriage, Mrs. Tricksey fails to prepare her daughter for the realities of sexual politics.

It is this pleasure in praise that sets Syrena up for her fall at Vardine's hands. Mrs. Tricksey warns Syrena of the "Folly of Women who suffer themselves to be seduced by fine Speeches only" (73). Despite her mother's warnings, though, Syrena finds herself susceptible, with grim consequences, to Vardine's persuasions. During a prearranged meeting at St. James Park, they are caught in the rain. Appealing to her awareness of public virtue, he takes advantage of his good luck and convinces her to take shelter with him indoors: "Nothing could have happened more lucky for Vardine's Designs: he had now a very plausible Pretense for persuading her to go into a Room.—It would be a piece of strange Affectation, said he, to chuse to stand in a Place where we are exposed to the View of every body; (and you see how many People pass) rather than go with a Man who loves you, and whose every Action you may command" (74). When they have been inside for some time drinking, Vardine asks Syrena if it is not preferable to be inside rather than "strolling the Streets, as if no House would have us" (74). Vardine's appeals to shame recognize shame as a seemingly innocuous mechanism of social control, curtailing one's bad public behaviors.

Syrena's sense of shame, however, has not been fully assuaged. She confesses that being inside the tavern is better "if it were not for the Scandal." Though Vardine assures her that there need not be any scandal "unless we tell it ourselves," Syrena admits that she is "ashamed to know I am here myself" (74). Despite the security the privacy affords them, Syrena, nonetheless, still feels shame. In recognizing Syrena's shame, Haywood recognizes that shame is not only a mechanism of social control but also a tool of masculine seduction. Syrena's attempts to manage her *public reputation* result in real danger and genuine shame as opposed to self-consciously performed shame. Vardine's advances become more and more forward, as he presents her with stockings he has already tried to give her before and grabs at her leg. Finally, Syrena can no longer resist as she begins "to grow confused, and she lost all Memory of the Place, or Danger she was in" and becomes Vardine's victim (76). Though her consent (or lack thereof) is not made explicit, Haywood's language indicates a woman under siege, and implies rape: Syrena is "bombarded . . . so fast with Speeches from Plays" that eventually "the Town [Syrena's body] was wholly" Vardine's (76). Despite her mastery of the "art of Decoying," Syrena is not exempt from the experience of genuine shame and emotional anguish: "the momentary Rapture over, the Power of Reflection return'd to this unhappy ruin'd Girl—she reproach'd him and herself;—she wept;—she exclaim'd" (76).²⁴⁴ Where Shamela (as the model of the "bad girl") can counterfeit the outward signs of modesty, shame, and virtue despite her literal *shamelessness*, Syrena's later ability to counterfeit modesty does not negate her capacity to feel genuine shame. Her shame, though, does not stem from

²⁴⁴ Though "rapture" could indicate that Syrena took some pleasure in her sexual liaison with Vardine, the *OED* provides "Rape; sexual violation, ravishing" as a definition of rapture. Combined with the preceding violent tone, I assert that Haywood leaves open the possibility that Syrena does not consent to sex with Vardine.

social consequences but from her loss of autonomy in Vardine's very dangerous company. Syrena's internalized notions of shame make her vulnerable to Vardine's predatory advances. In capitulating to the threat of social shame, Syrena, shamefully, gives up control of her sexuality to Vardine's desires.

Syrena's internalization of shame has predisposed her to victimization at Vardine's hands and Haywood recognizes the very real threat the loss of her chastity poses to her reputation. Syrena must act fast to preserve her reputation and any autonomy left her over her body and desires. It is a danger which seems not to threaten Shamela. Though Mr. Booby ultimately catches Shamela in bed with Parson Williams, her punishment is relegated to a postscript in the final letter from Tickletext to Oliver. While Shamela has relentlessly pursued greed in her seduction of Booby, Syrena begins pursuing financial gain as a consequence of seduction. Realizing the precarious position she is in, decides that she must carefully manage her situation by seeking financial security: she "resolved to be entirely secret in the Matter, and get as much as she could from him, in recompence for what he had robb'd her of" (77). Her astute awareness of the need for compensation recognizes the economic needs of a woman in her position. Vardine gives her a metal box Syrena compliments (she, rather naively, believes it to be real gold) and he reluctantly gives her money when she manages to convince him that her mother is in debt and that, on her way to pay the debt, she was the victim of a pickpocket. Her success in financially manipulating him results in her thinking "it impossible for Mankind to refuse her any thing" (81). In seeking financial recompense, Syrena regains the autonomy over her body and desires and is able to maintain her independence, a

strategy which she uses to her advantage again. By retaining her autonomy, Syrena preserves herself from the shame of both losing her reputation and living in poverty.

It is precisely these lessons that allow Syrena to manage carefully her relationships in the Sir Thomas household, a situation which underscores not only the necessity of women's performing virtue, modesty, and shame but also the importance of managing public reputations for both men and women. While in the service of an elderly gentlewoman, Syrena is pursued by both the woman's son, Sir Thomas, and Sir Thomas's son, Mr. L—. After fending off their advances, Syrena finally gives in to Mr. L—, only to frame him for rape in order to extort money from the family (a *modus operandi* gleaned from her "little conversation" with Vardine). Her plot is unsuccessful, though, and she is found out when a letter from her mother detailing their scheme ends up in the hands of Sir Thomas and his family. Though she is exposed to Sir Thomas's family and loses any prospect of financial gain, she avoids public exposure because the family wants to spare Sir Thomas and Mr. L— the public embarrassment of having propositioned a servant girl.

While her financial punishment allows Haywood a means of criticizing her deceptions, Syrena is not the only character subject to criticism. This episode illustrates that the need to maintain the appearance of one's virtue is not only a feminine interest but a masculine one as well. Sir Thomas and his family need to maintain their public reputation, and as a result, they reinforce Syrena's false construction of virtue. By covering up their own breach of social boundaries, they help Syrena preserve her false reputation. But more than merely reinforcing a woman's ability to deceive, Haywood uses Sir Thomas' and Mr. L—'s expectations of Syrena's sexual availability to argue that

masculinist social norms not only encourage women to perform virtue but to get their revenge where they can take it:

“How false and weak, therefore, is that Notion which some Men have, that they may do any thing with a Woman, but marry her, and that nothing but a Wife can make them unhappy; when, in reality, there are often more Disquiets, more Perplexities, more Dangers, attend the Prosecution of an unlawful Amour, than can be met with, even with the worst of Wives; for if a Woman cannot be sincere in a State where ‘tis her Interest to be so; what can be expected from her in one where ‘tis her Interest to deceive: Besides, the Artifices practiced to gain the Sex at first, gives them a kind of Pretense for Retaliation afterward; and Men frequently find to their Cost, they but too well know how to be even with them.” (118)

Ultimately, Haywood criticizes with a heavier hand the dominant masculine sexual expectations that construct women as objects of male pleasure. The source of the problem for Haywood is not the feigned virtue of Shamela Andrews but male inconstancy and artifice used to encourage women to deceive when it is in their interest. Men, like women, engage in acts of deception, and the deceptions that women employ are simply retaliations against male behavior which seeks to take advantage of vulnerable women. Unlike Fielding, Haywood exposes a system which creates no guiltless players.

Haywood pushes the relationship between male and female deceit one step further in the Syrena’s brief affair with Lord R—. Though Syrena’s manipulations of her first lover Vardine teach her to “Glory in the Power of her Beauty and Invention, [and think] it impossible for mankind to refuse her anything,” and while she manages to cut her losses

in the Sir Thomas debacle, her adventures with Lord R— are less successful. The morning after their tryst, Lord R—tries to give her ten Guineas, and Syrena, an expert at feigning virtue, pretends to be offended, claiming that she indulged her desires because of love. She does, however, take the money when Lord R—calls it a token of his affection, taking the time to point out that she is no prostitute. When she does not hear from Lord R—, Syrena takes it upon herself to visit his lodgings. Lord R— is shocked to see her and upbraids her: “I never receive Visits from your Sex, unless those who are known to be nearly related to me” (149). Syrena bursts into tears, rages, and eventually swoons, when Lord R—calls out her behavior for what it is. Haywood defends his actions to her readers who might think a woman who has obliged a man as Syrena has deserves better treatment: “he had before met with Women of *Syrena’s* stamp;--that he had for some her Years of his Life devoted himself so much to Gallantry, that he was perfectly acquainted with every little Art put in Practice by those, whose Business it is to ensnare; and had more than once been imposed upon by the Pretense of a violent Affection, which make him not only presently discern but likewise abhor those studied and counterfeited Tendernesses” (150). While it may seem that Haywood justifies Lord R—’s behavior and condemns Syrena’s, she reaches the same judgment she did in the Sir Thomas affair: though it has been in Syrena’s interest to deceive, Haywood acknowledges that deception is in the interest of both parties. Lord R—pretends devotion to Syrena upon parting to minimize the cost of having lost interest in her. Unfortunately, for Syrena, she is unable to recognize that she is not the only one playing the game and that Lord R— is shameless. While the Sir Thomas affair maintains Syrena’s false virtue, the Lord R— affair argues that social expectations create a feedback loop between manufactured virtue

and consumer skepticism. Together, Syrena's affairs with Sir Thomas and Lord R— illustrate that men simultaneously expect women to be virtuous and suspect them of deception. In turn, the Shamela construction of women as inherently dangerous and deceitful becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy in Haywood.

