

APPROPRIATING THE RESTORATION HERO(INE): INTERTEXTUALITY AND THE  
TRANSFORMATION OF GENDER IDENTITY, 1677-1759

BY

MARILYN MARIE HOLGUIN

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English  
in the Graduate College of the  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2016

Urbana, Illinois

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Robert Markley, Co-Chair  
Associate Professor Anthony Pollock, Co-Chair  
Associate Professor Catharine Gray  
Associate Professor Lisa Freeman, University of Illinois, Chicago

## ABSTRACT

My dissertation considers how and why representations of female suffering in Restoration tragedy had a profound impact on the development of mid-eighteenth century novels and plays, focusing primarily on the work of Aphra Behn, Thomas Southerne, John Dryden, Samuel Richardson and David Garrick. Previous scholarship on Restoration “she-tragedies” has tended to emphasize how their heroines’ descent into hysteria, madness, and death implies a total loss of female agency and power. My project challenges this reigning interpretation: through detailed readings of Richardson’s and Garrick’s adaptations of Restoration tragedy, I argue that these influential mid-century authors transform the spectacle of female suffering into a resource for female empowerment and authority over the public sphere. My four chapters analyze Restoration tragic female characters as strongly influencing eighteenth-century writers, who appropriated and adapted them in relation to changing cultural tastes, especially as regards more restricted representations of female sexuality and the heightened desire to promote a seemingly less complex version of female virtue. Scholarship in the long eighteenth-century has suffered from a tendency to emphasize distinctions between the “licentious” culture of the Restoration and the “reformed” tastes of mid-eighteenth-century readers and audiences; by allowing these two cultural moments to speak to one another, my project challenges those distinctions and considers the more nuanced ways mid-eighteenth century’s writers like Richardson and Garrick were informed and influenced by Restoration drama.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I finish the final edits to a project that consumed the better part of my twenties, I find myself thinking back to what originally inspired my interest in adaptation. I was in my second year of graduate work, taking Prof. Curtis Perry's course on Seneca and Shakespeare; interested in *Oedipus* and *Hamlet* (as one is), I gravitated towards researching Restoration adaptations of both, eventually stumbling upon Dryden and Lee's version of *Oedipus*. My goal was to figure out these plays' obsession with memory and to then argue about how the desire to remember becomes immediately self-defeating when met with the equal desire to forget—a double-bind resulting in a constant revision of the past to accommodate the present. My focus on how the eighteenth-century adapted, appropriated, revised, reworked, edited, and enjoyed the plays from the late seventeenth-century is really an exercise in how any current culture decides to archive a collective past into a present restored memory. I see now my own fears of forgetfulness manifesting themselves throughout my chapters but also a larger concern for our culture's amnesia when it comes to current events and history. This larger occasion for my dissertation related to my acknowledgments page in a much smaller way in that I'm concerned I also might forget to thank someone who might have helped me over the years, and so here I'd like to acknowledge and thank all the people that might have helped me with my graduate work and dissertation over the years.

I must first thank my two advisers and the co-directors of my research project, Prof. Robert Markley and Prof. Antony Pollock. Bob and Tony's seminars were so inspiring to me that I changed my specialty from American modernism to focusing on Restoration drama and novels in the long eighteenth-century in British literature. I remember that the micro-research projects we did in Bob's seminar on *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* largely influenced my leaning towards cultural-historical criticism along with introducing me to doing archival research

at UIUC's Rare Books Library. Bob's enthusiasm and breadth of knowledge in eighteenth-century studies continued to motivate me to work harder and explore new topics. Tony's seminar also pushed me to change fields—his book list alone (Addison, Haywood, Habermas, to name a few) made me fully realize my interest in canon formation and the importance of revisiting non-canonical texts. Tony and Bob, you have been incredibly patient and kind throughout the years of reading my drafts and providing me with much needed criticism and feedback. It's so rare when brilliant men are also communicative and generous with their time. Thank you both for all you've done with this project and for me.

I would also like to thank my committee members, Catharine Gray and Lisa Freeman, for their incredibly helpful ideas during both my Special Field Exam and my defense. Sometimes it's hard to see the forest for the trees but I feel like I understand where I want to take these chapters now that I've heard your insights. Lisa, your questions in particular during the defense have made me think about my methodology in general, and specifically in terms of queer theory and close-reading *Venice Preserved* and *The Fair Penitent*. Catharine, thank you for helping me articulate precisely how to explain the larger concepts of my project as I continue to work on job materials. I really had a terrific committee and I thank you all for working with me.

I would like to thank my friends and colleagues who have supported me, given me feedback on my work, praised me, critiqued me, guided me, argued with me, and made me so grateful to be a part of the academic community. I would particularly like to thank: Alaina Pincus, John Claborn, Dave Morris, Tania Lown-Hecht, Claire Barber, Wendy Truran, Kathy Skwarzceck, Michael Shetina, Sarah Bubash, Alexandra Patterson, and Michelle Sauer. I must especially thank my best friend, Kathryn Starzec, for years of incredible conversation over early morning coffee talks, late evening discussions, and mid-day therapy sessions.

Getting through graduate school was more difficult than I could have imagined and I'm delighted to be on the other side of it now. I know how lucky I am to have such a supportive family. I'm so grateful to my grandparents, Rosa Holguin, Marilyn and Ray Gerhart; thank you all for sending me letters of encouragement over the years, bragging about me to your friends, and loving me so unconditionally. Thank you to my little brother Joey for making me laugh whenever I see you—thank you for listening to me on the phone, visiting me, and just being you. Finally, to my parents, Mico and Karen Holguin: you are the reason I was able to complete my dissertation. Thank you for believing in me when I doubted myself.

I would like to dedicate this dissertation in memory of my grandfather, Mico Holguin, who would have been over the moon for my academic achievement.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

INTRODUCTION: ADAPTING TO THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY.....	1
CHAPTER 1: ADAPTING BEHN'S NUN: WIDOWHOOD AND FEMALE AGENCY IN SOUTHERNE AND GARRICK.....	12
CHAPTER 2: RICHARDSON'S "LION-HEARTED LADY": CLARISSA AS RESTORATION TRAGIC HERO.....	66
CHAPTER 3: RICHARDSON'S LOVELACE AND THE SPECTACLE OF FEMALE SUFFERING.....	108
CHAPTER 4: PERFORMANCES OF POWER AND VIRTUE: CLEOPATRA AND OCTAVIA, FROM SHAKESPEARE TO GARRICK.....	154
BIBLIOGRAPHY:.....	197

## INTRODUCTION: ADAPTING TO THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY

In *Spectator* No. 40 (April 16, 1711), Joseph Addison expresses his great disdain toward Restoration critics' reductive definitions of tragedy as a genre. For Addison, the "ridiculous Doctrine" of "poetical Justice" has given English dramatists the mistaken notion that "when they represent a virtuous or innocent Person in Distress, they ought not to leave him till they have delivered him out of his Troubles, or made him triumph over his Enemies." Following Aristotle, Addison argues that modern writers "defeat [the] great End" of tragedy—the goal of producing "Terror and Commiseration in the Minds of the Audience"—to the extent that they "make Virtue and Innocence happy and successful." Indeed, Addison points to recent trends among English audiences to bolster his case, claiming that "more of our English Tragedies have succeeded, in which the Favourites of the Audience sink under their Calamities, than those in which they recover themselves out of them." Addison's sharp criticism of English tragedies foregrounds the idea that we derive pleasure from the pain of watching the good suffer, from the catharsis elicited by vicariously "sink[ing] under" our favorite characters' "calamities." Elsewhere in the essay, Addison also grumbles about the hero-lover hybrid, as he is unable to accept the fluid gender roles implied by the "Swelling and Blustering" of men on stage. Indeed, Addison pokes fun at how women particularly enjoy tragedies that allow for this kind of slippage between masculinity and femininity. In Addison's account, "the fair Part of [the] Audience" are quite pleased to see heroes fluctuate wildly between boldly "insulting Kings" and "affronting the Gods" in one scene, only to throw themselves "abjectly" at the "Feet of [a] Mistress" in the next. Ironically, by criticizing English plays that represent male heroes as deeply feminized, Addison reveals his culture's fascination with such gender-transgressive figures, refusing to consider *why* "Heroes are generally Lovers" in tragedies. The intersection of their spiritual and romantic journeys

certainly makes these heroes too queer for Addison, although he would obviously not have labeled them as such. The points he raises, however, provide a point of entry for my own project, which both addresses the agential power of female suffering on the stage and reconsiders how Restoration drama was intertextually appropriated by authors throughout the long eighteenth-century as a resource for reconstructing gender.

Mid-eighteenth-century writers, in particular, took a vested interest in Restoration drama, poetry, and prose. My work hones in on how influential writers like Samuel Richardson, Sarah Fielding, and David Garrick fixated on Restoration tragedies in order to depict the complicated relationship between female suffering, masculinity, and power. This project depends upon the concept of the audience's ability to recognize character types, tropes, modes, and plots borrowed from the recent past, insisting on long eighteenth-century cultural nostalgia for stock figures like the unrelenting libertine, the tragic hero, the fop, the molly, the rake, the mourning widow, and the manipulative coquette.<sup>1</sup> These familiar figures enjoyed continuous popularity despite the fact that, as I hope to show, the depiction of masculinity and femininity in Restoration plays often

---

<sup>1</sup> In her discussion on "The Molly and the Fop", Sally O'Driscoll notes how the effeminacy best be defined as a "lack of appropriate masculinity"; to this I would then see these stock characters as measured by those same standards (as set by the Restoration and early eighteenth-century cultures. If the libertine and rake are the most masculine and the molly, the least—the widow and hero stand in an interesting location of less clearly marked terms. Sally O'Driscoll, "The Molly and the Fop: Untangling Effeminacy in the Eighteenth Century." In *Development in the Histories of Sexualities: In Search of the Normal, 1600-1800*, ed. Chris Mounsey (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2013), 145. For more discussion on interpreting the fop, see George Haggerty, *Men in Love: Masculinity and Sexuality in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Susan Staves, "A Few Kind Words for the Fop," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 22 (1982): 413-428.; Kristina Straub, *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth-Century Players and Sexual Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

muddies neat distinctions between these often binaristically opposed categories.<sup>2</sup> In addition to its investment in this binaristic distinction, scholarship on the long eighteenth century has often suffered from a tendency to emphasize distinctions between the “licentious” culture of the Restoration and the “reformed” tastes of mid-eighteenth-century readers and audiences; by allowing these two cultural moments to speak to one another, my project challenges both sets of distinctions and considers the more nuanced ways mid-eighteenth century’s writers were informed and influenced by Restoration drama.

Late-seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century tragedies have provided rich material for discussion within gender and queer studies. Helene Foley and Jean E. Howard have recently announced tragedy as something “horrible” and “yet, paradoxically, edifying.”<sup>3</sup> They go on to describe the long history of the roles women have played in tragedy, culminating in an account relevant to my concerns in this dissertation: “As a literary form, tragedy was created and enacted by men for a primarily male audience; it came to fruition in classical Athens, where the political system marginalized woman to the domestic and religious spheres. In Western theatre, women did not enact tragic roles until the seventeenth century and over the centuries have rarely composed works defined as tragedy. Is tragedy, then, a male genre?”<sup>4</sup> My project indirectly engages with Nussbaum’s provocative question by considering the edifying effect of tragedy and

---

<sup>2</sup> During a compelling panel discussion entitled “Taking Stock: Character Types in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatre,” Lisa Freeman remarked on the eighteenth-century audience’s collective nostalgia for stock characters, pointing out that the term “stock character” itself is useful in that it is “generic” and denotes something readily recognizable by audiences—in short, a device that enables “playwrights to generate meaning.” Lisa Freeman, “Reconsidering the Trickster and the Fop: The Cultural Politics of Vanburgh’s *The Relapse*” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Literature, Los Angeles, California, March 19-22, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Helene P. Foley and Jean E. Howard, “Introduction: The Urgency of Tragedy Now,” *PMLA* 129 (2014): 617.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 627.

how representations of female suffering in Restoration tragedy had a profound impact on the development of mid-eighteenth-century novels and plays. The spectacle of female suffering has been the subject of much scholarly discussion, particularly by Jean Marsden, whose work on she-tragedy heroines has served as a stepping-off point for this project. Much previous scholarship on Restoration she-tragedies has tended to emphasize how their heroines' descent into hysteria, madness, and death implies a total loss of female agency and power. I challenge this reigning interpretation through detailed readings of two influential mid-eighteenth-century literary figures, Samuel Richardson and David Garrick. Analyzing their adaptations, appropriations, references, and allusions to Restoration tragedies, I argue that their intertextual borrowing transforms the spectacle of female suffering into a resource for female empowerment and cultural authority. By focusing on selected works by Aphra Behn, Thomas Southerne, John Dryden, Nathaniel Lee, and Thomas Otway, I consider the ways in which Richardson and Garrick altered and appropriated representations of masculinity and femininity in order to accommodate, and in some cases to transform, reigning cultural tastes.

The four chapters that follow focus on how Restoration characters and character-types are adapted by and alluded to in subsequent texts from the long eighteenth century. Each chapter discusses tragic female theatrical roles made popular during the Restoration period and their subsequent influence into mid-eighteenth-century literary culture. Scholarship has often discussed gender roles within she-tragedies or within the early novels, respectively, without considering the implications of how she-tragedy figures are appropriated *by* later works, both novelistic and theatrical. Beyond merely tracing the influence of seventeenth-century English plays on the early English novel, I examine how long eighteenth-century literary culture queered Restoration drama. I argue that these plays, which remained quite popular throughout the

following century, offered alternative and fluid versions of male and female roles that allowed for more complex identification by their spectators and readers. With this in mind, my project aims to reevaluate the status of the tragic heroine as victim while framing my readings within the context of eighteenth-century understandings of Restoration texts. Queer readings of the relationship between Restoration drama and mid-eighteenth-century novels might immediately seem anachronistic to some critics, but I would argue that, based on how often the adaptations and references I study nod to both fluid gender roles and variegated definitions of masculinity and femininity, we should begin to recognize the extent to which mid-eighteenth-century writers queered Restoration texts, texts that perhaps appealed to midcentury culture precisely because of their queerness.

My four chapters analyze Restoration tragic female characters as strongly influencing eighteenth-century writers, who appropriated and adapted them in relation to changing cultural tastes, especially as regards more restricted representations of female sexuality and the heightened desire to promote a seemingly less complex version of female virtue. My first chapter considers this issue of female virtue by unpacking changing constructions of the nun and the widow in Behn's *The History of the Nun* (1689), Thomas Southerne's *The Fatal Marriage; Or, the Innocent Adultery* (1694), and David Garrick's *Isabella; or, The Fatal Marriage* (1757). *Isabella* stands as the first in a line of archetypal suffering heroines around which my dissertation organizes itself. The popularity of *Isabella*'s character cannot be overstated, but this popularity rests on her stage depiction rather than on the original novella's conception and representation of her. At first glance, Southerne's and Garrick's changes to Behn's darkly humorous cautionary tale seem counter to a feminist or queer interpretation of *Isabella*. By focusing on her isolation and her tragic descent into madness and death, the theatrical

adaptations seem to heighten Isabella's suffering, to diminish her agency, and to extinguish her desire. Indeed, the erasure of major elements of Behn's story from the play's plot suggests the latter texts' development of simpler story that foregrounds the force of the patriarchal historical context and overshadows Behn's complex original character. I argue, however, that rather than reducing Isabella's complexity, Southerne relocates her power from her sexuality to her moral legitimacy as a "good" suffering widow—a socially marginalized single mother responsible for a young child, destitute on the streets begging for food as the play begins. The play does not have Isabella interacting with other women and forging intimate friendships as she does in Behn's novella. Southerne's Isabella is surrounded by men who want to judge her and to control her. Rather than focusing on her suffering and the spectator's investment in watching the heroine unravel, this chapter argues that Isabella's recognition of her own tragic tale and of her limited choices foreground the extent to which Southerne's adaptation should be read as a realistic and socially engaged depiction of the English widow in the late seventeenth century. Chapter One articulates the foundational reading of the she-tragedy on which the rest of the dissertation builds: my reading of Southerne's *Isabella* reveals her character as both a critique of patriarchy and as a potentially queer figure who contributes to the play's blurring of binary distinctions between masculinity and femininity (especially in Southerne's final act). Southerne's tragic male figures, particularly Isabella's doomed first husband (Biron), rely on many of the same rhetorical devices as Isabella to define themselves, situating themselves as similarly powerless to resist the pressures of the patriarchal structures within which they are enmeshed.

While Chapter One argues that *Isabella* provides a realistic portrayal of the impoverished widow while also signaling the fluid nature of gender roles between the heroes and heroines within the she-tragedy, my next two chapters develop the queer elements of this reading as

essential to interpreting Samuel Richardson's sentimental novel, *Clarissa* (1747-48). My work attempts to reconcile Richardsonian studies with Restoration scholarship, to underscore the importance of she-tragedies to the construction of the novel, and to question how gender has been discussed in recent work in eighteenth-century studies. Chapters Two and Three build from the premise that Clarissa's dependence on heroic male figures and Lovelace's equal reliance on heroines from she-tragedies illustrates the extent to which eighteenth-century readers understood such archetypal figures as exceeding or as transcending conventional gender binaries. Lovelace is typically associated with the Restoration rake, just as Clarissa can be read as a descendant of (a pathetic version of) Isabella. My readings of Richardson's references to Restoration drama argue that by limiting these two characters to their respective hyper-realized gender roles, not only do we produce reductive readings of the novel but we also perform an ahistorical reading of eighteenth-century culture as being incapable of reading gender complexity out of late seventeenth-century plays. Moreover, my chapters on Richardson question the standard reading of Lovelace and Clarissa as victimizer and victim. The trappings of this power relationship force us to imagine the Clarissa-Lovelace relationship as an extreme version of the conventional romantic plot. This reading does not capture the nuances within both characters; both Lovelace's femininity and Clarissa's masculinity are lost when the novel is read as a recreation of the (standardized reading of) the she-tragedy. I argue that the novel does not seek to categorize these characters simply as she-tragedy heroine and villainous rake but instead suggests—with every reference to the tragedies—that the very readings of Restoration drama that undergird our understanding of Richardson's characters are in fact erroneous and oversimplified. Richardson's text suggest that the heroine from she-tragedy ought to be reimagined as an inspiration for the

eventual suffering of the libertine, at the same time that the libertine, or rake archetype, ought never to be understood as unassailably masculine in the first place.

Chapter Two focuses on Clarissa's connection to the tragic male figures in plays like Dryden and Lee's *Oedipus* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, along with her idealization of (and figurative participation in) male homosocial friendship as represented in other domestic tragedies like Otway's *Venice Preserv'd*. I argue that Clarissa's fatal flaw, pride, connects her to these tragic male figures: Clarissa's virtue has been emphasized to the point that readers and critics tend to overlook her extreme self-satisfaction and belief in her own will as determining her fate. This pride links her to Oedipus by foregrounding her belief that she has autonomy and control over her destiny. If we read Clarissa as a mythic and often masculine figure in terms of her heroic journey and her fatalistic rise and fall, not only do we remove her from the typical romantic plot that often confuses readers as to how to interpret the novel, but we can begin to understand why her antagonism with Lovelace is so often figured as a form of masculine homosocial conflict.

Chapter Three then analyzes Lovelace's case, which presents us with a man who has been taken to fashion himself rhetorically and insistently as a hyper-masculine rake. Clearly, this reading of Lovelace is supported by Richardson's text both in terms of how he sadistically treats Clarissa and in terms of the rape itself. Lovelace performs the rake so well, in fact, that we are inclined to believe his demands that we interpret this Restoration figure as mimicking his true identity. But his constant plotting and his insistence on this perception of his masculinity call into question the authenticity and appropriateness of the role he is playing. By first considering the libertine figure as a masculine mask we can also then question Lovelace's understanding of himself: does he believe himself to be the rake he performs and what lies beneath the artifice? I

argue that Lovelace's rakish qualities are at odds with his performance of a more complicated queer identity. In his moments of actual reflection and, arguably, in the final hours of his redemption, Lovelace depends upon tragic heroines from the stage to figure his identity; he becomes a "very Isabella" in his own madness after Clarissa dies and in his own predetermined path to death. But throughout the novel leading up to these events, I argue, Lovelace queers both himself and Clarissa throughout his letters to Belford, referring to Restoration plays in ways that reveal the inherently flexible gender roles already at work within them. In that sense, Lovelace reads Restoration tragedy heroines as I previously argued they should be understood in Chapter One, which questions the limitations of reading Isabella as merely a victim and object of suffering.

While my project's first two chapters argue against readings that view Isabella's and Clarissa's virtuous suffering as objectifying, my final chapter focuses on the iconic Cleopatra and her female rival, Octavia, to discuss how three adaptations of William Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (ca. 1607)—John Dryden's *All for Love* (1677), Sarah Fielding's *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia* (1757), and David Garrick's *Antony and Cleopatra* (1759)—reconfigure the relationship between virtue, suffering, and female agency. I argue that Dryden's play succeeds over Shakespeare's and Garrick's versions through its perhaps unlikely depiction of Cleopatra as enacting an ideal version of feminine virtue. Like Isabella and Clarissa, Dryden's Cleopatra is represented as following a fatalistic trajectory in which she does not control her own destiny. At the same time, Dryden downplays her cruelty to Antony and removes her culpability almost entirely, making her much more a victim than the more manipulative and sadistic Shakespearean version of the character. Both Dryden and Garrick attempt to heighten Cleopatra's power on the stage by making Octavia less appealing as a character: Dryden adds

confrontational scenes between Octavia and Cleopatra, while Garrick cuts Octavia out of the play almost completely. Octavia's relative invisibility in Garrick's play and her fishwife presence in Dryden's serve to make Cleopatra's adulterous romance with Antony more palatable to audiences that might be powerfully inclined to question their virtue based on Shakespeare's original representation of the story. Fielding, however, does not interpret *All for Love's* Cleopatra in a positive or forgiving light; her narrative fiction provides an alternative interpretation of both women through first-person accounts of their lives. Fielding's introduction clarifies her intent to show how little Cleopatra loved Antony and how virtuous a wife Octavia actually was. Against the claims of Fielding's framing remarks, however, I argue that Fielding's *Lives* ends up generating much more sympathy for Cleopatra than it does for Octavia: Fielding gives Octavia far less narrative space to tell her own story, allowing Cleopatra to dominate Fielding's pages just as her stage presence overwhelms her rival's in Garrick's nearly contemporaneous play. In Fielding's attempt to demonize Cleopatra, the reader is left feeling much like one does with Lovelace. Just as Lovelace's character charms the reader, so does Cleopatra eventually insinuate herself into the reader's good graces. Fielding's apparent resentment towards Cleopatra as an archetypal seductress stands in stark contrast to her soft spot for Lovelace: in her own interpretation and rewriting of *Clarissa*, of course, Fielding redeems the rake. The three representations of Cleopatra across the long eighteenth-century complicatedly negotiate the relationship between her power and her virtue.

The triumph of Cleopatra's suicide dovetails with the power Isabella and Clarissa achieve in their own deaths. While one could argue that all of these women are punished in some sense by those deaths, I would argue that is a substantial misreading of all of these tragic stories. What ties these three characters together, beyond their shared fear of being misinterpreted, is their

hyper-awareness of both the precarious nature of their social positions and the inevitability of their destiny towards death as an escape from confining patriarchal structures. All three of these tragic figures recognize that their performances cannot sustain themselves, and they fight to retain their transitory identities despite their simultaneous acknowledgment of their inherent unsustainability. Thus, Isabella wears her mourning long after the death of her first husband so that her suffering will be interpreted as authentic; Clarissa constantly buckles at Lovelace's appropriations of and alterations to the intended meaning of her words; and Cleopatra famously dies in order to avoid being performed by boys on the stage, even though the stage provides the in-joke that this has already occurred. These characters wish to control their own identities at the same time that they realistically recognize the difficulty of maintaining that kind of agency. Indeed, their shared self-awareness of the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of eluding containment within patriarchy is arguably their greatest shared tragedy as well.

## CHAPTER 1: ADAPTING BEHN'S NUN: WIDOWHOOD AND FEMALE AGENCY IN SOUTHERNE AND GARRICK

Despite Aphra Behn's decline in terms of both critical notice and public fame, her 1689 novella *The History of the Nun; or, the Fair Vow-Breaker*—the story of an inconstant nun-turned-wife-turned-widow-turned-murderess—remained indirectly popular in the form of different stage adaptations until the end of the eighteenth century. Two adaptations—Thomas Southerne's *The Fatal Marriage* (1694) and David Garrick's *Isabella* (1757)—were made especially popular by the actresses who took on the tragic lead role, from Elizabeth Barry to Sarah Siddons<sup>5</sup>, keeping Behn alive in the playhouse even as her literary works themselves were left outside the rising fortress of the English canon.<sup>6</sup> Though scholars have analyzed how the

---

<sup>5</sup> Before she transformed the role of Lady Macbeth, Sarah Siddons made men weep with her 1782 portrayal of Isabella in David Garrick's altered version of Thomas Southerne's *The Fatal Marriage*. H. Barton Baker's enthusiastic inclusion of audience responses to Siddons' depiction of Isabella: "On October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1782, Mrs. Siddons made her *rentrée* as the heroine of Southern's [sic] *Isabella, or The Fatal Marriage*. And with what a difference! Her beautiful face and form, the exquisite tones of her voice, her deep tenderness, seized upon every heart, and her overwhelming agony thrilled every soul as it had never been thrilled before. Men wept, women fell into hysterics, transports of applause shook the house, the excitement and enthusiasm were almost terrible in their intensity, and the curtain fell amidst such acclamations as perhaps Garrick has never roused. The salary she was engaged at was £5 a week. This very inadequate stipend was, of course, quickly increased; but notwithstanding the rush and houses crowded to the ceiling nightly, at the end of the season she was in receipt of only £20. Her benefit, however, realized a large sum" (95). *The London Stage: Its History and Traditions from 1576-1888* Volume I. London, W.H. Allen and Co. 13 Waterloo Place, 1889. In 1785, Siddons cemented her standing as *the* eighteenth-century actress with her interpretation of Shakespeare's iconic character: Drawing from Thomas Campbell's *The Life of Mrs. Siddons* (London 1834), Sandra Richards explains just how linked Lady Macbeth and Siddons became by the early nineteenth century: "Her farewell performance in her best-known role of Lady Macbeth, on 29 June 1812, produced a dangerous situation in the scramble for seats and the audience's ungovernable applause refused to let the play go beyond Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene." Sandra Richards, *The Rise of the English Actress* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 75.

<sup>6</sup> Garrick's costar, Susannah Cibber, made them all weep in *Isabella*'s mid-eighteenth century run and Southerne's Restoration audience wept for Elizabeth Barry's Isabella. <sup>6</sup> Citing Anthony Aston, Lowe's edited version of Duran's *Annals of the English Stage*: Cibber was never so "solemn and august" as she was as Isabella: "Aston remarks, that 'her face expressed the

changing priorities of eighteenth-century readers gradually produced a growing distaste for her works, this chapter considers the ways in which British culture continuously absorbed Behn's original story, though she no longer received credit for the characters, and has even been disassociated from the adaptations by recent critics.

In addition to discussing the various alterations that Southerne and Garrick made to Behn's original text, I will also consider the generic differences between amatory fiction and she-tragedy. My analysis relies on the definition of amatory fiction offered by Ros Ballaster, who argues that the prose fiction of writers like Behn, Delarivier Manley, and Eliza Haywood follows an "erotic-pathetic" trajectory of "seduction and betrayal narratives": Ballaster reads amatory fiction as a kind of "pornography for women" whose "extravagant rhetoric of desire" provides female readers with "a sense of feminine power and agency."<sup>7</sup> Southerne's and Garrick's adaptations change Behn's plot and her characters' motivations to suit their audiences, but they retain the powerful themes and the complicated gender politics of Behn's novella. In their she-tragedies, Southerne and Garrick foreground the role of the widow in ways that force eighteenth century audiences to recognize the real victimization often associated with the widow's social position.

---

passions it somewhat preceded her action, as her actions did her words" (Lowe, Volume One , page 154). Southerne designed the play for Barry and Garrick for Cibber—Southerne's "Epistle Dedicatory" : "I could not, if I would, conceal what I owe Mrs. Barry; and I should despair of ever being able to pay her, if I did not imagine that I have been a little accessory to the great Applause, that every body gives her, in saying she out-plays herself; if she does that, I think we may all agree never to expect, or desire any Actor to go beyond that Commendation; I made the Play for her part, and her part has made the play for me; It was a helpless Infant in the Arms of the Father, but has grown under her Care; I gave it just motion enough to crawl into the World, but by her power, and spirit of playing, she has breath'd a soul into it, that may keep it alive." Robert Jordan and Harold Love, eds., *The Works of Thomas Southerne: The Fatal Marriage; or, the Innocent Adultery* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 10-11.

<sup>7</sup> Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 33-35.

Susan Staves reads Southerne as having invented a kind of “bourgeois domestic tragedy” that differentiated itself from previous dramatic forms through an increased focus on “the woman’s dilemma and suffering” and a heavier emphasis on misfortune than on sin.<sup>8</sup> Building upon Staves’s interpretive framework, Jean Marsden defines she-tragedy as a “subgenre of plays written between the late 1680s and first decades of the eighteenth century” that foregrounds the suffering of a “central female figure”; indeed, Marsden ultimately argues that she-tragedies are “intensely erotic plays” obsessed with women “tainted by sexual transgression, either voluntary or involuntary,” practicing what she calls a “technology of gender” in which “female sexuality is both demonized and defined as a treasure for homosocial exchange.”<sup>9</sup> The widow in Southerne’s and Garrick’s adaptations fulfills Marsden’s definitive stipulations regarding the she-tragedy heroine: in their works, Isabella is desired but does not control her own sexuality; possession of her body is fought over by male figures; her sexuality is subject to control by the male gaze; she is rendered sexually corrupt or contaminated, and this corruption is converted into a spectacle; and, finally, her female suffering is often exaggerated.<sup>10</sup> While Behn gives comparatively little attention to Isabella’s widowhood, focusing instead on her time spent as a nun and a wife, I argue that the figure of Isabella in Southerne’s and Garrick’s plays responds to events as a passive victim precisely *because* she is a widow. As Staves notes, Behn’s Isabella remains a widow for only three years, while Southerne’s widow waits seven years before remarrying.<sup>11</sup> The adaptations confront the actual hardships faced by widows in the period; indeed, unlike Restoration comedies, which typically place the widow in a position of power—even if they do

---

<sup>8</sup> Susan Staves, *Players Scepters: Fictions of Authority in the Restoration* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 175.

<sup>9</sup> Jean Marsden, *Fatal Desire: Women, Sexuality, and the English Stage, 1660-1720* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 65.

<sup>10</sup> Marsden, *Fatal Desire: Women, Sexuality, and the English Stage*, 65-79.

<sup>11</sup> Staves, 249.

so to make her an object of satire—she-tragedy takes seriously the widow’s plight and clearly articulates the pressures upon her to remarry.<sup>12</sup>

Southerne and Garrick distinguish their depictions of Isabella from Behn’s by removing the female protagonist from the nunnery, by extending her mourning period, and by blaming Isabella’s condition on external forces. Without a female commentary or guide, their Isabella travels in a strictly patriarchal universe and stations herself within domestic spaces. Southerne’s and Garrick’s decision to represent the widow figure as a tragic victim (rather than as a source of comic relief) not only foregrounds their culture’s apathy toward widows’ often problematic social and economic status, it also challenges the restrictions imposed on widows by contemporary conduct books, property laws, personal memoirs, and theatrical representations of that archetype.<sup>13</sup> Scholars like Jacqueline Pearson, Jane Spencer, and Aleksandra Hultquist have read Behn’s Isabella’s remarriage as a moment of sexually liberating choice—a marker of the protagonist’s agency—while criticizing Southerne’s adaptation based on the idea that his widow has no choice, no practical option but to remarry, suggesting that he denigrates the idea of female agency. A closer reading, however, reveals the extent to which Southerne’s play also destabilizes

---

<sup>12</sup> For an extended analysis on representations of widows in Restoration comedies. See Jennifer Panek, *Widows and Suitors in Early Modern English Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.)

<sup>13</sup> For examples of English conduct books: See Richard Allestree, *The Ladies Calling in Two Parts*. 6th ed. Oxford, 1693; *The ladies dictionary, being a general entertainment of the fair-sex a work never attempted before in English* (Oxford: 1694); *The Whole Duty of Women* (1695); Lord Halifax’s *Advice to a daughter* (1688); Timothy Rogers’ *The Character of a Good Woman, both in Single and Married State* (1697) An influential Spanish Catholic conduct book on Early Modern English Protestants, Juan Luis Vives’ 1524 (revised in 1528) *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, trans. Virginia Walcott Beauchamp, et al. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002); Citing John Mason, Nancy Armstrong suggests Hester Chapone’s *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, Dr. Gregory’s *Father’s Legacy to his Daughters* helped increase the range and amount of conduct books for women by the mid to late eighteenth-century. See: Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 62.

gendered power relations precisely by displaying the limits of Isabella's choices, emphasizing the social pressures on her as a widow who must depend either on the private support of a new husband or on charity from the public.

Southerne's adaptation was one of his biggest successes, due in part to audiences' emotional connection with the actresses who played Isabella.<sup>14</sup> In his "Epistle Dedicatory," Southerne acknowledges the importance of the actress—in this case, Elizabeth Barry—in interpreting his text and determining the nature of the character. Southerne and Garrick depended upon audiences loving their heroine.<sup>15</sup> As Marsden discusses, Barry was "renowned for her ability to represent passion and yet to wring tears from the even the stoniest audience."<sup>16</sup> At the

---

<sup>14</sup> On Thomas Southerne: In 1782, David Erskine Baker notes the differences between Southerne and John Dryden's financial successes in terms of how Southerne insisted for individual tickets to be sold at a higher cost whereas perhaps Dryden thought that "was beneath the dignity of a poet." (427). The "low comic intrusions" in "The Fatal Marriage" are mentioned a few times throughout this entry and Baker cites a letter edited by Mr. Mason between Mr. Gray to Mr. Walpole that refers to the tragicomedy as "that monstrous species of composition" through Mason speaking for Gray (427-28). On Aphra Behn: Baker provides a much more extensive entry for Behn and the tone greatly differentiates from the more condescending contemporary 18<sup>th</sup> century critics; he even points out her influence on Southerne (20-23).

<sup>15</sup> For instance, London's *The Gentleman's Journal; or, the monthly miscellany* in March, 1694 praised Southerne's work in contrast to lesser contemporary works: "Mr. Southern's new Play call'd, *The Fatal Marriage; or, The Innocent Adultery*, has been so kindly receiv'd, that you are by this time no stranger to its merit. AS the world has it justice, and it is above my praise, I need not expatiate on the subject" (63).

<sup>16</sup> Jean Marsden, "Tragedy and Varieties of Serious Drama," in *A Companion to Restoration Drama*, ed. Susan J. Owen. (Malden: Blackwell, 2001), 239. Harold Love and Robert Jordan also emphasize Barry as the force behind *The Fatal Marriage's* success: "The production, graced by the superlative acting from Elizabeth Barry, was the greatest triumph of Southerne's career." Drawing from a letter received by the Windham family of Feldbrigg, dated March 22, "169¾", Love and Jordan further support Barry's strong effect on the audience. "[*The Fatal Marriage*] is no only the best that author ever writ, but is generally admired for one of the greatest ornaments of the stage, and the most entertaining play has appeared upon it these 7 years. The plot is taken out of Mrs. Behn's novel, called *The Unhappy Vow-Breaker*. I never saw Mrs. Barry act with so much passion as she does in it; I could not forbear being moved even to tears to see her act. Never was poet better rewarded or encouraged (sic) by the town; for besides an extraordinary full house, which brought him about 140l.50 noblemen, among whom my lord Winchelsea was one, gave him guineas, apiece, and the printer 36l. for his copy. This kind usage will encourage

same time, however, *The Fatal Marriage* was widely read, and was famously represented as having a considerable female readership in Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*<sup>17</sup>; Garrick's advertisement for *Isabella* also acknowledges the play's readers: "Several Lines of the Original, particularly in the Part of Isabella, are printed, though they are omitted in the Representation. Many Things please in the Reading which may have little or no Effect upon the Stage."<sup>18</sup> To this end, this chapter considers the adaptations both as objects for readership as pieces meant for theatrical audiences.

This chapter analyzes the extent to which Southerne's and Garrick's adaptations represent archetypal female characters—the widow, the nun, and the wife—in ways that both accommodate and subvert their audience's expectations of those gender roles. While Behn's *Isabella* has often been interpreted as vastly different from the character's stage depictions, I argue that Southerne and Garrick continue Behn's emphasis on female sexuality while also highlighting *Isabella*'s own recognition of her limited choices. Feminist readings have often

---

desponding minor poets, and vex huffing Dryden and Congreve to madness." (Edmond Malone, *An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the English Stage in The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare*, 10 vols, London, 1790, 1.ii.141. ) Again, the financial success Southerne enjoyed due to *The Fatal Marriage* is contrasted to Dryden (and Congreve), extending Erskine Baker's 1789 acknowledgment of Dryden's sour grapes towards Southerne's monetary achievements. Also interesting, the writer refers to Behn's story as *The Unhappy Vow-Breaker*—despite Garrick's lack of acknowledgment to Behn's original work in his own alteration, there clearly was still a recognition by readers at the end of the eighteenth-century that she was the original source for the still popular play (Love and Jordan, 5-6).

<sup>17</sup> My original interest in *The Fatal Marriage* stemmed from reading *Tom Jones* (1749) for my special field's exam and finding Sophia Western weeping over the play. Robert Gale Noyes made this discovery as well, it turns out: Noyes, Robert Gale. *The Neglected Muse: Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Tragedy in the Novel (1740-1780)*. Brown University Press, Providence: 1958. The scene occurs in Book Fifteen, Chapter Five: "...poor Sophia, alone and melancholy, sat reading a tragedy. It was *The Fatal Marriage*; and she was not come to that part where the poor distressed Isabella disposes of her wedding ring. Here the book dropt from her hand, and a shower of tears ran down into her bosom." Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones* ed., R.P.C. Mutter (London: Penguin, 1985), 657.

<sup>18</sup> David Garrick, *Isabella; or, The Fatal Marriage, a play*. Alter'd from Southern. Printed for J. and R. Tonson, in the Strand. (Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, 1757).

privileged Behn's original version over Southerne's by claiming that Behn lends Isabella a certain authenticity denied her in the adaptations. The adaptations, however, foreground how Isabella is enmeshed in a patriarchal system that prevents her from developing female friendships, relationships that Behn allows for in the novella. Indeed, Garrick further emphasizes Isabella's isolation from homosocial bonds by cutting all major women characters from Southerne's comical subplot. In order to more fully articulate Southerne's interpretation of the novella, I will also examine how theatrical representations of madness and violence create the greatest distance between the Isabella figure of the adaptations and Behn's original protagonist by further highlighting the affective impact of her confinement within a patriarchal system.

### **Behn's Isabella**

Behn's sly and often ironically judgmental narrator tells the story of the beautiful and chaste heroine, Isabella, who chooses the life of a nun over marriage. The novella follows Isabella's early life as she studies to take her vows, becomes accomplished in various skills, often entertains visitors in the nunnery, and *seems* to be fully committed to her Catholic faith. Past thirteen, Isabella decides to remain a nun and is ready to live a life of "hard lodging, coarse diet, and homely habit,"<sup>19</sup> despite all the frequent callers who wish to woo and marry her. One such suitor, Villenoy, is "overtaken by his Fate, surprised in his way of Glory" and "fell most passionately in love with this maid of immortal fame."<sup>20</sup> The narrator reveals that although Isabella has "pity" and "compassion for Villenoy" she "had fixed her mind on Heaven" and is

---

<sup>19</sup> Aphra Behn, *The History of the Nun; Or, the Fair Vow-Breaker* from *Oroonoko and Other Writings*, ed. Paul Salzman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 8.

<sup>20</sup> Behn, *The History of the Nun*, 8.

resolved to stay a nun despite his being “admirably made and very handsome.”<sup>21</sup> Behn’s narrator and Isabella toss Villenoy from the text and another suitor, Henault, quickly enters and then dominates the largest section of the tale.

The once controlled character of Isabella changes completely once she encounters this brother of her fellow nun and friend, Katteriena. Unlike the rather scant description Behn gives to Villenoy, Henault becomes the object of Isabella’s (and the narrator’s) gaze: he is “rather tall than middle-statured, his hair and eyes brown but his face exceedingly beautiful, adorned with a thousand graces, and the most nobly and exactly made that ‘twas possible for Nature to form.”<sup>22</sup> Henault face fuels Isabella’s desire, which is a point of emphasis since she later has trouble recognizing his face when he returns from war. Behn’s Isabella rages and struggles with “an unruly passion” for Henault as she grapples with her moral dilemma about quitting the nunnery.<sup>23</sup> She overhears Katteriena lecturing Henault on the inevitable ruin his love for Isabella will cause. Katteriena warns Henault about Villenoy while also reminding the reader how little Isabella thinks of this previous suitor. Katteriena asks her brother if he knows about Isabella’s curt rejection of Villenoy, for whom “no persuasions, no attractions in him, no worldly advantages, or all his pleadings” could “prevail” on Isabella’s “severe and harsh” heart.<sup>24</sup> Again, we are reminded both of how little Isabella felt for Villenoy and how potentially tenuous Henault’s position is as the object of her desire.