IV. Conclusion

Johnson's definitions of "virtue" highlight the power that virtue has for Pamela and at the anxieties present in Fielding's *Shamela* over the power virtue (or "virtue," as it were) might lend a servant girl in seducing her master. However, Johnson's definitions also break open the possibilities present in Haywood. Though Fielding sees the power of virtue as socially threatening, drawing a fine line between virtue and shame, Haywood understands virtue and shame as inseparable components of female morality. *Anti-Pamela*, in this respect, divests virtue of its power, arguing that a woman cannot know virtue until she has experienced shame. While it would be an oversimplification to insist that the popularity of *Pamela* accounts for this shift in the representation of female morality, it illustrates an important point about the novel's relationship to the internalization of feminine shame. *Pamela* privileges virtue and domesticity but also discourses of shame. A virtuous woman is one whose sense of virtue *naturally* produces the mechanisms of shame (the evidence of one's modesty) that Gregory and Allestree describe. This discourse of shame still depends on the virtuous woman but *not* the virtuous woman who leads by example. Rather, the Richardsonian virtuous woman performs a kind of shame which instills shame in the predatory men around her. This kind of virtuous woman does not emerge in isolation in *Pamela* but, rather, in a triangulated dialogue between Richardson, Fielding, and Haywood.

In both the novel and the conduct book, the insistence on natural female modesty and virtue creates tension between instinctive female behavior and the need to reinforce that instinct in women, as Yeazell notes: “the very existence of the literature testifies to the belief that the ‘instinct’ must be elaborately codified and endlessly discussed: woman’s ‘natural’ modesty must be strenuously cultivated, the argument goes, lest both sexes fall victim to her ‘natural’ lust.”²⁴⁵ The insistence that women are naturally virtuous and modest draws attention to the fact that women must constantly manufacture a natural virtue and modesty in accordance with the social rules. This acceptance of the blush as genuine, unaffected, and evidence of the innate modesty of women both in the courtship manual and in *Pamela* becomes the basis of Fielding’s and Haywood’s critiques in as much as each of these anti-Pamelists recognizes the role that socialization plays in creating female modesty.

Adding Haywood’s *Anti-Pamela* to the debate over the virtuous woman enables us to understand how both Fielding and Richardson reinforce problematic notions of gender. Fielding and Haywood recognize Shamela’s and Syrena’s ability to perform the virtuous woman, but the two authors attribute the performance to different circumstances and come to dramatically different judgments about the female characters. Each woman has mastered the performance of virtue, yet Haywood provides a set of circumstances which sympathetically illustrates a woman’s need to feign virtue and modesty. Fielding, conversely, portrays a naturally deceitful woman already steeped in the culture of performance. While each is an apt criticism of the problems in *Pamela*, these

²⁴⁵ Yeazell, 5. This insistence on natural modesty and virtue bears similarities to Michel Foucault’s repressive hypothesis. See *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*, trans. by Robert Hurley, (New York: Vintage, 1990).

representations can still be understood in gendered terms. While *Shamela* presents the typical “bad girl” who can counterfeit external signs of shame and modesty despite being (literally) shameless, Haywood’s *Anti-Pamela* argues that the ability to feign modesty and shame does not negate a woman’s ability to *feel* shame but constitutes an essential skill for the eighteenth-century woman’s survival in a harsh world. In Haywood’s world, this survival tactic is not something a woman naturally possesses but is something she learns by exposure and not necessarily or solely through her maternal education. Though Pamela is so innocent that her parents must warn her that B’s advances are inappropriate and Shamela is already so corrupt that it can only be part of her natural predisposition, Syrena’s performance is necessary and its necessity is learned as a result of her vulnerability.

Rather than ushering in a domestic novel featuring a virtuous woman as its heroine, these three novels recognize, in varying degrees, the instability of virtue and modesty in the ongoing construction of femininity. For Richardson, shame, paradoxically, is both a natural capacity and an internalized ideology aimed at desexualizing the sexually desirable, but desire-less, heroine. The Richardsonian virtuous woman maintains her virtue despite incessant assaults upon it and can provoke shame in those around her. Where Richardson emphasizes shame as a natural and internalized characteristic, in Fielding and Haywood, the performance of shame in and of itself suggests a self-consciousness that already indicates an interestedness in appearing virtuous. Both Fielding and Haywood go to great lengths to point out that shame and virtue are performative and not innate feminine characteristics. For Fielding, the Richardsonian virtuous woman becomes a disingenuous woman without shame invested

in profiting off of her virtuous reputation. In Haywood, however, the performance of shame is an invaluable talent possessed by both men and women as a means of preventing public humiliation and maintaining one's reputation.

Chapter 4:

Shame and the Moral Novel in Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*

“[W]hat a Set of Wretches [. . .] have we—to make the Behn's, the Manley's, and the Heywood's, look white. From the same injured, disgraced, profaned Sex, let us be favoured with the Antidote to these Womens Poison.”²⁴⁶

-Samuel Richardson, Letter to Sarah Chapone, 6 December 1750

When Arabella, the avid consumer of romance novels in Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*, believes she is about to be the victim of an abduction, she jumps into the Thames in an effort to save herself. She is rescued but falls very ill, confined to bed while suffering from a fever. Her physical illness subsides, but she still suffers from “a violent Distemper” from which “there seem'd very little Probability of her Recovery.”²⁴⁷ In an effort to cure her from her illness, a “Pious and Learned Doctor” (366)²⁴⁸ recommends that she read “an admirable writer of our own time, [who] has found the way to convey the most solid instructions, the noblest sentiments, and the most exalted piety, in the pleasing dress of a novel” (377).²⁴⁹ Though she does not read *Clarissa* by the novel's close, it serves as a sort of talisman against her previously bad reading.²⁵⁰ The simple

²⁴⁶ Samuel Richardson, *Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson*, ed. John Carroll, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 173n

²⁴⁷ Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote, or the Adventures of Arabella*, ed. Margaret Dalziel, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989), 366. All subsequent references in this essay are from this edition and cited parenthetically.

²⁴⁸ Though his is referred to both as a “doctor” and a “divine” in the novel, I refer to him as “doctor” as a means of highlighting the authority a doctor of divinity would have in treating Arabella's psychological and spiritual ailments.

²⁴⁹ In the appendix to *The Female Quixote*, Duncan Isles posits that Lennox intended to provide *Clarissa* as a cure as it is “the outstanding contemporary example of ‘natural’ and moralistic fiction” (426).

²⁵⁰ Possessing but not reading Richardson's novels was not uncommon in the eighteenth-century. Based on booksellers' records of books purchased and borrowed, Jan Fergus notes that Richardson's books were “often withdrawn incompletely” (110). While Fergus

recommendation eventually causes Arabella to reconsider her taste for “senseless Fictions” (374) and she finally consents to marry her cousin, Glanville, the suitor her father had identified as the only means of preserving her inheritance. This final scene, however, has proved problematic for many critics whether they read the novel as subversive of eighteenth-century gender ideology or conservatively by privileging Arabella’s appropriate marriage to Glanville.²⁵¹ By focusing on the marriage, these

does concede that an individual could already “own or have access to” volumes they did not borrow, “the sheer numbers of desultory borrowings suggest that browsing is a more likely explanation” (109). *Provincial Readers Eighteenth-Century England*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006). Coupled with practice of “ladies [in Ranelegh Gardens] to hold up the volumes of *Pamela* to one another, to shew they had got the book that every one was talking of,” the act of reading Richardson is not as important as the assumption that one has or will read Richardson. See *The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ed. Anna Letitia Barbauld, (London, 1804), lviii.

²⁵¹ For Deborah Ross, Lennox’s romantic influences “prevent the reader from rejoicing at this fairy-tale dénouement.” See “Mirror, Mirror: The Didactic Dilemma of *The Female Quixote*,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 23.7 (1987), 455-473. Qtd from 458. Catherine Craft claims “Arabella ends her adventures in marriage, and such, insists the narrator, must be the case,” arguing that a woman can neither be a romance heroine or the author of one. See “Reworking Male Models: Aphra Behn’s *The Fair Vow-Breaker*, Eliza Haywood’s *Fantomina*, and Charlotte Lennox’s *The Female Quixote*,” *The Modern Language Review*, 86.4 (1991): 821-838. Qtd. from 837-38. Reading Lennox’s ending ironically, Ellen Gardiner reads “Arabella’s marriage as a form of death.” See “Writing Men Reading in Charlotte Lennox’s *The Female Quixote*,” *Studies in the Novel* 28.1 (1996), 1-11. Qtd. from 9. Scott Paul Gordon, in contrast, argues that the novel “severely disapproves of the active (female) imagination and consistently rejects [Arabella’s] practice of quixotism” and finds “the text shows that [she] *misvalues* herself, having learned from romance to see herself as ‘heroine’ rather than, as the story eventually teaches her, as a ‘wife.’” See *The Practice of Quixotism: Postmodern Theory and Eighteenth-Century Women’s Writing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 53, 57. Similarly, Catherine Gallagher argues that the novel aims to reeducate women into marriage. See *Nobody’s Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1994), 175. Helen Thompson argues that Arabella is “neither romantic nor anti-romantic but, impossibly, both: she embodies one resolution of contractual modernity’s marriage plot.” Thompson argues that Arabella’s final decision to marry her cousin Glanville constitutes a moment in which Arabella “freely” chooses to submit to paternalistic authority. See *Ingenuous Subjection: Compliance and Power in the Eighteenth-Century Domestic Novel* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2000), 169.

readings ignore the novel's most pivotal scene: Arabella's debate with the doctor and his prescriptive recommendation of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*,²⁵² a debate and cure which result, as Gardiner argues, in Arabella's shame and encourage her submission to male privilege.²⁵³ By criticizing Arabella's reading (and the effects of it) and in offering Richardson's *Clarissa* as appropriate reading material, the doctor asks that we reread her earlier infatuation with romance as instances of madness. However, rather than treat Arabella's imaginative inventions as a version of feminine power,²⁵⁴ I argue that Lennox treats the doctor's moralistic prescription ironically. The doctor's introduction of Richardson motivates the deployment of a moralistic ending which presupposes an ideology that assumes that whatever women read will determine their behavior. Rather than offering Richardson as authoritative and instructive reading for women, *The Female Quixote* satirizes the notion that women lose their critical faculties when they read romances and thereby challenges the efficacy of the moralizing "antidote" to reform its female audience through a sanitized version of romance. Lennox, thus, emphasizes the moralizing novel's reliance on punishing female independence as opposed to exalting female virtue.²⁵⁵

²⁵² In the appendix to Dalziel's *The Female Quixote*, Duncan Isles posits that Lennox intended to provide *Clarissa* as a cure but that she was forced to reduce the length of the novel. This, according to Isles, accounts for the reference to *Clarissa* (426).

²⁵³ See Gardiner: "Arabella's reformation produces great joy in the men, but shame in her" (9).

²⁵⁴ Though the novel reflects Lennox's "conservative moral view," Jane Spencer claims it "gives its virtuous woman power, importance and a history." See *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 192. Craft calls "Arabella's adventures [. . .] herstory, a text which calls history into question in certain ways" and claims her tales give women a central role, "offer[ing] them more important roles than they actually had" ("Reworking," 833).

²⁵⁵ This claim builds upon Gardiner's assertion that "*The Female Quixote* [is] not as a romance, but [. . .] as a form of literary criticism" (1). Where Gardiner sees *The Female*

In considering *The Female Quixote* as commentary on the moralizing novel's process of "sanitizing," this essay builds upon what William Warner calls "overwriting," a process in which the moralizing novel internalizes and repeats the immoralities inherent in the novels of Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, and Eliza Haywood, appropriating them to justify the status of the novel as moral literature.²⁵⁶ In this light, while Richardson purports to have banished the immoralities within amatory fiction, he actually overwrites them in *Pamela* and *Clarissa* and uses them to his advantage. However, Warner's term assumes that the process of elevating the novel is teleological, one in which amatory fiction is, essentially, swallowed by the domestic novel. As Richardson overwrites the conventions of amatory fiction for his means, Lennox appropriates Richardson's overwriting for her means.²⁵⁷ *The Female Quixote* is neither amatory nor is it a replacement *for* amatory. It is neither "domestic" nor exclusively an orthodox quixotic tale.²⁵⁸ It is neither simply pro-romance nor anti-romance. *The Female Quixote* is a satirical novel critical not of romance and the amatory, but instead, one which exposes the ideological shaming of women upon which the success of the moralizing novel depends. In this respect, *The Female Quixote* comments ironically on the process of

Quixote as "expos[ing] the primarily economic motivation behind the eighteenth-century literary profession's attempts to devalue romance for certain groups of writers and readers" (9), this argument positions *The Female Quixote* as an ideological argument against moralizing fiction rather than economic one.

²⁵⁶ *Licensing Entertainment: The Elevation of Novel Reading in Great Britain, 1684-1750* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1998.) 193.

²⁵⁷ For a similar argument regarding Eliza Haywood's *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, see Aleksandra Hultquist's "Haywood's Re-Appropriation of the Amatory Heroine in *Betsy Thoughtless*," *Philological Quarterly*, 85.1-2 (2006): 141-165. Hultquist argues that Haywood "re-appropriates the resourcefulness of the amatory heroine that Richardson used as a negative example of female behavior," rejecting the notion that her later fiction is the fiction of a "reformed" Haywood (141).

²⁵⁸ Gordon, 53.

shaming Arabella out of her romantic reading practices. In having Arabella read French romances as opposed to Behn, Haywood, and Manley, Lennox provides an acceptable explicit target to appease moralists which, then, stands in an analogous position for the amatory novels that the institutionalized novel tries to supplant.²⁵⁹

As Richardson overwrites amatory fiction, the doctor tries to overwrite the romances that Arabella has read. The success of the doctor's cure introduces Arabella to shame, an emotion which has not yet affected her behavior and appears absent in the narrator's treatment of her reading. When she is left to reflect upon the error of her ways, she realizes, for the first time, "the Absurdity of her past Behaviour, and the Contempt and Ridicule to which [. . .] she had exposed herself" (383). However, the narrator's comments on the results of her cure stand in stark contrast to earlier assessments of her reading. Where the doctor derides her reading, calling her books "senseless Fictions," the narrator appears to reserve this sort of harsh judgment, instead providing insight into the appeal that romances hold for the young Arabella and highlighting her susceptibility to their influences. The books that once belonged to Arabella's mother and "soften[ed] a Solitude which [her mother] found very disagreeable" provide Arabella the same comfort:

The surprising Adventures with which they were filled, proved a most pleasing Entertainment to a young Lady, who was wholly secluded from

²⁵⁹ Of Haywood's and Delarivier Manley's scandal fiction, Ballaster claims, "[t]he popular association of the late seventeenth-century (French) romance with a female readership and female literary production established a continuity between the female-authored 'novel' in England and the earlier romance despite their significant differences" Amatory fiction was "consistently associated with" French romances. See *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 13, 43.

the World; who had no other diversion, but ranging like a Nymph through Gardens, or, to say better, the Woods and Lawns in which she was inclosed; and who had no other Conversation but that of a grave and melancholy Father, or her own Attendants. (7)

Because Arabella's reading occurs in complete seclusion, she begins "supposing Romances were real Pictures of Life, [and] from them she drew all her Notions and Expectations" (7). Though the narrator does not reveal whether or not her father intervenes in her reading, his influence seems minimal at best. Her books supplant normal conversation with her father, and her reading takes place in "perfect Retirement" (7), completely removed from the world outside her father's estate. By the time the novel closes, Arabella's reading has been placed under the supervision of overbearing masculine authority in contrast to the presence of a "grave and melancholy father" who leaves her to read at her leisure. This masculine intervention essentially shifts her reading from one extreme to another. Where her father gave her complete license to read whatever books were in her mother's library, the doctor, in recommending *Clarissa*, places a clear standard on what type of book is available to her: one which is instructive, sentimental, and pious and stands in opposition to books which can only harm the female reader. The doctor condemns Arabella's beloved romances as fictions that "at once *vitiates the Mind*, and *pervert the Understanding*; and which if they are at any Time read with Safety, owe their Innocence only to their Absurdity" (374, emphasis mine) and charges them with "soften[ing] the Heart to Love, and harden[ing] it to Murder" (380). The problem from the doctor's standpoint is, of course, that these romances cannot be read safely, but in criticizing her reading so harshly, the doctor attempts to shame Arabella by

belittling her character, implying she is corrupt and immoral as a result of her illicit reading practices.

From a diagnostic standpoint, her father's detachment from her reading practices, coupled with her complete seclusion, appear to be at fault. While the narrator understands her fairy-tale isolation as part of her susceptibility, the doctor's assertion that Arabella's mind is ruined or spoiled contradicts the narrator's playful representation of her seclusion. The doctor's criticism overshadows the narrator's representations of her reading and draws attention to judgments made earlier in the novel by Glanville, judgments which imply mental instability and take on greater significance in light of the doctor's diagnosis.²⁶⁰ When Arabella perceives herself in danger, she insists that Glanville defend her, admonishes him for being "cold and insensible as thou art to the Danger which threatens me," and rides away from him. Glanville "flung himself off his Horse in a violent Rage; and, forgetting that the Stranger was observing, and now within Hearing, he fell a cursing and exclaiming against the Books, that had turned his Cousin's Brain" (156, my emphasis). Later, Glanville realizes that his father and sister "seemed to look upon his beloved Cousin as one that was out of her Senses" when Arabella insists a group of highwaymen really must be out to rescue her and Miss Glanville (259). Finally, Arabella, mistaking a prostitute for a lady of quality, offers protection against a

²⁶⁰ Critics have also read Arabella as mad or hysterical. See Thomas Schmid, "'My Authority': Hyper-Mimesis and the Discourse of Hysteria in *The Female Quixote*," *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, 51.1 (1997), 21-35. Schmid argues Arabella's commitment to romantic convention "suggest[s] female 'hysteria'" (21). For Langbauer, Arabella's reading "seem[s] to have driven her mad" and this madness is "a danger the novelist wants to displace" (29-30). "Romance Revised: Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*," *Novel* 18 (1984), 29-49. Wendy Motooka, conversely, argues that "English quixotic characters are not insane by empiricist standards" and that "[their] senses [. . .] are always reliable" (6). *The Age of Reasons: Quixotism, Sentimentalism, and Political Economy in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1998).

gentleman who has drawn his sword against her. Glanville asks her if she is “mad [. . .] to make all this Rout about a Prostitute? Do you see how every body stares at you? What will they think?” (336). Glanville’s admonishment attempts to instill a sense of shame in Arabella but fails. It is not until Arabella has been introduced to the authority of the moralizing novel that she internalizes a sense of shame capable of reforming her into an appropriate domestic partner.