*The History of the Nun* provides the female characters with a clearly demarcated female space: the nunnery, a location men can look into but cannot enter. Within what might at first seem like a safe space, a nearly Mary Astellian location for female friendship and education,

---

<sup>21</sup> Behn, *The History of the Nun* 8-9.

<sup>22</sup> Behn, *The History of the Nun* 11.

<sup>23</sup> Behn, *The History of the Nun* 16.

<sup>24</sup> Behn, *The History of the Nun* 16.

Isabella becomes enthralled by Henault. Behn's Katteriena chastises Isabella for her shaky morality, and she foresees how the couple may be doomed because of Isabella's asymmetrical power over her brother.<sup>25</sup> While Henault might control Isabella's desire—"the more she concealed her flame, the more violently it raged"<sup>26</sup>—Isabella controls her own sense of morality, ultimately willing to sin and do her penance, by living apart from society, alone with Henault: "I am unused to worldly vanities and would boast of nothing but my Henault; no riches but his love; no grandeur but his presence."<sup>27</sup> After the couple runs away to the country to marry, they soon are cut off financially and Henault must leave Isabella in order to join the military. She soon discovers he has been killed and mourns him for some time. She meets up again with her first suitor, Villenoy, marries him, and all seems well—until Henault returns (not dead after all), and Isabella must decide between the two men. She realizes she now prefers Villenoy and kills Henault. She and Villenoy go to throw Henault's body into the river. At this moment, Isabella has an epiphany and discovers she could never live with the guilt of Villenoy knowing she has murdered Henault. She secretly (and deftly!) sews his body to Henault's corpse. When Villenoy hoists the body into the river, he too tumbles down and drowns. Isabella's murders are quickly found out and she confesses to her crimes. She is publically beheaded and the novella ends with the narrator's warning about vow-breaking.

---

<sup>25</sup> Ros Ballaster's reading of Katteriena argues that the use of the first-person "creates an illusion of immediacy" and further "inflames" Isabella's desires despite the friend's best efforts to keep her sister in the habit: "Behn habitually employs indirect speech to recount dialogue, but interestingly she shifts into direct speech and an inserted first-person narrative in *The Fair Vow-Breaker* to tell the seduction story of her heroine's friend and fellow-nun, Katteriena. Whereas Isabella is a sexual innocent, Katteriena has been exiled to the convent following a shameful love affair with her father's page. When Isabella finds herself obsessed with Henault, Katteriena's brother, Katteriena recounts her own story in order to persuade her friend that passion can be conquered by separation from the love object." Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms*, 102.

<sup>26</sup> Behn, *The History of the Nun*, 15.

<sup>27</sup> Behn, *The History of the Nun*, 26.

The adaptations of this incredible story take great liberties, to be sure, eliminating Isabella's murders and her duplicity, along with any account of the time she spent in the nunnery (or of her friendship with Katteriena). The adaptations are primarily invested in the idea of a woman accidentally being married to two men at once. But just as Behn's Isabella's sense of morality, described by the intrusive narrator, rests on a separation of her public and private actions, so too do the stage versions of Isabella rely on the notion of performance. Southerne and Garrick might remove plot points but they implicitly borrow from Behn's narrator's commentary on patriarchy in order to create their own equally complex, albeit less evil, Isabella.

### **The Widow and the Nun: Representing Isabella on Southerne's Stage**

Prior to *The Fatal Marriage*, Southerne's 1690 production of *Sir Antony Love Or, The Rambling Lady* pulled from Behn's *The Lucky Mistake* (1689.) This comedy provides some context for my reading of Isabella and adds more evidence to the argument that Southerne not only relied on Behn for his plots but stayed true to the proto-feminist themes throughout her stories. As Helga Drougge points out: "The Charlott-Floriante plot line...was borrowed from Behn's novel...and has an unmistakable Behn flavor—impecunious roving gallants, wild but virginal heiresses, authoritarian guardians, Catholic country, dizzying coincidences—and some of the self-parodying quality of the typical Behn plot."<sup>28</sup> Drougge highlights the "positive influence" of Behn over Southerne in terms of the gender politics within the play: His transvestite heroine Luxia/Anthony, a former kept woman plotting to extract a maintenance from her keeper and to get the man she likes into bed, is wholly free from the pathos with which Behn invested the courtesan figure. Lucia is unique on the patriarchal Restoration stage: a female rake

---

<sup>28</sup> Helga Drougge, "'We'll Learn That of the Men': Female Sexuality in Southerne's Comedies." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 33 (1993): 548.

who is successful in all of her schemes, loves liberty above all things, and does mean lewd liberty.”<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps the most significant structural change in the story’s movement from Behn’s novella to Southerne’s play lies in the decision Southerne makes to portray Isabella primarily as a widow rather than as an ex-nun. One immediately notices the remarkable shift in the playwrights’ interpretations of Behn’s story. Southerne’s *The Fatal Marriage; Or the Innocent Adultery* cuts *The History of the Nun* and its subtitle, *the Fair Vow-Breaker*, a move that highlights one of Behn’s major themes, fate, while also signposting the innocence of Southerne’s main character. Garrick (whose version I will discuss in more detail later in the chapter) hones in on that character by titling his adaptation *Isabella; or The Fatal Marriage*. Many critics have seen Southerne’s and Garrick’s emphasis on Isabella’s broken marriage vows—rather than on her broken vows as a nun—as one of the major reasons Isabella apparently loses so much agency in these adaptations.<sup>30</sup> But Southerne’s emphasis on Isabella’s roles as a widow and a wife rather than as a nun actually creates a connection to Behn’s novella by further illustrating the limitations of Isabella’s choices, a theme Behn pursues as well. Southerne’s staging of domestic spaces is patterned in many ways after the monastery in Behn’s story, as part of his effort to create a correspondence between Isabella’s agency, or lack thereof, and the spaces in which she resides.

---

<sup>29</sup> Drougge, “Female Sexuality,” 549.

<sup>30</sup> “*The History of the Nun: Or the Fair Vow-Breaker* (1689) is one of those short novels in which Behn’s authoritative narrator delivers a cool, witty account of the extremes of behavior caused by passion. Like other fiction of the time it shows a fascination with the idea of nuns’ illicit loves, and of great virtue turning suddenly into great vice...Southerne’s “drama focuses the action on the second marriage and the first husband’s almost immediately subsequent return. Though the broken religious vow is mentioned, the decision to marry a second time is seen as the crucial one. As Jacqueline Pearson shows, Southerne exculpates Isabella at every turn, providing cruel males who are to blame for her fatal decision to take second husband (here called Villeroy). Her first husband (here Biron) is persecuted by his obdurate father...” (Spencer 127-128).

Southerne's adaptation began as a tragicomedy, including a humorous subplot full of cross-dressing and role-playing. The juxtaposition of the comedy to Isabella's melodrama certainly emphasizes the extremes of both genres and the contrast allows the audience to consider how easily Isabella's tragedy could so easily have been a comedy.<sup>31</sup> Southerne's tragedy follows Isabella as the supposed widow of Biron (Henault in the novella) who has mourned for seven years with a child that age. She is destitute, cut off from her father-in-law, Count Baldwin, and being wooed by Villeroy (Villenoys in the novella). She loves only Biron and cannot fathom marrying again. But in order to overcome poverty and to provide for her son, after much prodding, she finally marries Villeroy, only then to discover that Biron is alive. She tries to force herself to kill Biron but cannot bear to do so, as she remains very much in love with him. Meanwhile, Biron's jealous brother, Carlos, intercepts some correspondence, causing Villeroy's men to mortally wound Biron, believing him to be an intruder. Isabella, guilt-ridden and quite mad at this point, kills herself. Count Baldwin realizes he should have treated both his sons equally and been kinder to Isabella when she (thought she) was a widow.

The representation of widows on stage during the period typically was aimed at producing laughs: widows were depicted as comical figures with a surplus of cash or property and, to balance this clear advantage, were often of a certain age (and would likely be described by men as having "good personalities").<sup>32</sup> Barbara Todd lists the widow Christian Custance from *Ralph Roister-Doiser* as one of the earliest comical widows on the early modern stage followed by Lady Plus from *The Puritaine*, Lady Allworth from *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*,

---

<sup>31</sup> Indeed, 1960's motion pictures certainly recognized that potential in the trope, with the Doris Day film *My Favorite Wife* in which the husband thinks his wife is dead, only to marry his second one on the day she finally shows up, very much alive.

<sup>32</sup> See Jennifer Panek for lengthier discussion on stereotypes of the lusty widow on the stage. Jennifer Panek, *Widows and Suitors in Early Modern English Comedy*, 124-156.

Widow Blackacre from *The Plain Dealer*, and Lady Wishfort from *The Way of the World*.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, one need look only a year ahead to Southerne's 1695 adaptation of Behn's *Oroonoko* to find this type.<sup>34</sup> His Widow Lackitt acts as the comic relief: lusting after a woman pretending to be a man, Lackitt eventually gets tricked out of her money. Like Behn's own Widdow Ranter, Lackitt is immediately defined by her widowhood. Southerne's Isabella, on the other hand, is known throughout the play by her first name, pulling her out of that comical shadow while also disconnecting her from being defined as her late husband's property. Rhetorically, the audience might then disassociate Isabella from her first marriage, whereas *Widow Lackitt* and *Widdow Ranter* are constantly identified by the audience with their first husbands' names. Southerne's melancholy and woeful main character spends so much of the play reminding the audience of the love she feels for her first husband that perhaps giving her his last name would seem redundant anyway<sup>35</sup>; Isabella's actions on stage present her as a "good Widow," but the other characters refuse to identify her with that title—thus, while she identifies herself as still tied to her first husband, her social world has already moved on (it has been seven years) and seems to identify her as a spinster or single-woman rather than as a widow. Importantly, unlike in Behn's novella, in Southerne's play Isabella's social world consists of men—she talks to just one other female character during the play's action (the Nurse), even though she occasionally stands on stage with

---

<sup>33</sup> Barbara J. Todd, "The Remarrying Widow: a Stereotype Reconsidered," in *Women in English Society, 1500–1800*, ed. Mary Prior (London: Methuen, 1985), 54.

<sup>34</sup> For further discussion on the role of the widow in Southerne's adaptation see Kristin Bross and Kathryn Rummell, "Cast Mistresses: The Widow Figure in *Oroonoko*," in *Troping Oroonoko From Behn To Bandele*, ed. Susan B. Iwanisziw, (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004), 59-82.

<sup>35</sup> In addition to the more well-known Hebrew word roots to beauty, the *OED* defines "Isabella" as a "greyish yellow, light buff" color, pulling from the 1689 *London Gazette*: "A new red Coat with an Izabella colour Lining"; indeed, the character's very name symbolically suggests the gray area in which she resides between her limited options of remarriage and poverty.

Julia and Victoria, the major female comic roles.<sup>36</sup> Her father-in-law, her brother-in-law, and her husbands determine the various types of widowhood she inhabits. Southerne's Isabella complicates previous representations of the widow through her evident poverty, her exceptional youth, the burden of the child she had with her "late" husband, and her desire to remain constant to his memory.

The work done on widows and remarriage in the late seventeenth century complicates the extent to which we might be too optimistic about the idea of the widow's freedoms and liberation from societal norms. There are varying perspectives on the types of freedoms widows enjoyed during this period and whether or not they had as much freedom as we might assume; as Raymond Anselment announces, "Throughout seventeenth-century England the widow often appeared a contradictory figure."<sup>37</sup> Current research on early modern English widows reveals a consensus that the widow was a deviation from societal norms, "which expected all women to be either married or about to be married."<sup>38</sup> On the one hand, there is evidence that suggests rich widows were the great anomaly of women experiencing personal and financial freedom, separate from patriarchal control—living out Mary Astell's utopian dream<sup>39</sup>; on the other hand, there is

---

<sup>36</sup> On the wedding day to Villeroys, her second husband, Isabella stands silent after she tells him "I have no more to say" (3.2.196-310) while Villeroys and the comical characters, Fernando, Julia, Fabian, and Fernando, celebrate.

<sup>37</sup> Raymond Anselment, "Katherine Austen and the Widow's Might," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 5 (2005): 5. Also, see: "The Deliverances of Alice Thornton: The Re-creation of a Seventeenth-Century Life." *Prose Studies* 19 (1996): 19–36.

<sup>38</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England: 1550-1720* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 175. Also see: Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England, 1500–1720*, (London: Routledge, 1993). Patricia Crawford and Laura Gowing, eds., introduction to *Women's Worlds in Seventeenth-Century England*, (London: Routledge, 2000), 1-12.

<sup>39</sup> Barbara J. Todd's research on the Abingdon widows of Berkshire, for instance, provides the decrease in remarriage during the late-seventeenth century as possibly attributed to the rising availability of job opportunities: "sacking and the processing of hemp and flax were introduced along with silk-weaving, and to form an increasingly important, labor-intensive, element in the

also evidence for a large demographic of poor widows, burdened by children, dependent on the welfare of the state for charity, and desperately needing to remarry in order to survive.<sup>40</sup>

Southerne represents his widow as both fulfilling the fantasy of the good widow and, paradoxically, drawing attention to the severe problems women faced if they were left without property and with children to support.

Southerne's major deviation from Behn in the construction of the heroine aligns with what he tells Hammond in the Prologue's letter regarding his intentions for the play's theme; he writes that he is fascinated by the question that Behn's novella poses as to what might happen to a woman who accidentally becomes the wife of two men, not necessarily the theme that we might take to be Behn's most important one. As other scholars have noted, it is Behn's heroine's

---

economy. Here was the source of employment for women and children that had been lacking in the sixteenth-century...the catering trade—a mainstay for working women—also revived in the seventeenth-century...the malt industry itself made self-supporting widowhood more feasible for those widows who had capital to invest...Even if they were unable to find employment, the poorest widows of Abingdon in the seventeenth century could count on...regular aid...Widows and their children, the quintessential 'deserving poor' were the main recipients of the ever-increasing funds dispensed by these institutions [Christ's Hospital and St. Helen's parish]." Barbara J. Todd, "The Remarrying Widow: a Stereotype Reconsidered," in *Women in English Society, 1500–1800*, ed. Mary Prior (London: Methuen, 1985), 78-79. For more discussion on the question of remarriage statistics in the early modern period see: Jeremy Boulton, "London Widowhood Revisited: the Decline of Female Remarriage in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries," *Continuity and Change* 5 (1990): 323–55. Vivien Brodsky, "Widows in Late Elizabethan London: Remarriage, Economic Opportunity and Family Orientations," in *The World We Have Gained: Histories of Population and Social Structure*, ed. Lloyd Bonfield, Richard M. Smith and Keith Wrightson (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 122-154.

<sup>40</sup> Merry E. Wiesner lays out the trends in remarriage, explaining how younger widows remarried more than older widows but widows with children remarried less than those without; meanwhile, rich widows could marry easier than poor widows but chose not to in order to enjoy their consider freedom: "For very poor widows or those with many children this low rate of remarriage stemmed from the fact they were less attractive on the marriage market than single women, but for middle-and upper-class women it was often the result of their choice; the 'lusty widow' who wants to remarry as quickly as possible is a common figure in early modern literature, but studies indicate that women who could afford to resisted all pressure to remarry and so retained their independence." Merry E. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 75.

reaction to the realization of her second husband's return that challenges our perception of the wife archetype: Behn's Isabella simply does not love or desire her first husband anymore. But Southerne develops his own interpretation of the wife/widow dilemma, so that his characterization of Isabella derives from the question Behn poses, even though he deviates from the answers her novella provides.

In Southerne, Isabella's desire to remain constant to the memory of her (presumed) dead husband, Biron, then, distances her from the interpretation of widowhood as a freeing role to occupy, a role that many critics have understood Behn's original character to inhabit. Southerne's Isabella channels the period's "virtuous widow" or "ideal widow" archetype: "Ideal widows do not even want to live without their first husbands... If they absolutely must live, however, virtuous widows often do so out of dedication to others, particularly their children."<sup>41</sup> Karen Bloom Gevirtz goes on to explain the extent to which the culture approved of widows who did not remarry, relating a "positive, maternal instinct to selflessness and benevolence."<sup>42</sup> At the same time, remarriage was not necessarily as frowned up by the masses as the idealization in literature of the good widow might suggest; Alan Macfarlane points out that "remarriage within the year was not prohibited by common law or canon law in England."<sup>43</sup> Macfarlane does note the judgmental attitude towards the "too rapid remarriage" regarded as "unseemly," but Isabella's seven-year wait goes well beyond the typical one-year wait for decency's sake.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> Karen Bloom Gevirtz 50.

<sup>42</sup> Gevirtz, 57.

<sup>43</sup> Alan Macfarlane references remarriage figures from a Clayworth parish's 1688 listing: "At that date there were 72 husbands in the village, of whom 21 were recorded as having been married more than once, with one married five times. Of the 72 wives, nine had been previously married." Alan Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England: Modes of Reproduction 1300-1840* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 234-235.

<sup>44</sup> Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love*, 235.

Indeed, drawing from the 1694 conduct book<sup>45</sup>, *The Ladies Dictionary Being a General Entertainment for the Fair Sex*, the appropriateness of a widow's remarriage seems contingent upon the amount of grief she expresses for the deceased husband and her performance of that grief in the public sphere: "Widdows indeed are allowed Marriage, and many of them after they have wept a while, and shed a few Tears to the Memory of the deceased, throw off their Veils, dry their Eyes, and look out for new Embraces, which is very indecent and unbecoming the Gravity of a Widdow..."<sup>46</sup> In its seven-page definition of a "good widow," *The Ladies Dictionary* notes that "Nuns made a Law that no Widdow should Marry under ten Months, and if she transgressed, she was to sacrifice as for a Crime done."<sup>47</sup> This conduct book corresponds to Southerne's depiction of widowhood in his play: the two genres encourage a display of certain emotions by the widow, a dignified grief, along with the lasting remembrance of the husband:

Her grief, though moderate for the death of her Husband, us yet not withstanding real; it is not a violent storm that is sooner over, but a still Rain that continues long, and soaks their Hearts with grief that is not easily removed; she continues her usual tie in her

---

<sup>45</sup> I found myself asking the same question posed by Jean Marsden: "But what was the Restoration idea of a virtuous woman?" To that end, how does one go about finding the sources to answer such a loaded question? Like Marsden, the conduct books provide, at least, the prescriptive language that helps to characterize this period's perceptions of ideal women. With reference to the "most widely read of the courtesy books", Marsden uses Richard Allestree's *The Ladies Calling* (1673) to support the popular virtue of "meekness" as the cornerstone to being a good woman. In her discussion of Restoration adaptations of Shakespeare plays, Marsden helps to explain the bridge between representation of women on stage and the cultural idealizations of women at that same time: "[conduct books] define proper female behavior and thus present an idealized picture of femininity—a function filled also by the virtuous paragons in the adaptations of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century... The ideal woman could be said to be characterised (sic) by 'piety and devotion, meekness, modesty, submission.'" Jean Marsden, "Rewritten Women: Shakespearean Heroines in the Restoration," in *The Appropriation of Shakespeare: Post-Renaissance Reconstructions of the Works and the Myth*, ed. Jean Marsden. (New York St. Martin's Press, 1991), 44-45.

<sup>46</sup> Richard Allestree, *The Ladies Dictionary Being a General Entertainment for the Fair Sex*, 484.

<sup>47</sup> Richard Allestree, *The Ladies Dictionary*, 484.

Widdows Estate, with a serious and modest reservedness...In civil Affairs she is often forced to Act a double part, both of the Man and Woman: The remembrance of her Husband is imprinted in the lively Pictures he has left behind him; for when she looks on her Children, She sees his Idea there, and places her fondness in giving them good Education, and bringing them up in the ways of Virtue.<sup>48</sup>

Rather than reading Isabella as the perfect widow, then, this definition suggests that she, in fact, goes too far in her grief, just as the side-characters suggest throughout the play. Isabella's suitor, Villeroy, speaks for the audience when he acknowledges how it might be time for her to move on from her first husband, dead seven years (as they think). Villeroy's frustration then reflects the audience's own recognition that Isabella need not dwell on her first husband's memory any more. I would argue that Isabella represents an extreme version of the virtuous widow that few Restoration audience members would expect to exist off of the stage; as Jennifer Panek asserts, "the remarriage of widows was not only a common fact of life in early modern England, but a socially, economically, and morally approved fact as well," despite a tendency in the prevailing scholarship to assume widows must never remarry and remain chaste and virtuous.<sup>49</sup> In terms of performing her virtue, Isabella covers all of her bases: she has no money, a child to support, and sufficient time spent mourning her dead husband. The late seventeenth-century audience might only have a negative feeling regarding Isabella's lack of stoicism; while her grief "continues long" like a "still rain," she also expresses her grief as being like a storm, a roaring "torrent" she invites to "overwhelm" her, since "life and death are now alike to [her]" (2.2. 94-96). Isabella's desire to die, her affinity for likening herself to the Ephesian Matron, and her use of the storm as the metaphor she lives by, all suggest her extreme interpretation of the role as the good widow.

---

<sup>48</sup> Allestree, *The Ladies Dictionary*, 481.

<sup>49</sup> Panek, *Widows and Suitors*, 10-11.

Like Behn's character, Southerne's Isabella dwells in extreme emotional and mental states; unlike the novella's representation of this widow, however, the genre of Southerne's play demands that the actress portraying Isabella interpret the ways in which she conveys these lines. Isabella reads herself as on display to her "Persecutors": they take "Pleasure" in watching her struggle; she knows she is a spectacle of grief and misery, and she also knows that people thrive on watching her suffer. While Isabella recognizes the constant voyeurism that accompanies women like herself in financial and emotional distress—along with the sheer *Schadenfreude* that grows from that spectatorship—she also will never fight against that role, in what has proven to be a paradoxical and frustrating aspect to her character to the scholars who have attempted to understand it. Isabella is resigned to be on display—she is "born to suffer," after all—but she also gives running commentary on her suffering and on the ways people derive pleasure from it. By having Isabella call attention to such persecutors, Southerne draws a discomfiting parallel to seventeenth-century audiences enjoying her performance of that despair. Given what we know about the performance history of *The Fatal Marriage*—especially the positive reviews and critics' inclination to take Isabella's melancholy seriously—we must assume both that Isabella was a tragic figure to Southerne's audiences and that his drama worked on a meta-theatrical level, observing its own generic conventions as it moved toward its inevitable dramatic close.

From the outset, Southerne foregrounds both the anxiety provoked by the widow figure and that figure's vulnerability to rhetorical and economic manipulation by the play's primary male figures. In the opening scene, Villeroy enters with the villainous character Carlos—the younger brother of Isabella's allegedly dead husband, Biron—and makes the first mention of Isabella by her first name, and Carlos responds to Villeroy by referring to Isabella as "your Mistress" (1.1.167); however, once Villeroy leaves the scene, Carlos immediately refers to

Isabella as “my elder Brother’s Widow.” (1.1.186)<sup>50</sup> Carlos switches labels for Isabella depending on his interlocutor’s position in the play’s action: to Villeroy, Isabella is a desirable conquest, while to Frederick she becomes a veritable white elephant. Carlos wants Villeroy to marry Isabella so he will not have any financial responsibilities towards her:

Carlos: Why so, Frederick, am not I a very honest Fellow, to endeavor to provide  
a good Husband for my elder Brother’s Widow?

Frederick: A very kind Relation indeed: you’ll give your Consent to the Match,  
where you are to have the Benefit of the Bargain.

Carlos: Tho’ I have taken care to root her out of our family, I wou’d transplant her  
into Villeroy’s.

Frederick: That has a face of good Nature: but it squints with both Eyes upon your  
own Interest. (1.1.185-192)

Switching from referring to Isabella as Villeroy’s “Mistress” to calling her a “Widow,” Carlos then responds to Frederick’s description of the “Bargain” implied in treating Isabella as a commodity by further objectifying Isabella as a disease to be rooted out and transplanted into another household. Whereas Carlos refers to Helen of Troy when he discusses Isabella with Villeroy—“Troy town was won at last” (1.1.163)—his true understanding of her worth reveals itself with Frederick. Frederick, knowing Carlos much better than Villeroy does, informs the audience that Carlos wants Isabella to remarry for his own “Interest.” This term will be repeated constantly throughout the play in relationship to Isabella’s status; indeed, Frederick’s use of the term here anticipates Villeroy’s own perception of Isabella’s “face.” Frederick’s reference to

---

<sup>50</sup> Fernando enters the stage and greets Villenoy and Isabella (who does not utter one word)—Fern: “Why, so, so; all goes well I see: Wish you Joy, Cosin. I am an Old Fellow, but I must salute your Bride. [Kisses her.] A fine Woman truly! I have had two or three Glasses to her Health already: I design to be very merry, ha?” (3.2.226-229).

how the imagined transaction “has a face of good Nature” while it actually “squints with both Eyes upon your own Interest” (1.1.185-192) creates the image of a face that appears good in nature but has eyes that reveal a self-interest. The masquerade Frederick alludes to in this early scene correlates with Villeroy’s musings on Isabella’s mourning veil in Act III.

Villeroy meditates on the ways Isabella’s mourning dress, particularly her veil, corresponds with the way he understands her mind. When Villeroy announces Isabella’s costume change, he clarifies to the audience that Isabella’s mind has not really changed and that her first marriage still determines her current emotional state: he expresses his desire that her “melancholy thoughts could change” simply by this “shifting of [her] dress,” describing how extraordinary it is that “the face of heaven” can appear “darkened, and hid so long in mourning veils”—metaphorical clouds which might “divide” and reveal “the bright sun” of her potentially happier future (3.2.180-186). Villeroy wants Isabella to move on from her loyalty to her first husband, but he also incorporates imagery in his speech that reminds the audience of the first time she broke her vows as a nun, as his attraction depends on seeing her as “the Face of Heav’n.” While Frederick knows that Carlos wears the mask of the “face of good Nature,” Villeroy believes in Isabella’s inherent goodness: her “face” is the reveal, as Villeroy believes Isabella’s mask has been the widow’s veil all those seven years. Without the widow’s veil, Isabella no longer appears to be the widow, and her marriage to Villeroy will seem (to him) like that of a virgin bride. Villeroy is pleased she has changed out of her typical black: “it was kind to grant, / Just at the time: dispensing with your dress/ Upon our Bridal-Day.” She responds: “Black might be ominous;/ I would not bring ill luck along with me” (3.2.176-179). The clear irony lies in the ways in which Isabella’s black mourning and her veil have protected her from sinning

again. The greater irony, of course, occurs when her first husband comes back to town one day too late, after she and Villeroy have already consummated their wedding vows.

Isabella reads black as a sign of bad luck and misreads her past as materialized by that mourning garb, a burden she literally can leave behind. Despite the fact that the audience knows Isabella is not a virgin bride—and despite the fact that Villeroy knows she is a widow—he insists on seeing her as virtuous; indeed, it is as though Villeroy reads Isabella as though she were behind a nun’s veil rather than a widow’s mourning veil. While the former suggests innocence, the latter suggests its lack.<sup>51</sup> With the seven years between the “death” of her first husband and Villeroy’s pursuit of her, he believes “Time has done cures” and perhaps has restored Isabella’s virtue. Isabella acknowledges that all her problems began with her vow-breaking at the monastery, fueled by the temptation Biron’s physical appearance created; she views her own life story as a “warning” to women that they should never feel “safe” from “the reach and tongues of tempting men”: “O! Had I never seen *Biron’s Face*,/ Had he not tempted me, I had not fall’n,/ But still continu’d innocent; and free/ Of a bad World, which only he had pow’r/ To reconcile and make me try agen” (1.3.212-220). “Biron’s Face”—like Carlos’ “face of good Nature” and Isabella’s “face of Heaven”—controls the actions of the person looking upon it; Isabella is tempted by Biron’s physical attractiveness and abandons the convent because of his “power” over her.

One of the major issues for scholars on the changes Southerne makes to Isabella’s character rests on her focused desire for her first husband, Biron, and her lack of desire for

---

<sup>51</sup> Consider, for example, Eliza Haywood’s Widow Bloomer from *Fantomina*—Beauplaisir’s desire is fueled by both her pitiful melodramatic sadness over her late husband along with the knowledge of her sexual experience. The “Lady” wears the widow’s veil, knowing it will attract her lover.

Villeroy.<sup>52</sup> I would like to challenge the premise that Southerne creates a sexually repressed Isabella by considering the ways in which Southerne brings out Isabella's constant desire for her first husband, a desire that Behn's narrator also emphasizes.<sup>53</sup> Southerne's Isabella marries Villeroy for financial security and to protect her son; this motivation has been placed in sharp contrast, by recent critics, to the reasons surrounding Behn's Isabella's decision to remarry, primarily her sexual desire. Southerne introduces Isabella dressed in mourning for her first husband, Biron. She remains in mourning garb for most of the play, having no desire to change out of it; speaking to Villeroy, Isabella makes a request: "On your Word/ Never to press me to put off these Weeds, / Which best become my melancholly thoughts/ You shall command me" (Southerne, II.iii.131-134). The sartorial effect of the widow's mourning veil, "these weeds," serves as a constant reminder of the veil Isabella rejected as a vow-breaker in both the play and the novella. Southerne's play extends the connotation of refuge associated with the veil, which signals Isabella's protection from the fate to which Behn's Isabella was subject. She wears the mourning veil throughout the play until her wedding day—the day she accidentally breaks a vow for the second time—but when she takes off the veil and wears the wedding gown, Isabella

---

<sup>52</sup> Hultquist argues: "In the adaptations of the *History of the Nun*, feminine desire is either negated, and revealed as self-destructive, or amplified, and condemned as morally reprehensible—in both cases the protagonists' expressions of desire negates her subjectivity. The virtuous victim in the dramatic versions by Southerne and Garrick focuses her desires on one man and represses her sexuality." Aleksandra Hultquist, "Equal Ardor: Female Desire, Amatory Fiction, and the Recasting of the Novel, 1680—1760" (PhD Diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2008), 116.

<sup>53</sup> After Behn's Isabella believes her first husband to be dead and Villenoy has entered her life again, her benefactress (the lady abbess) dies—this motivates her decision more than anything to remarry: "The death of this lady made her [Isabella] look more favorably on Villenoy, but yet she was resolved to try his love to the utmost and keep him off as long as 'twas possible she could subsist, and 'twas for *interest* [my emphasis] she married again, though liked the person very well..." (Behn 177). Note how Southerne's language emphasizes Behn's own economically-minded heroine—she is looking out for her best interest and marrying out of practicality first and foremost.

makes another dramatic statement by not speaking throughout the wedding. There are certain elements in Southerne's adaptation that suggest the playwright's assumption of the audience's familiarity with Behn's novella: even though we do not see Isabella act the part of the nun, Southerne's play (and later, Garrick's, to a different extent) traces Isabella's downfall back to her past vow-breaking. While Southerne and Garrick radically alter the plot of Behn's story, Isabella's history *as* a nun is still something Southerne's adaptation uses as a major plot device, while Garrick's version makes cuts that deemphasize the Catholic subtext.<sup>54</sup> Isabella's past haunts her, and she is ultimately punished for breaking her vows and abandoning her holy orders—not simply for (accidentally) becoming a polygamist—and this punishment directly links to her position as a widow. In response to this problematic situation, Southerne's Isabella takes on social power and a different kind of agency than that enacted by Behn's protagonist precisely through her fidelity to the memory of her first husband and her lack of sexual desire for Villeroy: in other words, far from *denying* Isabella agency in his adaptation, Southerne *relocates* female agency by removing it from the realm of sexuality and defining it in terms of Isabella's ethical constancy in the face of considerable social and economic pressures to abandon the memory of her first husband.

While Villeroy interprets Isabella as the “good” widow, Biron's father, Count Baldwin, uses her broken vows to rationalize his categorization of her as a “bad” widow. Southerne's play provides Isabella's history through the figure of the Nurse—the Nurse tells the servant,

---

<sup>54</sup> This section of the chapter is, in part, reacting to Pearson's argument that Isabella's Catholic background and vow-breaking past is a mere afterthought in the Southerne play: “While Behn's narrative deals with Isabella's whole career, *The Fatal Marriage* compresses the time involved concentrating on the events immediately surrounding her second marriage. We hear of her earlier life as a nun who breaks her vows, but this is very lightly sketched”; see Pearson, “The History of *The History of the Nun*,” in Heidi Hutner (ed.), *Rereading Aphra Behn: History, Theory, and Criticism*, 236.

Sampson, how Isabella “settled all her Fortune upon a Nunnery, which she broke out of to run away” and marry Biron (1.3.143-144). Count Baldwin, furious about her vow-breaking, cut his son off. The nurse says the couple was absolved by the church, but not by Baldwin: “They say they had the Church’s forgiveness, but I had rather it had been his Father’s” (1.3.144-45).

Southerne omits Behn’s minor characters—Isabella’s father and the Lady Abbess—in order to foreground the patriarchal figure of Isabella’s tyrannical father-in-law, who amalgamates two of Behn’s characters: Henault’s “cruel father”<sup>55</sup> and Isabella’s titled father, Count Henrick de Vallary. Behn’s text does not give a name or title to Henault’s father, though he does cause the same financial troubles for the couple as the play’s Count Baldwin.<sup>56</sup> Southerne breathes life into this ghostly patriarch by granting him both a title and, more importantly, by letting Count Baldwin serve as the only character who openly judges and punishes Isabella for breaking her vows, staying true to the ways in which Henault’s father is portrayed in the novella. Aside from the gossip the Nurse provides to Sampson, Count Baldwin is the major source of information relating to Isabella’s past as a nun. As Isabella is knocking on his door, standing in the street, she comments on the change in social behavior toward herself as a destitute widow, asking “Where is the Charity that us’d to stand,/ In our Forefathers Hospitable Days,/At Great Mens Doors, ready for our wants,/Like the good Angel of the Family,/With open Arms taking the Needy in,/To feed and cloath, to comfort, and relieve ’em?/Now ev’n their Gates are shut against their Poor” (I.iii.70-76). Isabella’s astonishment over her culture’s ostracizing of the poverty-stricken

---

<sup>55</sup> Behn, *The History of the Nun*, 28.

<sup>56</sup> Henault’s father cuts him off and gives his inheritance to his younger brother (presumably the Carlos character that Southerne expands on): “Henault was so unhappy as never to gain one [a letter] from his father, who no sooner heard the news that was spread over all the town and country that young Henault was fled with the so-famed Isabella, a nun, and singular for devotion and piety of life, but he immediately settled his estate on his younger son, cutting Henault off all his birthright, which was five thousand pounds a year.” Behn, *The History of the Nun*, 170.

widow rests in an idealized remembrance of the past “that us’d to stand.” She remarks on this change in how “Great men” behave—a claim that is then entirely borne out by her cruel treatment at the hands of Sampson and Count Baldwin. Southerne depicts these patriarchal figures as justifying Isabella’s economic situation through reference to the breaking of her vows. From Baldwin’s point of view, Isabella’s moral corruption cannot be disentangled from her financial ruin and the play consistently uses money as the motivating force for her eventual downfall. In this culture, the widow’s vow-breaking has a causal relationship with her financial ruin.

Jean Marsden points out the significance of how the male figures, Baldwin and his wicked son Carlos, “conflate...Isabella’s financial ruin with her personal ruin.”<sup>57</sup> And while Marsden recognizes the mercenary quality of these men and the shift in Isabella’s reasoning for marrying again, Southerne’s play suggests that Isabella is much more a dealer in the exchange than a mere object traded within it. Her fate, or the “mis-fortune” Marsden discusses, does become tangled with her financial status in the play: Southerne’s play makes the social limitations on Isabella’s character more explicit than they were in Behn’s text through his foregrounding of Count Baldwin, who not only yokes Isabella’s ostensible moral failure to her financial ruin but, but also reinforces the power of the idealized “good widow” figure in late seventeenth-century culture.

Isabella enters the play on the street with Villeroy and her son and announces herself as “A Bankrupt every way,” calling Villeroy a “Friend to my Misfortunes” (I.iii.2 and 6). She describes herself as a bad investment before she discusses her status with any of the male characters in the play—but, as mentioned earlier, Carlos and Frederick already have determined

---

<sup>57</sup> Marsden, *Fatal Desire: Women, Sexuality, and the English Stage*, 87-88.

she is not in the Baldwin family's best "interest." The setting of the street appears to be the location of Isabella's lowest point—she is driven out of Baldwin's house then nearly gets thrown from her own house due to her debts. The public street suggests the worst location Isabella thinks she can inhabit; after all, if she is living on the streets, it means she has lost all family connections and private funding. Once she marries Villeroy, Isabella will remain within enclosed spaces, never to be out on the public streets again. But the street is not the most dangerous place to be, as it turns out, and Isabella's true horror will be faced in the bedroom. The choices are clearly staged: Isabella can either exist on the street, penniless but morally sound, or enter the bedroom, financially secure but morally ruined. She can either be a poor but virtuous widow, or a rich but inconstant wife.

This first scene with Isabella places her begging outside a closed private space, Baldwin's house, knocking on his door, making reference to the "grate" imagery from Behn's depiction of the monastery. As Southerne's Isabella stands by Count Baldwin's closed door and comments on the change in the interaction between the public poor and the private rich, she implicitly calls attention to the difference between Count Baldwin's solid wall of a gate and the monastery's lattices from the novella. Behn's Isabella negotiates her power at the grate by remaining within the refuge of the monastery while relating to the freedoms of a socialized wit about town—indeed, the town frequents Isabella's home, the nunnery. In *The Fatal Marriage*, Isabella's powerlessness is first marked by her inability to exist in such an ambiguous state as Behn's narrative allows; Behn's depiction of the nunnery lays out the divided public and private lives of the nuns who may socialize with the outside world but have a literal boundary between themselves and the outsiders, the grate. Much like the chink in *Pyramus and Thisbe*, the grate becomes the location of Henault and Isabella's romantic interludes. The arbitrary quality of this

separation between public and private receives direct commentary from Behn's narrator who remarks on the publically-entertaining Isabella as opposed to the privately-devout one: "But however diverting she was at the grate, she was most exemplary devout in the cloister, doing more penance and imposing a more rigid severity and task on herself than was required."<sup>58</sup>

Behn's Isabella behaves differently at the grate than she does deep within the cloister. Southerne draws upon the private Isabella, the (for lack of a better term) "good" Isabella, who does not simply have the face of an angel but seems, like so many she-tragedy heroines, so perfect in her virtue as to suggest a deeper moral consistency. In fact, Southerne's Isabella imposes this "rigid severity" on herself wherever she is, a "task" that Behn's Isabella practices on herself only in private.<sup>59</sup> Behn's Isabella, however, never really has the same private reflection during her stay at the monastery—as the narrator reminds us, she is performing her virtue for the other nuns once she enters the cloistered space: Isabella gives "such rare examples to all the nuns that were less devout than her life a proverb and precedent."<sup>60</sup> Both of these Isabella figures are rarely left alone and are constantly and openly evaluated on their virtue.

The "good Angel of the family"—as Southerne's Isabella nostalgically describes the ideal female caretaker (1.3.73)—certainly recalls Behn's Isabella during her stay in the monastery and the way the nuns are represented more generally. But the former's rallying call for charity and generosity ("Where is the Charity that us'd to stand?") also draws the audience's attention to the actual charitable work widows were active in *or* desperately in need of during the late seventeenth century (1.3.70). Widows were either financially secure and therefore did not need to remarry, or they were financially insecure and desperately needed to remarry, though this

---

<sup>58</sup> Behn, *The History of the Nun*, 10-11.

<sup>59</sup> Behn, *The History of the Nun*, 11.

<sup>60</sup> Behn, *The History of the Nun*, 11.

very lack of property and assets (and, if they had children to boot) did not make them ideal candidates for the marriage market. Mendelson and Crawford explain how the dilemmas of seventeenth-century widowhood mirror the experiences of single adult women: widows “were more likely to be poor, to be objects of suspicion, and were under pressure to live under male governance.”<sup>61</sup> Isabella’s first husband provided her with no lasting security and Count Baldwin refuses to provide for her out of a superstitious belief that Isabella is cursed, along with his resentment that she indirectly caused his son’s death; as he puts it to her, “bringing you into the Family,/Entails a Curse upon the Name, and House,/That takes you in: The only part of me/ That did receive you, perish’d for his Crime” (1.3.241-244). While Isabella constantly works within a patriarchal system, Baldwin believes she controls that world. Baldwin also refers to his son as an “extension” of himself; to Baldwin, his son is the true victim and therefore Isabella’s current poverty-stricken status seems like a fair punishment for her “crime.” Baldwin enables Southerne’s commentary on the ruling class that determined who was morally acceptable to be granted charity by the public: widows were often given charity during the early modern period on the basis of their presumed morality. Baldwin disrupts this notion by reading Isabella as a bad widow who does not deserve charity, thereby depicting the weeding out processes parishes used to determine which individuals were most worthy of public donations.<sup>62</sup> The villain of the play comments on the judgmental communities surrounding the playhouses who expected poor

---

<sup>61</sup> Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern*, 175.

<sup>62</sup> Mendelson and Crawford point to the troubling lack of freedom many poor widows faced: “A widow’s need for support was recognized: widows and their children received the bulk of poor relief. Hence they were less likely to be forced into crime than their impoverished male counterparts. But charitable relief also kept women in a more dependent situation than men: the parish authorities scrutinized a widow’s moral conduct, and withheld support if they disapproved of her behavior. Impoverished old women might be despised as poor beggars. The widow who quarreled with her neighbors was vulnerable to accusations of scolding or witchcraft.” Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern*, 180.

widows to play up their pitiful states in order to receive charity: Baldwin represents the parishes that perhaps would not have rewarded a widow like Isabella with actual charity—considering her past as a fallen nun as conflated with her supposedly heightened sexuality.

The largest portion of Behn's novella describes Isabella's internal struggle with her passion for her first husband, and one major difference between Behn's Isabella and Southerne's has to do with how little guilt Behn's Isabella seems to internalize and how much rhetorical self-flagellation Southerne's Isabella indulges in as she laments her past. Isabella's virtue and guilt become most apparent in Southerne's decision to change Behn's ending: rather than having Isabella murder her two husbands on the way to being publically executed, Southerne has Villeroy kill Biron as a prelude to Isabella killing herself. Indeed, Southerne's heroine seeks to atone for her sins and brings up the sacrament of reconciliation to Count Baldwin: "Forgive our faults, that Heaven may pardon yours" (1.3.204). Rather than giving the power to God for forgiveness, Isabella takes on the Catholic model and positions Baldwin in the mediated role of priest between her sin and God's forgiveness. Count Baldwin challenges Isabella's paradigm—"How dare you mention Heaven!"—and Isabella again sets up another reconciliatory construct for him to better understand her own morality: she says Biron "had pow'r/To reconcile" and give her a fresh start (1.3.221-220) after she had fled from the convent with him. Yet again, Baldwin discounts Isabella's moral construct and lays out an altered triangular relationship in which, rather than Isabella finding both sin and forgiveness through Baldwin or his son, *she* becomes the agent of vice; Baldwin believes she controlled Biron's decisions and therefore made him sin in ways that indirectly caused his death. He argues that Isabella's "inconstancy" and "graceless thoughts" ultimately "debauch'd and reconcil'd [her] to the world" (1.3.221-222). In Count Baldwin's misogynistic patriarchal view, Isabella "prevail'd/ Upon [Biron's] honest Mind,

transforming him/ From Virtue, and himself into what Shapes/ You had occasion for; and what he did/ Was first inspir'd by you. A Cloyster was/ Too narrow for the Work you had in hand:/Your business was more general; the whole world/To be the scene” (1.3.224-231). This moment is rife with allusions to Behn’s *The History of the Nun* as Isabella’s role as a nun and then vow-breaker are pushed to the foreground in a series of interconnected themes and images. Baldwin’s verse carries on the motif of the “hand” from Behn’s narrative— a motif which Pearson has deftly read in the novella as reminding the reader of how the fates are constantly at play and how Isabella finally becomes Fate as she ties her two dead husbands together.<sup>63</sup> While Isabella describes Biron as tempting her away from the nunnery, Baldwin believes she destroyed his son’s virtue: these alternate histories of Isabella and Biron’s romance allow for her current virtue to constantly be called into question, while audience only can know the Isabella seven years after the broken vows and elopement—her past remains mysterious.

Baldwin’s firm belief that Isabella has some supernatural power demonstrates the she-tragedy’s own double-investment in the domestic and political spheres. As Baldwin notes how the “cloyster” was too small a space for Isabella to cause trouble for Biron, he implicitly comments on how that small space merely represents the larger spaces Isabella is quite capable of operating within. Interestingly, Isabella spends the rest of the play in similarly cloistered domestic spaces (particularly her climactic suicide scene in the bed-chamber) despite Baldwin’s proclamation of her capacity for control over open, public spaces. Baldwin’s rant in Act One and his insistence that Isabella is not what she appears to be, even to the seventeenth-century audience who cannot help but see her as a good and pathetic widow, seems far less insane and

---

<sup>63</sup> Pearson points to how Behn “allows Isabella to use needlework as her weapon for the murder of her second husband...Fate, more usually imaged as spinning, is here seen as a seamstress ironically like Isabella herself...Fate is seen as a sewing woman like Isabella, and needlework, conventionally an image of female subordination, becomes a locus of female power” (248).

cruel if his recollection of the past is the memory of the nun Behn created, if Southerne's backstory is the novella itself. Baldwin ultimately reads Isabella as a bad widow because she was a bad nun: even though Baldwin represents the standard parish mindset about widows and their necessary moral goodness, Southerne's omission of Isabella's actual flight from the nunnery and her affair with Biron keeps her in the audience's good favor. It is finally Baldwin's word against her own when they discuss the past: only those who read Behn's novella would know what "really" happened in the cloister. Southerne's play stays true to part of Behn's heroine's motivation to remarry: the play's Isabella remarries because of financial necessity rather than physical desire. Southerne also echoes aspects of Behn's own emphasis on the physicality of Isabella's first husband with the description in Isabella's line, "Oh! Had I never seen Biron's Face, Had he not tempted me."<sup>64</sup>

Southerne's Isabella reacts to her first husband's return with a clear preference for him over her second spouse. Because Southerne's Isabella maintains her loyalty to her first husband, and since she cannot bring herself to commit murder, a seventeenth-century audience could easily distinguish her as more virtuous than Behn's Isabella. But Isabella's virtue in the play has been yoked to her lack of complexity, a critical move that too quickly dismisses the nuances of her character.<sup>65</sup> Southerne's Isabella argues for her own virtue to be recognized by the patriarchal figures in the play, an assertive move that disrupts critical readings of her as passive.<sup>66</sup> As she

---

<sup>64</sup> Southerne, *The Fatal Marriage*, 24.

<sup>65</sup> Hultquist helpfully lays out the paradigm shift from Behn's novel to the adaptations: "In the adaptations of the *History of the Nun*, feminine desire is either negated, and revealed as self-destructive, or amplified, and condemned as morally reprehensible—in both cases the protagonists' expressions of desire negates her subjectivity. The virtuous victim in the dramatic versions by Southerne and Garrick focuses her desires on one man and represses her sexuality." Hultquist, *Equal Ardor*, 116.

<sup>66</sup> Pearson: "Both [Garrick and Southerne] at every point concentrate on her passive suffering and minimize, deny, or excuse her guilt. A complex and believable human being is transformed into

argues with Baldwin she cries out, “O! I have Sins to Heav’n, but none to him.” Again, Southerne’s Isabella not only pushes the audience to recognize a triangular relationship within the reconciliatory Catholic paradigm, but she also calls attention to her distinction between being a bad nun and being a good widow. Unlike Baldwin’s understanding of her past, she argues for a relativistic way to understand her sense of virtue: she might have broken her holy vows but she never (not yet, anyway) has been untrue to her marital vows. She also admits to her overwhelming desire for Biron—“Had he not tempted me, I had not fall’n”—which echoes the way Behn represents the male figure as a sexual temptation for her heroine. In this way, Southerne’s heroine can be viewed as neither passive nor desexualized.

By recognizing the patriarchal web she is enmeshed in, Southerne’s Isabella comments explicitly on the very social limitations against which Behn’s protagonist only implicitly reacted. Isabella’s self-awareness in Southerne’s play must therefore be given as much attention as critics have given to her madness. In the same vein, Behn’s representation of insanity must also be considered as the template for Southerne’s display of Isabella’s descent into madness. By exploring her insanity onstage, Southerne makes even more apparent how the sexual power

---

an icon of virtue. For Behn, Isabella’s capacity for guilty and her willingness to take full moral responsibility for her own actions are signs of her full human subjectivity; neither Southerne or Garrick is willing to allow this full subjectivity to a woman...Abandoned or oppressed by the representatives of patriarchal power, Isabella is transformed from an active sinner to a passive sufferer....In Behn’s text Isabella’s innocence is at best debatable, a fiction of conventional femininity that she acts out (5:317), while the men, Henault and Villenoy, are “Innocents” (5:320), allowed the lack of understanding and passive usually the women’s province” (Pearson 237). While I agree that Southerne and Garrick “concentrate” on Isabella’s “passive suffering” throughout the plays, I think she misses one of the major nuances of those plays, and of the she-tragedy more generally, when she creates a line between the “innocent” male victims of Behn’s novella and the men on Southerne and Garrick’s productions. The theatrical counterparts to Behn’s original husbands are hyper-feminized, particularly Biron towards Isabella and Villeroy towards Carlos. The eighteenth-century stage, therefore, did not merely transform the active female agent into passive female sufferer and but also maintained the passive male reactionaries.

Isabella exerts from a politically powerlessness position cannot be maintained within the masculine framework of female virtue.

### **Isabella's Madness and Self-Awareness: From Southerne to Garrick**

There has been a tendency in recent scholarship<sup>67</sup> to disregard Southerne's comical scenes in *The Fatal Marriage* despite the important intersections between the play's two plots, connections that create an interesting dramatic irony for the audience to consider: if Isabella were to interact at all with the comical subplot, the tragic dénouement might be entirely prevented, as she would quickly learn the truth about her first husband still being very much alive. Isabella's story, in short, could easily have been a comedy. And yet, these comical scenes were cut from later productions of the play and completely omitted by Garrick for his *Isabella; or The Fatal*

---

<sup>67</sup> For example, Robert Hume discusses Southerne's trepidation in categorizing *The Fatal Marriage* as a tragicomedy: "Southerne cautiously calls *The Fatal Marriage* just 'A Play.' The whole question of sub-plots and double plots is untidy...When connection vanishes and comedy enters, the result is a 'hip-hop' play, a stitching together of apparently disparate story lines...Critical objections to comic and tragic parts in the same play are repeated ad nauseam..." Hume goes on to reflect on the push and pull between writers like Dryden who seemed a little self-hating in their writing of double-plot plays: "Playwrights were conscious of audience pressure for variety...Serious plays which are not heroic, high, villain, or pathetic tragedy, include 'tragicomedy' of at least three drastically different and divergent types: (1) prosperous-ending plays; (2) works with a substantial mixture of serious and comic elements, usually in interwoven plot lines; and (3) split plot plays. For the third type, the 'hip-hop' variety almost no critical justification exists save brazen appeal to variety." Robert Hume, *The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 183-184. Frances Kavenik also explains the popularity of the tragicomedy, using Southerne's *Oroonoko* to support her analysis of audiences continued interest in this genre which "articulated their own questions about politics, nature, and ethical behavior." Kavenik goes on to suggest that the lack of interest in heroic dramas (so popular in the early years of the Restoration) left a void for audiences still salivating for spectacle and high drama; therefore, the tragicomedies and tragedies of the early 1690's to early eighteenth-century needed to reconfigure the performance of heroicism: "The purest heroic, of course, was reserved for opera, which distilled off the essence—spectacle, song, magnificent rant and posturing—of the audience appeal of the older heroic drama. But a new version of heroicism—intermixed with pathetic or stoic acceptance—was working to reform the outlines and emphases of serious drama, particularly the central protagonist." Kavenik, *British Drama*, 101.

*Marriage* due to eighteenth-century respect for the Aristotelian genre distinctions. As it turns out, Garrick's additions and revisions complicate the original connections between Behn's novella and Southerne's adaptation.<sup>68</sup> Garrick's version heightens melodramatic sentiment by highlighting Carlos as the villain and Isabella and as the victim. At first blush, Garrick might seem to move even further away from granting Isabella any more depth than Southerne allowed; however, Garrick's play provides Isabella with more insight into her own melancholy. While Isabella's victimhood becomes all the more blatant in the Garrick version, her self-recognition and awareness become even more apparent as well.

It is tempting to read Garrick's version as reducing Isabella's agency to an even greater extent that Southerne has been accused of doing. The overwhelmingly obvious victim/victimizer dichotomy allows the audience to empathize with Isabella all the more as Carlos is given additional scenes to express his own villainy.<sup>69</sup> The complication within Garrick's version finds itself in the added lines and stage time he gives Isabella; his advertisement announces the rationale for privileging the dramatic over the comedic:

---

<sup>68</sup> Harry William Pedicord provides a detailed examination of the specific changes by Garrick from Southerne's play in *The Theatrical Public in the Time of Garrick*. (Southern Illinois University Press. Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1954) 87-94. Pedicord also gives a helpful list of the other plays Garrick altered: "Of the sixty-four altered plays produced at Drury Lane from 1747-1776, four were by George Coleman the Elder; two each by Isaac Bickerstaffe, Francis Gentelman, and John Hawkesworth; seventeen by authors making only a single production; eighteen of unknown authorship; and nineteen by David Garrick as actor-manager..." (66) Pedicord notes that eleven of those nineteen plays were by Shakespeare. The eight remaining from the original set are: Johnson's *Every Man in his Humour* (1751) Fletcher's *The Chances* (1754), and *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* (1756), *The Country Girl* from Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1766), Dryden's *King Arthur; or the British Worth* turned into *Athus and Emmeline* (1770) and Tomkin's *Abumazar* (1773) and, 1757's *Isabella*, from Southerne's *The Fatal Marriage* (66).

<sup>69</sup> For examples of the additional Carlos moments in Garrick's play: in Act I, Garricks gives Carlos a brief soliloquy; he is given a briefer one in Act Two, scene One; Garrick provides a new lengthy scene with Carlos and Count Baldwin in Act Three, Scene one; Carlos is also given a new scene with Villeroy in Act Three. See Pedicord's *The Theatrical Public in the Time of Garrick* for a complete listing of changes to the structure of the scenes and dialogue.

Though the mixed Drama of the last Age, called Tragi-Comedy, has been generally condemned by the Critics, and perhaps not without Reason; yet it has been found to succeed on the Stage: Both the Comic and Tragic Scenes have been applauded by the Audience, without any particular Exceptions. Nor has it been observed, that the Effect of either was less forcible, than it would have been, if they had not succeeded each other in the Entertainment of the same Night. The Tragic Part of this Play has been always esteemed extremely Natural and Interesting; and it would probably, like some others, have produc'd its full Effect, notwithstanding the Intervention of the Comic Scenes that are mixed with it: The Editor therefore, would not have thought of removing them, if they had not been exceptionable in themselves, not only as indelicate, but as immoral: For this Reason, he has suffered so much of the Characters of the Porter and the Nurse to remain, as is not liable to this Objection.<sup>70</sup>

Garrick explains the discrepancy between critical reaction and audience response; on the one hand, he acknowledges the tragicomedy as an aesthetic failure, while on the other hand, he recognizes the popularity of the mixed genre, echoing the same self-hating attitude Hume has analyzed in Dryden's overcompensating apologies for writing tragicomedy.<sup>71</sup> Garrick begrudgingly suggests that the comingling of the comic with the tragic does not disrupt the experience of the play's "full Effect." Ultimately, Garrick claims to have cut the comedic scenes on the grounds that they were both "indelicate" and, most importantly, "immoral"; the gulf between Southerne's original play and Garrick's altered version—and subsequently the gap between Garrick and Behn—widens when we consider Garrick's intent, or at least his desire to

---

<sup>70</sup> David Garrick's advertisement from *Isabella: Or, The Fatal Marriage. A Play Alter'd from Southerne*.

<sup>71</sup> Robert Hume, *Dryden's Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), 183-184.

meet the midcentury audiences' moral and aesthetic criteria. At the same time, as Garrick hones in on the tragedy and rejects the comedy, he also becomes completely dependent upon one actress to carry the play. Indeed, his revised title alone immediately illustrates the marketing strategy of highlighting the star of the play: Isabella herself is the reason to go see the drama.<sup>72</sup> Another complication to consider is *which* version the early to mid-eighteenth-century audiences were actually going to see: Southerne's or Garrick's. The stage histories indicate Southerne's version extended from 1694 to 1758 while Garrick's ran from 1758 to 1798.<sup>73</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> Jean Marsden notes the initial success of Southerne's *The Fatal Marriage* was contingent upon Barry and Bracegirdle—"The role of Isabella was written for Barry." Jean Marsden, "Tragedy and Varieties of Serious Drama," in *A Companion to Restoration Drama*, ed. Susan J. Owen, (Malden: Blackwell, 2001), 239. It's interesting to consider how the rivalry between actresses was nullified by Garrick's decision to focus in on one actress (Cibber) for his appropriated version of Southerne's adaptation. For more on the rivalries between eighteenth-century actresses, see Felicity Nussbaum, *Rival Queens: Actresses, Performance, and the Eighteenth-Century British Theater* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

<sup>73</sup> The following lists of dates of performances is from the *Index to the London Stage: 1660-1800*. Edited with critical introduction by William Van Lennep, Emmett L. Avery, Arthur H. Scouten, George Winchester Stone JR and Charles Beecher Hogan. Compiled with an introduction by Ben Ross Schneider Jr. Forward by George Winchester Stone Jr. Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale: Feffer and Simons, Inc. London, and Amsterdam, 1979. The symbol key is as follows:

DL=Drury Lane Theatre, DG=Dorset Garden Theatre, CG=Covent Garden Theatre, Queen's=Queen's Theatre, HAY=Haymarket Theatre, DLKINGS=Drury Lane and King's Theatre, GR=Greenwich, LF=Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, 0=approximate date references

Thomas Southerne's *The Fatal Marriage; or, The Innocent Adultery*—1680: DG, Feb 0; 1694: DL, Feb 0, March 21, NONE, 22; 1703: DL, May 13, Oct 16; 1704: DL, Feb 28, April 3, June 29; 1705: Queen's, Nov 17; 1706: Queen's April 15, October 25; 1707: Queen's June 25; 1708: DL, Sep 18; 1709: DL, Feb 1, Queen's Oct 8; 1710: Queen's, May 19, GR, June 21, DL/Queen, Nov 14; 1711: DL/Queen, May 1; 1712: DL, Feb 5, GR May 21; 1714: DL, Nov 12; 1716: LIF, Jan 7, 27, May 18, Nov 9; 1717: DL, June 18, LIF, Oct 25; 1718: DL, Feb 13, May 13; 1719: DL, May 8, Nov 7; 1720: DL Jan 14, May 9, Nov 22, Dec 10; 1721: DL, Feb 7, May 19, Oct 5; 1722: DL, Feb 10, May 30; 1723: DL, Feb 6, May 25, Nov 23; 1724: DL, Feb 6, Nov 9; 1725: DL, Jan 25, Nov 23; 1726: DL, May 11, Dec 13; 1727: DL, Jan 11, Feb 13, Dec 5; 1728: DL, May 11, Nov 19; 1729: DL, Feb 23, May 9, October 31; 1730: DL, May 18, Dec 10; 1734: CG, May 18, Apr 4, May 4, CG/LIF, Oct 14, CG, Dec 9; 1735: DL, Jan 23, Feb 17, CG, Oct 20, Dec 13; 1736: CG, Feb 11, GF, Mar 9, 11, 13, May 3; 1737: DL, Feb 5; 1741: CG, Jan 15, GF, Mar 12; 1742: CG, Mar 13; 1744: DL, April 10, 19, May 2; 1747: GF, Mar 19; 1750: DL, Mar 13, 27; 1751:

The scope of the combined runs for *The Fatal Marriage* announces the incredible popularity of this story and its heroine—it is especially interesting to think of its 100-year run in comparison to what we currently consider a lengthy Broadway run. As mentioned earlier, Southerne’s addition of Isabella’s son, her own suicide, and the introduction of a villain, Carlos, in contrast to Behn’s barren protagonist who murders both of her husbands and then is publically executed for her crimes all constitute major shifts in plot and character. These elements from Southerne’s play survive and thrive in Garrick’s version: Garrick’s representation of Isabella as a virtuous widow is exaggerated by his changes and additions to the dialogue. These tacked-on scenes make Carlos and Count Baldwin even more active agents of her undoing, thus making Isabella’s victimization all the more distanced from her own sins and all the more contingent upon her fate as a suffering widow. Her past as a nun becomes fuzzier with certain cuts to the play’s dialogue, along with the lack of acknowledgment of the original source, Behn’s story.

---

DL, Apr 29; 1752: DL, Apr 20; 1755: CG, April 18; 1756:CG, Feb 19, May 13, Nov 17; 1757: DL, Dec 2, 3,5,6,7,9,10,12,15,19,20,26,29;1758:DL, Jan 6, 18, Feb 3, April 17, May 6,23. (800).

David Garrick’s *Isabella; or, The Fatal Marriage*—1758: DL, Nov 15, Dec 15; 1759:DL, Oct 17, Nov 21; 1769:DL, Mar 18; 1770:CG, Mar 31, May 4,5; 1772:CG, March 30, April 2, DL, May 4, CG, 28;1774: DL, Nov 25,28;1775:DL, Feb 1;1776:DL, Feb 10, HAY, Apr 22; 1778:CG, Mar 30, DL, Oct 27;1782:DL, Oct 10,12, 15,18,21,23,25,28, Nov 6,14,21,25,Dec 4, 17; 1783:DL, Jan 28, Feb 15, 24, 26, March 15, 29, Apr 10, May 6, 19, June 5, Oct 8, 31; 1784:DL, Feb 2, March 2, CG, 20, DL, 25, CG, April 15, DL, 20, 30, May 11, HAY, Aug 5, DL, Oct 12, 30, Nov 29, Dec 21;1785:DL, April 30; 1786: CG, Jan 2, DL, Feb 23, Mar 21, May 11, Oct 12, Dec 13; 1787: DL, Mar 27, Apr 21, May 3, 12, Oct 11; 1788:DL, Jan 15, March 15, CG, Apr 8, 25, DL, Oct 28, Dec 16; 1789:DL, Apr 2, CG, May 23; 1790: CG, April 29, HAY, Aug 18, DL, Dec 7, 21:CG, Feb 11, 18; 1792:DLKINGS, Jan 21, Mar 24, DL, Dec 17; 1793:DL, May 4;1794:DL, Oct 9, 11;1795:DL, Jan 3, April 14, Sep 19, Nov 2;1796:DL, Feb 13, Apr 9, 16, Sep 24, Oct 26, Nov 19,29;1797: DL, Jan 16, Apr 4, Oct 30, Dec 4; 1798: DL, Feb 10 (339-340).

Frances Kavenik’s work with the performance histories listed in *The London Stage* tallies *The Fatal Marriage* as having 19 performances between the years 1685-1714 and 38 performances between 1747-1779; however, she does not differentiate between *Isabella* and *The Fatal Marriage* in those mid-eighteenth century years, referring to *Isabella* as *The Fatal Marriage*. Frances Kavenik, *British Drama, 1660-1779: A Critical History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), 72-73 and 163-165.

Behn's Isabella expresses greater cunning and more self-assertiveness than Southerne's and Garrick's. Behn's representation of fate further supports the idea that her character achieves more agency than either of the stage versions of Isabella. Behn's narrator describes Isabella as *being* fate: a seamstress rather than spinster, to be sure, she does sew her two husbands together, murder them, and cover it up. In the play, Isabella believes fate controls her actions—she possesses it but does not control it—while the male characters believe she *is* fate, their fate.

Drawing us back to Count Baldwin's earlier accusations, Biron says "Thou are my Fate and best may speak my Doom" (4.3. 273), thus revealing how he understands Isabella as controlling him. I would agree with Lisa Freeman's assertion that male characters in she-tragedies are as much victimized within this domestic-pathetic-genre as the heroines: Biron and Isabella both imagine themselves as victims of their fate.<sup>74</sup> For example, before Biron and Isabella finally reunite in Act Four, Southerne provides a dialogue between the Nurse and Biron. Garrick adds this highly feminized brief soliloquy for Biron: "Now all my Spirits hurry to my Heart,/And every Sense has the Alarm/At this approaching Interview!/Heav'ns how I tremble!"<sup>75</sup> Biron's trembling body and quickening heart-beats mirror Isabella's bodily reactions to excitement and fear; both characters emote with the same highly demonstrative responses.

Isabella is also misread by the men in terms of her nature: she describes herself as controlled *by* a storm whereas other characters will describe her *as* the storm. As Isabella puts it, "Hark, they are coming; let the Torrent roar:/ It can overwhelm me in its fall" (2.2.95-97), clarifying how her understanding of fate and her connection to nature (the storm or "Torrent") are linked. Indeed, quite early in the play she allows for fate to take her over in much the same

---

<sup>74</sup> Freeman, Lisa A. *Character's Theater: Genre and Identity on the Eighteenth-Century English Stage*. Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.

<sup>75</sup> Garrick, *Isabella*, 32.

way she subordinates herself to the various patriarchs throughout the play. She describes how “The rugged Hand of Fate has got between/Our meeting Hearts, and thrusts them from their Joys:/Since we must part” (4.3.252-254). Isabella sees fate as possessing both Biron and herself. Rather than Biron acting as the mediating figure who could grant her reconciliation, now the triangular relationship has fate standing between Biron and Isabella. The “rugged Hand of Fate” suggests a masculine force but also could be related to the way the rough hands of older women might also be described; the spinster, after all, takes on masculine characteristics as an archetype due to her lack of sensuality and relationships with men. Isabella believes she is controlled by an external force, fate, which, though powerful, is still, like Isabella, subject to being described within this masculine model of power.

The question remains: does Isabella’s recognition of her subordinate role diminish her in terms of agency and complexity? I argue that Isabella’s self-knowledge in the adaptations should be taken as seriously as Behn’s character’s self-assertiveness as different but comparable kinds of female agency. Southerne’s adaptation changes how Behn understood Isabella’s relationship with fate by making fate into yet another patriarchal figure, as opposed to the deeply feminized association of fate with the spinner/seamstress figure that Pearson has drawn attention to in Behn’s story.<sup>76</sup> Garrick’s alteration to Southerne’s adaptation, though highlighting Isabella’s suffering at the hands of both fate and her rotten in-laws, extends Isabella’s self-awareness, thus complicating how we should read Isabella’s power within her seemingly powerless position. Garrick’s changes to Southerne’s text provide another test case for examining the extent to which Isabella should be read as victim and passive object of desire. For example, when Isabella walks away from Biron in Act Four of Southerne’s play, Biron implores her, “Yet stay, if the sad

---

<sup>76</sup> Pearson’s “The History of *The History of the Nun*,” in Heidi Hutner (ed.), *Rereading Aphra Behn: History, Theory, and Criticism*, 234-252.

News at last must come,/Thou art my fate, and best may speak my Doom” (4.3.272-273). By contrast, in Garrick’s version, at this same point, Biron says, “Stay, my Isabella--/What can she mean? These Doubtings will distract me;/Some hidden Mischief soon will burst to Light;/I cannot bear it!—I must be satisfied--/’Tis she, my Wife, must clear this darkness to me./She shall—if the sad Tale at last must come,/She is my Fate, and best can speak my Doom.”<sup>77</sup> In Garrick, Biron refers to her as “my Isabella” and then changes to the third-person—“What can she mean” and “She is my Fate”—whereas Southerne maintains the second person mode of address: “*Thou art my Fate*” (4.3.273, my emphasis). This moment in Garrick’s version focuses on Biron’s making sure we the audience know that Isabella is *his* wife. At the same time, however, Biron does not seem to have as much power over Isabella as she does over him, just as Behn’s Henault seemed far less empowered than her heroine. In Garrick, Biron’s brief soliloquy occurs *after* Isabella exits the stage despite Biron asking her to “stay.” While Southerne’s and Garrick’s stage-directions are ambiguous in terms of determining at what precise moment Isabella would actually leave the stage, Southerne’s version suggests that Isabella leaves the stage before Biron says, “Yet stay, if the sad News at last must come”; Garrick’s version suggests that Isabella exits as Biron is asking her to stay. More importantly, Garrick’s added lines further destabilize reading Isabella as the only person born to suffer in this she-tragedy. Biron places Isabella as the subject and himself as the object—she is the one who can “clear this Darkness.” Biron cannot interpret or understand Isabella’s words when she ominously hints to her own suicide—“When I am dead, forgive, and pity me”—and he stands alone on the stage perplexed, exiting to chase after his wife once again.

---

<sup>77</sup> Garrick, *Isabella*, 40-41.

Fate allows both Southerne's and Garrick's Isabella figures to ascribe their madness to an external source. In both of the plays, Isabella performs her insanity differently than Behn's heroine. Aside from the question as to what extent madness is performed, though, we also have to question *when* this madness occurs in both the novella and the play. Time, like space, plays an important role in the tragedy, often in opposition to the way time is represented in the novella. In the play version, Isabella is very much aware that she is becoming "undone" and knows she is losing her mind. She comments on the relationship between her mind and body continuously; even her verbal patterns change as she begins to unravel. Her self-awareness reflects the way the narrator represents Isabella in the novella; considering her own psychological state, Isabella laments, "Conflicting Passions have at last unhinged/The great Machine; the Soul itself seem'd chang'd;/Oh, 'tis a happy Revolution here!/The reas'ning faculties are all depos'd,/Judgement, and Understanding, common Sense,/Driv'n out; as Traitors to the public Peace"(5.1.25-34).<sup>78</sup> Southerne provides a new level of self-awareness to the victim of his tragedy, and Garrick maintains it. Isabella wishes the marriage had been a private affair.<sup>79</sup> Here she is attempting to explain the way her mind works, how madness is infecting a once rational brain, discussing its internal battle as a "revolution" with political overtones in a metaphor that again emphasizes her lack of control in the face of overpowering forces.<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> Garrick, *Isabella*, 43-44.

<sup>79</sup> Isabella: "I could have wish'd, if you had thought it fit,/Our Marriage had not been so public" Villeroy's: "Do not you grudge me my Excess of Love;/that was a Cause it could not be conceal'd;/Besides, 'twould injure the Opinion/ I have of my good Fortune, having you;/and lesson it in other People's thoughts,/Busy on such occasions to enquire,/Had it been private" (51).

<sup>80</sup> Susan Owen focuses on the "distinct tropes of Whiggism and Toryism": "Tory mockery of the Whigs has three aspects. First and foremost is satire of Whig rabble-rousing... The second aspect of the Tory rhetoric of class is satire of the citizen-merchant class... The third aspect of the Tory language of class concerns the treatment of the aristocracy. The corollary of the view that the social order is a natural one is that the upper class have a natural nobility and superiority, just as

Moreover, Isabella describes memory as an external mirror that she must look into in order to see a reflection of her own “crimes.” Memory is also immediately and importantly linked to Biron, the first husband; again, Biron is read as the feminized object that Isabella fights against, taking revenge upon the memory of being his wife. When Isabella looks at Biron she sees herself and her infidelity. While Isabella was content to perform the virtuous widow when she thought her husband was actually dead, she loses control over her own performance as that widow once Biron stops being a memory and becomes her husband again. Garrick maintains most of Southerne’s dialogue in these scenes between Biron and Isabella and, again, adds some lines that both feminize Biron and connect him to Isabella. In Southerne’s play, Biron responds to Isabella’s mental breakdown in this way: “Poor Isabella, she’s not in a condition,/To give me any comfort, if she cou’d;/ Lost to her self; as quickly I shall be/ To all the World. Death had been most welcome,/From any hand but hers; she never cou’d/Deserve to be the Executioner,/ To take my Life; nor I to fall by her” (5.ii.768). By contrast, here is how Garrick renders Biron’s reaction: “Poor Isabella, she’s not in a condition,/To give me any comfort, if she cou’d;/ Lost to herself; as quickly I shall be/ To all the World—Horrors come fast around me;/ My Mind is overcast . . . I approach the Brink,/And soon must leap the Precipice! O, Heav’n . . . if my Reason,/O’erwhelm’d with Miseries, sink before the Tempest,/Pardon those Crimes Despair may bring upon me.”<sup>81</sup> Garrick extends the storm imagery that has been so strongly associated with Isabella throughout the play. Biron uses the storm to describe his own mind (“My Mind is overcast”) and, like Isabella, recognizes that he is losing control over his senses and is fighting to

---

the kind poses inherent royalty.” Susan J. Owen, *Restoration Theatre and Crisis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 152-153. These three aspects on the ways the Tory’s mock the Whigs relate to the ways in which Isabella critiques herself as “rambling” while Villeroys functions as a member of the merchant class, and how Biron has natural state of superiority to Villeroys (as the first husband, landed gentry class).

<sup>81</sup> Garrick, *Isabella*, 45.

maintain his reason. Just as Isabella's madness seems to be at odds with her own ability to recognize that growing insanity and comment upon it, Biron's self-awareness seems contingent upon Isabella's state of mind: she cannot give Biron comfort, which again imagines Isabella acting as the subject with Biron completely under her control. Biron highjacks the storm metaphor Isabella has been employing since Act Two of the play; Garrick's decision to describe both characters as victims of a storm allows the audience to recognize both the male and female characters as locked into the fatalistic journey of the she-tragedy.<sup>82</sup>

As much as Garrick strengthens the connection between Biron and Isabella, he also binds the other male leads more tightly together in ways that allow for more conspiratorial patriarchal manipulation of Isabella as a pawn. Villeroy, Carlos, and Count Baldwin are given more time on stage together than Southerne had provided for them. The friendship between Carlos and Villeroy is also given more importance, along with the father/son relationship between Carlos and Count Baldwin. The additional scenes between Carlos and Baldwin make it clear that Carlos's resentment towards his brother, Biron, stems from jealousy and a desire for approval from their father. I would argue that these additional Carlos-centric scenes in the stage productions have pushed critics away from associating Behn with these adaptations; he is the outside force that turns the character of Isabella into a passive sufferer rather than an active agent. Carlos controls what Isabella and Biron think is their fate; he is the one who knows Biron is still alive and yet pushes for Isabella to remarry. As noted by Harry Pedicord, Garrick allows for more character development for both Carlos and Count Baldwin by giving them a new scene

---

<sup>82</sup> It is important to keep in mind that Garrick played Biron's role—all of his additions and subtractions from the dialogue and staging become more interesting when we consider Garrick, the star of the stage, as Biron. A later chapter will further explore Garrick's alterations and adaptations of more Restoration works for his own productions and acting agenda.

together, in which the audience sees Baldwin's innocence in the matter and Carlos's machinations and plotting.

Carlos is motivated to ruin Isabella because he feels cheated out of his fortune—being the second son—and now wants to make sure his “Interest will not suffer.”<sup>83</sup> The character of Isabella is most famous for being “born to suffer,” so it becomes all the more interesting that Carlos draws on her language in order to convey to the audience his leading motivation is monetary. The issue of “interest” throughout this play is often discussed by Carlos, but all of the characters use the term with respect to both financial and emotional well-being. Carlos and Isabella are bound together by their use of “interest”; her “undoing” occurs because she must marry Villeroy or she will be out on the street. Garrick makes an interesting change with respect to this issue of interest in a scene early on in the play between Villeroy and Carlos. In Southerne, the dialogue runs thus:

Carlos: The Part I act in your Interest, goes against the grain of my good Nature and  
Conscience: but since 'tis necessary to your Service; and will be my Sister's  
advantage in the end ; I'm better reconcil'd to't.

Villeroy: My Interest! O never think I can intend to raise/ An Interest from Isabella's  
wrongs./ Your Father may have interested ends,/In her undoing: but my heart has  
none./Her happiness must be my Interest,/And that I wou'd restore. (2.1.1-9)

Garrick renders the exchange this way:

Carlos: My Villeroy, the Fatherless, the Widow/Are Terms not understood within these  
Gates--/You must forgive him; Sir, he thinks this Woman/Is Biron's Fate, that

---

<sup>83</sup> Garrick, 21.

hurried him to Death--/I must not think on't, lest my Friendship stagger./My  
friend's, my Sister's, mutual Advantage/ Have reconcil'd my Boson to its Task.

Villeroy: Advantage! Think not I intend to raise/ An Interest from Isabella's

Wrongs./Your Father may have interested Ends/ In her Undoing; but my Heart  
has non,/Her Happiness must be my Interest,/And that I wou'd restore. (12-13)

Garrick changes Southerne's "My Interest!" to "Advantage!"; Southerne's Villeroy reacts to Carlos's insinuation that Villeroy will benefit from Isabella's misery. Villeroy makes clear that he wants to possess Isabella's "happiness," not her fortune, all of which is tied up in Count Baldwin's "interested ends." Meanwhile, Garrick has Villeroy react to Carlos's line: "My friend's, my Sister's, mutual Advantage/ Have reconcil'd my Boson to its Task." Garrick changes the syntax to Villeroy's response and removes the "O never" in favor of the more controlled "Think not..." Indeed, Villeroy's language is often made more controlled by Garrick, unlike Biron's rhetorical flourishes, which become far more ballooned with exclamatory statements than Southerne originally penned. The use of the term "mutual advantage" rather than "my interest" also deemphasizes Villeroy's desire to possess Isabella; the dialogue between Villeroy and Carlos reflects the ways in which the two friends already possess one another. Garrick's alterations to the she-tragedy makes Isabella more of a victim to be sure but it also further victimizes Biron and Villeroy.

Garrick's play emphasizes the friendship between Villeroy and Carlos simply by its subtraction of so many of the other male side-characters (Frederick, Fabian, Fernando). With all of these comic figures whom Carlos used as counterpoints from Southerne's play absent, Villeroy and Carlos are really the only young men on the stage until Biron's return (though we still have the servant figures, Sampson and Pedro). In Garrick's version, Villeroy becomes more

dependent on Carlos, as Carlos becomes more jealous of Villeroy's attachment to Isabella. For instance, another interesting use of the possessor occurs before the wedding scene. In Southerne's version, Villeroy is looking for his servants ("Where are my Servants? Gentelemen, this Purse/ [to the Musick] Will tell you that I thank you. Where, where are you? [To his Servants {who enter}]. Are my Friends invited? Is every thing in order?")<sup>84</sup>; in Garrick's, Villeroy only searches for Carlos: "But our Collation waits; where's Carlos now?" Garrick then adds the line: "Methinks I am but half myself, without him." (24). These lines almost immediately follow Villeroy's exclamation over Isabella: "My Isabella! But possessing her,/Who wou'd not lose himself?" (Garrick 24). Villeroy, again, uses the same possessor with Carlos as he does with Isabella. Villeroy loses himself in his possession of Isabella and is only half himself when Carlos is not around. Villeroy, like Biron, is dependent and constantly reacting to both the villain and the heroine, who is also the constant victim. Carlos uses Villeroy as a vehicle to possess both Isabella and Biron—Carlos actually does possess and control Villeroy; Villeroy thinks he possesses Carlos, but just as his marriage to Isabella is false, so is that friendship. Villeroy's constant use of "my" towards Carlos when the audience knows Carlos is duping him helps to remind us that he is *also* wrong to use that same possessive towards Isabella. While Biron's actions, the fainting and the suicide, mimic Isabella's on-stage demonstrations of melancholy and madness, Villeroy's rhetoric parrots Biron—the husband Villeroy can never actually (lawfully or spiritually) become.

After Biron dies (with many a "My Isabella" as he expires), Villeroy is left asking, yet again, where Isabella has gone. This time, rather than literally looking for Isabella's physical body, though, Villeroy stands right in front of her and attempts to understand her mind—

---

<sup>84</sup> Southerne, *The Fatal Marriage*, 3.2.71-94.

something he never has had access to throughout the play: “Are you all dead within there? Where, where are you?”<sup>85</sup> He then leaves the stage and Isabella regains control over her mind once more. She echoes Biron’s earlier dialogue Garrick had added from Southerne’s play. Garrick makes the connection between Biron and Isabella pointedly clear as she says, “Methinks I stand upon/The Brink of Life, ready to Shoot the Gulph/That lies between me and the Realms of Rest”<sup>86</sup>; this speech sounds quite similar to Biron’s line: “I approach the Brink,/And soon must leap the Precipice!”<sup>87</sup> Indeed, both Southerne and Garrick end with Villeroy unable to communicate with Isabella: he attempts to call her “My Isabella” but then shifts to the third person, “Poor unhappy Wretch!/What can I say to her?”; Isabella responds by saying, “Nothing, nothing; ’tis a babbling World.” Villeroy’s inability to connect to Isabella and her inaccessible mind brings us back to the wall between Behn’s Isabella and her two husbands.

### **Comparative Agency in Murders and Suicides: Conclusions about Conclusions**

Isabella kills her two husbands in Behn’s story—a plot point from which Southerne and Garrick so completely deviate, I originally thought there was simply no way to connect the seemingly irreconcilable endings of the plays and the novella. Isabella’s suicide in the plays has been read as passive, as cementing her role as the suffering victim of the she-tragedy. Reading the ending in this way demands that we read her suicide as Isabella finally giving into the patriarchs (Baldwin and Carlos) rather than escaping from them. But I would like to consider a different interpretation of Southerne’s and Garrick’s ending; Southerne’s major change from having Isabella executed for her crimes (as she is in the Behn story) to having Isabella kill

---

<sup>85</sup> Garrick, *Isabella*, 49.

<sup>86</sup> Garrick, 49.

<sup>87</sup> Garrick, 45.

herself after Biron is fatally wounded can be understood as her ultimate act of rebellion. Her final lines are full of venom towards the men she believes have denied her “justice”: “[Stabs herself] Now, now I laugh at you, defy you all,/You tyrant-Murderers.”<sup>88</sup> She then forgives Baldwin, refuses to give Villeroy any words of comfort (though he begs “O Speak, Speak”), and leaves her son in their care. One could read this virtuous widow as finally taking the (passive) Ephesian Matron path towards her husband’s grave; indeed, this has been the popular way to read Isabella’s suicide and Southerne’s changes to Behn’s text. But one of the final cuts that Garrick makes to Southerne’s play has to do with Isabella’s last words. In Southerne’s version, the scene reads like this:

Isabella: “Where is that little Wretch? [They raise her]/ I dye in Peace, to leave him to  
your Care./I have a wretched Mother’s legacy,/A dying kiss—pray let me give it  
him,/My Blessing; that, that’s all I have to leave thee./O may thy Father’s virtues  
live in thee,/And all his Wrongs be buried in my Grave./ The Waves and Winds  
will dash, and Tempests roar;/But Wrecks are toss’d at last upon the Shore.”