Arabella’s newfound sense of shame at the end of the novel coupled with her relatives’ fear that she is “out of her senses” echo the various discourses of hysteria circulating in the eighteenth century. In what follows, I explore the discourses of hysteria, arguing that the eighteenth-century idea of the hysterical woman was much more complicated than modern critical treatments often imply. This requires that we set aside twenty-first century understandings of mental illness and rehistoricize the polyvalent discourses of hysteria. By closely looking at the major terms of the medical perceptions of mental illness in the eighteenth century, we can better understand both the scientific and artistic fixations with and representations of the disorder, which complicate the assertions within the novel that Arabella is “out of her senses” or “mad” for actions such as defending a prostitute. This is not to argue that Arabella is or is not hysterical. Rather, these discourses play a central role in constructing the moralizing anxieties about amoral fiction and *The Female Quixote*’s critique of the ways in which these anxieties are produced. Lennox, by virtue of her satire, is not concerned with the “reality” of Arabella’s “madness;” her aim is not to diagnose *Arabella* but to diagnose *the diagnosis*. The masculine perception of female hysteria (embodied by the pious and learned doctor) becomes the novel’s preoccupation in the final scene. On the surface, it allows Lennox to

conclude the novel satisfactorily according to reformatory standards of moralizing fiction. However, it also operates, ironically, as a means of criticizing those very moralistic standards which dictate the novel's conclusion. The ironies of the novel's conclusion provoke the differing critical perceptions of the novel's satirical targets and Lennox's narrative strategies.

Eighteenth-century fiction and medical texts became preoccupied with sensational representations of hysteria or, where men are concerned, hypochondria, representations which allowed the mental condition to play itself out on the body.²⁶¹ The coalescence of the physical and psychological manifestations of hysteria is less an accurate representation of the disorder than it is an exploitation of the sensational characteristics of a complicated medical condition. While some physicians certainly sensationalized disorders according to sentimental convention and while these sentimental displays serve as signs of moral superiority in the moralizing novel,²⁶² the sentimental does not figure in all contemporary medical discourse. In fact, as Bernard Mandeville's *A Treatise of the Hypochondriack and Hysterick Passions* (1711), Sir Richard Blackmore's *A Treatise of the Spleen and Vapours* (1725), and John Hill's *Hypochondriasis* (1775) suggest, contemporary medical discourse was often critical of sensationalized representations and

²⁶¹ See John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988). Mullan notes that "[t]he construction of a body attuned to the influences of sensibility is not [. . .] uniquely a project of the novelists. We find the same kind of body, and the same concentration on the gestural force of feeling, in the writings of many eighteenth-century physicians" (201).

²⁶² See Mullan. In *Clarissa*, Clarissa's sentimental displays become a signal of her virtue, or a sign of "virtue's triumph in the body's defeat. The paradox never achieves such fanatical symbolic clarity in the medical writings, but the myth that only those of particular merit are liable to become victims of nervous disorder is commonly resorted to" (207).

gendered hierarchies that exalt the male hypochondric (and by association, male sentimentality) and shame the female hysteric.

Mandeville's Polytheca, confessing her hysterical tendencies to her husband's physician, emphasizes the intense social scorn and subsequent shame that force both a woman's silence about her suffering and her compliance with masculine authority. Polytheca reveals the control public shame has over her in admitting to her struggle: "[M]y whole Distempler is counted a *whimsy*, and I have the *mortification* into the bargain, of passing for Fantastical in the midst of so many real Evils. I never dare speak of Vapours, [since] the very name is become a Joke."²⁶³ Not only does the mortification Polytheca must endure encourage her silence but the tendency of the medical community to shame female patients also reinforces her silence: "Physicians, because they cannot Cure them, are forc'd to ridicule them in their own Defense."²⁶⁴ Though Polytheca has found a physician who will treat her and listen to her complaints, "he is of Opinion that [she is] incurable."²⁶⁵ This ridicule and lack of sympathy from the medical community result in an internalized sense of shame that contributes to women's silence. Acknowledging the shame which forces her silence, Polytheca criticizes the use of shame to coerce women into silence, a shame which, simultaneously, precipitates and is precipitated by Arabella's "cure."

Similarly, Blackmore criticizes gender-specific treatments and the supposed moral superiority of the hypochondriac man as opposed to the hysterical woman. Blackmore argues that hysteria and hypochondria are "the same Malady, and not

²⁶³ Bernard Mandeville, *A treatise of the hypochondriack and hysteric passions, vulgarly call'd the hypo in men and vapours in women; ... In three dialogues* (London, 1711), 199.

²⁶⁴ Mandeville, 199.

²⁶⁵ Mandeville, 200.

different in Specie” and that treatment should “be adapted to this Notion [that the diseases are “of the same Species”] founded on Reason and Observation.”²⁶⁶ Like Mandeville, Blackmore claims those who suffer from hysterical tendencies often will not recognize their illness because the disorder is “looked upon as an imaginary and fantastick Sickness of the Brain” and it has, consequently become “an Object of Derision and Contempt.” Admitting that they suffer from hysteria “will expose [women] to Dishonour and Reproach.”²⁶⁷ Not only does Blackmore acknowledge the potential scorn which accompanies the disease, he also validates the reality of its symptoms and effects, agreeing that “the consequent Sufferings are without doubt real and unfeigned.”²⁶⁸

Because Mandeville and Blackmore criticize perceptions of hysteria as inherently “feminine” and the use of shame as a form of treatment, these texts emphasize the relationship of the disease to the mind, not, as many physicians previously had, to women’s reproductive organs.²⁶⁹ In fact, Blackmore directly disputes uterine theories as they are “now exploded by learned Men” because “there are no Passages, or proper

²⁶⁶ Blackmore, *A Treatise of the Spleen and Vapours*, (London, 1725), 96-7.

²⁶⁷ Blackmore, 97-8.

²⁶⁸ Blackmore, 98-9.

²⁶⁹ See Mark S. Micale, *Approaching Hysteria: Disease and Its Interpretations* (Princeton UP: Princeton, 1995), and Anita Guerrini, *Obesity and Depression in the Enlightenment: The Life and Times of George Cheyne* (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2000). Both Micale and Guerrini recognize the development of neurological theories of hysteria and the decline in popularity of uterine disorders. However, Guerrini’s account of neurological developments implies that physiological theories were rare by mid-century: “By Cheyne’s time the notion of a wandering womb had long been discarded, although Friedrich Hoffman believed the uterus was nonetheless implicated, and the French physician Jean Astruc, writing in 1740, attributed hysteria to ‘Impressions made on the *Uterus*, whereby certain sensations are raised in the Brain’” (7). Micale, conversely, sees a “reintroduction of uterine theories of the disease” in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, physicians reversed the classical model which linked “hysterical symptomatology with female sexual deprivation, eighteenth-century writers blamed it on female sexual overindulgence” (23).

conveyances, by which these Steams and Exhalations may rise,” though it is still “retained, at least in Name, among the People.”²⁷⁰ Yet the shame that Arabella experiences as a result of the doctor’s “treatment” takes on sexual connotations in the context of the model of the symptomatically oversexed female hysteric. Simon Andre Tissot’s *The Lady’s Physician* (rather comically) explains the condition *furor uterinus* (the angry uterus) as “a continual and insatiable Desire of Copulation. [in which a woman] soon bids adieu to Shame.”²⁷¹ Women should “renounce all Excitements to lustful Sensation, such as Reading, Conversation, Self-touching, &c.”²⁷² Like Tissot’s female patient, Arabella seems to have lost her own sense of shame, and therefore, the only means she has of achieving her cure is renouncing her amoral reading in favor of reading which “Has taught the Passions to move at the Command of Virtue” (377).

In light of Tissot, many of Arabella’s misreadings of her surroundings become heavily sexualized.²⁷³ Her reading leads to her misreading her father’s gardener, Edward, as a gentleman disguised in order to be close to her. Fearing he is a threat, she flees her father’s house in an effort to protect her virtue. When she encounters a young gentleman during her flight, she seeks his protection, but his excitement “at having so beautiful a Creature in his Power” implies that he poses a more realistic threat than the gardener,

²⁷⁰ Blackmore, 101.

²⁷¹ Samuel Auguste David Tissot, *The lady’s physician. A practical treatise on the various disorders incident to the fair sex. ... Written originally in French, by M. Tissot, ... Translated by an eminent physician* (London, 1766), 16.

²⁷² Tissot, 17.

²⁷³ See Deborah Ross, “Mirror, Mirror: The Didactic Dilemma of *The Female Quixote*.” *Studies in English Literature*. 27.3 (Summer 1987), 455-73. Ross argues that Arabella “seeks sex as much as she avoids it” when she attempts to flee the presumed advances of Edward, her father’s gardener. Her solicitation for protection from a young gentleman places her in the very sexual danger she hopes to avoid, and Ross argues, “the heroine demonstrates *Lennox’s thesis* that only a woman who wants adventures will have them; and also the corollary, that *she will be thought to deserve them*” (460, emphasis mine).

though Arabella is unable to perceive it (100). However, whatever her mental state, she is not predisposed to uncontrollable sexual urges that inherently place her in danger. In fact, Lennox's satirical mode diffuses the sexual threats that Arabella faces and criticize hypersexualized representations of female readers.²⁷⁴ Unlike Richardson's *Clarissa*, Arabella does not find herself completely in the control of a threatening masculine presence like Lovelace. Male predatory power is quickly rendered impotent by circumstance and the comic confusion that Arabella habitually creates.

The young gentleman Arabella prevails upon to protect her from Edward initially poses a threat to her safety. He is "astonished at [her] Beauty [. . .] Her Stature; her Shape, her inimitable Complexion, the Lustre of her fine Eyes, and the thousand Charms that adorned her whole Person" and finds himself "extremely glad at having so beautiful a Creature in his Power" (99, 100). However, the potential for sexual violence is diffused almost as quickly as it is established:

[A]ll her fears being of Edward, whom she fansied every Moment she saw pursuing them: And, being extremely anxious to be in some Place of Safety, she urged her Protector to drive as fast as possible; who, willing to have her at his own House, complied with her Request; but was so unlucky in his Haste, as to overturn the Chaise. (100)

²⁷⁴ Joseph F. Bartolomeo argues that "Lennox [. . .] consistently diminishes the threat to Arabella by softening the male characters" and that "Bellmour's 'bad love' and scheming, like the Marquis' authoritarianism and Glanville's role-playing, enable Lennox to call attention to serious concerns about a woman's vulnerability, while simultaneously minimizing Arabella's danger and maintaining the comic tone" (165, 168). "Female Quixotism v. 'Feminine' Tragedy: Lennox's Comic Revision of *Clarissa*," *New Essays on Samuel Richardson*, ed. Albert J. Rivero, (St. Martin's: New York, 1996), 163-175.

Though Arabella rather foolishly throws herself at the mercy of this stranger, the potential threat he presents is over almost as soon as it seems imminent. Not only does Lennox negate any threat by overturning the chaise, the young gentleman's urgency makes him an ineffective predator incapable of stealing away with the woman who would be his victim. After Edward and Glanville arrive on the scene, Arabella's evocations of the ancient romantic heroines Cleopatra and Parthenissa prove her potential protector/rapist unworthy of her desire for protection. When she asks him if he knows of either of these women, he replies that he has never heard of Parthenissa and calls Cleopatra a whore. Disgusted, and in the vein of Richardsonian parody,²⁷⁵ Arabella exclaims, "What a black Defamer have I chosen for my Protector!" (105). Not only is this gentleman too clumsy to abduct Arabella, his ignorance makes him undeserving of the responsibility of protecting the heroine. Ironically, Arabella's romance-based epistemology has led her to judge correctly the character of her potential abductor. His dislike of romance saves Arabella. By treating the situation comically, Lennox negates the potential abductor's power; the novel satirizes not the dangerous sexuality of the hysteric female patient but the sexual ideology of the Lovelacian predator.

Recognizing the focus of Lennox's satire as not the oversexed female readers of romance but masculinist sexual ideology allows us to return to the question of Arabella's sanity. If the history of hysteria has illustrated nothing else, it is that we cannot read either Arabella's mental condition or her sexuality straightforwardly. In arguing that *The*

²⁷⁵ By referring to Arabella's criticism of her "black Defamer" as in the vein of "Richardsonian parody," I rely not only on extending Bartolomeo's assertion that *The Female Quixote* is a comedic treatment of *Clarissa* but also on the tradition of anti-pamela literature, particularly Henry Fielding's *Shamela* and Eliza Haywood's *Anti-Pamela*.

Female Quixote is an orthodox quixotic narrative, Gordon invokes the ability of contemporary readers' to recognize quixotic characteristics which seem to imply a degree of mental instability (though not necessarily a diminished intellectual capacity).²⁷⁶ These orthodox tales, ultimately, target as "the culprit ('that fascinating kind of books, denominated Novels') that captures young women's imagination and leads them to mistake fictions for 'reality.'"²⁷⁷ Though the reader is aware of the quixote's tendency to misread events around her, her familiarity with romances inhibits her ability to see "the 'reality' before [her] eyes (and what all others see 'in common') and ensure[s] that [she] sees, instead, a reality of [her] own making."²⁷⁸ In this light, we might even go so far as to call the Quixote delusional.

While I do not dispute that *The Female Quixote* readily fits into Gordon's definition of an orthodox quixotic narrative, it is this very reliance on familiar devices that allows Lennox to criticize novelistic convention. Gordon claims that "readers were 'prepossessed' to read quixote narratives in the orthodox mode," a mode dictating that they interpret Arabella as the typical Quixote to be ridiculed, a ridicule which echoes the ridicule Polytheca faces.²⁷⁹ However, it is this familiar quixotic trope that allows Lennox room to satirize the reformatory powers of virtuous reading without appearing to threaten the status quo. Arabella's presumed madness serves as a means of recoding feminine satire within moralizing novelistic discourse.²⁸⁰ This, then, is the beauty of Lennox's satire. By using a familiar form which readers could recognize (the quixotic tale), Lennox

²⁷⁶ Gordon does note that most quixotic tales "emphasize the female quixote's intelligence." (48)

²⁷⁷ Gordon, 43.

²⁷⁸ Gordon, 46.

²⁷⁹ Gordon, 65.

²⁸⁰ Craft, "Reworking," 822.

can simultaneously produce fiction that can be widely read and applauded for subscribing to an ideology of feminine virtue while satirizing the very masculinist novelistic strategies *The Female Quixote* deploys.

Though Arabella behaves according to romance conventions, the narrator of *The Female Quixote* consistently provides justifications *for* her interpretations rather than criticism *of* them by pointing out logical precedents for her actions in the romances she has read. Though Gordon argues that Arabella's "quixotism itself remains a constant source of derision," I would like to put pressure on his assertion that more recent critical treatments of *The Female Quixote* necessarily "ignore or obscure the steady ridicule that the novel directs at quixotism."²⁸¹ For Gordon, it seems that reading the novel as a quixotic tale and as a social satire are mutually exclusive. Instead, I argue that, Arabella is ridiculous only insofar as *she makes ridiculous* the notion that reading romances "turns one's brain" to the extent that a woman reader would lack the judgment to restrain herself from jumping into the nearest river to save herself from what she believes to be an abduction.

Because the narrator takes care to point to formulaic responses from Arabella, her reactions throughout the novel, as Gordon suggests, become predictable. Yet while her responses might be formulaic, they illustrate that she does not blindly act; rather, she evaluates her course of action based on what she knows should happen. In other words, Arabella's interpretive skills are not in question. She follows, based on the knowledge available to her in the form of romance novels, a strict system of logically derived interpretive principles. When she receives a love letter from her first potential suitor, Mr.

²⁸¹ Gordon, 53.

Hervey, she orders her maid, Lucy, to return it and scolds her for accepting it, “being a strict Observer of romantic Forms.” When Lucy does not immediately comply, Arabella “search[es] the Records of her Memory for a Precedent, and not finding that any Lady ever opened a Letter from an unknown Lover, she reiterated her Commands to *Lucy* to carry it back” (13). Based on romantic convention, Arabella “expect[s] to hear, that the Return of his Letter would make her Lover commit some very extravagant actions” (14). Eventually, when Mr. Hervey does fall ill, Arabella believes her rejection is the cause. She has Lucy draft a letter to him commanding him to live. When she thinks she should alter it because it is “too kind,” Lucy asks her not to, fearing it might prompt Hervey to die. Rather than upbraiding Lucy for her intervention, Arabella conjures romantic convention once again, “remembering that it was not uncommon for the Ladies in Romances to relax a little in their Severity through the Remonstrances of their Women” (17). When Glanville falls ill and she responds similarly, thinking his love for her is responsible and that only she can affect a cure, her reaction follows a logical precept. Similarly, once she has created a backstory for Edward, her fear of being abducted when he comes to her bedchamber follows logically. As she traipses through the woods after running away from the estate in search of protection, we come to expect that, based on our understanding of romance convention, she will encounter Edward, think he is in pursuit of her, and behave accordingly. While in the context of a presupposed masculinist ideology, her reactions can be easily ridiculed, it is clear that she behaves according to a predictable pattern rather than hysterically.

Arabella’s misreadings are rooted in terror, but because her reactions have logical precedents, they lose their power as indicators of mental instability and illustrate the

intellectual capabilities that Glanville (rather backhandedly) attributes to her. Glanville believes that she would be “one of the most accomplished Ladies in the World,” were it not for the “ridiculous Whims” (50) of her mind created by her reading habits. He believes she possesses a “fine Sense, and the native Elegance of her Manners give an intimitable Grace to her Behaviour” (64). When Arabella suffers from her fever before her cure, Glanville “lamented pathetically the Ruin such a ridiculous Study had brought on so Noble a Mind” (367). Her presumed madness, then, serves a dual purpose: it masks Lennox’s satirical treatment of masculine belief in women’s susceptibility to scandalous reading practices by pacifying moralists who want affirmation of their efforts to control women’s reading and sexuality, while making ridiculous the ridiculous female reader.