(5.4.293-301)

Garrick cuts Southerne’s final lines—“The Waves and Winds will dash, and Tempests roar;/But Wrecks are toss’d at last upon the Shore”—and ends instead with the previous two lines, “O may thy Father’s virtues live in thee,/And all his Wrongs be buried in my Grave.” Garrick’s choice further connects Isabella back to her first husband, as Biron’s last words are also about their son and all the hopes that he has for the “wretch.” Cutting the storm imagery allows Garrick to make the bond between Biron and Isabella all the more clear to the audience. Isabella’s final words bring us back to the issue of possession—this time she takes ownership over her death, “my

---

<sup>88</sup> Southerne, *The Fatal Marriage*, 57.

grave,” while declaring that she will internalize and absolve Biron’s sins, “all his Wrongs be buried.” Biron’s last words are filled with the possessive as well but, again, with far more feminine cries than Isabella’s comparatively controlled rhetoric. While Southerne keeps Biron’s death (relatively) brief, Garrick adds a series of emotional exclamations (“O, I faint...O! Support/My Wife, my Isabella—Bless my Child!”).<sup>89</sup> Garrick’s heightened sentimentality goes hand in hand with the ways he emphasizes Biron’s use of the possessive and his lack of bodily control. He not only faints in Garrick’s text as he does in Southerne’s version, he comments upon his fainting. Southerne places the possessive on Biron’s father and letter (a letter that confirms Carlos’s guilt) rather than placing the possessive on the son or on Isabella. Southerne’s Biron dies giving a command to Villeroy, whereas Garrick’s Biron dies midsentence, begging Heaven to take him.

The use of the word “Wretch” is also particularly interesting: Villeroy uses it on Isabella, Isabella on her son, and Biron on himself. The triangular relationship between Isabella, Biron, and their son—all of whom regard one another and themselves as doomed—finally indicates the way this play constantly uses the young boy as an object to symbolize this idea of possession. The boy is constantly on stage but mute, following Isabella wherever she goes.<sup>90</sup> He is the manifest of her memory—the reminder of her past and indicator of her sexual relationship with Biron. The addition of the son to Garrick’s *Isabella* and Southerne’s *The Fatal Marriage* has

---

<sup>89</sup> In Southerne’s version Biron says: “This Letter is my last, last Dying care;/Give it to my father.” [dyes] In Garrick’s version, Biron says: “Tis all in vain, my Sorrows soon will end,/O Villeroy! Let a dying Wretch intreat you,/To take this Letter to my Father—my Isabella!/Couldst thou but hear me, my last Words should bless thee. I cannot, tho’ in Death, bequeath her to thee; [To Villeroy] But cou’d I hope my Boy, my little One,/Might find a Father in thee—O, I faint!/I can no more—Hear me Heav’n! O! Support/ My Wife, my Isabella—Bless my Child!/And take a poor unhappy—“ [Dies]

<sup>90</sup> Interesting to note that Siddons had her real-life son on stage as Isabella’s son—apparently he was rather traumatized by her death scene during a rehearsal and “burst into tears.” (Lowe, 161).

been read, like their substitution of suicide for Behn's murders, as another change that distances the adaptation from Behn's story. Behn's Isabella, after all, has no child. The narrator brings this up a few times throughout the last third of the novella. Behn's Isabella miscarries at the news that Henault wants to join the militia.<sup>91</sup> Southerne's and Garrick's use of the child, though often read as adding sympathy for Isabella as a poor widow, seems a bit more complicated when we consider Isabella's suicide. Like Behn's Isabella, the stage version of this character does not really privilege motherhood over her first husband—the mere thought of losing Henault causes Isabella's miscarriage in the story just as the actual loss of Biron causes Isabella's suicide on the stage. The addition of the child in the play and the lack of the child in the novella serve the same crucial purpose in that in both cases Isabella possesses her own body. Despite all the power she lacks in both the novella and on the stage, she is constantly controlling her physicality. The ending of Behn's story also might seem to reject reading Isabella as in control of her body, as she is beheaded in a public execution. As with the staging of the suicide, however, this final moment allows Isabella to command the spectacle of her own death:

When they day of execution came, she appeared on the scaffold all in mourning...She made a speech of half an hour long...she put off her mourning veil and, without anything on her face, she kneeled down and the executioner, at one blow, severed her beautiful head from her delicate body...<sup>92</sup>

The grotesque imagery found in Behn's final lines repeats in the stage productions with Isabella's maddened request to have her hands cut off: "Cut off my hands--/Let me leave

---

<sup>91</sup> "At last, he lets Isabella know what propositions he had made him, both by his father and his relations; at the very first motion, she almost fainted in his arms while he was speaking, and it possessed her with so entire a grief that she miscarried." Aphra Behn, *The History of the Nun*, 173.

<sup>92</sup> Behn, *The History of the Nun*, 190.

something with him [Biron].”<sup>93</sup> Nicoll finds this moment “strange” and “artistic,” as a sign that “Southerne has united the spirit of the tragedy of blood with the spirit of the new sentimental and pathetic drama, still with a few reminiscences of the heroic stage.”<sup>94</sup> Indeed, as Kavenik argues about tragicomedy’s relationship to heroic drama<sup>95</sup>, *Isabella* and *The Fatal Marriage* blend the generic conventions, making the domestic space as political and dangerous for the “cruel, cruel men” as it is for the “unhappy” women (Garrick 50, 58). But Nicoll, while helpfully highlighting the *Titus Andronicus*-like moment in the play, fails to explain the anomaly in Isabella’s language at this crucial moment. Isabella demands to lose her hands rather than to stop holding Biron’s corpse, again pushing the audience to regard her and the Ephesian matron<sup>96</sup> and completely reversing the way we read the widow from Behn’s ending. Behn’s widow, however, has her own madness when she discovers her first husband is alive. In the novella, her madness manifests into external violence and murder, while the stage Isabella’s madness clearly becomes internalized and results in her suicide. The major difference between Behn’s story and the stage adaptations is finally the way Behn’s Isabella desires to change the past by literally removing the evidence (the husbands): the material objects, the bodies she sews together and throws into the water, all of these things symbolize the promises—vows—she can never fully uphold.

Behn’s Isabella recognizes that she cannot fulfill the roles of nun, wife, or widow. The stage Isabella cannot recognize her own inability to fulfill those roles—she wants to be the

---

<sup>93</sup> Garrick, *Isabella*, 50.

<sup>94</sup> Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of the Restoration Drama: 1660-1700* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1940), 144.

<sup>95</sup> See Frances Kavenik on tragicomedy and heroic dramas. Frances Kavenik, *British Drama, 1660-1779: A Critical History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), 72-73 and 163-165.

<sup>96</sup> As Behn’s narrator alludes to as well: “...women are by nature more constant and just than men, and did not their first lovers teach them the trick of change, they would be doves that would never quit their mate and, like Indian wives, would leap alive into the graves of their deceased lovers and be buried quick with ’em.” Behn, *The History of the Nun*, 139-140.

virtuous widow and the good wife rather than confront the patterns she set as a vow-breaker. By the last half of the play she never mentions the vows she broke as a nun. The distinction between the public execution in the novella and the domestic suicide on the stage further demonstrates the divergence between the representations of these women; however, both women—despite *all* their differences in terms of desire and power—cannot exist on the page or the stage once they have recognized the ways the various roles they are expected to fulfill ultimately overcome how they want to interpret themselves. Southerne takes the public execution from Behn's story and extends the metaphor throughout the entire reach of the play; the she-tragedy is finally that public spectacle of the female's destruction by a public that cannot recognize her in overlapping and contradictory roles. The she-tragedy's generic conventions, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, defer to Behn's amatory fiction. Isabella's body as spectacle, the public's simultaneous recognition of Isabella as a criminal and their sympathy for her, her death as a final lesson for other vow-breakers—all of these aspects of the novella's ending persist and grow in Southerne's adaptation. His interpretative argument suggests that Behn's heroine was born to suffer, but it also emphasizes that Behn's Isabella never recognizes what the stage heroine continuously dwells upon: the idea of being content in her own misery. As Garrick's Isabella puts it, "I am contented to be miserable" (66). Southerne's and Garrick's plays also represent that public execution as occurring within the most private domestic space of all, the bed-chamber. By taking the violence from the public street (where the play begins and the novella ends) into Isabella's bedroom, the stage productions nod towards Behn's own ideological framework in which the degree of Isabella's agency is determined by her location; the further both Isabella's get from the nunnery, the location of that first vow-breaking but also the safe-house in which a female role is predetermined and nonnegotiable, the muddier their roles become. As much as

these works use the representation of the female protagonist to prescribe behavior to a female readership and audience, the character's vow-breaking also warns women about the difficulty of attempting to move between public and private spaces without punishment. Behn's character is punished publicly, while Southerne's and Garrick's heroine is punished privately; in both circumstances, however, Isabella chooses death rather than penance or imprisonment. The deaths of both women could suggest a final Ephesian Matron allusion—emphasizing that these women simply cannot live without their husbands. But everything we know about these women—from the stage Isabella's seven-year widowhood to Behn's Isabella's murders—suggests that their deaths liberate them from both the private anguish in Southerne's case and the public punishment in Behn's. Garrick's and Southerne's audiences seemed to have little judgment against the vow-breaking and, just as Behn's story slyly asserts in its opening, the women who break vows are simply mirroring the inconstant men they've encountered: "The women are taught by the lives of the men to live up to all their vices, and are become almost as inconstant..."<sup>97</sup> Southerne and Garrick place negative moral judgment on the men who make Isabella miserable. Like Behn's narrator, the play reads these men as the "bad example" from which women construct their own characters. Indeed, my next chapter will consider the ways in which another archetypal female character in eighteenth-century fiction—Richardson's *Clarissa*—models her identity and behavior after tragic male characters from Restoration heroic plays and she-tragedies, to startling effect.

---

<sup>97</sup> Behn, *The History of the Nun*, 140.

## CHAPTER 2

### RICHARDSON'S "LION-HEARTED LADY": CLARISSA AS RESTORATION TRAGIC HERO

She is a lion-hearted Lady, in every case where her Honour . . . calls for Spirit.  
--Richardson, *Clarissa* (Robert Lovelace to John Belford)

Previous scholarship has argued that Samuel Richardson's allusions to Restoration literature running throughout *Clarissa* (1747-48) illustrate both the dramatic form upon which he relied and his commitment to connecting his primary characters to their literary antecedents in a simplistic, gender-based fashion: Clarissa, on this reading, should be understood as a heroine from she-tragedy, while Lovelace should be viewed as a villainous, rakish anti-hero. As a result, much attention has been given to Lovelace's reliance on figures like Lothario and Clarissa's connection to Calista—the central characters from Nicholas Rowe's *The Fair Penitent* (1702)—while less interest has been given to a number of other late-seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century plays that Richardson's characters use as resources for understanding their identities. The next two chapters argue that Richardson's use of Restoration tragedies not only queers Clarissa and Lovelace, it also reinterprets the original plays as allowing for a fluid understanding of gender roles. My contention is that we need to move beyond readings in which Clarissa and Lovelace are aligned reductively with the tragic heroine and rake, respectively. Clarissa, for example, depends just as much, if not far more, on male tragic figures as a means of expressing herself, and her literary references often overlap with Lovelace's own: the binary opposition between Clarissa as a tragic heroine and Lovelace as a rakish anti-hero collapses once we look into the actual plays to which they both allude. Considering *Clarissa*'s complex intertextual relationship with Restoration drama allows us to rethink not only the representations of gender in

the novel, but also the ways in which mid-eighteenth-century culture was interpreting the masculinity and femininity in plays from the earlier historical period.

I read against the notion that there are strict gender paradigms at work in *Clarissa*: rather than attempting to read Clarissa and Lovelace as reductively enacting a heteronormative seduction plot, I argue that we should read their power dynamic as a struggle between two great forces, an antagonism often imagined in masculine homosocial terms.<sup>98</sup> Despite the tendency by readers to reduce her to pure goodness and light, Clarissa is not meant to be read as a perfect paragon of conventional femininity: while her Christian principles often lead us to read her as purely good and virtuous by the most feminized definition of the term, her flaws blind her to her enemies and it is her pride in her virtue that then makes her think she can overcome those enemies. Lovelace, too, does not fit neatly into the conventional romance plot. He is not redeemable, but the problematic nature of the rape narrative opens the door for *Clarissa*'s readers to rally around the idea of Lovelace's redemption: one moment, we despise Lovelace for the rape, the next, we seek to change him, we want to forgive him so the couple can marry and live happily, and therefore we must ask Clarissa to forgive him as well. What's more, in this interpretive paradigm, she must be expected to marry her tormentor, her rapist. This desire for forgiveness and redemption is what eighteenth-century readers—from Sarah Fielding onwards—expected and desired, but Richardson resolutely refused these requests. The next two chapters are invested unpacking the implications of his decision to maintain the intended tragic ending for

---

<sup>98</sup> The idea of Clarissa and Lovelace's push and pull dynamic as what ultimately captivated its contemporary readers reminds me of the oft-quoted line from the 2007 Nolan film "this is what happens when an unstoppable force meets an unmovable object." Remarkably, we do not attempt to attribute goodness to a villain like the Joker; no—it is only when a woman becomes the object of that villain's cruelty that we want to find an ethical escape route for that man; after all, he must have something redemptive in him if he has engaged in a romance with someone so noble and virtuous.

*Clarissa*. If we read against the grain of conventional understandings of the novel's relationship to gender and genre, we can see the extent to which Richardson uses allusions to Restoration literature to illustrate the slippage between the masculine and the feminine aspects of both Clarissa and Lovelace. When we bracket our expectations regarding their prescribed gender identities, the seduction plot/romance falls apart and we can read the novel as a power struggle between queer antagonists.

The ways in which Richardson represents the Restoration to his readers allows my project to explore both the shifts and the unexpected continuities between gender roles from the so-called "Age of Dryden" to the "Age of Garrick." In this chapter, I read Richardson's allusions to a number of tragic texts—including Dryden and Lee's *Oedipus* (1678), Nicolas Rowe's *The Fair Penitent* (1702), Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserv'd* (1682), and Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* (ca. 1602)—as support for my interpretation that eighteenth-century readers would have compared the heroic male figures in those plays to Richardson's eponymous protagonist. I would like to discuss Clarissa's death as mimicking dramatic male suffering: her sacrifice of the body to save the soul has far more in common with male tragic endings from Rowe, Otway, and Dryden than it does with the fates of the female victims in the she-tragedies. I treat Clarissa's death as a self-determined suicide to emphasize the quest-like trajectory she imagines for herself after descending into madness and moving from Lovelace (and the seduction plot) towards a hero's narrative. Although Clarissa does in some ways recall the female figures in Restoration plays, it is ultimately Lovelace—the character we must constantly question and doubt—who labels her as a she-tragedy victim. We must read *Clarissa* instead as consistently relying on the dramatic male figures as she narrates her own fate and journey from rape, to madness, and, finally to her self-determined death. Alternatively (as we will see in Chapter Three), we must

then consider reading Lovelace as being much more reliant on melodramatic female characters than he might ever want to acknowledge.

Margaret Doody, Jocelyn Harris, Lois Bueler, and, more recently, Rachel Trickett and Elaine McGirr have carefully considered the implications of Richardson's allusion to Restoration texts.<sup>99</sup> These readings recognize the connection between *Clarissa* and both she-tragedies and heroic tragedies. What has not been considered in all of this scholarship—and what I hope to persuade readers of—is the way *Clarissa* herself alludes not only to she-tragedy heroines but to the male heroes of the stage as a means of understanding her identity. What difference does it make if read *Clarissa* within a masculine category or characterization? First, *Clarissa* has too often been misread as being only a victim, as a prude who should fall into her own seduction narrative, as too perfect to relate to, and, finally, as defined not simply by the rape but by her rapist. Her abusive relationship with Lovelace has come to dominate the ways we read her character. Of course, the rape is the important event in their relationship (and the novel), but its overdetermining power in our critical discourse has confined *Clarissa* into the very feminized object-positioning through which Lovelace defines her. Her allusions provide us with a better understanding of *Clarissa*'s mind: by considering what she was reading and which characters shape her self-conception—and, dare I say it, by taking Richardson's own readings of her into account—I think we can discover a more complicated female protagonist in Richardson's novel than has yet been acknowledged.

---

<sup>99</sup>Margaret Anne Doody, *A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974). Jocelyn Harris, *Samuel Richardson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Lois E. Bueler, *Clarissa's Plots* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994). Rachel Trickett, "Dryden's Part in *Clarissa*," in *Clarissa and Her Readers: New Essays for the Clarissa Project*, ed. Carol Houlihan Flynn and Edward Copeland (AMS Press, New York: 1999), 175-187. Elaine McGirr, "Why Lovelace Must Die," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 37 (2004): 5-23.

My own argument extends Katherine Kittredge's reading of Clarissa as an androgynous figure—one who so often seems trapped in her eighteenth-century version of the female shell while being occasionally recognized by Lovelace and consistently recognizing herself as a masculine hero.<sup>100</sup> Kittredge asserts that “Clarissa herself is the final and most complex example of Richardson’s flexible definition of gender roles,” admitting that in spite of this flexibility Clarissa often sees herself as “bound by the myth of the passive woman.”<sup>101</sup> Eighteenth-century readers also must have recognized the struggle between the female-type within which Clarissa is trapped by cultural expectations and the heroic figures she to whom she thematically ties herself with her masculine tragic flaw. Her pride sometimes breaks through the shell of her female construct, but Clarissa’s defiant acts lead to immediate social punishment: for instance, her first major act of rebellion occurs when she rejects Solmes. The swift reaction from her family is to instill shame and to withhold love; she is indirectly punished for her pride. But her rejection of Solmes also marks the first time her father rejects Clarissa as a daughter—indeed, I would argue that she threatens the family, especially James, because they cannot reconcile these masculine qualities, these tragic hero elements, with the femininity, charm, beauty, and grace that they want to use to categorize Clarissa. In my own analysis, I see the tragic hero internalized by Clarissa in the same way eighteenth-century readers and Richardson himself might have imagined them: as Restoration versions of tragic men on stage, adapted and appropriated for the changing culture’s tastes and mediated by the versions made available for that culture. In short, Chapters Two and Three aim to reconsider the way we have been approaching Clarissa and Lovelace by evaluating the novel’s dependence on Restoration drama. Chapter Two argues that Clarissa’s obsession with

---

<sup>100</sup> Katharine Kittredge “Men-Women and Womanish Men: Androgyny in Richardson’s *Clarissa*,” *Modern Language Studies*. 24, (1994): 20-26.

<sup>101</sup> Kittredge, “Men-Women and Womanish Men,” 23.

her father, her non-romance with Lovelace, her tragic flaw (pride), and the tragic irony of her rape all align her most prominently with the iconic tragic figure, Dryden and Lee's Oedipus.

### **Critical Background: Richardson and Restoration Drama**

This study builds upon a long history of scholarly discussion regarding Richardson's references to Restoration drama. One of the strongest early voices in that conversation belongs to Alan McKillop, whose work focused on how Richardson's allusions further complicate his already dynamic characters, while blurring the lines between the conventions of theatre and the novel. McKillop argues that

For the character of Clarissa, Richardson needed no large amount of literary baggage. She is the heroine of tragedy, but she is not like Lovelace compounded from literature... Though Clarissa's stiffly puritanical views of life and literature are about in the spirit of Richardson's own correspondents... her tragic fate carries her to a higher level. Here it may be felt that literary references are inadequate; it may seem superficial that she should quote Otway, Dryden, Shakespeare, Garth, and Cowley in her delirium, that she should argue against sudden conversion in the words of Rowe's *Ulysses*, or that the sober tenacity and self-confidence of the middle-class girl should be elevated to the stoical pride of the tragic heroine in lines from the *Oedipus* of Dryden and Lee... Yet this literary scaffolding was perhaps necessary... The principal characters are not completely assimilated to dramatic types, but are influenced by such types; the detailed narrative of

the letters is not forced into full conformity with the dramatic scene, but is often influenced by the technique of the drama.<sup>102</sup>

McKillop, soon followed by William M. Sale, Robert Gale Noyes, John Dussinger and Ira Konigsberg, reignited a critical conversation in the early twentieth century on the importance of Restoration drama in *Clarissa* that focused primarily on determining the texts Richardson referred to and how he accessed them.<sup>103</sup> One of the merits of their work is that these critics established crucial points regarding Richardson's self-conscious nods back to the Restoration.<sup>104</sup>

But with their wide coverage of his literary influences—which include comedies, operas, tragedies, tragicomedies, satires, poetry, amatory fiction, and early novels—McKillop and Noyes often make nonspecific generalizations about the importance of Richardson's use of those works in *Clarissa*. Deeply critical of Richardson, McKillop essentially argues that the middle-class printer was a bad reader. McKillop points out Richardson's lack of understanding of the very dramatic works from which he quotes:

There is somewhere a story of an author who 'read no poetry but his own.' Richardson is disposed to tolerate no sentiment, no characterization, but his own, and when he is confronted with such works as *The Distrest Mother*, *The Fair Penitent*, *La Princess de Clèves*, or *Amelia* his comments are those of the blunt Philistine and Puritan precisian.

Though he would have us take his own story as a 'she-tragedy' with decorously

---

<sup>102</sup> Alan Dugald McKillop, *Samuel Richardson: Printer and Novelist* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press: 1936), 153-154.

<sup>103</sup> William M. Sale Jr., *Samuel Richardson: Master Printer* Ithaca: Cornell University press, 1950. Robert Gale Noyes, *The Neglected Muse: Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Tragedy in the Novel (1740-1780)*. (Providence: Brown University Press, 1958). Ira Konigsberg, *Samuel Richardson and the Dramatic Novel* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, Lexington: 1968.) John Dussinger, "Richardson's Tragic Muse," *Philological Quarterly* 46 (1967): 18-33.

<sup>104</sup> William Park, "Clarissa as Tragedy," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*. 16 (1976), 461-471.

expressed emotion and improved morals, he would not acknowledge Otway and Rowe as his masters; still less would he accept the doubtful rhetoric and ethics of the heroic drama as he knew it in the work of Dryden and Lee.<sup>105</sup>

McKillop cites Aaron Hill, Edward Young, Colley Cibber, and William Warburton as “Richardson’s chief literary advisers during the time when he was writing *Clarissa*...”<sup>106</sup>

McKillop goes on to explain his critique of Richardson as an undisciplined writer, but he allows for Richardson’s at least partial knowledge of dramatic history: “Unsystematic and incomplete through [sic] his knowledge was, he had a fair acquaintance with the English drama from Dryden through Rowe, gained partly from books, partly from attendance at the theatre, and partly, no doubt, from his close contact with Aaron Hill, who was always talking and writing about theatrical matters, and whose discussions of such subjects in *The Prompter* Richardson himself had printed.”<sup>107</sup> Thus, while McKillop will not allow that Richardson understands Dryden or Otway, he acknowledges that Richardson was familiar enough with the plays to quote from them.

Noyes opens up his discussion to compare the works of other eighteenth-century novelists and playwrights, discussing the larger connection between these authors and Restoration and Augustan drama:

For the historian of the drama as a literary form the novels contain an abundance of criticism of specific tragedies and comedies by the most respected playwrights. Here, indeed, is the core of the discussion of the drama and the theater by the best and worst novelists of the age...actually, the novelists from Samuel Richardson to Frances Burney,

---

<sup>105</sup> McKillop, *Printer and Novelist*, 147.

<sup>106</sup> McKillop, 159.

<sup>107</sup> McKillop, 142.

when they permitted their characters to enter the portals of the playhouse, were in the habit of arranging for them to attend a performance of some comedy or tragedy drawn from the standard English repertory of the companies—some play written before the appearance of the novel itself as a new art form or, less often, some new piece by a contemporary dramatist.<sup>108</sup>

Noyes goes on to list the “best dramatists” the eighteenth-century novelists were choosing to incorporate into their novels, but he neglects to mention Behn (among others) in a list that *does* include, for comedy, “Etherege, Dryden, Congreve, Wycherley, Vanbrugh, Farquhar, Cibber, Steele, and Mrs. Centlivre,” and for tragedy: “Dryden, Lee, Congreve, Otway, Southerne, Rowe, Addison, Lillo, or Home.”<sup>109</sup> Noyes concludes:

One may properly call the eighteenth-century a ‘quoting’ century. It was fond of literary allusions, and its novels are replete with literary embellishments. Their authors frequently reflected the high-flown rhetoric of tragedy and permitted their characters to quote sententious passages from tragedies, most of which, however, were drawn from handy compilations such as *Thesaurus Dramaticus* (1724) rather than from original texts.”<sup>110</sup>

Noyes regards Richardson as part of this larger set of writers who lifted lines of those plays from quote-books, and he seems to regard quoting itself in the same way that McKillop describes Richardson’s literary knowledge: a bit bourgeois, if not philistine.

Ira Konigsberg’s work contradicts a number of problematic claims implicit in McKillop’s “brief” analysis. An apologist for Richardson, arguing that he is more well-read than McKillop allows, Konigsberg argues for Richardson’s familiarity with English drama: “It is not difficult to

---

<sup>108</sup> Noyes, *The Neglected Muse*, 5.

<sup>109</sup> Noyes, *The Neglected Muse*, 5.

<sup>110</sup> Noyes, 6.

show that Richardson had a greater knowledge of the English drama than of any other literary form. While he infrequently referred to earlier fiction, and then only to damn the genre, he often discussed plays and quoted from the drama in his novels and letters.”<sup>111</sup> To this point, McKillop would most likely argue that Richardson’s quoting from the drama does not necessarily indicate that he knows what he is quoting. Konigsberg goes far beyond McKillop’s bold claims and supports a reading of Richardson’s literary knowledge with an analysis of the similarities between specific plays and *Clarissa*, citing Charles Johnson’s *Caelia: Or, The Perjur’d Lover* (performed, at most, two nights in 1732) as one that bears the most striking resemblance to Richardson’s own novel.<sup>112</sup> Beyond the plays providing a “dramatic background” for Richardson’s “new species of writing,” Konigsberg suggests that Johnson in particular had a direct influence on the writing of *Clarissa*: “The two works resemble one another not only in theme, plot, and major characters, but both also possess such similar details as the presentation by each heroine of a ring to one of her jailers, such similar lines as those uttered by the dying villains, and such similar secondary figures as the villains’ morally converted friends.”<sup>113</sup>

In his introduction to *The Clarissa Project*, Florian Stuber laid out the extent to which the “significant event” of reprinting the third edition of *Clarissa* (1751) was motivated by scholars’ continuing interest in the novel as dependent upon drama.<sup>114</sup> As Stuber put it, the very interplay between reader and author parallels the relationships between audience and play:

As in a play, where the script is a field for interaction between actors and audience, so *Clarissa*’s “Dramatic Narrative” became a field for interaction between author and reader; and as some playwrights hope performance will emotionally affect and change the way

---

<sup>111</sup> Konigsberg, *The Dramatic Novel*, 42.

<sup>112</sup> Konigsberg, *The Dramatic Novel*, 50.

<sup>113</sup> Konigsberg, *The Dramatic Novel*, 52.

<sup>114</sup> Florian Stuber, ed., *The Clarissa Project* (New York: AMS Press, 1990), 1.

audiences deal with the world, so Richardson hoped to affect and change the readers of *Clarissa*.<sup>115</sup>

Stuber's introduction highlights the issue of Clarissa's parents, a key relationship to considering Clarissa's connection to Oedipus. By looking at the third edition of the novel alongside the first, we can see that Richardson's revisions and additions further demonstrate the extent to which he wanted to emphasize Clarissa and her father's relationship, in particular.

While Stuber traces the subtle changes that occur across the volumes, Jocelyn Harris adds to the ways we might understand the novel's readers as an audience in a playhouse:

I shall argue that Richardson's strategy for *Clarissa* derived from the stage controversy, that his preference for tragedy, classical poetic justice, the affective theory of the emotions, and the unities were all vital to his novel, that he founded *Clarissa* on classical and neo-classical theories of poetry and drama, and that his close acquaintance with plays and players made his entire method essentially dramatic, with letters providing an ideal way to convey the theatrical experience. The proof is that readers responded as though they were present in the theatre, and Richardson's confidence in revising may well have resulted from his thinking of *Clarissa* as a play.<sup>116</sup>

Harris reveals the more current understanding in eighteenth-century studies that Richardson was familiar with popular plays, a reading of his own literary background that goes against some older scholarship, which often reduces Richardson to an intellectual lightweight. Harris lays out the possibility for Richardson's sophisticated understanding of the novel as an "essentially dramatic" genre; her reading of the ways in which Richardson imagines *Clarissa* as a play helps

---

<sup>115</sup> Stuber, *The Clarissa Project*, 2.

<sup>116</sup> Jocelyn Harris, introduction to *Published Commentary on Clarissa: 1747-65. Volume I; Prefaces, Postscripts, and Related Writings*, by Samuel Richardson (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1998).

to situate my own interpretation of the novel in relation to both dramatic and epistolary form. Taking seriously the idea that Richardson's characters are performing—as though in a play—the relationship between them and the plays they reference becomes all the more interesting, as we must consider the double theatricality of their actions. We have characters who are, by design, theatrical; these hyper-performative characters are then constantly directly referring to or indirectly alluding to other theatrical characters. I would argue that the implication of these layers of theatricality within the novel invites a queer reading, as the boundaries between genres remain as unclear as they are between the characters' gender identities.

A seminal study of Richardson and the Restoration stage, Doody's *A Natural Passion* more specifically ties John Dryden and Richardson together—as this chapter does—demonstrating the novelist's penchant for quoting within her own title page, where she highlights the novel's dependence on Restoration theatre: “Love is a natural passion” and “Love various minds does variously inspire” (from Volume II of *Sir Charles Grandison* and Act II of *Tyrannick Love*). Doody's chapters on *Clarissa*'s allusions to dramatic works and themes go beyond earlier work (like the studies by Noyes and Konigsberg) and into much more sophisticated analysis, complicating how we read Clarissa and Lovelace as “grand characters, rebels against the social law and the rules of moderation” who are striking when set against a catalogue of other canonical and non-canonical eighteenth-century characters:

Most of the works of this period which examine individual human nature in an interesting way are works of comic, not tragic vision; they show individuals in the process of accommodating themselves to society, not tearing each other apart...For the heroes of

Defoe, Fielding, and Smollett, sex is an activity and a pastime, like fighting, a sequence of incidents and not, any more than their religion, a governing principle of life.<sup>117</sup>

Richardson's reliance on late-seventeenth-century theatrical works leads me to agree with Doody that *Clarissa* stands out and seems unlike much contemporary fiction of the 1740s and 1750s. Richardson's investment in women, and his exploration of psychological and emotional questions as to what women want, sets him apart from satirists and early novelists like Daniel Defoe and Henry Fielding. Doody also asserts that "Richardson is the first major English novelist to present sexuality as a constant vital principle of human life, both conscious and subconscious. At the same time he is also of the first (and few) novelists to treat spiritual life seriously."<sup>118</sup> It is precisely the role played by Richardson's intertextual allusions to Restoration drama in his constructions of gender and sexuality that will be the subject of this chapter and the next.

### **Clarissa's Immasculation and the Gender Politics of Allusion**

Because it is primarily through Clarissa's allusions to Dyden and Lee's *Oedipus* that she constructs a masculine identity for herself, it is worth preparing the argument with some consideration of this particular play's status, in terms of both its production history and its importance as an object of discussion in Richardson's literary circles. From its initial performances into the next several decades, *Oedipus* was a success for the writers: "Mounted by the Duke's Company in the autumn of 1678, this tragedy 'took prodigiously, being Acted 10

---

<sup>117</sup> Doody, *A Natural Passion*, 106.

<sup>118</sup> Doody, *A Natural Passion*, 106.

Days together,' and remained a stock play until the 1720's."<sup>119</sup> The "incomparable" play, initially appreciated by critics as difficult to please as *Langbaine*, eventually lost its allure: "By the end of the eighteenth century the appeal of the English *Oedipus* had been irrevocably lost."<sup>120</sup> As unappealing as the play might have been to stage, John Bell still included it in his thirty-four volume *British Theatre*: Robert Markley marks Bell's 1790-1797 work as a helpful representative of "what constituted the 'canon' at the time."<sup>121</sup> The fact that Bell included only three Dryden plays in total heightens the significance *Oedipus* still held for readers and critics deep into the eighteenth century; interestingly enough, *All for Love* and *The Spanish Fryar* were Bell's other Dryden plays, all written during the 1670s, while *All for Love* also acts as a significant reference in *Clarissa*.<sup>122</sup> Indeed, the correspondence among three of Richardson's readers further supports how critically important *Oedipus* still was at the time of *Clarissa*'s publication.<sup>123</sup>

Dryden and Lee's play also functions as an important point of reference in discussions of aesthetic and dramatic theory among Richardson's friends and contemporaries. William Duncombe, for example, in his 1748 discussion of Addison's "misrepresented" sentiments on Aristotle from *The Spectator*<sup>124</sup>, argues that "The only proper subject . . . for tragedy is a person

---

<sup>119</sup> James and Helen Kinsley quoting Downes: "'It took prodigiously...being acted ten days together' and reached six editions by 1701." James Kinsley and Helen Kinsley, introduction to *Dryden: The Critical Heritage*, (London: Barnes and Noble, 1971), 5. For more context on the appeal to audiences, see: Paulina Kewes, *Authorship and Appropriation: Writing for the Stage in England 1660-1710* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 154-155.

<sup>120</sup> Kewes, *Authorship and Appropriation*, 157 and 161.

<sup>121</sup> Robert Markley, "The Canon and Its Critics," in *The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre*, ed. Deborah Payne Fisk (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2000), 232.

<sup>122</sup> Markley, "The Canon and Its Critics," 232.

<sup>123</sup> Correspondence among William Duncombe, Joseph Highmore, and George Jeffreys, *Clarissa: The Eighteenth Century Response 1747-1804. Volume I Reading Clarissa*, ed., Lois E. Bueler, (AMC Press, Inc. New York, 2010), 27-41.

<sup>124</sup> *The Spectator*, Number 40 discussed in my introduction

of a mixed character, neither very good, nor very bad; who does not draw for his misfortunes on himself by any enormous crime; but becomes unhappy by infirmities, or some involuntary fault.”<sup>125</sup> Later that year, Duncombe writes to George Jeffreys on this issue of the tragic subject in a way that explicitly addresses Richardson’s relationship to tragic form: “The ingenious author of *Clarissa* has, in a postscript annexed to his last volume, endeavored to justify his conduct in making a very virtuous character unhappy, by the authority of Aristotle and Addison.”<sup>126</sup>

Duncombe goes on to attempt to “reconcile” the disparate readings of the tragic hero and this issue of fault. Duncombe takes issue with the Aristotelian definition of the tragedy demanding that a character must “ ‘draw his misfortunes on himself by some involuntary fault’ ”; against this idea, Duncombe argues: “Now, I think, there can be no ‘fault’ at all, without the consequence of the will; and consequently, that an involuntary fault is a contradiction in terms.”<sup>127</sup> Duncombe then moves on to use Oedipus as the example of the exception to Aristotle’s rules for tragedy, finally offering Dryden’s version as the “reasonable” characterization of Oedipus in part because of Dryden’s emphasis on his hero’s guiltlessness:

Can any thing be more apt to excite ‘horror’ and to drive men into despair, than to see so virtuous a person, as Oedipus is represented to be, (a man adorned with every princely and heroic quality) plunged into such terrible calamities by an absolute decree of the gods, made before he was born, and without any fault of his own? He killed his father, indeed; but ignorantly, and merely in his own defense. He married his mother; but did not suspect her to be his mother, nor had any reason to think so. What just grounds, therefore, can there be for those terrible complaints of his wickedness? The reproach he casts on the

---

<sup>125</sup> Bueler, *Reading Clarissa*, 29.

<sup>126</sup> Bueler, *Reading Clarissa*, 30.

<sup>127</sup> Bueler, *Reading Clarissa*, 30.

gods, in Dryden, is surely more reasonable: ‘Impute my errors to your own decree; My hands are guilty, but my heart is free.’<sup>128</sup>

Duncombe’s letter asks his readers to connect Oedipus and Clarissa in terms of defining them as tragic figures based on their lack of clear faults or flaws. In response, George Jeffreys disagrees with the idea that Sophocles’s Oedipus is “blameless,” but he concurs that Dryden’s Oedipus certainly is, thus making another comparison between Clarissa and Dryden’s Restoration adaptation of the Greek tragedy.<sup>129</sup> In short, the lengthy Duncombe-Jeffreys correspondence on the definition of tragedy highlights the extent to which readers and playgoers in Richardson’s moment felt compelled to draw connections between Clarissa and Dryden’s Oedipus (or tragic heroes more generally).

Richardson’s familiarity with *Oedipus*, though certainly reinforced by his use of quote-books, also likely came from conversations with his close friend Aaron Hill. Hill attended the 1734-35 winter season of *Oedipus* at Covent Garden, writing in *The Prompter* (No. CXVII) on Tuesday, 23 December 1735:

I was under a Concern, of this kind, very lately to observe a too remiss, unjudging Audience, (at Covent-Garden Theatre) unrows’d by some masterly strokes in the play of Oedipus wherein Mr. Ryan out-went any thing I had seen done in it, before; and reach’d (to say all in a Word) the whole Reality, with which Nature herself, cou’d have inspir’d such an aged, terrified, apprehensive, unwilling Discoverer of That Truth, which he

---

<sup>128</sup> Bueler *Reading Clarissa*, 31.

<sup>129</sup> Bueler, *Reading Clarissa*, 35-37.

knows must have Consequences, so fatal—I confess indeed they applauded: but the Applause was disproportion'd to the Merit.<sup>130</sup>

The Hill-Richardson correspondence began “in earnest” in 1736. Given Hill’s background as a former stage manager for Drury Lane along with this being a “well known” member of the literati, it follows that Richardson would be familiar with *Oedipus* beyond any superficial understanding that could be gleaned from the quote-books. Christine Gerrard points out that Hill, unlike so many other readers of *Clarissa*, “never hoped for a happy ending”: She refers to his letter from 12 November 1748: “With how much Justice, Dear Sot, do you tell me Your Clarissa is a work of tragic Species!”<sup>131</sup> Gerrard discusses Hill’s heavy involvement in the early stages of *Clarissa*:

Richardson sent Hill twelve manuscript volumes of *Clarissa*, interleaved with blank pages...However, Hill’s active involvement in the project led him to overstep his editorial role and argue for changes in plot and characterization—changes which Richardson fiercely resisted. Hill explained that, on the grounds of realism, Lovelace’s character should be softened and his motivation altered. He argued strenuously that Clarissa’s behavior in ‘eloping’ with him would be more explicable were she in ‘downright love’ with Lovelace.<sup>132</sup>

Even if we allow that its story should remain tragic, Hill nonetheless acts as an example of the frustrated reader of *Clarissa*, one who wants it to be a love story rather than an ambiguous tale of power and spirituality. His interest in Greek tragedies and Restoration tragedies is further

---

<sup>130</sup> John Dryden, *The Dramatic Works, Oedipus*, ed. Montague Summers (London: Nonesuch Press, 1932), 347.

<sup>131</sup> Christine Gerrard, ed., *Samuel Richardson: Correspondence with Aaron Hill and Hill Family* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), xxxvii.

<sup>132</sup> Gerrard, *Samuel Richardson: Correspondence*, xli.

discussed in a letter from 29 November 1748 in which Gerrard notes that in “the Postscript to volume VII of *Clarissa*” Richardson “laments the fact that ‘English writers of Tragedy....Are possessed with the Notion...That they are obliged to an equal distribution of Rewards and Punishments, and an Impartial Execution of Poetical Justice.’” Hill responds to Richardson by writing:

Dear Sir! To what increase, of more than human Power to mould the Soul, have you inflam’d this closing Scene of your Angelic Prodigy!! It is not to be borne!—Why does your Postscript throw away a single word about Poetic Justice? You move, through every not to be describ’d Enchantment, of this amiably killing Progress, twenty thousand times more forcibly, than all the Tragedies, of all the Nations in the World; from Athens, down to Otway!<sup>133</sup>

Rather than interpreting their correspondence as a one-way street of influence—as McKillop does when he assumes Hill whispered all of the interesting theatrical ideas in Richardson’s ear—I would argue that their correspondence further establishes that both men were invested in the connections between Greek tragedy and Restoration drama. Indeed, they seem interested in the kinds of intertextuality between cultural moments than motivate my own project. Gerrard mentions that in the Postscript, Richardson “aligns *Clarissa* with Greek tragedy” and that “He also identifies *Venice Preserv’d* and *The Orphan*...as some of the best English tragedies.”<sup>134</sup> The popularity of *Oedipus* aside, Richardson and his literary circle displayed great critical admiration for Dryden’s play, which rarely invites close analysis.

Richardson’s characters in *Clarissa* quote Dryden and Lee’s *Oedipus* directly three times. The first instance of this intertextual connection comes in Letter 174, Clarissa Harlowe to Anna

---

<sup>133</sup> Gerrard, *Samuel Richardson: Correspondence*, 279-280.

<sup>134</sup> Gerrard, *Samuel Richardson: Correspondence*, 280.

Howe; the second in Letter 261, Robert Lovelace to John Belford (contained in Clarissa's Paper X); and the third in Letter 419, Belford to Lovelace.<sup>135</sup> Much attention has been given to Lovelace's relationship to Restoration culture and to Dryden particularly, with critics noting the shocking and exciting Letter 31, which introduces readers to this rakish character for the first time. Elaine McGirr, for example, focuses on how references to Restoration literature shape Lovelace's self-presentation, arguing that he writes in "an affected 'Roman style' with stilted and anarchized diction" that effectively advertises his letters' "artificiality" and "literariness"; for McGirr, Lovelace's "Roman style" is essentially "a composite of tags, texts, and sentiments, plagiarized from Restoration drama."<sup>136</sup> The problem with McGirr's reading here—which I take to be representative of a broader trend in studies of Richardson—is not so much that she is wrong to claim that Lovelace "adopts Restoration tragedy to express his feelings," but rather that she implies Lovelace is the only character in the novel who relies upon Restoration dramatic models for self-definition. McGirr uses Lovelace's literary references to prove that Richardson "recasts" and "inverts [the] moral superiority" of "Dryden's super-heroes," showing them to be "decidedly un-heroic" by establishing their connection to Lovelace—but she never considers how Clarissa would fit within such an argument.<sup>137</sup> McGirr's claim depends upon a reading of *Clarissa* that essentially ignores all of the quotes and allusions that Clarissa herself makes to many of the same works Lovelace cites. It is true, however, that Lovelace's tendency toward hyper-quotation often reveals his egocentric understanding of heroic dramas and she-tragedies,

---

<sup>135</sup> Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa: or, the History of a Young Lady*, ed. Angus Ross (New York: Penguin, 2004). Ross's edition is the version I will use throughout the chapters. Also see: Susan Price Karpuk, *Samuel Richardson's Clarissa, An Index: Analyzing Characters, Subjects, and Place Names with Summaries of Letters Appended* (New York: AMS Press, 2000). Karpuk's index was invaluable for beginning my research on literary references throughout Richardson's rather lengthy novel.

<sup>136</sup> McGirr, "Why Lovelace Must Die," 11.

<sup>137</sup> McGirr, "Why Lovelace Must Die," 14.

from which he takes lines out of context in order to make them work for his own circumstances. Richardson criticizes Lovelace for his opportunistic misreading of the tragedies; compared to him, Clarissa is the better reader of the Restoration because she considers the context of the passages she cites and does not bend their meaning to suit her whims.

Clarissa reveals her own self-satisfaction, and with that a hint of her fatal flaw (pride), as she makes her first reference to Restoration literature in Letter 21 (to Anna Howe), alluding to John Dryden's prose in order to poke fun at Roger Solmes. In a description that anticipates Jane Austen's Mr. Collins (from *Pride and Prejudice*), with his clumsy gait and his presumptuous attitude, Clarissa describes Solmes thusly:

The man stalked in. His usual walk is by pauses, as if (from the same vacuity of thought which made Dryden's clown whistle) he was telling his steps: and first paid his clumsy respects to my mamma, then to my sister, and next to me, as if I were already his wife and therefore to be last to his notice; and sitting down to me, told us in general what weather it was. Very cold he made it; but I was warm enough. Then addressing himself to me: And how do you find it, miss, was his question; and would have took my hand. I withdrew it, I believe with disdain enough: my mamma frowned; my sister bit her lip. I could not contain myself: I never was so bold in my life, for I went on with my plea, as if Mr. Solmes had not been there. My mamma coloured and looked at him, looked at my sister, and looked at me. My sister's eyes were opener and bigger than ever I saw them before. The man understood me. He hemmed, and removed from one chair to another.<sup>138</sup>

Clarissa description of Mr. Solmes does not mince words when it comes to her clear sense of her superiority to this bumbling man. Referring to "Cymon and Iphigenia" by Boccaccio, from

---

<sup>138</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 114. ( L21, Clarissa to Anna.)

Dryden's *Fables Ancient and Modern* (1700), Clarissa describes Solmes as having "the same vacuity of thought which made Dryden's clown whistle," alludes to Dryden's line describing how Cymon "trudg'd along unknowing what he sought,/And whistled as he went for want of thought." Clarissa announces Dryden's name over Boccaccio's, so the interpreter/translator gets the credit. Clarissa uses Dryden to make a joke to her friend, demonstrating how her razor-sharp wit can marshal obscure Restoration poetry for her satirical purposes.

Clarissa's esoteric use of Dryden announces an intimacy between herself and Ms. Howe, and it sets up an important discussion between the two women that will be continued shortly thereafter. In Letter 28, Clarissa, not wanting to be labeled as "a silly love-sick creature"<sup>139</sup> by anyone (especially Anna Howe) elaborates upon her claim that the term "love" is too broad a term to be used liberally and without reflection on its particular meaning in different situations:

LOVE, methinks, as a short a word as it is, has a broad sound with it. Yet do I find that one may be driven by violent measures step by step, as it were, into something that may be called—I don't know what to call it—a conditional kind of liking, or so. But as to the word LOVE—justifiable and charming as it is in some cases (that is to say, in all the relative, in all the social and, what is still beyond both, in all of our superior duties, in which it may be properly called divine), it has, methinks, in this narrow, circumscribed, selfish, peculiar sense, no very pretty sound with it.<sup>140</sup>

Clarissa desperately does not want Anna to "let this imputation pass so glibly" from her pen while also taking the "double triumph" of assuming Clarissa's "love" for Lovelace. What is for Clarissa an intellectual discussion on love—and a slight mockery of Anna's tendency towards cheap sentiment—gets transformed into a sinister and violent battle that Lovelace envisions as he

---

<sup>139</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 135.

<sup>140</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 135.

lays out his plan to Belford shortly after this very exchange between Clarissa and Anna. In short, Clarissa's references to Restoration works often enable moments of more complex intellectual reflection or spiritual questioning, as in her analytical discussion of "love" with Anna Howe, while Lovelace tends to manipulate the references he makes to fit his own whims, to justify his machinations and his declarations of love with literary allusions<sup>141</sup>; his reliance on Restoration literature suggests a certain showboating as a writer, and it reveals the competitive quality of his relationship with Belford.<sup>142</sup>

Lovelace ends his letter with a long quote from "Absalom and Achitophel," leaving Belford to interpret his use of it, just as Lovelace often places his reader into a contextless space when he refers to Restoration drama. In his direct use of Dryden's poem here, "the part of Dryden's lion" certainly works with the figure of the "lion slumbr'ng" in terms of the way Lovelace has resigned himself to be "all gentle" in his "movements" with the innkeeper's daughter, whom he nicknames Rosebud: "Her hand shall be the only witness to the pressure of my lip—my trembling lip: I know it will tremble, if I do not bid it tremble. As soft as the sighs as the sighs of my gentle Rosebud." This interpretation of Lovelace's reference is rendered still more complicated, however, by the fact that the term "lion" is listed under the heading of "Proteus" in the 1714 edition of *The Art of English Poetry*—a quote-book Richardson likely used in the process of finding appropriate citations from Restoration plays for use in *Clarissa*—and

---

<sup>141</sup> Aside from his dependence on Dryden's drama from Bysshe's category of "protestations of love," Lovelace's reading of some poetry in Letter 35 seemingly deviates far from Dryden's emphasis to the political context of the Poplish plot with his political allusions to Charles II and Shaftbury as represented through David and Zimri, *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681). Lovelace uses the poem to express his personal torment, again, making the poem's lines refashion themselves to his egocentric interpretation: "By my humility will I invite her confidence...but little will I complain of, not at all will I threaten those who are continually threatening me." Still he quotes with a view to act the part of Dryden's lion.

<sup>142</sup> This relationship and letter 31 will be discussed at length in Chapter Three.

Proteus is a figure to whom Lovelace elsewhere likens himself (when he's not referring to himself as Jupiter).<sup>143</sup> This lion figure also appears in yet another one of Dryden's works, his translation of Virgil.<sup>144</sup> The lion in the translation is particularly related to the character of Lovelace when we consider the context of how he fancies himself a very Proteus. Bysshe cites the relevant passage from Dryden:

The flipp'ry God will try to loose his Hold,  
 And various Forms assume to cheat thy Sight,  
 And with vain Images of Beasts affright,  
 With foamy Tusks will seem a brissly Boar,  
 Or imitate the Lion's angry Roar;  
 Break out in crackling Flames to shun thy Snares,  
 Or hiss a Dragon, or a Tyger stares...  
 Convinc'd of Conquest he resumes his Shape.<sup>145</sup>

Dryden's Proteus can only *imitate* the dragon, the tiger, and the lion, just as Lovelace himself imitates so many figures including Proteus (imitating the imitator) in a strategy of self-fashioning that highlights the constant artificiality of Lovelace's character. His quoting from the Restoration in and of itself does not suggest the falsity of Lovelace's character, but his failure to comprehend the quotes and to recognize the irony of referring, for instance, to Dryden's lion, which functions

---

<sup>143</sup> Bysshe, *The Art of English Poetry* Volume II, 1714 edition, 386.

<sup>144</sup> Indeed, the fact that Bysshe prioritizes the translator over the author of *The Aeneid* is itself representative of the Restoration's dominance over not simply the Early Modern period but over the classics as well in his quote-book. For a discussion on Bysshe's methodology see: Stephen Jarrod Bernard, "Edward Bysshe and *The Art of English Poetry*: Reading Writing in the Eighteenth Century." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 46 (2012): 113-129.

<sup>145</sup> Bysshe, *The Art of English Poetry*, 386-387.

as a figure for imitation itself, forces the knowing reader to question Lovelace's hermeneutic practices, whether he is reading Restoration literature or interpreting Clarissa herself.

Lovelace's misreadings also allow us to recognize the differences between his and Clarissa's contrasting uses of literary allusion. The reader feels the weight of the lines from Dryden's poem all the more since Clarissa's correspondence then dominates a large section of what follows—Letter 37 to Letter 94—and the move away from Lovelace's consistent references to Restoration drama and poetry might signal why modern and contemporary critics like McGirr often assume that only Lovelace draws on these sources. Lovelace's prolonged absence from the novel is more pronounced because of how entertaining the first few pieces of his correspondence are in contrast to the more mannered and finely-crafted prose of Clarissa and Anna Howe. Lovelace and Clarissa eventually discuss one another's pride, and just as they use quotes in completely different ways, so too do define their shared flaw in starkly contrasting ways.

Clarissa writes to Ms. Howe, in Letter 91:

My aunt mentioned Mr. Lovelace's boasting behavior to his servants: perhaps he may be so mean. But as to my brother, he always took a pride in making himself appear to be a man of parts and learning to our servants. Pride and Meanness, I have often thought, are as nearly allied, and as close borderers upon each other, as the poet tells us Wit and Madness are.<sup>146</sup>

Like Lovelace, Clarissa uses Dryden's "Absalom and Achitophel," alluding particularly to the line "Great Wits are sure to Madness near allied" without making the reference as overt as Lovelace tends to do; moreover, Clarissa's mode of citation relies upon Dryden's poem to explain a concept rather than to associate herself with the grand figures within it. Clarissa's

---

<sup>146</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 369.

subtle use of Restoration quotes might also be one of the reasons her penchant for them has been so much ignored in current scholarship. She requires her reader not simply to recognize the quotes (as Lovelace expects from Belford) but also to catch her moments of paraphrase in ways that wink to the sharper reader and that suggest both her own literary acumen and Ms. Howe's. The line referred to in the aforementioned quote also foreshadows the Mad Papers from which we know Clarissa's "wit" is "near allied" with her own "madness."

While Clarissa's reference to Dryden determines a general connection between pride and cruelty, she means more specifically to attack her brother's character and ends up inadvertently striking at her own basic flaws as well. It follows that she would not recognize her own pride this early in the story and therefore also would not realize she is criticizing herself as she judges James Harlowe. Meanwhile, Lovelace has already determined that her pride is tied to her femininity while also broadly categorizing the entire Harlowe family as prideful. In Letter 108 to Belford, he writes:

What can be done with a woman who is above flattery, and despises all praise but that which flows from the approbation of her own hearts? But why will this admirable creature urge her destiny? Why will she defy the power is absolutely dependent upon?— Why will she still wish to my face that she had never left her father's house?...And why, she is offended, does she carry her indignation to the utmost length that a scornful beauty in the very height of her power and pride can go?<sup>147</sup>

Among all of these letters, filled with close inspections of ideologies and philosophies, Richardson continuously reminds us how Lovelace reads Clarissa's pride as rooted in her beauty and her virtue. Lovelace misreads Clarissa as much as he misreads the drama he quotes. But

---

<sup>147</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 423.

despite his flawed use of tragedies and poems, Lovelace's complexity derives from his ability to understand aspects of Clarissa that other people do not recognize, regardless of his general tendency to misconstrue. He might be wrong about the motivation behind Clarissa's pride, but he is right to pinpoint that flaw as the aspect of her character that keeps them in a constant power struggle. As Clarissa becomes more aware of her inability to escape Lovelace, her "unhappy situation" makes her recognize her own hand in the events. Her complete recognition that it is this very pride that keeps her from leaving Lovelace emerges with her first direct reference to *Oedipus*.

In Letter 174, Clarissa quotes the last lines from the third act of the play, a scene in which Laius (Oedipus's dead father) appears as a ghost. She ends her letter with this quote, much like Lovelace ends earlier letters with long unexplained quotes from Dryden. Clarissa's reference to Oedipus, however, does not reinforce her character as we might think we know it at this point in the novel. Rather, considering the context of the scene and the way Clarissa changes the words to suit her occasion, her use of *Oedipus* suggests her self-recognition as a masculine heroic figure:

To you, great gods! I make my last appeal:

Or clear my virtues, or my crimes reveal.

If wand'ring in the maze of life I run,

And backward tread the steps I sought to shun,

Impute my errors to your own decree;

My feet are guilty; but my heart is free.<sup>148</sup>

Before Clarissa uses this quote, she acknowledges how her correspondent, Anna Howe, might understand and disapprove of the lines: "It were an impiety to adopt the following lines, because

---

<sup>148</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 568. Note: Correspondence among William Duncombe, Joseph Highmore and George Jeffreys mentioned earlier in this chapter refers to this same quote.

it would be throwing upon the decrees of Providence a fault too much my own.”<sup>149</sup> Clarissa recognizes how the quote from *Oedipus* deals with fate and freewill in a way similar to her own attempts to balance her agency against her sense of God’s will. Clarissa has altered the original text, however, and her psychological connection to it might be revealed by these changes. The original lines from Oedipus’s speech to Jocasta show us Richardson’s small but significant changes to the text:

Oedipus: To you, good Gods, I make my last appeal;

Or clear my Vertues or my Crime reveal:

If wandering in the maze of Fate I run,

And backward trod the paths I sought to shun,

Impute my Errours to your own Decree;

My hands are guilty, but my heart is free.<sup>150</sup>

The first line marks the general tonal difference between the original text and Clarissa’s alteration of it. While the original text uses the comma splice and semicolon to suggest a more calm and controlled, perhaps even respectful, appeal from Oedipus to the gods, Clarissa modifies the punctuation and makes the strange choice to end the exclamation with an incomplete sentence, “To you, great gods!” The change to the punctuation suggests an impatience on her part to express the emotion, and while the act of quoting often implies a kind of distancing of the text from the speaker’s emotional self, Clarissa’s frantic change and her fragmented sentence imply her desire to express the emotion of that opening while also foreshadowing the much more obviously fragmented quotes she will use to express her sense of madness and terror after the rape.

---

<sup>149</sup> Richardson, 568.

<sup>150</sup> John Dryden, *Oedipus*, 397-398.

Clarissa immediately emphasizes the importance of “gods” both by attaching that word to the exclamation mark and by changing Dryden and Lee’s “good gods” to her own “great gods!” The change from “good” to “great” reveals that she wants to emphasize for Anna the fact that she is subject to a much stronger supernatural force: using the term “great” suggests more clearly the hierarchical relationship within which Clarissa feels herself subordinated, whereas the word “good” implies the rather more benign and less threatening moral construct that Dryden and Lee implicitly allude to, even as they represent a world distanced from their audience’s Christian framework. Clarissa’s revision also seems significant to understanding the complexity of her archetypal position within the tradition of the sentimental novel: though she is readily associated with a narrative genre that is so often grounded in Christian morality, Clarissa imagines herself here through reference to a pagan figure who is at once detached from monotheistic religion (we are dealing with “gods,” after all) and provocatively related to the religious controversies of Dryden and Lee’s historical moment. Indeed, the religious associations between the Dryden and Lee quote and its own cultural context add more meaning to Clarissa’s use of it in this letter.<sup>151</sup> Dryden and Lee’s play contains just enough allusions to Catholic and Protestant tensions to provide audiences with reference points to its political and religious moment—however much its

---

<sup>151</sup> The Restoration *Oedipus* has remained a literary footnote rather than a location for analysis with critics in the field; the scholarship that has been done typically relates to either its unusual print history, the dual-authorship, or its Popish Plot political moment. For instance, James Anderson Winn points to how the play draws on a number of political personalities, including James II, Monmouth, and Shaftesbury: In the very first scene, the characters discuss Oedipus’s physical resemblance to Laius, just as contemporary gossips made much of the close physical resemblance between Charles and his handsome bastard Monmouth, whose military victory on 17 August 1678 is alluded to in the prologue. Although Dryden and Lee may have completed this play before the Popish Plot scare began in earnest, they were evidently aware of its potential political resonances...some of play’s success may have been due to the good luck or prophetic skill or last-minute revisions by which Dryden and Lee matched their plot to the fantastic Plot now gripping the nation. James Anderson Winn, *John Dryden and His World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 311-314.

setting and story might be divorced from Christianity—reference points that might bear on the Catholic undertones in *Clarissa* that have been discussed with special attention to her musings about joining a nunnery, if only the Harlowes were Catholic: “Were ours a Roman Catholic family, how much happier for me, that they thought a nunnery would answer all their views!”<sup>152</sup> Margaret Doody has explored the potential connection between Dryden and Richardson on the basis of the Catholic ideologies prevalent in their writings.<sup>153</sup>

Further, by pluralizing Oedipus’s singular “crime” into “crimes,” *Clarissa* appears to do two things: first, she moves away from Oedipus’s tendency to avoid recognizing his own fate by reducing his predicament to being the result of one mistake; and second, she creates a symmetrical parallel structure to match the plural form of her “virtues.” This line from Dryden is also misquoted in Bysshe’s *Art of English Poetry*, as well as the *Thesaurus Dramaticus*, where it is found under the heading of “Fate”:

Oedipus: To you, *great Gods*, I make my last Appeal;

Or clear my Virtues, or my *Crimes* reveal:

If wand’ring in the Maze of Fate, I run,

And Backward trod the Paths I sought to shun;

Impute my Errors to your own Decree,

My Hands are guilty, but my Heart is free.<sup>154</sup>

Here *Clarissa*’s revisions of Dryden follow the changes in the quote-books, but other revisions in Richardson’s text add a sense of *Clarissa*’s own idiosyncratic paraphrasing and memory. For

---

<sup>152</sup> Letter 13, 18.

<sup>153</sup> The Popish Plot context of the early productions of *Oedipus* combined with *Clarissa*’s earlier use of *Absalom and Achitophel* further imply the character’s penchant for that time period’s literature.

<sup>154</sup> *Thesaurus Dramaticus*, 128.

example, while Dryden's Oedipus describes himself as running in the "maze of fate" and treading backward "paths" he "ought to shun," Clarissa (imagining herself as Oedipus) refers to herself as running in the "maze of life" and treading backward "steps" she "ought to shun."<sup>155</sup> Clarissa makes his dilemma her own by changing the concept of "fate" to "life"; while Dryden's Oedipus wanders under the direction of a controlling metaphysical force, Clarissa turns his conceit into a description of the literal way she physically wanders through her lived experience in the novel. The implications of this change are reinforced by Clarissa's insistence on her own chosen "steps" as a contrast to the predetermined "paths" Dryden's Oedipus views himself as following.

But Richardson's greatest alteration to Dryden's original text—one further emphasized by its appearing in the last line of the quote—involves Clarissa's insistence that while her "feet are guilty" her "heart is free," when Dryden's Oedipus describes his "hands" as being "guilty" (while his "heart," too, is "free").<sup>156</sup> At first glance, this seems like an odd revision: why should Clarissa emphasize her own feet when Oedipus is of course named after his swollen feet (which would therefore seem like a more appropriate symbol for his guilt)? What does this change do for Clarissa's text and her self-understanding? First, Richardson's revision unifies the governing conceit of the speech, which reflects on the act of wandering (on foot) in a maze. But Clarissa's reference to the guilt of her feet also seems germane to understanding her psychological state at this moment in the novel, imagining the moral failure of her inability to leave Lovelace in physiological terms—just as Oedipus's swollen feet represent the fate he cannot escape, Clarissa's own weakness, represented metonymically here through the physicality of her feet, keeps her locked in Lovelace's world.

---

<sup>155</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 568; Dryden, *Oedipus*, 397-398.

<sup>156</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 568.

Clarissa's use of the *Oedipus* speech reinforces claims critics have made about Clarissa's body functioning as a signifier for her character: through her appropriation of Dryden's text, she figures her body as the reason she remains trapped. Juliet McMaster, for instance, has discussed how Clarissa prioritizes body language over verbal language, finding the former more conducive to the expression of truth: "To a large extent, Clarissa [is] about body language and about the competing sign systems of speech, written language, and the language of gesture and facial expression."<sup>157</sup> One of the paradoxes of Richardson's novel, of course, is that his characters must use the epistolary form to describe their bodies, creating an additional but unavoidable layer of textual mediation between the self and its legible manifestation in a literary form that is often associated with the *immediacy* implied by "writing to the moment"; in this case, however, the mediation of character is rendered even more complicated by the fact that Clarissa is quoting from Dryden's play to express her feelings about her "unhappy yet undersigned error." Just as Clarissa's body language must be expressed through the written language of the letters, Clarissa's self-analysis is filtered through her citational identification with a male literary figure: in a sense, we are twice removed from Clarissa when she refers a text to explain her own predicament.

Because it deals precisely with this moment in Richardson's novel, William Warner's (controversial) reading of Clarissa becomes an important interlocutor for this chapter, both for what Warner implies about Richardson's use of Restoration works and for the way his reading reflects scholars' general disregard for the details of the references Richardson's characters make as a means of defining themselves. Apparently without knowing exactly what the source of her

---

<sup>157</sup> Juliet McMaster, *Reading the Body in Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 194.

quotation is, Warner describes Clarissa's appropriation of Dryden's Oedipus as her way of "reach[ing] a more optimistic note" by "quoting lines of a poem":

Here [Clarissa's] own errors are seen, with some qualifications, in the light of an overarching providential design ("Impute my error to your own decree: My FEET are guilty, but my HEART is free" (II, 266)). Clarissa's speculations about her cousin's letter, and this poem, taken together, repeat a progression commonly enacted by Clarissa in her letters. She starts with a gloomy awareness of a hostile fate, interrogates the arbitrary details that seem to compose that fate, then uncovers the logical cause-effect concatenation which orders these details, and finally feels an exultant acceptance of a divine Providence that glorifies her. (107)

While calling Dryden and Lee's *Oedipus* a "poem" is perhaps forgivable, Warner's reading reduces Clarissa's understanding of fate to its most trivial and simplistic of meanings. Warner cuts four of the lines Clarissa gives to Anna—never acknowledging the source text for this "poem"—and he uses the reference as a jumping off point for his generalistic argument about what "enables Clarissa to assimilate apparently arbitrary events into a life-pattern redolent with meaning and value," schematizing Clarissa's emotional "progression into four discrete 'moments'" (107-108). Interestingly enough, Warner discusses fate without ever mentioning that the lines are taken from one of the most important plays on that theme; instead—and I think this is the truly dangerous aspect of how Warner interprets Clarissa as a reader—he merely incorporates the parts of Oedipus's speech that suggest Clarissa's belief in a "strange" and fatalistic understanding of her circumstances. In fact, even the lines Warner *does* include suggest the very ambivalence that Clarissa reads into them: the feet and the heart are separated from one another in her reflection upon the potential sources of guilt for her "crimes" and "errors." Before

Clarissa quotes the lines, however, she mentions that she is not exactly like Oedipus: as she writes, “It were an impiety to adopt the following lines, because it would be throwing upon the decrees of Providence a fault too much my own. But often do I revolve them, for the sake of the general similitude which they bear to my unhappy yet undersigned error.”<sup>158</sup> Clarissa is a better close-reader than Warner gives her credit for being, and she recognizes her own agency and her mistakes by confirming her connection to the tragic male hero (who remains unnamed in Warner’s analysis).

Reading like a cento, Clarissa’s Paper X, found in Lovelace’s letter to John Belford (Letter 261) provides the Clarissa’s second reference to Dryden and Lee’s *Oedipus* and it helps explain the way she understands death. In her attentive article on Paper X, Stephanie Fysh focuses on the print history of the novel and readers’ visual experienced of the text. Fysh explains how the typography displays Clarissa’s loss of control since her mad papers “are embedded in [Lovelace’s letters] and would be, if we were not reading a printed collection of letters, available to us only in Lovelace’s handwriting.”<sup>159</sup> Clarissa’s literary allusions in Paper X should thus be read with some skepticism since we access them through Lovelace’s mediation. Paper X makes the reader work on a couple of levels to understand Clarissa’s state of mind: not only must we literally move the paper into multiple positions to read the text itself, we must also understand the references Clarissa is making. Clarissa cites a number of texts, including Otway’s *Venice Preserved*, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, and a line from the third act of Dryden’s *Oedipus*. The complexity and detail of Clarissa’s allusions here raise a fundamental question as to whether we are correct in calling it one of Clarissa’s “mad papers” in the first place. If she is able to cite so

---

<sup>158</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 568.

<sup>159</sup> Stephanie Fysh, *The Work(s) of Samuel Richardson* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), 98.

many texts so accurately, how are we to reconcile the apparently considered deployment of her intellect with the idea of Clarissa's being "mad"? The very act of her writing at all suggests the continuing control her mind has over her physical abilities, further complicating how we should read Clarissa's body as a sign of her lack of power in the narrative.

Clarissa's "Mad" Paper X marks the early stages of her transitioning from the rape to her new spiritual life away from Lovelace. This spiritual life, which psychically distances her from her material body, also allows Clarissa to move beyond the imposed gender role Lovelace and her family have used to define her throughout her imprisonment. As importantly, the literary allusions through which Clarissa defines her spiritual state in the novel's denouement enable us to arrive at a more complicated understanding of how she operates as a tragic figure. On the surface, the first part of *Clarissa* reads like a Restoration comedy—Clarissa must run away with the libertine to escape the Whiggish bore—and if Richardson had stayed within those generic conventions, the rape would be coded as seduction and Clarissa would marry Lovelace. Richardson's decision to reject those conventions signals the rape as a moment that should prompt us to revisit the opening of the novel. Richardson's plotting suggests that we are moving at the pace of a comedy until we accept that the libertine will not be redeemed and that the heroine will not forgive him. This tragic structure, then, has generally led critics to connect Clarissa with she-tragedy heroines and their typical descent into a madness of the kind represented by Southerne's *Isabella*, Rowe's *Calista*, and, on my reading, Otway's *Belvidera*. The Mad Papers have tended to encourage just such a reading, as they appear to announce Clarissa's hysterical reaction to the rape, particularly through the haphazardness of their form and typography. But a closer look at the content of the Mad Papers actually suggests a sharp shift away from Clarissa fulfilling the role of she-tragedy (as Lovelace has framed her) and towards

her imagining her heroic fate as that of a male tragic figure. Clarissa's appropriation of quotations from Otway's Jaffeir, Hamlet's Ghost, and Dryden's Oedipus supports my argument that her relationship with Lovelace not only rejects the heteronormative seduction plot but also allows us to read Restoration tragedies from a queer-theoretical perspective. More specifically, the lines she cites in Mad Paper X demand not only that we confront Clarissa's self-identification with Jaffeir, but also that we consider the identification of Anna Howe with Belvidera.

Clarissa's queer relationship with Anna Howe develops through the intimacy and shared privacy of their correspondence, and through Clarissa allusions to *Venice Preserv'd*: here Richardson's references to Restoration drama allow Clarissa to develop literary analogies for her friendship with Anna, just as they allow the reader to recognize the queerness of Clarissa's reading practices. Clarissa quotes twice from the fourth act of Otway's tragedy, referring to the scene in which Jaffeir is being led by Belvidera through the streets to the Senate house. Clarissa alludes directly to the moment when Jaffeir is taken by the guards, as she writes to Anna, "Lead me, where my own thoughts themselves may lose me; / Where I may doze out what I've left of life, / Forget myself; and that's day's guilt! / —Cruel remembrance!—how shall I appease thee?"<sup>160</sup> Clarissa cuts the "Sir, if possible" that introduces the words "Lead me" in Otway's text, thus allowing this line to slide more easily into a gender neutral place wherein she can later continue in character as Jaffeir talking to Anna Howe as Belvidera.

The next line, however, which alludes to the moment after Jaffeir and Pierre have argued over his loyalties, further complicates Clarissa's relationships both to Anna and to Lovelace:

Oh my Miss Howe! If thou has friendship, help me,

And speak the words of peace to my divided soul,

---

<sup>160</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 893.

That wars within me,  
 And raises ev'ry sense to my confusion.  
 I'm tott'ring on the brink  
 Of peace; and thou art all the hold I've left!  
 Assist me—in the pangs of my affliction!<sup>161</sup>

Otway's original lines address Pierre's suspicions about Jaffeir, right at the point when Jaffeir is about to offer Belvidera a confession about his having betrayed the cause:

Jaffeir: Oh Belvidera! I'm the wretchedest creature  
 E'er crawled on earth: now if thou'st virtue, help me;  
 Take me  
 Into thy arms and speak the words of peace  
 To my divided soul that wars within me  
 And raises every sense to my confusion;  
 Oh Heav'n, I am tottering on the very brink  
 Of peace, and thou art all the hold I've left.<sup>162</sup>  
 (4.2. 339-345)

Clarissa's alterations to the original lines signal her interpretation of *Venice Preserv'd's* characters as easily slipping between gender identities. She initially seems to place herself in the role of Jaffeir and Miss Howe in the role of Belvidera, transforming the language of love into the language of friendship: indeed, she changes "virtue" to "friendship," a move that particularly challenges how we are to interpret Clarissa as constantly thinking about maintaining her own

---

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Thomas Otway, *Venice Preserved; or, A Plot Discovered*, in *Six Restoration Plays*, ed. John Harold Wilson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), 298-299.

virtue. Rather than thematically connecting Clarissa to Otway's play by explicitly highlighting the discussion of "virtue" in this scene, Richardson reveals Clarissa's interpretation of virtue as synonymous with friendship in a way that implies her own recognition of the context of the scene she draws from while also recalling her connection to Jaffeir's major dilemma. Clarissa, familiar with the context of Act IV since she has recently attended a production of Otway's play, knows that Jaffeir is torn between his friendship to Pierre and his love to Belvidera. In a typical reading of *Venice Preserv'd*, we would associate Pierre with friendship and the political-public sphere, on the one hand, and Belvidera with virtue and the domestic private sphere, on the other. In this appropriation of Otway, however, Clarissa's identification of herself with Jaffeir effectively positions Anna as Pierre and, implicitly, Lovelace as Belvidera. Clarissa uses Otway's lines to analogize her platonic friendship with Howe, paralleling their homosocial bond with that between Pierre and Jaffeir. Just as Clarissa does not depend upon the virtuous heroine to express her madness and her transition away from Lovelace, so does she recognize the ways in which Otway's political tragedy privileges male friendship over heterosexual relationships—and it is precisely this model of male friendship with which she most deeply identifies in the moment, and which she evokes to understand her relationship to Anna.

Richardson certainly could have found these lines in *The Art of English Poetry*, where they are found under the heading of "despair" along with lines from *The Fair Penitent*, *Oedipus*, and *All for Love*. But the passage as Bysshe quotes it is a kind of hybrid version that combines previous lines spoken by Belvidera with those Clarissa quotes from Jaffeir; Bysshe's entry runs like this:

Whither shall I fly?

Where hide me, and my Miseries together?

Oh Belvidera! I'm the wretched'st Creature  
 E'er crawl'd on Earth. Now, if thou'st Virtue, help me,  
 Take me into thy Arms, and Speak the Words of Peace  
 To my divided Soul that wars within me,  
 And raises ev'ry Sense to my Confusion,  
 By Heav'n, I'm tott'ring on the very Brink  
 Of Peace, and thou art all the Hold I've left  
 Do thou at least with charitable Goodness,  
 Afflict me in the Pangs of my Afflictions<sup>163</sup>

Bysse pulls Belvidera's speech together with parts of Jaffeir's, and then jumps ahead about twenty lines to tag on the slightly altered lines "Do thou at least with charitable Goodness, / Afflict me in the Pangs of my Afflictions."<sup>164</sup> Bysse not only changes the dialogue into a speech, he redirects the theme to fit into his "despair" category when Jaffeir and Belvidera (though full of despair as they often are through the play) are actually discussing Pierre and how he has used Jaffeir "like a slave."<sup>165</sup> Richardson's *Clarissa* also alludes to the lines added by Bysse ("Afflict me in the Pangs of my Afflictions...," but she cuts the lines from Belvidera ("Whither shall I fly? Where hide me, and my Miseries together?"). While it seems clear that Richardson does use the quote book in this case, given the extent to which *Clarissa*'s cuts and jumps match those in Bysse's text, I would argue that Richardson's decision not to stay completely true to the quote-book or to Otway ultimately enables *Clarissa*'s queer gender identifications in Mad Paper X.

---

<sup>163</sup> Bysse, *The Art of English Poetry* 1714 Edition, 104.

<sup>164</sup> Otway's original dialogue goes "Be still at least with charitable goodness/Be near me in the pangs of my affliction" (4.2.366-367.)

<sup>165</sup> Otway, 4.2.353.

Clarissa's revisions to the lines from *Venice Preserv'd* not only call attention to the play's investment in male friendship, they also illustrate how much that friendship echoes the emotional terms of the romantic relationship between Belvidera and Jaffeir. While Bysshe's decision to pull Belvidera and Jaffeir's dialogue into one speech suggests a unity between Otway's hero and heroine, Richardson's further revisions to these passages signal his recognition that Bysshe to a certain extent manufactured this heterosexual unity only by altering the play's original lines. Richardson removes Belvidera from the equation, insisting that Clarissa speak only Jaffeir's lines. He does not want Clarissa to be read as Belvidera any more than he wants her to be read as Calista. Like Otway's Jaffeir, who dies for a cause rather than dying for Belvidera, Clarissa privileges her principles over love. Interestingly, while Jaffeir and Pierre's staged decision to privilege death over love—like so many heroic male figures in eighteenth-century drama, including the equally popular Cato—was valued and enjoyed by audiences, Clarissa's rejection of the love-story/seduction-plot narrative often left readers cold, to such an extent that many readers complained about the tragic ending to Richardson's novel and even wrote their own proto-fan fiction to change it.

While Clarissa identifies primarily with male figures in her Paper X, one reference she makes to a female character in Restoration tragedy stands out all the more because of its singularity: in Paper X Clarissa alludes to a speech Eurydice delivers to Creon in Dryden's *Oedipus*:

Death only can be dreadful to the bad:

To innocence 'tis like a bugbear dress'd

To frighten children. Pull but off the mask

And he'll appear as a friend.<sup>166</sup>

The first key difference between Clarissa's use of this *Oedipus* quote and her earlier allusion to the play in Letter 174 is the accuracy of Paper X's reference to the original text. Clarissa does not change the words and makes only a minimal punctuation change, altering the semicolon in the phrase "To frighten children; pull but off his Masque" to a period.<sup>167</sup> Her accurate use of the quote makes the earlier appropriation of *Oedipus* all the more perplexing in terms of her understanding of the text and how Richardson wants us to read her madness. The line itself deals directly with the potential death-wish Clarissa has after Lovelace rapes her, but it also suggests her capacity for dark humor, a character trait usually attributed to Lovelace. Max Novak points out, for example, the etymology of the word "bugbear":

The bug or bugbear was a sort of hobgoblin invoked by nurses to frighten children. The examples cited in *OED* and in Tilley, B703, give no clear parallel to Dryden's image of the man dressed up as a bugbear... These figures participate in a comic entertainment. Since the imaginary bugbear inspired groundless terror, it was associated with death among other things, see e.g. *The Winter's Tale* III.ii.91-92 and Dryden's 'The Translation of the Latter Part of the Third Book of Lucretius' (*Works*, III, 48).<sup>168</sup>

The scene Clarissa draws from parallels her relationship with Lovelace; Creon is the older predator to the virtuous Eurydice in the play, and in that same scene Eurydice says to Creon: "I was thinking / On two [of] the most detested things in Nature: / And they are death and thee

---

<sup>166</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 893.

<sup>167</sup> Dryden, *Oedipus*, 383.

<sup>168</sup> Maximillian E. and Alan Roper, eds. *The Works of John Dryden: Plays, All for Love, Troilus and Cressida, and Oedipus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 480-481.

[Creon].”<sup>169</sup> While Clarissa identified with Oedipus before the rape—in terms of her wandering, losing her connections to her family, and feeling a lack of agency as she was slowly losing control to Lovelace—after the rape she relates to the female character in the play, one who was given much more emphasis in Dryden’s version than in the original Sophocles play. Indeed, the Creon/Eurydice subplot of *Oedipus* is truly representative of the Restoration age. Creon, as James Winn notes, is a not so subtle “caricature of Shaftesbury” and physically resembles him, being performed with a hunchback.<sup>170</sup> Eurydice will later literally be killed by Creon, just as many readers might blame Clarissa’s death indirectly on Lovelace. Colonel Morden certainly blames Lovelace, and interestingly makes reference to Shaftesbury himself in one of his final letters that signal his intent to duel with Lovelace.

Clarissa juxtaposes her quote from Eurydice—and her nod back to the “bad” father archetype of Shaftesbury—with a quote from *Hamlet*: “I could a tale unfold—Would harrow up thy soul!”<sup>171</sup> Clarissa cites the moment when Hamlet’s ghost tells his son about his own murder; this seems like a strange moment for Richardson to choose from Shakespeare’s play, considering how different the context of the Hamlet scene is from Clarissa’s own experience. But both Shakespeare’s and Dryden’s texts involve characters’ confrontation with the past in a way that would resonate with Clarissa’s own reflections on the events of the novel. Oedipus and Hamlet confront their fathers’ ghosts in order to learn the truth about their present circumstances. These two allusions in Paper X also are tied together through their incestuous undertones: Creon is the creepy uncle who desires Eurydice; Hamlet’s dead father bemoans the incestuous implications of his wife marrying his brother. Clarissa’s references to both the feminine figure of tragedy from

---

<sup>169</sup> Dryden, *Oedipus*, 382.

<sup>170</sup> Winn, *Dryden*, 312.

<sup>171</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 893.

*Oedipus* and the hyper-masculine paternal figure of Hamlet's ghost ultimately allow the reader to recognize the flexibility of Clarissa's gender identifications.

Taken together, Clarissa's references to Dryden and Otway foreground the extent to which she relies upon identification with predominantly male characters from Restoration plays to come to terms with trauma. Indeed, Richardson has his primary antagonists constantly defining themselves through allusions to Restoration literary figures in ways that disrupt both the heteronormative seduction plot and cisgendered notions of identity more generally. As we will see in the next chapter, this claim applies just as much to Lovelace's penchant for cross-gendered modes of identification as it does to Clarissa's.

### CHAPTER 3

#### RICHARDSON'S LOVELACE AND THE SPECTACLE OF FEMALE SUFFERING

Scholarship on Richardson has tended to examine his relationship to Restoration drama by insisting that the characterization of Lovelace borrows from the earlier period's representations of libertines and male tragic heroes, while Clarissa herself is (unsurprisingly) modeled after its tragic heroines. Richardson complicates conventional readings of midcentury gender construction, however, not only by insisting on the way male characters in Restoration drama serve as models for Clarissa's self-understanding, but also by establishing allusive connections between Lovelace and a range of feminine or feminized tragic figures. This chapter extends the previous chapter's queering of Richardson's *Clarissa* in order to highlight the complex relationship between the early English novel and Restoration tragedy. By ignoring the connections between literary genres and historical periods that are often imagined in binaristically opposed ways, we also allow for a larger, albeit more insidious, problem to develop: we assume a false history of the novel, creating a startling series of strict categorical boundaries between literary forms, and we then take for granted the legitimacy of an English canon as constituted by those unreliable, oversimplified labels. Studies of eighteenth-century canon formation have suggested the relative unimportance of Restoration literature to eighteenth-century novelists and dramatists, implying a certain lack of cultural memory regarding Restoration plays throughout the later period. Much work remains to be done on the compelling intertextual relationship mid-eighteenth century writers established with Restoration literature.