It is not simply the genre of moralizing fiction that Lennox targets, though. In reading the novel as a satire of moralizing fiction, we must also turn to the problem of Richardson and his novels. *The Female Quixote* prominently features its own version of the male-author of romances in Sir George, a potential suitor of Arabella’s who unsuccessfully crafts romantic tales; his lack of success in his storytelling (and Arabella’s ability to see through it) highlights the ineffectiveness of masculine manipulation through fiction. Though Sir George engages in concocting *romantic* tales as opposed to *moralizing* fictions, he does, like Richardson, concoct tales which rely on extensive familiarity with a salacious genre. Though David Marshall claims *The Female Quixote* is most certainly “not a Richardsonian novel,” Bartolomeo argues that “*The Female Quixote* is a rewriting of *Clarissa* in the comic mode,”²⁸² yet it is much more than a mere revision of Richardson’s novel. Like many good satires, the novel targets more than one satirical

²⁸² Marshall, “Writing Masters and Masculine Exercises in *The Female Quixote*.” *Eighteenth Century Fiction*. 5.2 (1993), 112, and Bartolomeo, 163

object, and while Bartolomeo provides a thorough analysis of *The Female Quixote* as comic rendering of *Clarissa*, it does more than simply satirize Richardson's novel. By making Sir George a(n unsuccessful) writer of romances, Lennox satirizes the masculinist desire to sanitize amatory fiction.²⁸³ After all, if Lennox's novel criticizes the belief that reading romances creates hysterical women, it seems plausible that it also satirizes one of the fiercest proponents of that myth.

Sir George's manipulation of romantic conventions illustrates the problems inherent in masculine revisions of romances. Though Thomas Schmid quite accurately attributes to Sir George "a male authority to tell one's story, an authority that Arabella herself can never claim,"²⁸⁴ it is an authority that the narrative is able to see through and manipulate *for* Arabella's benefit. Once Sir George starts to appropriate narrative and romantic conventions, however, the effects of the Richardsonian model become apparent, creating more confusions, adventures, and intrigues. Sir George is the only character in the novel who is as familiar with romances as Arabella: "He was well read in Romances himself, [. . .] he was perfectly acquainted with the chief Characters in most of the *French* Romances: could tell everything that was borrowed from them, in all the new Novels that

²⁸³ Gardiner argues that the interaction of male figures with romance in *The Female Quixote* illustrate that "what men fear most is not [the ability of romance to produce] female, but [to produce] male desire" (7). Lennox, she claims, "yokes 'romance' and 'men' in the same way that much of eighteenth-century popular discourse yokes the term 'romance' with 'women' (3) and critiques the motivations of those who "devalue romance for certain groups of writers and readers" (9). I agree with Gardiner's argument that Lennox's novel engages in contemporary critical debates over the novel and would like to extend her more general assertion that Lennox criticizes what seems to be the institutionalization of the novel-at-large and direct attention more specifically to the effects of a Richardsonian moralizing novel.

²⁸⁴ Thomas H Schmid, "'My Authority': Hyper-Mimesis and the Discourse of Hysteria in *The Female Quixote*." *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 51.1 (1997), 32.

came out” (129-130). Marshall argues that Sir George acts, simultaneously, as a “parody of the author of romance fictions [and . . .] stands in the place of Lennox.”²⁸⁵ Sir George also takes over the novel from Lennox and Arabella but he is unable to maintain control over his narrative.²⁸⁶ That he is both a male connoisseur of romances and their redactions in contemporary novels identifies his position with male novelists, like Richardson, who seek to appropriate women’s writing for moral ends. In order to overwrite amatory fiction, Richardson must be, to some extent, familiar with the genre. That Sir George’s story begins in a chapter entitled “Containing the Beginning of Sir George’s History; in which the ingenious Relator has exactly copied the Stile of Romance,” reinforces his efforts to rewrite a feminized narrative, just as Samuel Richardson has.

Yet Sir George cannot successfully play the role of the romantic hero. In addition to swooning himself during his story, he fails to live up to the standards of romance heroism. According to his tale, after his lover, Sydimiris, marries according to her brother’s wishes to secure Sir George’s freedom, he falls in love with Philonice, who is abducted, and he searches for but is unable to find her. Several years later, though he still grieves her loss, “another Object possesses his Soul.” Arabella, ever the astute reader, calls Sir George out on his inadequacies of his tale: “your suffering so tamely the Loss of this last Beauty, and allowing her to remain in the hands of her Ravisher, while you

²⁸⁵ “Writing Masters and Masculine Exercises in *The Female Quixote*.” *Eighteenth Century Fiction*. 5.2 (1993), 115.

²⁸⁶ Marshall notes that “Lennox’s anti-romance seems to surrender its pages to the romantic intrigue of another writing master” whose narrative spans almost the entire length of one book (113). However, “Sir George’s design backfires when he inadvertently depicts his ‘Character’ (at least in Arabella’s eyes) as ‘Ungrateful and Unjust’ and he ends ‘with Shame and Vexation at having conducted the latter Part of his Narration so ill’” (113). Later, he “becomes a character in a dangerous farce that departs from his script and escapes his authority” (115).

permit another Affection to take Possession of your Soul, is such an Outrage to all Truth and Constancy, that you deserve to be ranked among the falsest of Mankind” (250).

Bartolomeo, who argues Sir George is a comic rendering of Lovelace, notes that “Richardson himself objected to the length and improbability of Sir George’s story, perhaps because he was uncomfortably reminded of Lovelace’s superiority as a manipulator of narrative.”²⁸⁷ Yet, Lovelace’s own authorial authority slips out his control. Defending his imprisonment of Clarissa in a letter to Belford, Lovelace compares her to a captive bird who “at first, refusing all sustenance, it beats and bruises itself against its wires.” Eventually, the bird becomes familiar with its cage and “hops from perch to perch” and “sings a song to amuse itself and reward its keeper.”²⁸⁸ Thomas Keymer argues that, in this letter, Richardson “show[s] the ultimate resistance of the image to Lovelace’s intended meaning.”²⁸⁹ While Lovelace seems to intend to show that his “captive bird” will eventually “yield” to its captivity and try to please its captor, Lovelace ends up admitting to know a captive bird to “starve itself, and die with grief”²⁹⁰ and, as Keymer notes, draws attention to “the darker implications of Clarissa’s oppression.”²⁹¹

While Richardson’s anxiety over Lovelacean parallels in *The Female Quixote* are certainly plausible, it seems that his objections to Sir George also point to questions in his own mind about the success of *Clarissa* to sanitize the amatory tradition. Richardson’s own letters to readers of *Clarissa* illustrate his trouble controlling his text (trouble that

²⁸⁷ Bartolomeo, 167.

²⁸⁸ Richardson, *Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady*, ed. Angus Ross, (London: Penguin, 2004), 557.

²⁸⁹ Richardson’s *Clarissa and the Eighteenth-Century Reader* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992). 184

²⁹⁰ Richardson, *Clarissa*, 557.

²⁹¹ Keymer, 184.

both Sir George and Lovelace face) and readers' emotional response to his narrative. He writes to Aaron Hill that, though he intends Lovelace "to be unamiable" he was forced to make "him still more and more odious" in response to "a young Lady" who pit[ied] him, and wish[ed] he had been rather made a Penitent, than to be killed."²⁹² In a letter to Lady Bradshaw, Richardson admits that, despite the fact that

"in the very first Letter of Lovelace all those Seeds of Wickedness were thick sown [. . .] it has been matter of Surprize to me, and indeed of some Concern, that this Character has met with so much Favour from the good and the virtuous, even as it stands from his two or three first Letters—and in some Measure convinced me of the Necessity of such a Catastrophe as I have made."²⁹³

And yet Richardson's novel also faced its own charges of salaciousness and pornographic tendencies.²⁹⁴ The problem Richardson must confront is that his readers desired (or expected) not a moralizing novel but the salacious and tantalizing scenes of amatory fiction, scenes more like those in Sir George's narratives, even if they were ultimately contained within a didactic framework of "virtue rewarded." Despite Richardson's stated intentions, then, the moralizing form becomes a form that he is similarly unable to control.²⁹⁵ In this way, Lennox's portrayal of Sir George as an ineffective writer of romances serves to hoist Richardson on his own petard: Richardson's loss of control of

²⁹² Samuel Richardson, *Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson*, Ed. John Carroll, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964). 73.

²⁹³ Richardson, *Selected Letters*, 92.

²⁹⁴ See Keymer, 154-155.

²⁹⁵ Langbauer argues that Lennox is unable to control her own text and that the novel cannot balance its contradictions: "Instead of being in control of romance, the novel is drawn into and repeats it" (67). *Women and Romance: The Consolations of Gender in the English Novel*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1990), 62-92.

his novel and the salacious desires it encouraged in its contemporary readers undercut the ostensible purpose of the moralizing novel (or *Clarissa*, in Arabella's case) to instill virtue in its readers.

Richardson's inability to control interpretation becomes central, then, in evaluating the advice that the doctor provides at the end of *The Female Quixote*.

Arabella's cure becomes instrumental in disguising social criticism as conventional moral justice. When proposing *Clarissa* as the cure for Arabella's "madness," the doctor claims that "Truth is not always injured by Fiction" (377). Though he claims that Richardson's novel upholds the values of truth and constancy, the success of the moralizing novel to instruct is called into question by Richardson's own letters. Both Bartolomeo and Keymer question the ability of *Clarissa* to redeem its heroine and to pass adequate judgment on its villain.²⁹⁶ Arabella's previous condemnation of Sir George questions the success of Richardson's efforts to moralize the readings practices of women who expect a romance ending. The effectiveness of Arabella's cure cannot be taken at face value. Though Gordon claims that "the novel does not regret curing her,"²⁹⁷ to expect that Lennox should betray any regret in using the cure for narrative and ideological closure imagines that the female writer had complete license in her fiction.²⁹⁸ Lennox cannot

²⁹⁶ Clarissa asks that Bellford and Anna Howe compile the letters they have into a book intended to show Clarissa's virtue and Lovelace's "vile" nature (*Clarissa* 1163). Keymer claims that Clarissa "takes no account of the elaborate rhetorical apparatus with which Lovelace transforms these facts. Her view of the books' capacity to do justice is thus dangerously naive" (230). Bartolomeo notes, in Clarissa's desire for a book and Lovelace's demand for the return of his letters, a "Richardsonian confidence in the transparency of the epistolary medium [. . .] a medium that characteristically embodies indeterminacy and thus invites mixed and contradictory judgments" (172).

²⁹⁷ Gordon, 62.

²⁹⁸ Kate Levin similarly notes that "Lennox needed Arabella's cure" largely to placate moralists who might object to Arabella's whimsy. Levin, however, goes on to argue that

afford a hint of any regret. Curing Arabella allows Lennox to continue criticizing masculinist notions of women's susceptibility to immoral fiction under the guise of criticizing women's improper reading.

Yet Arabella has "a Noble mind" despite her romantic reading. Her intellectual dexterity in her debate with the doctor challenges his logic, repeatedly calling his intellectual superiority into question. Arabella argues that her leap into the Thames "was not only reasonable and just, but also great and glorious, and *exactly conformable* to the *Rules of Heroick Virtue*" (368, emphasis mine). Rather than encouraging his perception of her as mad, Arabella's defense of her actions amazes the doctor who finds he "was not so well prepar'd as he imagin'd" (373). His reaction reinforces the notion that she has maintained a sense of reason *despite* and *through* her romantic indulgences.²⁹⁹ Her reading experiences have created a schema of logical events and appropriate reactions upon which Arabella consistently relies in order to justify her behavior. Rather than make the doctor lament her folly, her romantic epistemology (an epistemology which has served to protect her before) makes his effort to cure her a much more difficult endeavor, and he is forced into a logical debate with a woman presumed mad by the men around her.

Arabella's reading better prepares her "for her subsequent role as a proper domestic woman [. . .] than her non-reading companions." See "'The Cure of Arabella's Mind': Charlotte Lennox and the Disciplining of the Female Reader," *Women's Writing the Elizabethan to Victorian Period*, 2.3 (1995), 271-290. Qtd. from 275, 276.

²⁹⁹ Motooka claims "Arabella's 'cure' is no cure, for the doctor who treats her is himself quixotic." In making the "rational" "quixotic," Motooka claims that "Lennox's novel mocks empiricism *as* quixotism" (126). She, further, notes that "[t]here is a method to Arabella's madness, and that method looks strikingly similar to the empiricist epistemology employed by her 'rational' companions" (131).

In full control of her reason, Arabella seizes on and exploits the flaws in the doctor's logic. The doctor asks her whether she has ever known a lady of her position to have been attacked in the manner she imagined and says that a villain carrying her off to some remote castle would be impossible "because there is no such Castle, Desert, Cavern, or Lake" (373). Following the solid logical principles she has developed from her reading, Arabella retorts, "That there is a Castle, any Man who has seen it may safely affirm. But you cannot *with equal Reason*, maintain that there is no Castle because you have not seen it" (373, my emphasis). If women who read romances are susceptible to or, in extreme cases, dangerous imaginings, then Arabella would be incapable of participating in this debate for any reasonable length of time. Also, she would be unable to point out when the doctor commits errors in logic. That Arabella not only matches him in wit but also nearly foils him on more than one occasion highlights the limitations of the Richardsonian paradigm as a means of developing moral sensibility through proper reading.

Though she demonstrates her reason in her debate with the doctor, Arabella must relinquish her mental agency in the final moments of what has heretofore been a logical and reasonable discussion: "It is not necessary, Sir, [. . .] that you strengthen by any new Proof a Position which when considered calmly cannot be denied; my Heart *yields* to the *Force of Truth*" (381). Arabella's final response to the doctor may indicate not Lennox's approval of the moral cure but a coded dissent against the "moral" novel and the masculine suppression of feminine interpretation. The heroine's ability to think critically is not at issue. Her debate with the doctor increases her knowledge base, allowing her to recognize that her world-view has been based on a faulty set of data rejected by

masculine ideology. She “yields” her heart to “force” rather than agrees to give over her mind willingly to his “Truth.” If “Truth” in the doctor’s esteem is the male-authored appropriation of romance, it can hardly be seen as a satisfying alternative for Arabella who acquiesces less of her own accord than through coercion. In claiming that the doctor offers Arabella male-authored fictions, I note Gardiner’s arguments about the doctor: “What separates the learned divine from other characters in the text is that he reads fiction for moral instruction as well as diversion [. . .] and the learned divine is asexual to boot.”³⁰⁰ In this asexuality, an asexuality privileged by the moralizing novel, the doctor affirms a passive and feminized virtue for Arabella. Reading *Clarissa* (or simply being offered *Clarissa*) produces the apparently desireless but sexually-desirable heroine, one whom Glanville finds appropriate for marriage.

Interestingly, Arabella’s diagnosis, treatment, and ultimate coercion to masculine reason seem to work in exactly the opposite fashion as Polytheca’s admission of hysteria in Mandeville’s *Treatise of Hypochondriack and Hysterick Passions*. While Polytheca clearly suffers from mental anguish which produces physical symptoms, her condition is undiagnosed and dismissed,³⁰¹ and she is shamed into silence about her condition until

³⁰⁰ Gardiner, 8.

³⁰¹ Many eighteenth-century physicians note that hysteria can produce physical manifestations, which often make diagnosing the disease more difficult because it mimics other conditions. In *The English Malady, or A Treatise of Nervous Diseases of all Kinds*, (London: G. Strahan, 1733), George Cheyne lists, among others, “Lowness of Spirits, Swelling of the Stomach, frequent Eructation, Noise in the Bowels or Ears, [. . .] Inappetency, Restlessness, Inquietude, Fidgeting, Anxiety, Peevishness” and, as the disease progresses, “wandering and delusory Images on the Brain, and Instability and Unsettledness in all the intellectual Operations, Loss of Memory, Despondency, Horror, and Despair” (194, 199). Of ease of diagnosing, Blackmore argues that “This Distemper, [. . .] personates the Disease that peculiarly belongs to each Part” (111). Subsequently, diagnoses of “Hysterick Passions” are often “charged unjustly” and “Spectators, by not discerning the Distinction, are apt to cry out, oh! this is nothing but Vapours” (112).

her husband's physician sees her disease sympathetically and validates its existence. Arabella's doctor, in contrast, creates his patient's condition, and she is similarly shamed into silence. He behaves exactly as Polytheca has said physicians behave and *is* the incompetent doctor who Mandeville, Blackmore, and Hill rail against: the physician who endorses gendered binaries and dismisses or ridicules the disorder. Because he "cannot Cure [her], [he is] forc'd to ridicule [Arabella] in [his] own Defense."³⁰² Where Polytheca suffers from a real illness which is mocked and ignored, the doctor's diagnosis of Arabella *creates* in her the mythical hysteric whom the moral novel wants to reform. Her diagnosis as a hysteric *results in* her shame rather than her hysteria *resulting in* proper diagnosis. Her internalization of shame, according to moralizing convention, seeks to reestablish her virtuous reputation, but as medicine has failed Polytheca, Arabella's doctor fails her in misdiagnosing her. This failure highlights the importance not only of a physician's understanding of hysteria but also his bedside manner. George Baglivi had emphasized earlier in the eighteenth century the importance of "the Physician's Words [. . .] upon the Patient's Life" arguing that "a physician that has his Tongue well hung, and is Master of the Art of perswading, fastens, by the mere Force of Words, such a Vertue upon his Remedies, and raises the Faith and Hope of the Patient to that pitch, that sometimes he masters difficult Diseases with the silliest Remedies."³⁰³ Arabella's doctor lacks the mastery of persuasion that Baglivi argues is necessary in treating patients; by questioning the authority of the doctor to diagnosis and cure Arabella through the heroine's ability to out-reason him, Lennox destabilizes the effectiveness and legitimacy of the moralizing novel as the antidote to the poison of amoral fiction.

³⁰² Mandeville, 199.

³⁰³ Giorgio Baglivi, *The practice of physick* (London: Andr. Bell, et. al, 1704), 189.