In order to consider this relationship, it is important to understand how midcentury writers accessed and understood the Restoration plays to which they were referring. Restoration plays were being performed less and less frequently, but both the printed versions of the plays

and the quote-books that anthologized their better-known passages suggest a continuing cultural recognition of their value. Novelists and dramatists alike referred to the Restoration with a consistency that contradicts the idea of a cultural amnesia with regard to its plays, poetry, and prose. By considering the intertextual connections between the mid eighteenth century and the Restoration, I believe we can complicate our understanding both of the rise of the novel and of changes in eighteenth-century theatrical taste. Keeping in mind that important work has already contradicted the phallogentric understanding of the rise of the novel, I would like to extend a queer-historicist reading of Richardson by looking at the complicated and elastic nature of gender roles in his enormously influential second novel. Such a reading is not intended to establish a simple cause and effect relationship of influence between the literature of the Restoration and the beginnings of the English novel; rather, by looking at Richardson's hero and his heroine—and the archetypes of masculinity and femininity they have been taken to represent—borrow from Restoration models in establishing their identities, we can understand the ideologies that both shaped the work of mid-eighteenth century writers while also considering how those writers reshaped gender distinctions.

Chapter Two focused on questioning the readings of Clarissa as only defined through the tropes of the she-tragedy heroine by turning to her reliance on Dryden and Lee's *Oedipus* and the ways in which her pride suggests a masculine conceit. Chapter Three will turn to Lovelace and the variety of plays from which he quotes: by recognizing the queer relationships that Lovelace draws upon in those plays and then attempts to create in his own relationships with Clarissa and Belford, we can complicate reading Lovelace as a mere rake or sadistic villain. While I would not argue that Lovelace does not act as a victimizer to Clarissa, I would assert that he is a victim of his culture's normative definition of heterosexuality. While I have previously asserted that

Clarissa does achieve the tragically fated and essentially masculine quest that results in death, Lovelace cannot fully capture a stabilized gender identity based on his Restoration models: he is never the Lothario he wants to be, but he is also never fully redeemed as a penitent.

I have chosen to focus on Richardson's canonical mid-eighteenth-century novel in these chapters for two key reasons. First, the sheer number of references to the Restoration throughout the letters in *Clarissa* lends the novel to more extended close-reading on the issues with which my project engages. Second, Richardson's dependence on mediated sources in *Clarissa* shapes his understanding of both the literary marketplace and the early development of the canon. As a printer and as a popular author, Richardson knew how to sell a novel, and he certainly wanted *Clarissa* to do well in the marketplace; his use of Restoration literature strongly suggests the continuing popularity of the works he cites, the cultural recognition of the previous period's well-known verse, and the continuing assumption that Restoration literature was still something to be valued—that engagement with that literature could still be an index of literary taste.

Richardson's reliance on the theatrical tragic form has been well explained by previous scholars as a necessary one; Noyes, for instance, reminds us that early novelists like Richardson, not having a large sampling of novels to mimic, relied on Aristotelean dramatic forms. And while his novel's form certainly suggests a reliance on those aesthetic ideals from Restoration plays like Dryden's *All for Love*, this chapter is more invested in the content of the plays from which Richardson's characters quote and the context of those quotes. My project attempts to consider how mid- to late-eighteenth-century readers and audience members remembered the Restoration theatre and early novellas. Richardson accesses and then redistributes the Restoration to his readers, using mediating works that helped determine the most memorable lines from those plays. Richardson, like Garrick, perhaps limited later eighteenth-century literary culture's

understanding of Restoration literature, but they also enabled later generations' access to that literature as well, highlighting its relevance to contemporary thinking about gender.

While Chapter Two focused on Clarissa's specific relationship to heroic Restoration figures, I would now like to look at the important dramatic female figures Lovelace draws upon. I argue that Lovelace shares some common ground with the "wanton" women of Restoration she-tragedies; paradoxically, Lovelace relies much more on these female figures for his sense of identity than he would ever allow Belford to know. Ultimately, Lovelace's inability to fully narrate his own destiny, his loss of control over the narratives he wants to orchestrate, his lack of real power over Clarissa, his loss of friendships and community, and even his final ambiguous words obscuring our sense of his shame or guilt—all of these elements of his character correspond with Rowe's Calista and with other she-tragedy heroines.

### **Lovelace and/as the She-Tragedy Heroine: Rowe and Otway in *Clarissa***

Nicolas Rowe's *The Fair Penitent* and Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserv'd* typically begin any conversation on Richardson's use of Restoration drama in *Clarissa*. Indeed, Samuel Johnson asserted a connection between Lovelace and *The Fair Penitent*'s Lothario, arguing that Lovelace was a great improvement on the archetypal character: "Lothario, with gaiety which cannot be hated, and bravery which cannot be despised, retains too much of the spectator's kindness." In his discussion of the longstanding connection scholars have made between Clarissa and Calista, Alan McKillop also mentions Johnson's observation:

The relation between the story of Clarissa and Rowe's *The Fair Penitent* has been the stock example of the influence of the drama on Richardson ever since Dr. Johnson referred to it in his *Life of Rowe*. Richardson, indeed, invites us to make the comparison,

as Mr. H.G. Ward has pointed out. In Belford's letter on Clarissa's story as a tragedy the parallel between Lovelace and Lothario is considered, though Richardson, who is no doubt giving his own views here, is chiefly concerned to bring out the moral flaws in Rowe by contrasting Clarissa and Calista... [as] Belford then goes on to outline the virtues of Clarissa, as illustrating true penitence and piety. The whole passage resembles the niggling dramatic criticism of *Pamela* in its censure of stormy passion and its application of a narrow moral standard to the characters.<sup>172</sup>

Both Otway and Rowe are explicitly discussed by the characters in the novel during important scenes that help illuminate the development of Lovelace and Clarissa's relationship; as we shall see, these references should seriously complicate our reading of gender construction in the novel.

In order to provide the necessary historical and conceptual background for my argument, however, I should begin with a brief discussion of the dramatic genres and tropes with which Richardson was engaged. The generic term "she-tragedy" was, in fact, coined by Nicholas Rowe, the first Restoration playwright I would like to discuss in this chapter.<sup>173</sup> Performed at Lincoln's Inn Fields in March of 1703, Rowe's *The Fair Penitent* was certainly not the period's first she-tragedy.<sup>174</sup> As noted in Chapter One, plays like Thomas Southerne's *The Fatal Marriage*, along

---

<sup>172</sup> McKillop, *Samuel Richardson: Printer and Novelist*, 145-147.

<sup>173</sup> "Nicholas Rowe is an important literary figure simply because he was the first biographer and editor of Shakespeare, as most of us know... But his greatest important importance—as it should be in ours—is that he was the major tragedian of the early eighteenth-century and became poet laureate in 1715 on that basis. Nearly all of his tragedies were initially successful, and after Shakespeare's, three of them—*Tamlerlane*, *The Fair Penitent*, and *The Tragedy of Jane Shore*—were among the most popular of the century. Historically, Rowe's she-tragedies—*The Fair Penitent*, *Jane Shore*, and *Lady Jane Grey*—influenced not only the development of English and continental domestic tragedy but also Richardson and the development of the novel (*Clarissa* is obviously indebted to *The Fair Penitent*.)" J. Douglas Canfield, *Nicholas Rowe and Christian Tragedy* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1977), 1.

<sup>174</sup> Nicoll dates the premier of *The Fair Penitent* on May of 1703. Citing Emmet L. Avery, Malcolm Goldstein indicates that *The Fair Penitent*—aside from Shakespeare's works—was the

with other works by John Banks and Otway, have also been labeled as she-tragedies. As Jean Marsden notes, however, even if Rowe was not the first, he was “the most famed practitioner of the genre.”<sup>175</sup> *The Fair Penitent*, like *The Fatal Marriage*, relies heavily on the stage presence of its lead actress; in fact, the play’s popularity was undoubtedly due to the established star power of the Restoration stage icon, Elizabeth Barry. The insular effect of the domestic setting of the play moves it away from the epic stories of Rome and their concern with public politics, and towards the private dramas of the family.

An unacknowledged adaptation of Philip Massinger and Nathan Field’s *The Fatal Dowry*, Rowe’s play begins with an exposition of events that have already occurred before its own primary action gets underway: a beautiful and pure noble woman, Calista, has been seduced by Lothario (this play is where we get the archetypal name),<sup>176</sup> who crept into her bedchamber and, after a night of passion, grew bored of Calista, casting her aside. Intended to marry another

---

“sixth most frequently performed tragedy in London between 1701 and 1776. For the first twelve years following its opening no performances are on record, but from 1715 until the end of the century it was presented in almost every theatrical season, and it is known to have been presented several times in the nineteenth century.” Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of the Restoration Drama: 1660-1700* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1940), 144. Malcolm Goldstein, introduction to *The Fair Penitent*, by Nicholas Rowe (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1969), xiv. See: Emmet L. Avery, “The Popularity of *The Mourning Bride* in the London Theatres in the Eighteenth-Century,” *Research Studies of the State College of Washington* 4 (1941): 11-116.

<sup>175</sup> Marsden, Jean L. Marsden, “Tragedy and Varieties in Serious Genres,” in *Companion to Restoration Literature*, ed. Susan J. Owen (New York: Blackwell, 2008), 264.

<sup>176</sup> Goldstein goes on to provide a little more background on the play’s sources: *The Fatal Dowry*, published in 1632, “but probably written in 1616 or 1619.” Goldstein points out that Rowe most likely assumed his source would be recognized and reminds us of the Augustan playwrights’ penchant for “borrowing” plot. Malcolm Goldstein, introduction to *The Fair Penitent*, XV. J.R. Sutherland disagrees with this chance of detection: “Rowe, who had altered completely the names of Massinger’s characters and put the whole play into an eighteenth-century dress, was not likely to be found out in 1703.” J.R. Sutherland ed., *Three Plays: Tamerlane, The Fair Penitent, Jane Shore by Nicholas Rowe with introduction, bibliography, and notes* (London: The Scholartis Press, 1929), 26.

suitor (Altamont), Calista is now seen as damaged goods by her father and by Altamont's friend, Horatio—although it is unclear to what extent Calista herself thinks she has sinned, and this ambiguity has become one of the central issues of contention in the play's critical reception. As Samuel Johnson remarked on *The Fair Penitent*, for example: "It has been observed that the title of the play does not sufficiently correspond with the behavior of Calista, who at last shews no evident signs of repentance, but may be reasonably suspected of feeling pain from detection rather than from guilt, and expresses more shame than sorrow, and more rage than shame." The play itself foregrounds the characters' unresolvable conflicting interpretations of what actually took place: Altamont's friend Horatio finds out about Calista and Lothario by stumbling upon an incriminating letter Lothario has carelessly left lying around; Horatio tells Altamont about his would-be bride, who refuses to believe the slander until he overhears Calista talking to Lothario, which appears to confirm everything Horatio has already told him. Calista is then banished by her father, Sciolto, which results in her finally admitting to her sins under duress and in her eventual suicide. Calista's state of mind throughout this plot complicates a seemingly uncomplicated play: she seems to recognize her lack of real choices—the decision as to whether she should end up with Lothario or Altamont ultimately rests with the patriarch, her father, and the events that lead to her secret being revealed suggest (as with Southerne's *Isabella*) that external forces make Calista unable to assert control over her private self. Calista's exile—which is cut short by another series of events, the death of her father, and a duel between Lothario and Altamont—might have provided her with the only means of escape from the judgmental men in her life; like the nunnery in *The Fatal Marriage*, however, that space is left to the audience's imagination and never actually staged.

Rowe's Calista has been viewed as a precursor to Richardson's Clarissa largely on the basis of their emblematic quality as suffering, tragic female characters. The implications of McKillop's argument—with his implicit suggestion that we should avoid applying a “narrow moral standard” in our reading of these characters—certainly invites my own dissatisfaction with Johnson's reading of Calista, which has in many ways become the final word in understanding *Clarissa's* relationship with she-tragedies. In fact, Belford's reading of Calista and Clarissa raises important questions about both the psychological depth of the staged heroine and her difference from Clarissa. Calista loses her complexity when Belford only reads her by comparison to Clarissa, and Belford also reduces Clarissa by setting up a moralistic competition between the two characters; we should remember, however, that Richardson foregrounds the idea that Belford does not know how to interpret she-tragedies. Belford misreads Clarissa as much as Lovelace does, if to an opposite end. As Lovelace attempts to make Clarissa his “charmer” or “Rosebud,” Belford constantly places her on a pedestal, pushing for her sainthood. Indeed, these men read Clarissa in much the same way that the eighteenth-century audiences and readers read Cleopatra (the subject of this project's final chapter), whose virtue and vice were often imagined as mutually exclusive qualities.

Clearly, Rowe's plot alone reminds us of *Clarissa*—we can even hear the echoes in the names of Lothario and Lovelace, Calista and Clarissa—however, I think the novel and the play ought not be discussed in terms of those superficial connections.<sup>177</sup> By assuming the

---

<sup>177</sup> Sutherland's quick-draw connection reveals this tendency to pair Calista with Clarissa, presumably because they are both women and both suffer by men: “Calista was sufficiently animated to reappear as Clarissa Harlowe in Richardson's novel.” J.R.. Sutherland ed., *Three Plays: Tamerlane, The Fair Penitent, Jane Shore by Nicholas Rowe with introduction, bibliography, and notes* (London: The Scholartis Press, 1929), 26.

appropriateness of conventional gender-based comparisons, critics have focused on mismatched pairs: Calista and Clarissa have little in common, while Lovelace is far more complicated than Lothario. We should also include in our reading some consideration of how Altamont and his friend, Horatio, can be viewed in relation to Clarissa and Belford: it could be argued that the triangular relationship among Clarissa, Belford, and Lovelace (after the rape) corresponds strongly to the similar connections between Altamont, Horatio, and Calista. More importantly, I would argue that we need to consider reading Lovelace's gender-transgressive connection to Calista, which has never been seriously considered in readings of Richardson's novel.

The first problem with assuming a similarity between Calista and Clarissa rests in the vital difference between Calista's decision to have sex with Lothario, on the one hand, and Lovelace's rape of Clarissa, on the other. As Malcolm Goldsteing has argued, "Lothario is [certainly] a more attractive character than Lovelace, for he is no rapist, and he declares in the first act that he would have married Calista had not his suit been rejected by Sciolto."<sup>178</sup> If we unthinkingly yoke the play to the novel's themes, we are essentially putting seduction and rape into the same category. Such a tendency is obviously not limited to close-readings of eighteenth-century fiction; as Terry Eagleton argues, Clarissa has been tagged as a prude and Lovelace's actions have been dismissed as those of a mere prankster because of the weak readership, or, a lack of recognizing what would seem obvious: the difference between consensual and nonconsensual sex.<sup>179</sup> Richardson never considered the rape in his novel to be a seduction, and this fact should make us reinterpret why he has his characters refer to *The Fair Penitent*. I would

---

Alternatively, Nicoll characterizes Lothario as "a Lovelace of the reign of Anne." Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of the Restoration Drama: 1660-1700* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1940), 99-100.

<sup>178</sup> Malcolm Goldstein, introduction to *The Fair Penitent*, by Nicholas Rowe, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1969), XX.

<sup>179</sup> Terry Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

argue that we have to pay close attention to who is drawing the connections between Rowe's play and Clarissa, Lovelace and Belford; we must then also question the assumptions behind conventional readings of *The Fair Penitent's* Calista: while we cannot equate her relationship with Lothario completely to Clarissa's relationship with Lovelace, I do think we must consider her death scene as having influenced Richardson's depiction of Clarissa's drawn out death. As Marsden importantly highlights, Rowe's Calista "ends her life in an almost heroic fashion."<sup>180</sup> Taking this idea further, I would like to argue that Calista's death scene blurs the lines between the Restoration hero and the she-tragedy victim, a conceptual overlap that Richardson uses to shape his own tragic heroic figures, Clarissa and Lovelace.

Margaret Doody helpfully argues that Richardson essentially makes Belford his Mary-Sue, comparing Clarissa to Calista in order to then insert his own criticisms of Rowe's play into the novel—quite literally, as he includes a footnote distinguishing "good" Restoration plays from "bad" ones. Belford's letter to Lovelace—written after the rape and before Clarissa's death—chastises Lovelace for his own lack of penance, shame, or guilt. As Doody summarizes:

Belford compares Clarissa's story to that of the *Fair Penitent*, largely attacking Rowe's play and its heroine (Clarissa, vii. 132-135). Belford's remarks are introduced mainly in order to enable Richardson to insist, within the novel itself, that the differences between the two works are more interesting than any resemblances, thus forestalling the inevitable critical comparison. In a footnote which Richardson himself appends to Belford's letter, he cites examples of good tragedies (as opposed to Rowe's play).<sup>181</sup>

---

<sup>180</sup> Marsden, 241.

<sup>181</sup> Margaret Doody, *A Natural Passion*, 113.

Indeed, Belford's critique of Calista neatly aligns with the common eighteenth-century criticism of that character—it's particularly similar, in fact, to the negative views found in 1753's *The Lives of Poets* from Theophilus Cibber, who wrote:

Another tragedy of Mr. Rowe's is the *Fair Penitent* [sic], acted at the Theatre in Lincoln's-Inn Fields; and dedicated to the duchess of Ormond: This is one of the most finished performances of our author. The character of Sciolto the father is strongly marked; Horatio's the most amiable of all characters and is so sustained as to strike an audience very forcibly. In this, as in the former play, Mr. Rowe is guilty of a misnomer; for his Calista has not the least claim to be called the Fair Penitent, which would be better changed to be called the Fair Wanton; for she discoveres not one pang of remorse till the last act, and that seems to arise more from external distress to which she is then exposed, than to any compunctions of conscience. She still loves and doats [sic] on her base betrayer though a most insignificant creature. In this character, Rowe has been true to the sex, in drawing a woman as she generally is, fond of her seducer; but he has not drawn a Penitent. The Character of Altamont is one of those which the present players observe, is the hardest to represent of an in the drama; this is a kind of meanness in him, joined with an unsuspecting honest heart, and a doating [sic] fondness for the false fair one, that is very difficult to illustrate: This part has of late been generally given to performers of but very moderate abilities; by which the play suffers prodigiously, and Altamont, who is really one of the most important characters in the drama, is beheld with neglect or perhaps contempt; but seldom with pity.<sup>182</sup>

---

<sup>182</sup> Theophilus Cibber, *The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1753), 276-277.

Cibber, like many of his contemporaries, finds Calista's lack of actual remorse disturbing; more distressing for my purposes, however, is Cibber's assertion that Calista stays true to her sex by being "fond of her seducer" as she "loves and doates on her base betrayer." Most Richardsonians would balk at the notion of Clarissa having ever doted on Lovelace (before or after the rape), and this helps us to pinpoint another important difference between Calista and Clarissa: Clarissa never loves Lovelace as Calista loves Lothario. Cibber's most damning critique of Calista—and one that aligns him with Belford's, or, as Doody would assert, Richardson's point of view—also stands as the most quotable of his remarks: "Mr. Rowe is guilty of a misnomer; for his Calista has not the least claim to be called the Fair Penitent, which would be better changed to be called the Fair Wanton; for she discovers not one pang of remorse till the last act, and that seems to arise more from external distress to which she is then exposed, than to any compunctions of conscience."<sup>183</sup> Here, not only does Cibber articulate his problem with the play (Calista's lack of actual remorse), but he also reveals what I would argue is the actual source of his anxiety about Rowe's character: her sexuality. She ought to be filled with shame for her relationship with Lothario, according to Cibber. Part of what upsets Cibber is Calista's subject positioning, which indicates that the she-tragedy heroine does not function merely as the object of male desire but, in fact, has the same sexual desires as men, making them the objects of her desire. Moreover, Calista's approach also suggests the possibility of women keeping a secret about that very desire, in that she never reveals her relationship with Lothario until outside circumstances force her to do so. Finally, Calista's lack of remorse over her desire suggests that she does not believe her sexuality is immoral—she simply wants more control over her privacy, so that she can pursue sexual intrigue while maintaining her public mask as a "good" woman. Cibber sniffs out Rowe's

---

<sup>183</sup> Cibber, 276.

inability (or his unwillingness) to punish Calista for desiring Lothario; oddly, then, my twenty-first century critical response and Cibber's eighteenth-century one come full circle: we both recognize Calista's lack of remorse when it comes to embracing her sexuality.

While I (obviously) would never label Calista a wanton, I do agree with Cibber that Calista displays no remorse, this fact makes it difficult to categorize Rowe's play as a she-tragedy. Her lack of actual penance does make one question the play's actual themes, since it would seem to muddy the genre, moving Calista away from Otway's idealized tragic victims like Monimia and Belvidera. This problem brings us back to the question of Richardson's use of *The Fair Penitent* in his novel: how did Richardson want this play to be read, especially if he somehow wanted to connect the problematic character of Calista, who so clearly loves her seducer, to Clarissa, who clearly does not? Belford criticizes *The Fair Penitent* by imagining Clarissa as the better Calista figure, the Calista that could have been had Rowe allowed her to actually express penitence. Belford writes:

I have frequently thought in my attendance on this lady, that if Belton's admired author, Nick Rowe, had such a character before him, he would have drawn another sort of penitent than he has done, or given his play which he call *The Fair Penitent*, a fitter title.<sup>184</sup>

We immediately know not to admire Rowe, since Belford mentions that "Nick" is "Belton's admired author"; Belton's taste clearly must be questioned since he is a rake who serves as (yet another) cautionary tale to the frustratingly blind or apathetic Lovelace. Belford then argues that Rowe draws Lothario well but cannot capture the penitent, Calista. As Belford explains, "Calista is a desiring luscious wench, and her penitence is nothing else but rage, insolence, and scorn. Her

---

<sup>184</sup> Richardson, 1205. (third edition, letter 413)

passions are all storm and tumult...” Doody argues that Richardson would be of the same mind as Belford, thus reminding us to clearly distinguish between Calista and Clarissa. Tagging *The Fair Penitent* as “bad” literature gives us a hint as to Richardson’s own idea of the hero: if Belford is his mouthpiece in this letter, then Richardson is arguing that Calista fails as a hero because she “has no virtue, [and] is all pride.”<sup>185</sup> This reading of Calista reminds one more of Lovelace than Clarissa. Lovelace’s trajectory from attraction, to seduction, to rape—combined with his complete lack of penance—parallels much more closely with Calista’s character arc than does his superficial connection to Lothario.<sup>186</sup> Meanwhile, Clarissa, having both virtue and pride, is the more balanced character: a hero with a fatal flaw. After the rape, by demonstrating no shame or guilt, Lovelace’s behavior unexpectedly echoes that of Calista, at least as she has been read by many critics from the eighteenth century to the present. Calista *seems* sorry to have been caught, but not sorry to have slept with Lothario. And like Lovelace, Calista eventually

---

<sup>185</sup> Noyes referring to McKillop states: “The most important influence of *The Fair Penitent* upon the novel appears in Richardson’s *Clarissa* (1747-1748), in which John Belford, while drawing a parallel between the gay Lothario and Lovelace, points out the contrast between Calista and Clarissa. If Rowe had been able to observe *Clarissa*, Belford believes, he would have had a model for a faultless penitent...Richardson himself rejected the analogy of his great novel with *The Fair Penitent* and ‘was inclined to find fault with the attitudes and motives of important characters in current tragedy, even while he profited by their example.’” Robert Gale Noyes, *The Neglected Muse: Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Tragedy in the Novel (1740-1780)* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1958), 93-94.

<sup>186</sup> Ira Konigsberg notes the influence of Lothario on Lovelace in *The Fair Penitent* : “The similarities between Lothario and Lovelace have been noted: Dr. Johnson first suggested that Richardson in his portrayal of Lovelace was influenced by Rowe’s character; and H.G. Ward, in 1912, attempted to prove this indebtedness. Richardson quotes *The Fair Penitent* in his correspondence and twice in *Clarissa*. He has Belford in *Clarissa* compare Calista and Lothario to Clarissa and Lovelace—the point is even made that ‘Lothario, ‘tis true, seems such another wicked ungenerous varlet as thou knowest who: The author knew how to draw a Rake’(VII, 133). As Ward points out, both villains are proud noblemen and scorners of marriage...But Lothario appears too seldom in the play to be sufficiently developed as a figure upon which Lovelace might be based...” Konigsberg, *Samuel Richardson and the Dramatic Novel*, 38.

recognizes her sin, but it takes a few acts—just as Lovelace does not immediately recognize his own need to repent.

Richardson's use of allusions to Restoration drama as a way of complicating conventional constructions of gender is also exemplified in the way his characters refer to Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserv'd* (1682). Indeed, there is a long critical history of connecting Otway to Richardson. In his *Dramatic Miscellanies* (1784), for example, Thomas Davies praises Otway's work precisely by establishing such a link: "This man [Otway] had more power over the heart than any writer of our nation, except, perhaps Richardson."<sup>187</sup> *Venice Preserv'd* was one of the most popular tragedies to come out of the Restoration, and, even more impressive than its immediate success at the Dorset Garden Theatre in February of 1682, was its staying power as a stock play. Performances of it occurred well into the nineteenth century, which was unusual for Restoration tragedies; indeed, Noyes reports that *Venice Preserv'd* received "two hundred sixty-nine performances during the years 1702-1776. From 1741-1776 it was acted seventy-five times at Drury Lane and sixty-three times at Covent Garden. And, of course, the impact upon novelists was notable, although they considered this tragedy less frequently than its predecessor [*The Orphan*]."<sup>188</sup> Given the play's popularity, it is hardly surprising that it should provide one of the most well-known (or, at least, one of the most discussed) references to Restoration drama to be found in *Clarissa*.

In Letter 194, Lovelace writes to Belford about his desire to go on a trip to the theatre with Clarissa. He describes asking "for her company to the play of *Venice preserved*" in order to test if he "were to be denied every favour," though the conversation between them brings out the differences in their aesthetic tastes. Lovelace reports telling her, "I loved not tragedies; though

---

<sup>187</sup> Davies, Thomas. *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 231.

<sup>188</sup> Noyes, 70.

she [said she] did, for the sake of instruction, the warning, and the example, generally given in them. I had too much feeling, I said. There was enough in the world to make our hearts sad, without carrying grief into our diversions, and making the distresses of others our own.” For our purposes, Lovelace’s subsequent reflection upon this conclusion in L194 to his discussion is worth quoting at some length:

True enough, Belford; and I believe, generally speaking, that all the men of our cast are of my mind—They love not any tragedies but those in which they themselves are the parts of tyrants and executioners; and, afraid to trust themselves with serious and solemn reflections, run to comedies, to laugh away the distresses they have occasioned, and to find examples of as immoral men as themselves. For very few of our comic performances, as thou knowest, give us good ones—I answer, however, for myself—Yet thou, I think, on recollection, lovest to deal in the lamentable. Sally answered for Polly, who was absent, Mrs Sinclair for herself, and for all her acquaintance, even for Miss Partington, in preferring the comic to the tragic scenes—And I believe they are right; for the devil’s in it, if a confided-in rake does not give a girl enough of tragedy in his comedy... Then I pressed for [Clarissa’s] company to the play on Saturday night. She made objections, as I had foreseen... Got over these therefore; and she consented to favour me... The woes of others so well-represented, as those of Belvidera particular will be, must I hope unlock my charmer’s heart. Whenever I have been able to prevail upon a girl to permit me to attend her to a play, I have thought myself sure of her. The female heart, all gentleness and harmony when obliged, expands and forgets its forms when attention is carried out of itself at an agreeable or affecting entertainment... Thus exceedingly happy

are we at present. I hope we shall not find any of Nat. Lee's left-handed gods at work, to dash our bowl of joy with wormwood.<sup>189</sup>

Lovelace could be taken at his word that he prefers comedies to tragedies, but since the entire novel invites us to question every aspect of his "scribbling"—to consider the various levels of performance occurring as he describes the events to Belford while also acting the part of the libertine to this friend—it would then follow that we should question moments when Lovelace asserts such obvious lies. Lovelace never quotes from comedies with the consistency or urgency evident in his allusions to tragedies.<sup>190</sup>

In fact, Clarissa, whom he reads as "all gentleness and harmony," lists the books she finds in the brothel's library<sup>191</sup> in a way that highlights her approval of both tragedies and comedies. Based on her description of what she finds there, it is unclear whether this library

---

<sup>189</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 613 and 620.

<sup>190</sup> McGirr describes Lovelace as "a prolific and seemingly indiscriminate quoter...[he] cites no comedies." Elaine McGirr, "Why Lovelace Must Die," 13. Meanwhile Adam Rounce has worked on Dryden's Fables in *Clarissa*. Rounce considers Richardson's use of Dryden's *Fables Ancient and Modern of 1700* from the same critical vantage point as myself; he admits to the inability for current scholars to fully know whether or not Richardson read the original sources or only read the mediates quotation books or, most likely, did both. Importantly for my own project's interest, Rounce examines the context of the Dryden quotations within *Clarissa* and what the quotations could mean both for the characters referencing and reading them and whether we can determine the extent to which Richardson knew their meaning and context from whatever play, poem, fable, speech, or essay from which they originally derived. Adam Rounce, "Eighteenth-Century Responses to Dryden's Fables," *Translations and Literature* 16 (2007): 29-52.

<sup>191</sup> At this point in the novel, Clarissa does not know Mrs. Sinclair owns a brothel: "I am in London, and in my new lodgings. They are neatly furnished...But I think you must not ask me how I like the old gentlewoman. Yet she seems courteous and obliging. Her kindswomen just appeared to welcome me at my alighting. They seem to be genteel young women" (524). Clarissa suspects something is amiss but the books actually make her feel slightly better about these apprehensions: "I have turned over the books I have found in my closet; and am not a little pleased with them; and think the better of the people of the house for their sakes." Richardson, *Clarissa*, 525.

gives us a real indication of Lovelace's co-conspirators' literary tastes or if these books were planted simply to please Clarissa; here is a partial catalog of her findings:

Stanhope's *Gospels*; Sharp's, Tilloston's, and South's *Sermons*; Nelson's *Feasts and Fasts*; a sacramental piece of the Bishop of Man; and another of Dr. Gauden, Bishop of Exeter; and Inett's *Devotions*; are among the devout books; and among those of a lighter turn, these not ill chosen ones; a *Telemachus* in French, another in English; Steele's, Rowe's, and Shakespeare's plays; that genteel comedy of Mr. Cibber, *The Careless Husband*, and others of the same author; Dryden's *Miscellanies*, the *Tatlers*, *Spectators*, and *Guardians*; Pope's, and Swift's, and Addison's works. In the blank leaves of the Nelson and Bishop Gauden is Mrs. Sinclair's name; in those of most of the others, either Sarah Martin or Mary Horton, the names of the two nieces.<sup>192</sup>

On the one hand, we could argue that these are actually the women's books; on the other, these could be Lovelace's. I would argue that these are books Lovelace thinks Clarissa would be happy to find, anticipating her tastes but also giving such a large selection in order to suggest something natural in the choices the purchasers had made. In light of Lovelace's general reluctance to quote from comedies—as well as Clarissa's particular admiration for Cibber's *A Careless Husband*—we already know that Lovelace misunderstands Clarissa's reading of *Venice Preserv'd*, to some extent. He assumes she enjoys the play for the sentiment—that is, for the pathos of the she-tragedy heroine's suicide—though her interest in Otway's play could just as easily derive from her fascination with its political context, as with her quoting from *Oedipus* and *Absalom and Achitophel*. The subtitle of Otway's play—"A Plot Discover'd"—invited political interpretation from its Restoration audiences, as did *Oedipus*. Judith Milhous and Robert Hume confirm the

---

<sup>192</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 525.

play's original parallels to elements in the historical context: "The play's Tory appeal is well-documented. Charles II came to the third day of the initial run, and the play was attended first by the duke of York and then by his wife... That *Venice Preserv'd* was originally seen as a Tory manifesto can hardly be doubted."<sup>193</sup> We could argue, of course, that by the 1740s, the play's contextual reference points and its "political sympathies" had most likely become (as they are now understood to be) "notoriously unclear."<sup>194</sup> Munns, in agreement with Milhous and Hume, asserts that "Were the conspiracy [in Otway's play] royalist, or were the senators noble, a clear political reading could emerge, either condemning or endorsing republicanism, or endorsing or condemning political revolt. However, the Senate and the conspiracy are equally morally and politically bankrupt. Neither of the groups can be admired, and their conflict is acted out with both savage and comic intensity."<sup>195</sup>

Such is the play that Lovelace chooses to take Clarissa to see, one she heartily admires, and one that he claims to dislike in favor of comedies. *Venice Preserv'd* provides Richardson yet another occasion to foreground the gaps between Lovelace's understanding of Clarissa and her understanding of herself. In Letter 200 Clarissa writes of her experience at the theater:

I was at the play last night with Mr. Lovelace and Miss Horton. It is, you know, a deep and most affecting tragedy in the reading. You have my remarks upon it, in the little book you made me write upon the principal acting plays. You will not wonder that Miss Horton, as well as I, was greatly moved at the representation, when I tell you, and have

---

<sup>193</sup> Judith Milhous and Robert Hume, *Producible Interpretations: Eight English Plays, 1675-1707* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), 173-174.

<sup>194</sup> Jessica Munns, introduction to *Venice Preserved*, by Thomas Otway, in *The Broadview Anthology of Restoration and Early Eighteenth-Century Drama*, ed., J. Douglas Canfield (Ontario: Broadview, 2002), 1689. Also see: Jessica Munns, *Restoration Politics and Drama: The Plays of Thomas Otway, 1675-1683* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995.)

<sup>195</sup> Munns, introduction to *Venice Preserved*, 1689.

some pleasure in telling you, that Mr. Lovelace himself was very sensibly touched with some of the most affecting scenes. I mention this in praise of the author's performance; for I take Mr. Lovelace to be one of the most hard-hearted men in the world.<sup>196</sup>

In her private reading of the play as a text prior to experiencing its performance, Clarissa certainly recalls her emotional reaction to it, calling Otway's work a "most affecting tragedy." She repeats this term in her description of how she takes "pleasure" in Lovelace's "being touched" by the "affecting scenes." On the one hand, we could assume that Clarissa is merely responding to Otway's work in its capacity as what Hume and Milhous call a "pathetic vehicle for Belvidera."<sup>197</sup> They highlight that until Siddons' 1782 performance, the character "worked from the assumption that she was an innocent bystander, dragged down in general ruin."<sup>198</sup> If we could assume that Richardson would have recognized Otway's play as not merely a pathetic drama but as a satire, on the other hand, then we must reconsider Clarissa's response. Despite Belvidera's seemingly obvious parallels with Clarissa—they both wander the streets, in debt, and

---

<sup>196</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 640.

<sup>197</sup> Milhous and Hume, *Producible Interpretations*, 180.

<sup>198</sup> What's more, Hume and Milhous detail the changes Siddons' performance did for the characterization: "Siddons adopted the idea that she [Belvidera] was the cause of the whole catastrophe and her mad scene (played at hysteric pitch) reflected her sense of responsibility and despair." Milhous and Hume, *Producible Interpretations*, 180. Since Richardson's *Clarissa* obviously predates Siddons' reign on stage, we can assume that, had he attended any performances at all, he would most likely have seen Susanna Cibber's "delicate and adoring Belvidera." Milhous and Hume, 180. But I do think it would be interesting to consider not simply the influence of these texts on *Clarissa* but the novel's influence on the stage. For instance, looking ahead to Chapter Four's investment in *All for Love* and Garrick's production of *Antony and Cleopatra*, I would at some point like to take more time to consider the influence books that provide conduct manuals on virtue as informing the privileging by the culture of the more loyal and virtuous Cleopatra over the more duplicitous and conniving interpretation. Belvidera, Isabella, and Cleopatra all occupy the same transitional phases throughout the eighteenth century, performances/cuts to dialogue/changes to costuming all quite analogous to the changes Richardson makes to his various editions and commentaries on *Clarissa*. Both the alterations to his novel and the alterations to those plays imply a desire to give the readers and the audiences what they wanted, although not necessarily succeeding in that desire to please as seen with Garrick's failed production of *Antony and Cleopatra*, to be discussed further.

under the control of patriarchal figures—I would argue that Clarissa would identify most profoundly with Jaffeir. Clarissa’s character rests on being torn between the spiritual and the physical world. She works within a belief system in which God has predetermined all of her actions—a belief that parallels the fatalistic aspects of Oedipus’s own trajectory—at the same time that she wants autonomous control over herself. This desire for control works itself out only within the limited confines of either/or propositions: she can leave the Harlowes and Mr. Solmes, but only by becoming Lovelace’s prisoner; she can refuse Lovelace’s proposal of marriage after the rape, but this assertion of her agency can only result in destitution followed by death. Jaffeir works within a set of ethical either/or propositions that can be seen as analogous to those within which Clarissa is trapped; Jaffeir’s ultimate decision to die depends upon an absolute rejection of Belvidera in the name of embracing his friend Pierre’s ideologies.<sup>199</sup>

Ultimately, tragedies like *Venice Preserv’d* and *The Fair Penitent* inform Richardson’s construction of gender identity in at least two ways: first, they enable Clarissa to read her relationship with Anna Howe in terms of the Restoration ideal of male heroic friendship; and second, they reveal the extent to which Lovelace can be identified with she-tragedy heroines, as we can view the letters by and about Lovelace in his final moments as essentially recreating Belvidera’s and Calista’s death scenes. Lovelace fails in his attempt to perform as a heroic male tragic character—a figure like Jaffeir, Pierre, Oedipus, or Antony—and his death hearkens back more obviously to the fates of heroines who fall into madness and hysterics in their final moments. After Clarissa has died, Lovelace attempts to possess her by requesting her corpse for his family’s tomb, revealing his desire to hold on to her literal heart:

---

<sup>199</sup> “Once Jaffeir has joined the conspiracy, he feels torn between his obligations to Pierre and his obligations to Belvidera. The play has, therefore, often been treated as an embodiment of the love versus honor dilemma central to so many of the rhymed heroic plays of the 1660s and 1670s.” Hume and Milhous, *Producible Interpretations*, 182.

Everything that can be done to preserve the charmer from decay shall also be done. And when she will descend to her original dust, or cannot be kept longer, I will then have her laid in my family vault between my own father and mother. Myself, as I am in my soul, so in person, chiefly mourner. But her heart, to which I have such unquestionable pretensions, in which once I had so large a share, and which I will prize above my own, I will have. I will keep it in spirits. It shall never be out of my sight. And all the charges of sepulture too shall be mine.<sup>200</sup>

Clarissa's madness reenacts the soul-searching wandering of desperate figures like Oedipus and Hamlet; she is at once despondent and seeking spiritual guidance in hopes of rationally understanding the rape. Lovelace's madness, by contrast, locates itself in the material world around him, and his frustrated sexual desire still motivates all of his anger and resentment towards Belford and the Harlowes. His obsession with Clarissa's body does not seem at all insane to himself; indeed, he imagines himself the only sane person amid a "whole world" that has become "one great Bedlam."<sup>201</sup>

Lovelace's attachment to Clarissa's corpse recalls Calista's melancholy as she stands on the stage with Lothario's dead body. The fifth act of *The Fair Penitent* is dominated by Lothario's corpse and Calista's performance upon it. His dead body's powerful presence onstage can be compared to the affective force of Clarissa's body in the dénouement of the novel: Lovelace is obsessed with possessing her body just as Calista cannot quite remove herself from Lothario's side.<sup>202</sup> The scene in Rowe's tragedy is described thusly:

---

<sup>200</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 183-84.

<sup>201</sup> Richardson, 183-184.

<sup>202</sup> As Landon Burns points out: "Critics from the first have recognized this superiority and fascination in the character of Lothario, for as Nettleton points out, 'Even in the last act, when the villain is dead, his body dominates the sinister scene.' Here 'that Haughty, Gallant, Gay

Scene is a room hung with black: on one side, Lothario's body on a bier; on the other, a table with a skull and other bones, a book, and a lamp on it. Calista is discovered on a couch in black, her hair hanging loose and disordered; after music and a song, she rises and comes forward.<sup>203</sup>

Richardson does not have Clarissa's drawn-out death reach back to figures like Calista or Belvidera, characters who certainly suffer for a long time but whose actual suicides are rather quick compared to the deaths of their romantic counterparts. At the same time, the madness of these she-tragedy victims is usually given at least one full act to allow them to explore the complicated effects of loss at various levels—the loss of honor, love, or even a sense of control over their circumstances.

Implicitly contrasting her approach against Calista's refusal to intellectualize her final state of mind, in L261 Lovelace notes that Clarissa's mad papers seem to display a certain control and mastery over her own mind: "After all Belford, I have just skimmed over these transcriptions of Dorcas; and I see there is method and good sense in some of them, wild as others of them are; and that her memory, which serves her so well for these poetical flights, is far from being impaired."<sup>204</sup> Calista's madness is a slow burn. Like Lovelace, she attempts to work through her despair both by confronting the body of Lothario and by consulting a literal text:

Calista: 'Tis well! These solemn sounds, this pomp of horror  
 Are fit to feed the frenzy in my soul;

---

Lothario still occupies Calista's thoughts, and in the curiously Gothic atmosphere of the scene, his corpse does occupy a prominent position." Landon Burns, "Pity and Tears: The Tragedies of Nicholas Rowe" (PhD Diss., University of Salzburg, 1974), 89. See also: George Henry Nettleton, *English Drama of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century (1642-1780)* (New York, 1923), 176.

<sup>203</sup> Rowe, *The Fair Penitent*, 61.

<sup>204</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 894.