Not only does *The Female Quixote*'s satire criticize assumptions about feminine reading habits but it also criticizes the sentimental double standard the moralizing novel endorses. Once Arabella has come to her senses and the doctor informs Glanville of her conversion, he thanks him "for the *Miracle* as he called it, that he had performed" (382, my emphasis). That Glanville believes the doctor is capable of working miracles seems ironic after the lengthy logical debate he has engaged in with Arabella. Throughout her presumed madness, she has maintained the ability to engage intellectually with a reasonable man, avoiding any manifestation of bodily sentiment. Arabella's previous displays of sentiment occur *prior to* her "cure." Her father's death causes "Her Spirits [. . . to fail] her at once; and she fell upon the bed, without Sense of Motion, as soon as she saw him expire" (58). Believing Edward is in pursuit of her, she swoons and is in an "inconceivable Terror" when she trips and hurts her ankle (95). She recovers from her swoon to find Lucy gone and "she had like have relapsed into her Swoon" (99). Arabella, again, swoons when Lucy cries out in fear that Arabella is being carried away (300). Yet Arabella's sentimental displays occur within the context of her romantic delusions, not within the context of her cure. In relying on sentimental displays, Richardson envisions himself as "a 'painter' of virtue [. . . a virtue] realized in the capacity to feel and display sentiments" utilizing a "massively sensitized, female body."³⁰⁴ In contrast, Arabella's virtue manifests itself in her internalized sense of shame, not in her sentimental display of emotion.

³⁰⁴ Mullan, 61.

Once she faces the shame induced by the moralizing novel, her body loses its sentimental capacity and Glanville's body becomes the site of sentimental expression.³⁰⁵ After she has been "recovered to the free Use of all her noble Powers of Reason," the doctor's "Miracle" leads Glanville to resort to what could be perceived as hysterics: he is "Transport[ed with] joy" and so overcome with emotion that he almost "throw[s] himself at [the doctor's] feet" (382). Interestingly enough, though, Richardson's novels, the very novels intended to "cure" Arabella, seem to encourage similar responses in both real and fictional male readers. Carolyn Houlihan Flynn claims that these responses constitute "readers [who] 'felt' the dream and menace of his novels. Aaron Hill's servant boy sobs over Pamela; Aaron Hill himself, confesses that he can never escape Mrs. Jewkes, 'who often keeps me awake in the Night'; and Fielding's Parson Tickletext, complains that 'if I lay [*Pamela*] down *it comes after me*— [which] all testify to the emotional power Richardson enjoyed over his readers."³⁰⁶ This physical experience of the dream, however, particularly Fielding's satirical treatment of Tickletext, ironically underscores the power that romance supposedly has for women. Richardson's intention was to write novels that provided moral examples, yet they apparently induced in men feminine-like sobbing and terror despite his intention to channel these emotional excesses into unimpeachable female virtue. Reading *Pamela*, Hill, ironically, becomes a masculinized Arabella, driven to fear because of his romantic expectations. Like Sir George's affectations in his storytelling, Glanville's reaction to Arabella's cure recalls the responses of Richardson's male readers. Through this lens, Arabella's reaction to romance cannot be entirely

³⁰⁵ Men swoon in *The Female Quixote*, too, though Sir George does most of the swooning and largely within the confines of his romantic tale.

³⁰⁶ Carolyn Houlihan Flynn, *Samuel Richardson: A Man of Letters* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982), 151-152.

ridiculous if fictional characters such as Glanville and Fielding's Tickletext and historical readers alike are overcome with emotion when they read or encounter the effects of moral fiction. Arabella's cure, then, does not serve as a means of restoring her to reason but as a means to highlight the complicated gendered expectations of readers and novelists alike.³⁰⁷

While Arabella is returned to "sanity" at the novel's conclusion, the ending provides yet one more chance for Lennox to mask her criticism of masculine ideology. Rather than affirming Lennox's complicity in a discourse which diminishes the intellectual capacity of women, Arabella's introduction to Richardson and subsequent cure challenge our assumptions about eighteenth-century hysteria, female identity, and the novel's history. Though the ending of *The Female Quixote* recognizes the power of the Richardsonian paradigm, it signals much more than the straightforward internalization of the new moral novel. Lennox's novel is not an attempt to bridge generic gaps between amoral fiction and the moralizing novel; instead, it exposes the contradictions inherent in the process of sanitizing the amoral novel, a process which aims to control women's reading by introducing and encouraging the internalization not of virtue but of shame.

³⁰⁷ Patricia Meyer Spacks argues that *The Female Quixote*'s ending illustrates Lennox's awareness of the relationship between plot and power: "There is no way for Arabella to win; controlling social facts limit plot's possibilities. [...] Reality must subdue desire." *Desire and Truth: Functions of Plot in Eighteenth-Century Novels*, (Chicago, U of Chicago P, 1990), 33.

Epilogue

The popularity of *Pamela* in the eighteenth-century has no doubt colored literary history and the representation of amatory fiction. The premise of “virtue rewarded” encourages readers and literary historians to focus their attentions forward, on the consequences of both Pamela’s virtuous resistance to Mr. B’s advances in the novel and on the subsequent reinterpretations of this Richardsonian paradigm in “the” novel. However, as Bradford Mudge asserts, “‘Virtue Rewarded’ thus becomes both the central message of Richardson’s novel and, for the modern reader at least [...] a startling oxymoron.”³⁰⁸ This oxymoronic message, though, did not go unnoticed by contemporary readers or the anti-pamelists would have not attacked *Pamela* so viciously. And certainly, Richardson was forced to acknowledge the contradictions in “virtue rewarded” as evidenced by prefatory letters he included in the second edition praising his work³⁰⁹ and in his own correspondence. George Cheyne advised Richardson to “avoid Fondling and Gallantry, tender Expressions not becoming the Character of Wisdom, Piety, and conjugal Chastity in the Sex.[...] clasping, kissing, stroking, hugging are but Approaches to those others, and are really dangerous to be proposed to or read by young Persons of either Sex.”³¹⁰ Richardson defended the content of *Pamela* by stating that “I am endeavoring to write a story, which shall catch young and airy Minds, and when Passions run high in them, to shew how they may be directed to laudable Meanings and Purpose, in order to decry such Novels and Romances, as have a Tendency to inflame and

³⁰⁸ *The Whore’s Story*, 186.

³⁰⁹ Mudge closely reads a letter from Aaron Hill included in the second edition.

³¹⁰ *The Letters of Doctor George Cheyne to Samuel Richardson (1733-1743)*, ed. Charles F. Mullett, (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1943), 68-69.

corrupt.”³¹¹ Cheyne’s directive to Richardson to avoid indecent content highlights the relationship between virtue and shame. The sexual content of *Pamela* threatens the “Wisdom, Piety, and conjugal Chastity” of women, the loss of which implies the loss of reputation and social shame.

In drawing attention to the entangled discourses of shame and virtue, I have argued not for a new genealogy of the novel but for an enhanced understanding of the discourses which have shaped our perception of the novel’s development. The early amatory fiction of Behn and Haywood actively challenged the conditions of female morality, questioning the stability and viability of conduct manual ideals and testing the limits of virtue, shame, and modesty. In *Pamela*, Richardson attempted to stabilize the tenuous model of female virtue, plucking the ideal woman from the conduct manual and setting her loose in an idealized world where a woman’s virtue, acting as a talisman, preserves her from (nearly) all shame. Lennox’s *The Female Quixote* blends the amatory modes of Behn and Haywood with the Richardson’s moralizing tone, playing out the shaming consequences of reformatory reading.

Though I have concluded with Lennox’s *The Female Quixote*, arguing that the novel’s conclusion serves as a meta-narrative of the progress of eighteenth-century fiction, it is actually the point at which this dissertation begins. In her introduction to *The Female Quixote*, Margaret Doody notes that “Authority remoulds Arabella” and she “renounces narrative power, and submits to the role of object of paternal authority which

³¹¹ *Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson*, ed. John Carroll, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 46-47.

also claims the name of reason.”³¹² Ros Ballaster argues that Arabella’s cure and subsequent marriage “mark...the book’s closure and the containment, indeed silencing, of its heroine. As reader of the novel, Arabella’s verbal power comes to an end.”³¹³ In identifying the conclusion of *The Female Quixote* as the culmination of novelistic discourse, this dissertation understands the development of novelistic subjectivity as a cyclical process of internalization, rejection, and critical awareness of feminine subjectivity and morality. *The Female Quixote*, then, under these conditions, does not signal the silencing of the female subject but rather a refinement of earlier prose forms that address ever-evolving constructions of femininity, morality, and virtue. Rather than silencing her heroine, Lennox similarly tests the limitations of masculinist constructions of female virtue in the domestic novel, just as Behn and Haywood similarly tested the limitations of female morality. The women’s writing that I have focused on here is specifically invested in viable strategies to manage female shame (social, sexual and/or economic), not in capitulating to masculinist expectations of female morality. These texts illustrate that the struggle to manage shame is a shared struggle between the woman writer, her heroine, and the idealized female reader. The domestic novel does not afford women a successful pattern to manage shame. Rather than offer women a means of controlling and maintaining their virtue and reputations, the domestic novel demands woman internalize limiting forms of female morality: pious virtue, chastity, and modesty. Women’s writing, however, exposes not only the contradictions of gendered morality but

³¹² Introduction to *The Female Quixote* by Charlotte Lennox, ed. Margaret Dalziel (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989), xi-xxxii.

³¹³ Ros Ballaster, “Women and the Rise of the Novel: Sexual Prescripts,” *Women and Literature in Britain, 1700-1800*, ed. Vivien Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 197-216. 208.

seems to find within those contradictions space to act autonomously, a space to shed the constraints of virtue and break open the limitations of shame.

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