Here's room for meditation, ev'n to madness,  
 Till the mind burst with thinking; this dull flame  
 Sleeps in the socket; sure the book was left  
 To tell me something—for inspiration then—  
 He teaches holy sorrow and contrition  
 And penitence—Is it become an art then?  
 A trick that lazy, dull, luxurious grown-men  
 Can teach us to do over? I'll no more on't;

*Throwing the book*

I have more real anguish in my heart  
 Than all their pedant discipline e'er knew.  
 What charnel has been rifled for these bones?  
 Fie! This is pageantry—they look uncouthly,  
 But what of that? If he or she that owned 'em  
 Safe from disquiet sit, and smile to see  
 The farce their miserable relics play.  
 But here's a sight is terrible indeed;  
 Is this that haughty, gallant, gay Lothario?  
 That dear perfidious—Ah! how pale he looks!  
 How grim with clotted blood and those dead eyes!  
 Ascend, ye ghosts, fantastic forms of night,  
 In all your diff'rent, dreadful shapes ascend,  
 And match the present horror if you can. (19-42)

This scene explains some of the interpretive confusion that has been generated by the character of Calista, who puzzled contemporary critics because of her seeming lack of penitence. Like Lovelace, she reflects on madness being a product of the space around her; she blames the room for forcing her into madness, just as Lovelace views the external world as both mad and maddening. Calista casts aside a book, just as Lovelace rejects counsel from sources he used to depend upon. In the fifth act, Calista has been reading a book, which, as Lindley Wyman points out, is probably not the Bible but a book of formal meditations: “By tossing the book, Calista is saying that her anguish is so great that traditional meditation is insufficient to soothe her, but she is also showing that she is still a spirited, independent woman.”<sup>205</sup> The fact that this action of Calista’s could be staged in a variety of different ways helps to explain some of the extreme reactions she elicited from contemporary audiences and critics. Her tossing a book of religious significance—perhaps the Bible itself—could easily be interpreted as an index of her lack of penitence. Even though the lines suggest that she simply believes her feelings cannot be put into words—that a book cannot do justice to her soul’s desire for penitence—Calista’s frustration with the book of meditations rests in her belief that there might be something artificial about institutionalizing an ostensibly authentic feeling: “And penitence—Is it become an art then?/A trick that lazy, dull, luxurious grown-men/Can teach us to do over? I’ll no more on’t;/I have more real anguish in my heart/Than all their pedant discipline e’er knew.” Calista recognizes the artfulness of writing down the “anguish” of her “heart.” Lovelace’s epiphany after Clarissa’s death also centers itself around a rejection of performance: he discovers that his own artifice often manifested itself in his misquotation and misinterpretation of Restoration authors. He revises his own interpretations of texts; for instance, Lovelace quotes Dryden to Belford only to

---

<sup>205</sup> Burns, “Pity and Tears,” 103. See also: Lindley A. Wyman, “The Tradition of the Formal Meditation in Rowe’s *The Fair Penitent*,” *PQ* (1963): 412-416.

decide that “in the first quoted lines, considering them closely, there is nothing but blustering absurdity,” and that “in the other [lines], the poet says not truth; For CONSCIENCE is the conqueror of souls: at least it is the conqueror of mine.”<sup>206</sup> While Lovelace fashioned quotes earlier in the novel to suit his whims and moods, Clarissa’s death causes him to revisit Dryden and to question the ideologies implicit in the lines. His own death scene fully captures the extent of both his failure to maintain the hyper-masculine façade and his resemblance to she-tragic predecessors.

The letter describing Lovelace’s death is written in translation from the French by an outsider who witnessed the events.<sup>207</sup> Our editor translates for us into English while De La Tour often reminds us that during the duel and afterwards, Lovelace and Morden often are speaking in French. The distance between the reader and Lovelace thus is at its greatest during this final scene in which his famous last words—“Let this expiate!”—are cried out. While Lovelace intentionally makes himself impenetrable throughout the text, like Clarissa is to him, plotting and performing in both his actions and his rhetoric, the final letter allows us to see him as an indifferent observer might. We are strangely set back into the tragic drama, away from the hyper-textual pages of Clarissa’s last will and testament, all the legalities that follow, and the attendant marginalia. Lovelace’s death as a reminder of the theatrical aspects of the letter reminds us of his earlier words to Belford when he notes that writing is just like talking; he recognizes that the words on the page can be interpreted as though he were speaking to Belford. Lovelace also recognizes the inherent role-playing that occurs when he’s choosing certain words over others, quoting from certain types of plays or books, or (most importantly in relation to his death scene) describing events through dialogue and exposition, creating tension with delay, and allowing

---

<sup>206</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1473.

<sup>207</sup> Letter 537 F.J. De La Tour to Belford

descriptions of bodies to speak for themselves, sometimes to support the words and often to oppose them. For instance, Lovelace's ongoing discussion of Clarissa's heaving bosom more often than not suppresses the gravity of her words.

With Lovelace's death, however, he cannot plot or describe. With this dramatic distancing between himself and the reader, with the introduction of this translated letter and its third-party writer-transcriber-translator, we are actually ironically closer to the truth than we have ever been before with Lovelace. The letter describes Lovelace's duel, how both men "parried with equal judgment," both slightly wounding the other, culminating in Morden's "raking" Lovelace's chest so damagingly that he says "sir I believe you have enough," to which Lovelace swears "by G-d, he [is] not hurt," and boasts that the wound is but "a pin's point." But he finally falls and de la Tour describes Lovelace as saying: "The luck is yours, sir—Oh my beloved Clarissa! Now art thou—Inwardly he spoke three or four words more." The bystander, not hearing or not understanding what Lovelace says here, captures the unreliable nature of observing another person's actions and behavior. We no longer have direct access to Lovelace; the distancing between the reader and Lovelace reenacts his own laments about Clarissa's death being told to him, about his inability to communicate with her, and about the malaise that occurs when he realizes they will no longer exchange direct dialogue. Lovelace's death scene lasts over a day—surgeons are politely paid for by Morden—and the delirium brought on by the pain of his injuries is described by De la Tour:

He was delirious, at times, in the last two hours; and then several times cried out, Take her away! Take her away! but named nobody. And sometimes praised some lady (That Clarissa, I suppose, whom he had called upon when he received his death's wound) calling her, Sweet Excellence! Divine Creature! Fair Sufferer! And once he said, Look

down, blessed Spirit, look down! –And there stopped—his lips however moving. At Nine in the morning, he was seized with convulsions, and fainted away.<sup>208</sup>

The reader experiences Lovelace here outside the determining frame he usually deploys to shape how he will be read or how he wants particular scenes to be understood. While Clarissa maintains control over her faculties in death, Lovelace loses such control and, while there might be an argument that even in his delirium he could be self-consciously performing his death scene, I would argue that his enactment of a feminized conclusion borrowed from she-tragedy reveals his true character. Lovelace's loss of control over his body and his mind recalls the figures of Isabella, Calista, and Belvidera as they slip first into madness and then into death. Lovelace's body becomes that which is on display; he creates a spectacle, and his death is narrated by a neutral spectator.

The emphasis De La Tour places on certain pieces of direct dialogue over mere exposition also supports a reading of Lovelace's death as enmeshed in she-tragedy conventions. He chooses simply to mention "the orders" to "dispatch" a packet of letters to Belford, and to thank him for all of his "favours and friendship," but he gives a direct quotation of what Lovelace says in his final words to Morden: "There is a fate in it! replied my chevalier—a cursed fate! –or this could not have been! But be ye all witnesses, that I have provoked my destiny, and acknowledge, that I fall by a man of honour." Both Lovelace's belief in the predestined nature of his death and his commentary on fate hearken back to she-tragedy heroines who ruminate over how they feel tethered to their unhappy futures, as though they cannot write themselves out of their own destinies. Lovelace's death scene depicts his own inability to plot, to control the reader, and perhaps even to convince himself of the meaning he aims to extract from his past

---

<sup>208</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1487.

actions. While previous letters about events in his life enabled Lovelace to reflect intentionally on the terms of his self-understanding, his death captures the nature of the objectified female figure on stage, determined by her onlookers and interpreted only through her words and actions. Lovelace's thoughts finally do not matter.

### **Lovelace and the Performance of Queer Masculinity: Shakespeare and Dryden in *Clarissa***

In the allusions Lovelace and Clarissa make to Restoration literature as a means of defining their identities, Richardson consistently allows them to slip between genders, having Clarissa model herself after male heroes like Oedipus, while Lovelace affiliates himself with she-tragedy heroines; through these practices of allusion and intertextual appropriation, Richardson explicitly suggests that his characters imagine themselves (and one another) as belonging to the opposite sex in ways that disrupt binaristic understandings of cisgendered identity. Importantly, Lovelace reads Clarissa as the Greek hero, Achilles. His battle with her, which he imagines as a kind of masculine homosocial conflict, becomes even more complicated when we look at it through its allusive connection to the many authored versions of *Troilus and Cressida*: Richardson's references to this story as a means of representing the antagonistic relationship between the primary characters in his novel borrows from the works of Shakespeare and Dryden in ways that reveal the layers of meaning that Richardson wanted to access in his idiosyncratic framing of gender identity.

It seems appropriate that one of Shakespeare's most "puzzling" plays would work so well as an intertextual point of reference for Richardson's most puzzling of tragic novels. The difficulty with interpreting *Clarissa* finds itself in how we categorize it first, as a tragedy, without then falling into the trap of assuming the centrality of romance or love between Lovelace

and Clarissa to the text's meaning, with all of the overdetermined hermeneutic implications such an assumption necessarily entails. Readers frustrated with Richardson's novel, I would argue, are often motivated by a deep (and perhaps unacknowledged) need for Clarissa to forgive Lovelace by marrying him in order to provide a kind of comic resolution to a plot Richardson intended to be tragic. Richardson's contemporary readers in particular were guilty of imposing this desire on the two characters. Another kind of unsatisfied reader might feel the need for Richardson to have provided some redemption for Lovelace after Clarissa's death. I am not convinced by Lovelace's penitence, much as audiences for *The Fair Penitent* were not convinced of Calista's penitence. Richardson's literary references point to a clear parallel between Lovelace and Milton's Satan—another Restoration era character who is inarguably unredeemed and something of a pathetic figure by the end of the epic poem. To continue this argument I would like to take a look into Lovelace's library and to take seriously the idea that Lovelace should be viewed as a self-conscious reader.

In Lovelace's letter to Belford (Letter 209), we are given a parody of the first meeting between Achilles and Hector. Lovelace imagines Clarissa as a kind of Achilles in relation to himself as Hector, with Belford watching and chastising from the sidelines as Ajax:

Thou rememberest what Shakespeare, in his *Troilus and Cressida*, makes Hector, who however is not used to boast, say to Achilles in an interview between them; and which, applied to this watchful lady, and to the vexation she has given me, and to the certainty I now think I have of subduing her; will run thus—supposing the charmer before me; and I meditating her sweet person from head to foot: Henceforth, oh watchful fair one, guard thee well: For I'll not kill thee There! Nor There! Nor There! But, by the zone that circles Venus' waist, I'll kill thee Ev'ry-where; yea, o'er and o'er.—Thou, wisest Belford,

pardon me this brag: Her watchfulness draws folly from my lips; But I'll endeavor deeds to match the words, Or may I never—Then, I imagine thee interposing to qualify my impatience, as Ajax did to Achilles: —Do not chafe thee, cousin: —And let these threats alone, Till accident or purpose bring thee to it.”<sup>209</sup>

Beyond the initial humor of reading Belford as the dimwitted Ajax—a character related to Hector only in these versions and Chaucer’s, though there is no relation between them in Homer—I take seriously the implications of Lovelace’s decision to read Clarissa as Achilles and himself as Hector. Just as Clarissa does not read herself as a tragic female figure (see Chapter Two), Lovelace does not consistently read her as one either. In fact, Lovelace only reinforces the privileging of homosocial intimacy in the Hector-Achilles relationship by attempting to transform that relationship into a heteronormative one; Richardson gives us a veritable Victor/Victoria doubling-drag show in which Lovelace addresses Clarissa as Achilles but then must label her as a “Venus” in contradiction to Hector’s original lines from Shakespeare:

---

<sup>209</sup> Richardson, 672. Comparatively, the lines from Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* read:

Hector: Wert thou the oracle to tell me so,  
 I'd not believe thee. Henceforth guard thee well;  
 For I'll not kill thee there, nor there, not there,  
 But by the forge that stithied Mars his helm,  
 I'll kill thee everywhere, yea, o'er and o'er.--  
 You wises Grecians, pardon me this brag;  
 His insolence draws folly from my lips.  
 But I'll endeavor deeds to match these words,/Or may I never—“

Ajax: Do not chafe thee, cousin.  
 And you, Achilles, let these threats alone,  
 Till accident or purpose bring you to't.  
 You may have every day enough of Hector,  
 If you have stomach. The general state, I fear,  
 Can scarce entreat you to be odd with him.”<sup>209</sup>  
 (4.5.252-265)

See David Bevington, ed., *The Arden Shakespeare: Troilus and Cressida*. (Surrey: Arden, 1998), 302-303.

Hector: For I'll not kill thee there, nor there, not there,

But by the forge that smithied Mars his helm,

I'll kill thee everywhere, yea, o'er and o'er. (4.5.254-256)

Lovelace draws our attention to the sexuality already present in this scene by making explicit the implicit connection between dying and the “little death” of the female orgasm. Changing *Mars* to *Venus*, associating the sword with the penis, and essentially foreshadowing the violent way he will eventually disarm Clarissa, Lovelace associates himself with the ill-fated Hector, a far more paternal figure than Lovelace could ever be. Perhaps, though, Lovelace reads himself from the perspective of Achilles, or Clarissa, one who hates and eventually kills Hector in a passionate rage.

Considering the context of the quotes Lovelace alters to imagine his relationship with Clarissa, I would argue that Richardson bypasses Dryden's adaptation in favor of Shakespeare's in this scene in order to highlight the erotic wordplay between the two men. Dryden's cuts to Shakespeare's play somewhat downplay the homoerotic possibilities between Hector and Achilles. Richardson's decision to attribute this scene to Shakespeare, in contrast to his use of Dryden's adaptation throughout his other references to *Troilus and Cressida*, not only implies his recognition of the differences between the two versions but it also supports the claim that Richardson was reading the actual plays. The confrontation scene between Achilles and Hector is not to be found in *The Art of English Poetry*, despite its many references to both Dryden's and Shakespeare's versions. The differences between them illustrate the attention Lovelace gives to the context of the scene. Shakespeare's version, with its more extended exchange between Hector and Achilles, invites Lovelace to consider the relationship's homoerotic undertones and then apply them explicitly to his perception of his relationship with Clarissa. Shakespeare's

Hector mimics Achilles's rhetoric with his "there, nor there, nor there," and he discusses how he will use Mars's forged helmet to kill Achilles "everywhere":

Hector: Wert thou the oracle to tell me so,  
 I'd not believe thee. Henceforth guard thee well;  
 For I'll not kill thee there, nor there, nor there,  
 But by the forge that smithied Mars his helm,  
 I'll kill thee everywhere, yea, o'er and o'er.—  
 You wises Grecians, pardon me this brag;  
 His insolence draws folly from my lips.  
 But I'll endeavor deeds to match these words.<sup>210</sup>

In his adaptation, Dryden chooses not to have Hector parrot Achilles's lines, thereby moving away from the implications that mimicry suggests; while Shakespeare's antagonistic relationship between these heroes incorporates mirroring rhetorical strategies to further cement the ways in which these men are two sides of the same coin, Dryden's Hector determines his own dialogue, separate from Achilles's influence:

Hector: Wert thou an Oracle to tell me this,  
 I'de not believe thee, henceforth guard thee well,  
 I'le kill thee everywhere.  
 Ye Noble Grecians pardon me this boast;  
 His insolence draws folly from my lips,

---

<sup>210</sup> Ajax responds here with: Do not chafe thee, cousin.  
 And you, Achilles, let these threats alone,  
 Till accident or purpose bring you to't.  
 You may have every day enough of Hector,  
 If you have stomach. The general state, I fear,  
 Can scarce entreat you to be odd with him. (Shakespeare 4.5.252-265)

But I’le endeavor deeds to match these words;

Else may I never—

Dryden’s cuts—his removal of the lines “For I’ll not kill thee there, nor there, nor there,/ But by the forge that stithied Mars his helm,” along with “yea, o’er and o’er”—clearly support Lovelace’s quotation practices and his reading of *Troilus and Cressida* while also signaling Richardson’s dependence on the actual Shakespeare play rather than Bysshe’s quote-book.

It would have been easy for Richardson to confuse the two versions had he depended on *The Art of English Poetry*; Bysshe sometimes attributes Shakespeare to Dryden and vice versa. My own research did not find these particular lines in the 1714 version of the quote-book, or in various printings of the *Thesaurus Dramaticus*, but it could be argued that Richardson was still able to find the lines out of context in another source. Even that mediated source, however, would not explain Lovelace’s reading of the characters and the scene’s context. For example, consider the lines that precede Hector’s rejoinder:

Achilles: Thou art too brief. I will the second time,

As I would buy thee, view thee limb by limb.

Hector: O, like a book of sport thou’ll read me o’er;

But there’s more in me than thou understand’st.

[Why dost thou so oppress me with thine eye?]

Achilles: Tell me, you heavens, in which part of his body

Shall I destroy him? Whether there, or there, or there?

That I may give the local wound a name

And make distinct the very breach whereout

Hector’s great spirit flew. Answer me, heavens!

Hector: [It would discredit the blest gods, proud man,  
 To answer such a question. Stand again.  
 Think'st thou to catch my life so pleasantly  
 As to prenominate nice conjecture  
 Where thou wilt hit me dead?

Achilles: I tell thee, yea.]<sup>211</sup>

Dryden's scene cuts Hector's line ("Why does thou so oppress me with thine eye?"), thereby downplaying the sensual quality of the exchange. Dryden does not allow for any slippage between the violent and the sexual in his version of the play. While Shakespeare's Hector overtly expresses his anger over Achilles' oppressive "eye" on his physical form, Dryden's Hector becomes all the more oblivious to his own vulnerable position after admitting to being "like a book" for Achilles to read over. Dryden maintains this simile between Hector as a text that Achilles cannot fully interpret. Lovelace's interest in this particular scene—whether in Dryden's or Shakespeare's version of it—locates itself in this insistence on the body as a text. Lovelace and Clarissa are constantly using similar metaphors to explain their own understanding or misunderstanding of one another. In this case, Lovelace reading himself as Hector implies that he feels Clarissa (as Achilles) can never fully access his meaning: "there's more in" Lovelace, or at least, he believes himself to have such depths.

Dryden's Achilles still taunts Hector with his "there, or there, or there?" questions, but his Hector just changes the conversation. By cutting out the entire middle section of this dialogue, Dryden also removes Hector's rejoinder describing Achilles as a "proud man." In terms of the relationship back to Clarissa and Lovelace's consistent reading of Clarissa as proud,

---

<sup>211</sup> The brackets indicate the cuts Dryden made to Shakespeare. 4.5.237-251.

the links between Lovelace with Hector and Clarissa with Achilles suggest a potential irony to Richardson's use of Lovelace as the interpreter of this scene. Lovelace believes that he and Clarissa are engaged in an epic battle; rather than reading their story in terms of romance—by turning, for instance, to the titular characters of *Troilus and Cressida*—Lovelace chooses to interpret the extreme antagonism between them as masculine. While we can easily read Clarissa simply as the ideal of femininity, it is more convincing to argue that Richardson's conduct-book version of the virtuous woman depends upon blending what the eighteenth century conventionally interpreted as masculine with what was deemed feminine. Lovelace's free play with gender roles and his reading of *Troilus and Cressida* reinforces the ways in which he views Clarissa as masculine: "She is a lion-hearted lady in every case where her honour, her punctilio rather, calls for spirit..."<sup>212</sup> This letter, preceding Lovelace's reference to *Troilus and Cressida*, reflects on Clarissa's spirit as masculine. While her beauty remains the pinnacle of the feminine ideal, Lovelace recognizes her spirit as coded masculine. Just as Lovelace's spirit exposes itself as hyper-feminine in his own death scene, Clarissa's sense of honour nods back to masculine heroism both in terms of the way she understands herself and in terms of Lovelace's own reading of her.

Lovelace recognizes the authentic masculinity within Clarissa's spirit—her "lion heart"—while his own overdrawn masculinity depends upon a double-performance: he plays at representing performances from the Restoration stage. While Clarissa's masculinity finds a balance with her femininity, resulting in this unearthly quality she finally determines for herself in death—the spiritual self that others eventually also recognize—Lovelace's sense of his own masculinity initially demands a complete rejection of the feminine. He actually seeks the most

---

<sup>212</sup> Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa*, 647.

performative version of hyper-masculinity as he sees himself as the leader of the pack of his libertines:

You shall all have your direction in writing, if there be occasion. But, after all, I dare say there will be no need but to show your faces in my company. Such faces never could four men show—Mowbray’s so fierce and so fighting; Belton’s so pert and so pimply; Tourville’s so fair and so foppish; thine so rough and so resolute; and I your leader!—What hearts, although mediating hostility must those be which we shall not appal?—Each man occasionally attended by a servant or two, long ago chosen for qualities resembling his master’s.<sup>213</sup>

In this letter, Lovelace draws attention to a standard trope of the Restoration comedy: each hero’s actions are echoed by his servant’s and we know the man by his looks and his carriage. In this sense, the reader gets a hint of the comedies Lovelace claims to prefer over the tragedies.<sup>214</sup> This passage captures the typical readings of Lovelace as the Restoration rake; his plotting and his desire to set the scenes recalls Hamlet’s much more neurotic staging of the “Mousetrap”; however, Lovelace’s desire to perform the rake to his confidant (Belford) while he pretends to be an attentive suitor to Clarissa asks the reader to read Lovelace as a liar who knows where fantasy begins and reality ends.

I would argue, though, that Lovelace has very little understanding—either of the power his relationship with Clarissa has over him, or of the extent to which her influence as a masculine force in his life makes him all the more feminine. Lovelace’s belief, for instance, that he is as impenetrable as Hector believes himself to be to Achilles, assumes that Clarissa desires

---

<sup>213</sup> Richardson, 147-148.

<sup>214</sup> As mentioned before, Lovelace does not quote from the comedies and I have argued that his stating of the preference for them seems disingenuous given the amount of tragedies he does reference.

to understand and access his true self, or soul. Clarissa's indifference to Lovelace, contrasted against his obsession with her, makes his attempt to view their relationship as comparable to the bond between Achilles and Hector seems completely misguided. Lovelace's reference to this drama illustrates his fantasy image of himself as a kind of throw-back libertine hero, at the same time that it highlights his need to interpret his own heterosexual relationship with Clarissa through the lens of a homosocial one. Lovelace cannot find an analogous Restoration or early modern heterosexual relationship to equate with his desire for Clarissa because their "odd"<sup>215</sup> and unfulfilling relationship can better be understood in terms of its queerness. Lovelace reaches back for a plot to copy or a character type after which he can model himself, but he comes up short every time: the Restoration must be appropriated and adapted to fit Lovelace's mid-eighteenth century self.

By internalizing and enacting the qualities of she-tragedy heroines, all the while pretending at playing the hyper-masculine figures, Lovelace's perception of the rape becomes more clearly defined. In one of the final letters before his death, he throws out a series of rationales for the rape and to explain how Clarissa's reaction was unexpected to say the least. For example, in Letter 517, he asks:

[I]s death the natural consequence of a rape?... And if not the natural consequence, and a lady will destroy herself, whether by a lingering death as of grief; or by the dagger, as Lucretia did; is there more than one fault the man's?—Is not the other hers?... Upon the whole, Jack, had not the lady died, would there have been half so much said of it as there was? Was I the cause of her death? Or could I help it? And have there not been, in a

---

<sup>215</sup> As Doody expresses and I reference earlier in this chapter.

million of cases like this, nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand that have not ended as this has ended?—How hard then is my fate!<sup>216</sup>

Lovelace, still holding fast to the idea that the rape ought to be viewed as “a common theft,” leans on his mirror hoping to see a Greek version of himself. He relies on this vision of being a character out of history, so nostalgic for the fantasy of that past that he does not actually have to be held accountable for what he did to Clarissa. Lovelace’s relentless use of literary references and quotations to explain his reading of Clarissa can be interpreted as his means of taking her out of reality, of churning the abuse he piles on to Clarissa into the necessary gestures and acts of a character he was trying on for size.

Although it is Clarissa whose fluid gender roles are made most apparent by her intertextual connection with Oedipus, Lovelace is the character who actually makes the first reference to Dryden and Lee’s *Oedipus*. In letter 115, he writes to Belford:

But I was originally a bashful whelp—bashful still, with regard to this lady!—bashful, yet know the sex so well!—But what indeed is the reason that I know it so well—for, Jack, I have had abundance cause, when I have looked into myself, by ways of comparison with the other sex, to conclude that a bashful man has a good deal of the soul of a woman; and so, like Tiresias, can tell what they think and what they drive at, as well as themselves.<sup>217</sup>

Here, Lovelace figures the “bashful” whelp as a man who can understand a woman’s true nature in part by accessing his femininity—by having “a good deal of the soul of a woman.” Lovelace implies that an inexperienced young man connects most intuitively with a woman’s soul in a narcissistic way, since the endgame for Lovelace is to look into himself. To make this argument,

---

<sup>216</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1439.

<sup>217</sup> Richardson, 440-441.

he alludes to Oedipus's prophet, Tiresias, who lived as a woman for seven years after making the big mistake of upsetting the goddess Hera (by hitting two copulating snakes with a stick). In his brief aside on his own theoretical androgyny, Lovelace combines two opposing terms: "bashful" and "whelp." The *OED* allows for positive definitions of the term "whelp"—in its sense as referring to a young child, boy or girl, used in a "jocular" manner—but it then explains the word's negative denotations as well: not only can the term can be "applied depreciatingly to the offspring of a noxious creature or being (cf. son of a bitch) and an ill-conditioned or low fellow," but in "later" or "milder" use it also refers to "a saucy or impertinent young fellow; an 'unlicked cub' or 'puppy'." In this latter definition, the *OED* then cites a passage from the introduction to the second edition of Richardson's *Pamela* in which one of Richardson's defenders sympathetically recalls Pamela's "beginning to complain about the whelp Lord's [Lady Davers's younger brother's] Impertinence."<sup>218</sup> Lovelace certainly recognizes himself as both a noxious creature and a son of a bitch, and he most likely was an impertinent young man before he became the manipulative grown man he represents himself to be in his letters. He moves us quickly from the memory of himself as that bashful young pup, which he regards as the time in his life when he learned all about women. Lovelace's complicated gendered references here identify him as knowing women effectively because, in his "soul," he "still" is "a woman." Lovelace, "like Tiresias," claims that he understands how to think like Clarissa, or all women, by inhabiting a feminine subject position himself.<sup>219</sup>

---

<sup>218</sup> *OED* "whelp"

<sup>219</sup> Indeed, this line's importance is made clear by Tassie Gwilliam's chapter, "Like Tiresias': Knowing the Sex in *Clarissa*." Gwilliam discusses this particular quote as significant to understanding Lovelace's femininity and identification with women despite his clear misogyny. Gwilliam's argument importantly grounds my own reading for the fluid gender roles for both Clarissa and Lovelace, asserting a helpful claim on the latter's "play with the implications of spectacle" which dovetails with my own reading of the rake as always also the tragic feminized

Further insight into the impact of Restoration drama on Richardson's construction of Lovelace's gender identity can be gleaned from the novel's final direct reference to *Oedipus*—one which might otherwise appear unimportant, focused as it is on a supporting character in one of Belford's letters. But Belford's letter reflects on what it means to be masculine, as it is a warning to Lovelace about how he should view his own character in connection to their libertine friends. Letter 419 focuses on the ghost scene from *Oedipus* (thus, indirectly referencing Hamlet's ghost scene) as Belford offers Lovelace a cautionary tale about their friend "poor man" Belton's death scene.<sup>220</sup> At this point, Belford stands at odds with the men in Belton's circle, particularly the "brutal" Mowbray,<sup>221</sup> who finds Belford "insufferable" and criticizes him for "joining [his] womanish tears with [Belton's]," arguing that such empathy "is not the way" and finally saying that "If our Lovelace were here, he'd tell thee so."<sup>222</sup> Mowbray acts the stereotypical Restoration rake, and Belford's reaction to him reflects the more nuanced reading of masculinity and femininity that Richardson provides throughout the novel: "...turning to the poor sick man, Tears, my dear Belton, are no signs of an unmanly, but contrarily of a humane nature; they ease the over-charged heart, which would burst but for that kindly and natural relief."<sup>223</sup> Belton and Belford (like Lovelace and Clarissa) reject the hyper-masculinity of the "uncouth and unreflecting Mowbray," and this letter allows Belford to mock Lovelace indirectly, appealing a bit to his sense of humor as he critiques Lovelace's character: "The hardened fellow [Mowbray] then retired, with the air of a Lovelace; only more stupid; yawning

---

figure. Tassie Gwilliam, *Samuel Richardson's Fictions of Gender* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 50-110.

<sup>220</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1223.

<sup>221</sup> "Now, said the brutal Mowbray, do I think thee sufferable, Jack. Our poor friend is already a peg too low; and here thou art letting him down lower and lower still." Richardson, 1224.

<sup>222</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1224.

<sup>223</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1225.

and stretching, instead of humming a tune as thou didst at Smith's."<sup>224</sup> On his deathbed, Belton believes himself having "less to answer for than either Lovelace or Mowbray," and Belford then describes how Belton hides his own tears as the "hardened" Mowbray walks back in.<sup>225</sup> Belford cannot tell whether Mowbray feels anything for his dying friend or if he is simply fatigued; Mowbray's drowsiness reminds Belford again of Lovelace and he points out this shortcoming of Lovelace's a couple of times—"I thought of thy yawning fit, as described in thy letter of Aug. 13"—while Belford's frustration with Mowbray grows, as he finds himself "at a loss to know whether stupid drowsiness or intense contemplation has got most hold of [Mowbray]."<sup>226</sup>

Complicating this episode's engagement with discourses of gender even further, Mowbray goes to Belton's "chiefly classical and dramatical" library to find something to read to him as Belton lies dying. Mowbray chooses *Oedipus* and reads a passage to Belton that he thinks "extremely apt" to give "courage" to a "dying man":<sup>227</sup>

Amusing himself in our friend's library, which is as thou knows chiefly classical and dramatical, [Mowbray] found out a passage in Lee's Oedipus, which he would needs to have to be extremely apt, and in he came full fraught with the notion of the courage it would give the dying man, and read it to him. 'Tis poetical and pretty. This is it.

When the sun sets, shadows that show'd at noon

But small, appear most long and terrible:

So when we think fate hovers o'er our heads,

Our apprehensions shoot beyond all bounds:

---

<sup>224</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1228.

<sup>225</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1228.

<sup>226</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1228.

<sup>227</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1228.

Owls, ravens, crickets seem the watch of death:  
 Nature's worst vermin scare her god-like sons.  
 Echoes, the very leaving of a voice  
 Grow babbling ghosts, and call us to our graves.  
 Each mole-hill thought swells to a huge Olympus;  
 While we, fantastic dreamers, heave and puff,  
 And swear with our imagination's weight.

*The Art of English Poetry* has this quote under the "Death" category, attributing it to Lee just as Lovelace and Belford do, and quotes it thusly:

When he Sun sets, Shadows that shew'd at Noon  
 But Small, appear most long and terrible,  
 So when we think Fate hovers o'er our Heads,  
 Our Apprehensions shoot beyond all Bounds:  
 Owls, Ravens, Crickets, seems the Watch of Death;  
 Nature's worst Vermin scare her God-like Sons;  
 Echoes, the very Leaving of a Voice,  
 Grow babbling Ghosts, and call us to our Graves,  
 Each mole-Hill Thought swells to a huge Olympus,  
 While we fantastic Dreamers heave and puff,  
 And swear with an Imagination's Weight.<sup>228</sup>

Richardson has changed some minor details: the "an" of "Imagination's Weight" is changed to "our." This also deviates from the original play, just as he changed the "hands" to "feet" in

---

<sup>228</sup> Bysshe, *The Art of English Poetry* 1714 edition, 90-91.

Clarissa's alterations to the text in her earlier letter; Richardson's decision to change this part of the text again announces his understanding of the larger context of the play and the ways he wants Belford to convey the meaning of its connections to Belton and Lovelace in his letter. Putting weight on the "our" allows him to attempt to convince Lovelace of the dire situation he believes his friend has now arrived at. Belford describes it as "poetical and pretty," but Belton reacts violently to the reading of the passage, saying how inaccurately it describes death: Mowbray "expected praises for finding this out. But Belton turning his head from him, Ah Dick! (said he) these are not the reflections of a dying man! What thou wilt one day feel, if it be what I now feel, will convince thee that the evils before thee, and with thee, are more than the effects of imagination."<sup>229</sup> What interests me about Mowbray's choice and Belton's reaction along with Belford's own transcription of the event has to do with the context of the *Oedipus* passage. While Belton's reaction to the passage is understandable, given what Mowbray reads from the scene, the omission speaks volumes. Mowbray cuts out the dark opening and the Ghost's interjections, thereby changing a moody and much more overtly theatrical moment into exactly what Belford describes it as: pretty and poetical. When Belton turns his head from the reading and says "these are not the reflections of a dying man!"<sup>230</sup> he seems to recognize how Mowbray misreads the original text and adapts it for his own needs; after all, Mowbray's fear of death at this point in the narrative manifests itself as boredom and annoyance. Mowbray chooses to omit the darkness in order to cope with his friend's death. Belton will have none of it, knowing his own library better than anyone, and he chides Mowbray for his lack of understanding: "What thou wilt one day feel, if it be what I now feel, will convince thee that the evils before thee, and

---

<sup>229</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1228.

<sup>230</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1228.

with thee, are more than the effects of imagination.”<sup>231</sup> Belford reveals more reflection and empathy for Belton than Mowbray (since we have his letters on the subject) and we have the passage because of his inclusion of it in a letter to Lovelace. We must trust that Belford is recording exactly what Mowbray read to Belton, and it seems to follow that Mowbray did indeed omit the rest of the *Oedipus* passage, given Belton’s reaction.

The question that interests me is whether Lovelace reading Belford’s letter recognizes that omission, as we are already keenly aware of his own stake in Dryden and Lee, and in this play in particular. His response to Belford confronts the passage and Belton’s death: “But sickness, a long tedious sickness, will make a bugbear of anything to a languishing heart, I see that. And so far was Mowbray apropos in the verses from Nat Lee which thou hast transcribed. Merely to die, no man of reason fears is a mistake, say thou, or say the author, what ye will.”<sup>232</sup> At this point, Lovelace, like Mowbray, reads the passage as he wants to, out of context and privileging the poetry of it over the theatrical. In fact, Lovelace makes a convincing argument as to how that passage should be read, focusing on Belton’s lack of credibility as a reader due to his sickness and pain. Lovelace draws our attention to the *Oedipus* line Clarissa quotes in her Mad Papers: he refers to the “bugbear” from Eurydice’s lines on death.<sup>233</sup> Lovelace, so fascinated with Clarissa’s papers, perhaps now internalizes the quotes she used to express her trauma.

---

<sup>231</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1228.

<sup>232</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1238.

<sup>233</sup> “Death only can be dreadful to the bad:/To innocence ‘tis like a bugbear dress’d/To frighten children. Pull but off the mask/And he’ll appear as a friend.” Richardson, *Clarissa*, 893.

## Conclusion

This chapter asks readers to consider interpreting Lovelace as an eighteenth-century audience or reader might interpret she-tragedy heroines, women who did not fit comfortably into the roles assigned to them. These roles demanded not only an incredible amount of suffering for these women, but also a convincing performance of the guilt or shame they were supposed to feel over their sins. Like Lovelace, however, these characters never exactly repent or attempt to change; death becomes the only way for them to escape their suffering. At the same time, Lovelace recognizes the masculine qualities of Clarissa and draws parallels between the impossibility of their love and the homosocial bonds in the plays to which he refers. Queering Lovelace and Clarissa by paying close attention to the quotes and figures they allude to in constructing their identities throughout the letters, we can arrive at a more complicated understanding not only of midcentury interpretations of Restoration texts, but also of the fluid gender roles already apparent in late-seventeenth-century plays. In short, *Clarissa's* specific and consistent references to Restoration drama highlight and often demand a queer reading both of Richardson's novel and of the dramatic literature from which his novel so often draws its resources for thinking about gender.

## CHAPTER 4

### PERFORMANCES OF POWER AND VIRTUE: CLEOPATRA AND OCTAVIA, FROM SHAKESPEARE TO GARRICK

My final chapter focuses on how three long-eighteenth-century adaptations of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (ca. 1607)—Dryden's *All for Love* (1677), Sarah Fielding's *Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia* (1757), and David Garrick's revision of *Antony and Cleopatra* (1759)—focus on the homosocial conflict between Cleopatra and Octavia as a site for articulating contrasting conceptions of the proper relationship between female virtue and power. I argue that Dryden transforms the politically threatening and morally problematic figure of Shakespeare's Cleopatra by relocating her “flaw” in her focused love, her fidelity towards Antony. Dryden's interpretation of Cleopatra and Octavia turns them into sparring figures on the stage in a way that allows for a new reading of virtue: the adulterous character eventually takes on features of the faithful-wife archetype, while the literal wife plays like the *other* woman. The virtue of Dryden's Cleopatra enables her death to become unambiguously triumphant like Clarissa's, though it also pulls at the heartstrings of the audience in a way reminiscent of Isabella's death. Dryden's *All for Love* creates a Cleopatra who, by existing in a limited space like the domestic heroines in the she-tragedies of Southerne, Otway, and Rowe, confronts her death with a self-awareness similar to Isabella's and with a recognition of the tragic-heroic dimensions of her trajectory similar to Clarissa's. Garrick's Shakespearean Cleopatra could not coexist with Dryden's successful and sympathetic model of the tragic heroine, which still dominated the very stage Garrick wanted to transform.

Garrick's 1759 abridged production of *Antony and Cleopatra*, with over 600 line-cuts, seemed an ideal compromise for managing the infamously sprawling and supposedly unstageable play. In keeping with *Antony and Cleopatra*'s tumultuous stage history, however,

Garrick's version was not equal to his earlier successes with Shakespeare's plays. His audience's lukewarm response to the revival contrasts with their continued interest in John Dryden's *All for Love* (1677), which was produced throughout the early eighteenth century (when *Antony and Cleopatra* was not being performed). This chapter will argue that, rather than reading *All for Love* as reactionary or secondary to *Antony and Cleopatra*, a tendency that runs throughout most criticism on Dryden's play, we need to consider these two works as dialectically related to one another during the long eighteenth century, as mutually influencing and informing British cultural understanding of Cleopatra's "infinite variety." Both Garrick's altered *Antony and Cleopatra* and Dryden's *All for Love* foreground Shakespeare's critically-divisive female lead by reducing the power of Octavia's virtue, though they do so in extremely dissimilar ways that achieve remarkably similar effects. Like Garrick's cuts to her character Dryden's additions to it diminish Octavia's already weak role, allowing Cleopatra's performance of herself as the virtuous wife figure to become all the more convincing.

John Dryden's *All for Love* staked a uniquely powerful claim in the long eighteenth century as the favored version of the Antony and Cleopatra tragedy—Shakespeare's notoriously difficult play was not attempted throughout the Restoration period until David Garrick's Drury Lane 1759 production. Known as the play Dryden wrote for himself, *All for Love* is recognized by many critics as his best work, or, at least, as the most canonical. While *All for Love* continued to have success, *Antony and Cleopatra* would not be produced again until Kemble's revival in 1813 (interestingly, Kemble also borrows from *All for Love*<sup>234</sup>). I begin my comparative analysis

---

<sup>234</sup> "J.M. Kemble's revival at Convent Gardens in 1813, starring Charles Young and Helen Faucit, radically cut Shakespeare's text, interpolating not only passages from Dryden's *All for Love*, but two wholly original scenes...producing what Lord Byron despairingly termed '[a] salad of Shakespeare and Dryden' (qtd. In Madelaine 34)." My larger book project would like to investigate how much Dryden's *All for Love* influenced later productions of the Shakespeare

of Garrick's version of *Antony and Cleopatra* and Dryden's *All for Love* by considering the ways Octavia's character engages with Restoration and mid-eighteenth-century conceptions of female virtue as obligatory: she is listed as Caesar's sister or Antony's wife in the *Dramatis Personae* but is interpreted as Cleopatra's sexual competitor and ultimately as the figure of "cold" and "passive" female suffering. I then argue that Cleopatra's alternative versions of female suffering in these works are constructed relationally through Garrick's cuts and Dryden's additions to Octavia's scenes. The chapter concludes by looking at Sarah Fielding's 1757 narrative, *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia*, a historical novel that deploys the familiar good girl/bad girl dichotomy between the two women in ways that not only give us an alternative reading of Dryden's characters (and a possible influence on Garrick's 1759 adaptation), but that also suggest Fielding's transformative re-imagining of the relationship between female virtue and suffering.

### **The Importance of Being Octavia**

Before Garrick's 1759 production, there is no record of *Antony and Cleopatra* being performed throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In *The Elizabethan Stage*, E.K. Chambers records the play as last being acted in 1606, while David Bevington argues that "the latest possible date for *Antony and Cleopatra* is 1608, when, on 20 May 'A booke Called. Anthony and Cleopatra' was entered in the Stationer's Register by Edward Blount, along with 'A booke called. The booke of Pericles prynce of Tyre.' The folio was not published until 1623."<sup>235</sup> Garrick put a considerable amount of time and money into his version, breaking up the acts and

---

play and how much his representation of Cleopatra's virtue and romantic love for Antony determined performances of the complex and difficult character for actresses.

<sup>235</sup> David Bevington, ed., *The New Cambridge Shakespeare: Antony and Cleopatra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1.

scenes from the folios (which gave no clear divisions), as well as changing scenery and costumes. Working with his friend Edward Capell, Garrick rearranged and altered the play but did not add or create new speeches. After at least five months of prep work, they debuted *Antony and Cleopatra* on January 3, and it was produced four more times that month, ending its run in May after a total of six performances.<sup>236</sup> These few performances would have been brief by comparison to the play as it was acted in the early seventeenth century, as the Garrick-Capell version is 657 lines shorter than Shakespeare's original: they cut several characters (Antony's friends Ventidius, Scarus, Demetrius, and Philo; as well as Pompey's friends Gallus, Menecrates, and Varris), and they made cuts to two scenes in Act IV—the one in which Octavius-Caesar sulks and whines about Antony (“He calls me a boy”), and the one in which Cleopatra cannot understand Antony. The only cuts to Shakespeare's Act V (dominated by Cleopatra) occur when the Clown speaks back with a series of not so subtle double-entendres to Cleopatra's question “Will it eat me?” (5.2.264-268).

For the purposes of my argument, perhaps the most significant changes Garrick and Capell made to Shakespeare's original play are the two cuts to Octavia's role: their removal of her betrothal scene with Antony and of the scene in which Antony leaves her to go to Athens. George Winchester Stone argues that Octavia's absence in Garrick's adaptation is deeply felt:

[Octavia] appears only once at Rome to learn that Antony's pleasure has taken him back to the soft beds of the East, and that she is most wretched. This glimpse is hardly

---

<sup>236</sup> Stone discusses the “stir of anticipation among the London theatre-going public long before the play was produced” due to Garrick and Capell's unique marketing strategies in which they decided to publish their alteration in October of 1758. Capell included marks to highlight the places readers should read more dramatically: Four different marks indicating different things (irony, change of address, description of an object, and asides.) Stone indicates “Capell's hope...that these marks would be universally accepted and hence do away with marginal comments.” George Winchester Stone, Jr., “Garrick's Presentation of *Antony and Cleopatra*,” *Review of English Studies* 13 (1937): 26.

sufficient to show the beauty and fidelity of her character. She has become a shadow that temporarily haunts and hampers Antony and is really known to the audience only through report and the comments of Cleopatra as her messenger describes her.<sup>237</sup>

Stone's claim that Garrick and Capell reduce Octavia from a fully realized "individual" to an "insignificant puppet" is based both on her relative invisibility in the adaptation and on the fact that we receive only mediated, second-hand information about her.<sup>238</sup> Garrick's audience cannot care for Octavia because she does not appear enough on the stage to gain their sympathies. By comparison, Dryden's Octavia gains more stage time and more lines, but (as a number of critics have pointed out) she actually loses audience support *because of* her increased stage presence.

Dryden's 1678 preface—directed at critics who had attacked *All for Love*—addresses the question of Octavia's role. He admits she might disrupt the lovers' tragedy by taking away the audience's pity for them:

I had not enough considered that the compassion she moved to herself and children, was destructive to that which I reserved for Antony and Cleopatra; whose mutual love being founded upon vice, must lessen the favour of the Audience to them, when Virtue and Innocence were oppressed by it. And, though I justified Antony in some measure by making Octavia's departure, to proceed wholly from her self; yet the force of the first Machine still remained; and the dividing of pity, like the cutting of a River into many Channels, abated the strength of the natural stream.<sup>239</sup>

---

<sup>237</sup> Stone, "Garrick's Presentation," 30.

<sup>238</sup> Stone argues that "Two characters, Pompey and Octavia, have dwindled from individuals with lives of their own to rather insignificant puppets used for background purposes." Stone, "Garrick's Presentation," 29.

<sup>239</sup> L.A. Beaurline and Fredson Bowers, eds. *John Dryden: Four Tragedies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 196-279.

Dryden goes on to explain his major disagreement with such critics, and that despite his hesitancy to include Octavia in the play, he believes he was ultimately correct to do so. Dryden notes that the “French Poets” would not “have suffere’d Cleopatra and Octavia to have met; or if they had met, there must have only pass’d betwixt them some cold civilities, but no eagerness of repartee, for fear of offending against the greatness of their characters, and the modesty of their sex.” To this implicit critique, Dryden goes on to say:

I judged it both natural and probable that Octavia, proud of her new-gained Conquest would search out Cleopatra to triumph over her and that Cleopatra, thus attacked, was not of the spirit to shun the encounter; and tis not unlikely that two exasperated Rivals would use such Satire as I would put into their mouth; for after all, though the one were a Roman and the other a Queen, they were both Women.<sup>240</sup>

Before I look at this incredibly contentious scene between Cleopatra and Octavia, I would like to unpack Dryden’s reading of it and his rationalization for including it in such a compact play. The neoclassical *All for Love*’s major difference from *Antony and Cleopatra* is in its economy of language, time, space, and characters. The story of the two lovers takes place all within the final hours of their lives and most of the side characters (including Octavius/Caesar Augustus) from *Antony and Cleopatra* are necessarily omitted. Given all of this economy, Dryden’s choice to provide Octavia with *more* stage time suggests his heightened sense of the importance of her character. While Dryden argues that the two women, simply by being women, would naturally fight and compete over Antony, Garrick’s Octavia loses this battle by forfeit and Cleopatra wins over the audience and Antony due to Octavia’s absence.

---

<sup>240</sup> Dryden, Preface to *All for Love*, 196-205.

Garrick's choice to avoid staging *Octavia* would have appealed to a prudish critic like John Dennis who, in 1719, had condemned Dryden's play as "pernicious, immoral, and criminal" in a letter to Richard Steele. Dennis cannot understand how the character Antony could lower himself to "take to his Bed a loose abandon'd prostitute" rather than staying with "his young, affectionate, virtuous, charming wife." Garrick sidesteps this form of moral critique that Dryden had anticipated in his own preface decades earlier; it may be that in trying to please everyone by trimming scenes, purchasing lavish costumes, and keeping in fashion with a heavy amount of "pageantry and spectacle," Garrick could please no one. In his attempt to stay true to Shakespeare, Garrick failed. Dryden succeeded by abandoning Shakespeare; despite Dryden's use of blank verse, I agree with Richard Kroll and Max Novak that Dryden's references to Shakespeare are "something of a red herring."<sup>241</sup> Dryden's confrontation scene between Octavia and Cleopatra is representative of his overarching strategies in adapting Shakespeare.

In Act III of *All for Love*, Cleopatra has lost Antony to Octavia: "Octavia has him!/O fatal name to Cleopatra's love!/My kisses, my embraces now are hers." Before Octavia enters the stage, Cleopatra asks Alexas to describe Octavia:

Cleopatra: But thou has seen my rival; speak,  
 Does she deserve this blessing? Is she fair,  
 Bright as a goddess? and is all perfection  
 Confin'd to her? It is. Poor I was made  
 Of that course matter which, when she was finish'd,  
 The gods threw by, for rubbish.

---

<sup>241</sup> See: Richard Kroll, "The Political Economy of *All for Love*," in *Enchanted Ground: Reimagining John Dryden*, edited by Jayne Lewis and Maximillian E. Novak (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 127-147.

Alexas: She's indeed a very Miracle.

Cleopatra: Death to my hopes, a Miracle!

Alexas: A miracle;

I mean of goodness; for in beauty, Madam,

You make all wonders cease. (3.401-409)

Here, we see how Dryden has emphasized Cleopatra's vulnerability while still maintaining the vanity and insecurity that often motivate Shakespeare's version of the character. Thinking she has lost Antony to Octavia for good, Cleopatra fixates on her own looks—measuring them over Octavia's goodness and gentleness; quickly reassured by Alexas that she can rest calmly about her superior beauty, Cleopatra then just as quickly realizes that this win is but an empty victory and that perhaps Alexas merely tells her what he thinks Cleopatra wants to hear: "I fear thou flatter'st me!"<sup>242</sup> In this dialogue, Alexas appears to be playing with Cleopatra's insecurities; he uses the term "miracle," but the rhetorical device implies he is borrowing from Cleopatra's own descriptions. In fact, Cleopatra uses the word "perfection" and perhaps implies a miracle with "goddess," but Alexas pushes for something grander, beyond the associative images that Cleopatra has conjured. He pauses just long enough to toy with Cleopatra's anxiety, suggesting the comical elements within this feminine moment and anticipating what will punctuate the dialogue between Octavia and Cleopatra.

Their exchange illustrates the quick wit of both women while highlighting the nasty qualities of jealousy within both of them. The dialogue opens with Octavia attempting to insult Cleopatra, who swiftly turns the insult into a compliment:

Octavia: I need not ask if you are Cleopatra,

---

<sup>242</sup> 3.411.

Your haughty carriage—

Cleopatra: Shows I am a queen:

Nor need I ask who you are. (416-419)

While it would be easy to read Cleopatra as merely imperious (as Octavia herself might read her), this exchange nods back to an earlier one when we are first introduced to Cleopatra. Act II of *All for Love* begins with Cleopatra asking Alexas and Iras, “What shall I do, or whither shall I turn?” Alexas asks, “Does this weak passion/Become a Mighty Queen?” and Cleopatra responds, “I am no Queen.” Thus, when Cleopatra declares herself a queen to Octavia, we are watching someone who has already recognized that her status is just a performance: “Is this to be a Queen, to be besieged/By your insulting Roman; and to wait/Each hour the Victor’s chain?” (2.1.8-10). If we can read her as drawing self-conscious attention to her own theatricality, then it is not hard to infer that Cleopatra is already aware of the finite quality of her royal status.

Not to be shown up, Octavia then follows suit, announcing not her name, but her nationality. This point of difference—Octavia as Roman and Cleopatra as Egyptian—becomes particularly interesting in Dryden’s version, which is set entirely in Alexandria and therefore gives Cleopatra home-field advantage. The East-West binary cannot help but underpin the argument between the women: unlike Shakespeare, however, Dryden does not imply an immediate hierarchy in which we must read Cleopatra as a lascivious gypsy and Octavia as an idealized Senecan stoic. In fact, critics of *All for Love* have often complained about the latter’s extreme coldness:

Octavia: A Roman: A name that makes and can unmake a Queen.

Cleopatra: Your Lord, the man who serves me, is a Roman.

Octavia: He was a Roman, till he lost that name

To be a slave in Egypt: but I come

To free him thence. (420-423)

Establishing her strong connection to her homeland, Octavia further implies her own strength by telling Cleopatra how her identity as a “Roman” implies her ability to destroy a queen, but Cleopatra parries back, noting that Antony serves her, thus putting Rome under her power. Octavia declares that Antony is no longer a Roman, thereby distancing herself from him rhetorically and suggesting her power over Antony and Cleopatra in the slightly bawdy “slave in Egypt” (if we take Cleopatra as “Egypt”):

Cleopatra: Peace, peace, my lover’s Juno.

When he grew weary of that Household-Clog,

He chose my easier bonds.

Octavia: I wonder not

Your bonds are easie; you have long been practis’d

In that lascivious art: he’s not the first

For whom you spread your snares: let Caesar witness. (424-429)

Cleopatra admits she has enslaved Antony, but that he likes being under her control; Octavia takes the image of the “easier bonds” and makes another bawdy sneer at Cleopatra’s sexual power by implying her reputation and sexual history in the claim that the latter’s lasciviousness has “long been practis’d.” Octavia suggests that Cleopatra’s very body links her to the traps she sets by “spread[ing her] snares,” and finally makes explicit the previous relationship Cleopatra had with Caesar, to which Cleopatra responds:

I lov’d not Caesar; ‘twas but gratitude

I paid his love: the worst your malice can,

Is but to say the greatest of Mankind  
 Has been my Slave. The next, but far above him,  
 In my esteem, is he whom Laws calls yours,  
 But whom his love made mine. (430-434)

Here, Dryden's Cleopatra explains her relationship with Caesar in a way that connects to but slightly nuances Shakespeare's representation of it. Dryden's Cleopatra admits that she was involved with Caesar—that he loved her but she did not love him back. She turns Octavia's insult into a compliment by smugly acknowledging that two of the great men of their time have been under her power.

By comparing this explanation with the one from Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, in which we have an exchange with Charmian, we can see how Dryden moved away from the ambiguity in the language. Cleopatra asks, "Did I, Charmian, ever Love Caesar so?" (1.5.65-66). Shakespeare's Cleopatra does not remember, or does not want to be perceived as remembering, her own feelings for Caesar. Cleopatra chastises Charmian for speaking well of Caesar ("Oh that brave Caesar!"), who then reminds her mistress that she is merely repeating Cleopatra's past praises ("I sing but after you"). Cleopatra famously responds by referring to that time as "My salad days, / When I was green in judgment, cold in blood" (1.5.72-74). Unlike in *All for Love*, this Cleopatra implies that she did love Caesar but was a different type of lover then, being younger and less experienced. Dryden will not allow for this; his Cleopatra must be faithful of heart, if not quite maintaining literal fidelity in her actions. But both versions depict Cleopatra as insisting on a hierarchy in their loves: Antony is "but far above" Caesar and is Cleopatra's "man of men" (1.5.71).

In Dryden's play, the exchange continues with Octavia taking Cleopatra's use of the word "mankind" and making it her own, just as Cleopatra had previously reconfigured her use of "slave." After discussing Cleopatra's body as a trap, Octavia focuses on Cleopatra's face, a move that builds on the previous imagery of ensnarement while adding the more blatantly political language of usurpation:

I would view nearer [coming up close to her.]  
 That face, which has so long usurp'd my right,  
 To find th'inevitable charms, that catch  
 Mankind for sure, that ruin'd my dear Lord. (435-439)

Cleopatra's beauty is the ruin not only of Antony but of "Mankind" more generally; Octavia searches Cleopatra's face for her "charms," wittily suggesting that they are not easy to find. Dryden's Octavia is now far from Shakespeare's "Gentle Octavia"; she is cold and smart in Dryden—hardly the woman Octavius had referred to as the "market maid of Rome."<sup>243</sup> *All for Love* makes Octavia a much more dynamic character than she is in Shakespeare. Cleopatra again responds by turning Octavia's words back against her, saying that Octavia *should* carry out her "search" on the idea that if she had "but half" of Cleopatra's charms, Octavia would not have "lost [Antony's] heart." This turn in the dialogue illustrates how the two women define certain terms in completely opposing ways: Cleopatra does not accept Octavia's moralistic paradigm, according to which "charm" is a dangerous method of obtaining power (anticipating Sarah Fielding's interpretation of the two characters, as we shall have occasion to note near the end of this chapter). Finally, Dryden's Octavia fully chastises Cleopatra, celebrating the idea that such "charms" are "far" from the "knowledge of a Roman lady" and "modest wife," and posing to

---

<sup>243</sup> Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, 3.4.51.

Cleopatra the condemnatory question: “Shame of our sex,/dost thou not blush, to own those black endearments/that make sin pleasing?” Octavia’s moralistic reading of Cleopatra’s charms demands that the latter should feel shame for playing at love.

Indeed, Octavia’s use of the word “blush” is particularly important in the context of this comparative analysis of Dryden’s version and Shakespeare’s. *All for Love* first refers to a “blush” when Charmion describes Antony to Cleopatra: “When he beheld me struggling in the croud,/He blush’d, and bade, make way” (2.1.52-53). Antony blushes at the sight of Cleopatra’s maid, presumably because he associates the maid with her mistress. His blush indicates his feelings, and “There’s comfort yet” for Cleopatra because of his bodily reaction to the mere idea of her. But Octavia links blushing to shame rather than to the positive feeling of passionate love. Moreover, this passionate love might be the very thing to be ashamed of, so the issue at hand for Dryden, and for many critics of *All for Love* is this: do we shame the lovers for this passionate feeling, or do we praise them? Does the play agree with Octavia’s Roman reading of the affair? Cleopatra makes clear her own understanding of shame and her version of love:

You may blush who want [charms].  
 If bounteous nature, if indulgent heav’n  
 Have giv’n me charms to please the bravest man;  
 Should I not thank’em? Should I be asham’d,  
 And not be proud? I am, that he has lov’d me;  
 And, when I love not him, heav’n change this face  
 For one like that. (444-449)

Here, Cleopatra echoes an earlier exchange with Antony in which they discuss the issue of “blushing.” Antony admits his admiration for Octavia’s “blushing” as he judges Cleopatra for

forcing him to fight by sea rather than by land: “To set the World at Peace, I took Octavia,/This Caesear’s Sister; in her pride of youth/And flow’r of Beauty did I wed that Lady,/Whom blushing I must praise, because I left her” (2.1.302-305). Antony collapses Octavia’s goodness with her blushing, which he praises because he associates it with her modesty and gentleness. But Cleopatra, after they have fought over the past, uses the term quite differently: “And since my innocence will not offend, /I shall not blush to own it” (2.1.344-345). Importantly, in this dialogue with Antony, Cleopatra establishes the way she interprets blushing: to blush is a sign of being in the wrong. She does not believe she has done wrong, so there will be no blushing.

Thus, when she is talking to Octavia, Cleopatra reasserts her opinions on the idea of shame and the body. Octavia cannot muster a response to Cleopatra, so she produces a new challenge:

Octavia: Thou lov’st him not so well.

Cleopatra: I love him better, and deserve him more.

Octavia: You do not; cannot: you have been his ruine.

Who made him cheap at Rome, but Cleopatra?

Who made him scorn’d abroad, but Cleopatra?

At Actium, who betray’d him? Cleopatra.

Who made his children orphans, and poor me

A wretched widow? Only Cleopatra. (451-456)

This moment towards the end of the dialogue might remind the audience how the two women have yet to use Antony’s actual name (they refer to him as “Lord”), though their shared understanding of the “him” in this fight implies a complex intimacy between them. After an incredibly infantile back and forth, Octavia moves towards more elegant language, relying on

repetition, and creating a deafening sound by using the name “Cleopatra” each time she answers her rhetorical questions. Rising to the occasion, Cleopatra takes back her name without denying any of Octavia’s accusations:

Cleopatra: Yet she who loves him best is Cleopatra.

If you have suffer’d, I have suffer’d more.

You bear the specious title of a wife,

To guild your cause, and draw the pitying world

To favour it: the world condemns poor me;

For I have lost my honour, lost my fame,

And stain’d the glory of my royal house,

And all to bear the branded name of mistress.

There wants but life, and that too I would lose

For him I love.

Octavia: Be’t so then; take thy wish. (457-467)

Dryden’s Cleopatra anticipates Southerne’s Isabella who was “born to suffer”; like Isabella, Cleopatra seems to revel in her own suffering but she goes so far as to measure her suffering, weighing it against Octavia’s. While Cleopatra does not necessarily feel shame in the way Octavia would like her to, she admits acknowledging how the “world” has condemned her.

What are we to do with Octavia’s suffering in both *All for Love* and *Antony and Cleopatra*? On the one hand, Octavia can be viewed as the long-suffering wife; on the other, she exists as a mere complication for the lovers. It seems Dryden wants to make explicit the passive rivalry between the two women in Shakespeare’s play. In *All for Love* the audience gets to see what Cleopatra would say to Octavia’s face, rather than just watching her insult Octavia’s

physical appearance behind her back. The confrontation scene captures Dryden's interest in competition between women: Octavia and Cleopatra become catty creatures determined to verbally assault one another over a man, in a fight with comedic undertones, however serious its implications might be. Dryden's preface suggests his transparent pity for Octavia, but it also insists upon the audience's continued investment in the lovers. Dryden highlights how he depicts Octavia as choosing to depart in order to justify Antony's actions—his preface has a certain amount of ambivalence about the moral questions raised by the play. Yes, Antony and Cleopatra are immoral, but they are so fascinating to Dryden that he finds ways to justify or rationalize their bad behavior. Dryden's decision to have Octavia leave of her own volition is just one example of his play's forgiveness for the lovers.

Maria José Mora helps to reconcile the various interpretations of Dryden's Octavia by noting the differences between how she was cast against Cleopatra in the original 1677 version and the 1704 revival:

The choice of actors was a fundamental strategy in defining the values of the play and determining the response of the audience... [I]n the case of *All for Love* the casting of the main female parts in the opening season was instrumental in making the audience withhold moral condemnation and pity the fate of Cleopatra; when the play was revived in 1704, however, the cast recorded on this occasion shows a completely different strategy at work, one that is designed to direct sympathy towards the character of the injured wife, Octavia.<sup>244</sup>

While the original 1677 cast included Elizabeth Boutell as Cleopatra and Katharine Corey as Octavia, the revival cast Elizabeth Barry as Cleopatra and Anne Bracegirdle as Octavia. Mora

---

<sup>244</sup> Maria José Mora. "Type-Casting in the Restoration Theatre: Dryden's 'All for Love', 1677-1704." *Atlantis* 27 (2005): 77.

explains that Corey's Octavia (with her gesticulations and figure) would have announced herself as more of a shrew than a suffering wife: Corey was fifteen years older than Boutell and was typically playing roles that would have emphasized this shrewishness, so she would not have held much appeal as a rival to Cleopatra for Antony's affections. While Boutell had a certain sweetness and vulnerability on stage as Cleopatra, Barry was not known for being an innocent creature (on stage or off), while Bracegirdle was often cast in more virtuous roles. Bracegirdle was also a very attractive actress to pair with Barry, and their confrontation as Cleopatra and Octavia would seem a fairer fight than that between the fish-wife Corey and the pretty, vulnerable Boutell. Mora argues that audiences' and critics' reactions to the confrontation scene would be largely dependent on which actresses were depicting Octavia and Cleopatra. Therefore, Dryden's critics who thought the confrontation scene beneath the characters might have been influenced more by how cruelly Boutell's Cleopatra behaved as she picked on another actress who was so clearly not as attractive. The 1677 version—with Cleopatra very much in the power-position—aligns more strongly with Garrick's production of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Garrick's Octavia exists as an idea more than a character, the person who consumes Cleopatra in terms of jealousy and Antony in term of obligation. I would add that Dryden's Octavia functions to remind the audience of the alternate tragedy occurring within Cleopatra and Antony's love story: Octavia will survive and become the widow-figure, a character so popular in Restoration she-tragedies.

I would argue that Garrick's decision to cut a scene from Shakespeare—the one in which Antony confides his feelings to Octavia—reduces her character to a mere plot device and pushes the audience to focus on her loyalty to her brother Caesar, a bond that is troubling in terms of its incestuous undertones and therefore suggestive of a larger problem for Rome itself. Garrick

moves immediately from Cleopatra's scene with Charmian, in which she asks what Octavia looks like (reminiscent of her scene with Alexas in *All for Love*, to be sure), back to Rome where Caesar cries "Condemning Rome, he did all this" (Garrick, 2.5.1). Garrick cuts the fourth and fifth scenes from Shakespeare's Act III, thereby removing the intimate conversation between Octavia and Antony—a privacy never allowed Antony and Cleopatra, who are always surrounded by attendants. In this sense, Shakespeare privileges the marriage between Octavia and Antony over the latter's love affair with Cleopatra. The married couple can be potentially less performative for one another, as opposed to the ways in which the political dimensions of Cleopatra's public persona seem to require theatrics at every turn. Antony's first lines to his wife in Shakespeare's version push imply a past intimacy offstage, as we enter mid-conversation:

Nay, nay, Octavia, not only that.  
 That were excusable, that and thousands more  
 Of semblable import—but he hath waged  
 New wars 'gainst Pompey, made his will and read it  
 To public ear, spoke scantily of me. (3.4.1-5)

By entering into the middle of their private conversation, the audience must recognize how the couple has already been discussing the issues at hand; we can infer a certain level of respect Antony has for Octavia, simply by the way he begins this scene by building off of her idea, "not only that" (3.4.1). The length of their individual speeches differentiates this dialogue from the ones Antony engages in with Cleopatra. Unlike Cleopatra, Octavia allows Antony to speak his peace, letting him resolve his thoughts about her brother and the state of Rome. He, too, does not interrupt Octavia as he does Cleopatra. The lack of verbal play and banter between Antony and Octavia suggests exactly what we would expect from their political marriage: necessary respect

and trust. The content of their dialogue also downplays whatever passion might exist between them as it focuses on Antony's insecurity about public opinion turning against him due to Octavius. Octavia wishes she did not have to choose between her brother and Antony: "The good gods will mock me presently,/When I shall pray 'O, bless my lord and husband!./Undo that prayer by crying out as loud/ 'O, bless my brother!'" (3.4.15-17). As he debates the issue of Caesar with her, Antony becomes affectionate with Octavia, "Gentle Octavia,/Let your best love draw to that point which seeks/Best to preserve it" (3.4.20-22). It's a brief scene, but because it occurs after Cleopatra's messenger has described Octavia as a woman round-faced "even to faultiness," the audience gets to draw its own conclusions about her. Actually, Octavia bookends the scene in which Cleopatra chides her looks: two scenes earlier (3.2), we see Octavia in her public Roman persona, whereas in the scene discussed above (3.4), we move to Athens and see her private self.

Garrick does not completely cut Octavia from his version of *Antony and Cleopatra*, and the scene he chooses to keep speaks volumes as to how he wanted his audience (and readers) to interpret her. Antony had left for Alexandria, back to Cleopatra, and Caesar is furious as Octavia enters the scene. His greeting expresses a strange hostility for his sister, suggesting how much he links her own humiliation with his own; he also victimizes her with the cruelty of his tone, which immediately colors our reading of Octavia:

Octavia: Hail, Caesar, and my lord! Hail most dear Caesar!

Caesar: That ever I should call thee castaway! (2.5.45-46)

Octavia as the "castaway" wife provides little pathos for the audience at this moment since we have literally just been introduced to her. There could be an argument that she stands as a silent figure onstage during an earlier scene but no stage directions suggest it. We also lose the

implications of her calling Caesar her lord since, in the original, we know she had not only called Antony her lord but also reflected on her torn loyalties. Garrick instead suggests Octavia commits her loyalties only to her brother, implying the privileging of family loyalty over wifely duty with these cuts and emphases from beginning to end: as his cast of characters lists her as “Caesar’s sister,” so does this scene seek to distance Octavia from any substantial relationship with Antony. Garrick maintains all of Shakespeare’s lines for this exchange. Caesar twits Octavia for her lack of grandeur:

You come not like Caesar’s sister. The wife of Antony  
 Should have an army for an usher and  
 The neighs of horse to tell of her approach  
 Long ere she did appear. The trees by the way  
 Should have borne men, and expectation fainted,  
 Longing for what it had not. (2.4.48-54)

Caesar refers to Octavia as both his sister and Antony’s wife—a remnant of the much more complicated relationships Octavia attempts to maintain simultaneously in the original play. Since we have not seen the intimate scene between her and Antony, however, this scene makes Caesar seem more like a jealous lover who associates Octavia’s current lack of pomp with Antony’s failure as a proper husband. The language becomes poetic and loving as Caesar moves from labeling her a castaway to lamenting on what could have been, on how expectations, light-headed and fainting like one in love, could never reach the reality of Octavia’s entrance. This particular metaphor implies Caesar’s own impotent desire for Octavia along with his anger toward Antony for not treating the “gift” of Octavia with greater care. He gives his “most wronged sister” the news that “Cleopatra has nodded” Antony back to her, and we end the scene

with Mecaenas's final assurance that Rome will take Octavia into its arms. Octavia's last line is answered by Caesar and closes the scene:

Mecaenas: Welcome, dear madam.

Each heart in Rome does love and pity you.

Only the adulterous Antony, most large

In his abominations, turns you off...

Octavia: Is it so, sir?

Caesar: Most certain. Sister, welcome. Pray you now,

Be ever known to patience. My dearest sister!(3.5.96-104)

Thus, Garrick's version provides a snapshot of Octavia as the victim to some extent but ultimately we are left feeling she's happier in Rome and with her brother. Without watching the marriage scenes between Antony and Octavia, the 1759 audience must rely on her version of their previous encounters. For instance, when Octavia tells Caesar, "To come thus was I not constrained, but did it/On my free will"—after he has already chided her for her "market maid of Rome" appearance—it's rather difficult to believe that this woman does anything of her own free will. But while Shakespeare's Octavia vacillates between Caesar and Antony, and Dryden's fights much harder for her husband, Garrick's emphasis on the plainness of Caesar's dearest sister cannot help but then make the audience long for another scene with Cleopatra.

### **The Problem of Sympathy: Constructions of Cleopatra in Shakespeare, Dryden, and Garrick**

Joining the discussion on the iconic figure of Cleopatra seems much like arriving a few months late for the prom. The fascination with her in our current culture perhaps stems from the multiple ways she has been represented—from Plutarch to Mankiewicz—Cleopatra's power over

our endless interest in her derives, paradoxically, from her power. Her singular place in history as a powerful female leader presents the reason for her initial appeal—Cleopatra as a regal queen. Indeed, despite varying depictions of her as childish or cruel, jealous or virtuous, Cleopatra’s status as a force of intelligence and wit does not change much across the history of her representation. The critical reaction to her power, however, has been incredibly diverse: from Samuel Johnson to Bernard Shaw, much canonical literary criticism has fixated on Shakespeare’s Cleopatra and what she represents. Dryden’s *All for Love*, along with Garrick’s version of her story and Sarah Fielding’s unique historical novel all allow us to question the ways in which Cleopatra as a character has been read as thoroughly Shakespeare’s. This section will consider the key differences between Garrick’s and Dryden’s representations of Cleopatra, paying particular attention both to her relationship to Antony and to her death scenes.

While Octavia’s relative absence from Garrick’s revival cannot help but elevate Cleopatra’s stage-presence, the matter of who played Antony certainly must be considered as yet another variable in this play’s lukewarm reception. In 1916, Benjamin Blom argued that Garrick was not suited for the masculine role of Antony:

This alteration of Shakespeare’s play seems to have been devised as a frame for a spectacle. Garrick presented it with rich scenic embellishment and gave more than the usual attention to correctness of costume...He did not himself look formidable in Roman costume, because his figure, though remarkably symmetrical, was slight, and he disliked Roman attire for that reason. He was tolerated as Antony, because he was the reigning favorite, but he was not admired for the part...Mrs. Yates, then twenty-eight years old, gained no considerable fame as Cleopatra, though later, 1766, acting the Egyptian siren, in Dryden’s *All for Love*, she gave what was accounted a splendid performance: ‘her

haughty features and powerful voice carried her well through rage and disdain.’ Garrick’s revival of *Antony and Cleopatra* was evanescent. One recorder states that the play was acted ‘with considerable applause; another mentions that it was acted six times.’<sup>245</sup>

Blom’s remarks circle around some of the more interesting distinctions between Dryden’s and Garrick’s versions; that is, Garrick wanted a “spectacle” to capture the grandeur of the scenery and the period, whereas Dryden focused on the spectacle coming from the acting itself.<sup>246</sup> Blom also notes the continuing popularity of *All for Love*, but further complicates readings of eighteenth-century Cleopatra. Yates’ “splendid performance” occurs years later when she is a more mature actress, suggesting another possible variable to the unpopular revival. Perhaps audiences recognized that Cleopatra required an actress closer to the age of the queen. The casting of Garrick and Yates certainly must be taken seriously as a possible obstacle to the play’s success, but I would like to focus on how the lovers have been interpreted in the two versions. Critics have often pointed out Dryden’s almost fatherly desire to keep Cleopatra out of trouble,

---

<sup>245</sup> Benjamin Blom, *Shakespeare on Stage: Third Series* (New York, 1916), 434-436.

<sup>246</sup> Stone reminds us of the requirements for theatrical managers to present both new plays as well as old standbys—the 1759 version of *Antony and Cleopatra* was one of the new plays. Stone goes on to explain the context of the London theatres to give a better understanding of why Garrick chose that play: “The decade 1750-60 was marked in the history of the English stage by the growth of pantomimes, pageants, and operas. The great exponent of these spectacle shows was John Rich, manager of Convent Garden, who himself...was a remarkable pantomimic actor and a master of elaborate stage devices” (22). With the competition between Rich and Garrick in mind, Stone helpfully provides the motivation behind Garrick’s desire to stage a visually exciting and new theatrical version of Shakespeare’s play: “...in the summer of 1758 Garrick was put to it to offer a new sort of spectacle. If he could find one in which he could also display his own powers of acting the possibility of triumphing over competition would be even greater. Moreover, he wished to produce one which would further his ideal of adding lustre to Shakespeare’s name. One of the dozen plays he had not yet attempted (the others being *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Love’s Labour Lost*, *Comedy of Errors*, *Richard II*, *Henry VI*, *Timon*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Julius Caesar*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Pericles*, and *Cymbeline*), *Antony and Cleopatra* seemed to offer the most in the way of pageantry, poetry, and action.” George Winchester Stone, Jr., “Garrick’s Presentation of *Antony and Cleopatra*,” *Review of English Studies* 13 (1937): 25.

removing her culpability for a number of events and deceits in a way that ultimately allows her a certain kind of virtue. Everything she does that could be read as bad behavior in Shakespeare's version Dryden re-frames as something she has done out of love for Antony. Garrick's adaptation, on the other hand, depicts the Cleopatra that outraged and confused readers because of her enigmatic way of blurring love and power.

The dichotomy we see in the scholarship, then, depends upon the sharp distinction between reading Cleopatra as a virtuous heroine as opposed to a dangerously powerful one. Norman Suckling, for example, rests upon this binary in his reading:

...Shakespeare's Cleopatra does not love Antony at all, until the last act. A real love could be attributed to her only by those who are so unaware of the truth of the matter as to suppose that love is compatible with coquetry. Shakespeare's Cleopatra is a coquette—Professor Bonamy Dobrée has called her a 'flashy vulgarian.' She is more concerned with her power over Antony than with his happiness or his honor; always until the last act, when a realization of the irrevocable end rouses her to unsurpassed lyric heights and to a genuine love too late, as it comes to so many of us...But Dryden's Cleopatra is a very different character, and may be said genuinely to love Antony, not merely to exploit him.<sup>247</sup>

Suckling goes on to list the ways Dryden's Cleopatra contrasts with Shakespeare's: in *All for Love*, Cleopatra deserts Antony at Actium, but out of fear rather than for a power play; she refuses Octavius's offer, and "only stoops to the coquette's trick of arousing jealousy" when Alexas plants the idea in her head. Moreover, Alexas feigns Cleopatra's death in *All for Love*,

---

<sup>247</sup> Norman Suckling, "Dryden in Egypt: Reflections on *All for Love*," in *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of All for Love*, edited by Bruce King (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1968), 51.

whereas in *Antony and Cleopatra*, it is her own idea to do so (51-52). Suckling highlights that in Dryden's play Cleopatra's "genuine desire" is to "keep Antony, not to put him on the rack of uncertainty as to whether she is wholly his or no" (52-53). Considering these differences between the representations of Cleopatra in Shakespeare and Dryden, I find it interesting that Suckling focuses on the issue of love, or more specifically, on the question as to whether Cleopatra "genuinely" loves Antony. Indeed, much of the criticism that has been leveled against Cleopatra's character derives from this issue, but how is Suckling understanding the loaded concept of romantic love in the first place? To Suckling, a coquette does not love because she is not a genuine person. Much scholarship has remained trapped in this definition of "true love" in comparative considerations of *Antony and Cleopatra* and *All for Love*: Antony is sexually drawn to Cleopatra, and she uses her power over him quite wrongly to get what she wants: that is the narrative marshaled to interpret both Cleopatra's lack of real love for Antony and his misguided love for her. The success of *All for Love* throughout the eighteenth-century apparently relied on Dryden's construction of a Cleopatra arguably more genuine and virtuous than Shakespeare's. But even Dryden's heroine has still been accused of lacking the morality of an Octavia in ways that apparently undermine Dryden's alleged intentions.

In his discussion of generic conventions in heroic tragedy, Otto Reinert begins by arguing that: "In many respects *All for Love* may be said to be faithful to the letter of the law governing life in the heroic play, but it certainly violates its spirit... [In the play,] compassion with romantic feeling in distress, not admiration for virtuous love and heroic valor, is the audience emotion courted. This was quite deliberate with Dryden."<sup>248</sup> Reinert's recognition of the pathos and the emphasis on the female lead in Dryden's play implies that he reads *All for Love* as a proto-she-

---

<sup>248</sup> Otto Reinert, "Passion and Pity in *All for Love*."

tragedy. The tepid response the play's premiere received from audiences, as opposed to its great success throughout the early to late eighteenth century, might corroborate Reinert's recognition of it as a "complex" tragedy; she-tragedies by Otway, Southerne, and Rowe had perhaps readied subsequent generations of playgoers to reevaluate *All for Love*. Reinert goes on to reconcile Dryden's prologue with the actual text of the play:

But if *All for Love* is a tragedy of pity and pathos rather than of terror and admiration, its failure to raise a warning finger on the behalf of reason and sexual morality ceases to be a symptom of Dryden's confusion of thought or of his divided intent. If the play is to be reduced to a moral at all, it must be one of some such order as this: the lovers perish as all those must who stake their all on passion rather than on reason. But their fall effect a purgation of the emotion of pity in the audience and this effect is achieved precisely because Dryden abandons the simple moral scheme of the heroic play for the complex multiple truth of mature tragedy. The play points beyond the strict neoclassical mode also in its particularity. Dryden's achievement is that he succeeds, despite the rigor of his form and the low temperature of his language, in making us feel that for these lovers, in these circumstances, the world is well lost. (85)

What Reinert calls "mature tragedy" can readily be understood as a form of she-tragedy, but Reinert deploys the term so that he can denigrate heroic tragedy as simplistic by contrast to a mature tragedy he imagines to be "complex." Rather than understanding *All for Love* within such limiting categories, I would argue that the play demands we rethink such distinctions within the category of "tragedy," since what is sentimental is also heroic and vice versa. Critics' narrow understanding of genre has gone hand in hand with a systematic privileging of conventional masculinity over conventional femininity. Reinert's use of "mature" rather than "she" to describe

the tragedy of *All for Love* keeps him from acknowledging that the feminized pathos of she-tragedy can be accommodated to his conception of what constitutes a mature and complex play.

One of the more general tendencies in previous scholarship involves precisely this question of misreading particular characters based on reductive definitions of generic form; interpreting Cleopatra, for example, critics have read *Antony and Cleopatra* as a failed tragedy, locating part of the reason for this failure in the triumph of the queen's suicide in the final act. I would argue, however, that Cleopatra's suicide (like Isabella and Clarissa's deaths), reveals the extent to which *All for Love* should be considered a she-tragedy, on the understanding that she-tragedy deeply overlaps with heroic tragedy. Antony's death furthers this argument, as he acts as the quintessential romantic lead from a she-tragedy, dying first with less majesty but with great sentiment in order to give Cleopatra the final word, so that she can effectively become the hero of the play. Garrick's *Antony and Cleopatra*, while it clearly foregrounds this heroic triumph for Cleopatra just as Dryden does, refuses to reward the lovers with the possibility of forgiveness for their passion: that is, "to die each other's; and, so dying,/While hand in hand" to "walk in Groves below" (V.394-395). This focus on the ambiguous moral status of the love between Antony and Cleopatra, along with the emphasis on her apparent lack of virtue, might begin to explain why Dryden's *All for Love* succeeded with audiences: Dryden elicits their sympathy for the key protagonists in ways that Shakespeare's and Garrick's versions did not.

Antony's death scene in *All for Love* announces its first major deviation from Shakespeare with regard to the stage directions. Garrick's "spectacle" of a play would certainly have made use of the scene's need for some interesting staging at Cleopatra's monument, using pulleys and devices to hoist Garrick's body up into Mrs. Yates's arms. While we cannot know all of the details in Garrick's staging strategy here, we can at least be certain that Garrick does not

place Antony in a chair as Dryden does in *All for Love*. Dryden has Antony remain stationary after his failed suicide attempt, forcing Cleopatra to enter the stage and run to him, providing a sharp contrast to the extreme pains Antony must go through to get back to Cleopatra in Shakespeare's version. To be fair, she also must hoist him up to her window, whereas in *All for Love* all she must do is kneel down and hold him in her arms. The simplicity of the couple's final scene in Dryden's version places the lovers on closer to even footing—with Antony in a chair as Cleopatra stands beside him, or, perhaps with him in a chair while she kneels beneath him. Either way, Dryden does not give Cleopatra the same decided powerful and authoritative presence over Antony that she wields in Shakespeare. The differences between Dryden's dialogue and Shakespeare's cements this comparative reading of the power dynamics at work in the two plays.

In *All for Love*, Cleopatra enters the scene asking “Where is my Lord? where is he?”; she then runs to Antony, who asks, “Art thou living?/Or am I dead before I knew? and thou/The first kind Ghost that meets me?” (5.354, 5.357-359) They both questioning the surreal quality of their final days; life and death have become blurred for them, which is understandable since they have been anticipating it and often referring to themselves as already dead throughout the entire play. In his version, Garrick maintains the great physical distance between the couple as they begin their final dialogue. Cleopatra looks out of a window at her monument and asks Diomedes, “How now? Is he dead?”; Diomedes responds by explaining that Antony is close to death and that his guards have brought him. Antony enters, held by his men, and these are Cleopatra's first words to him:

O sun, sun

Burn the great sphere thou mov'st in! Darkling stand

The varying shore o'the world! O Antony,

Antony, Antony! Charmian, help; help, Iras!

Help, friends below! Let's draw him hither. (4.10.11-15)

Similarly, Dryden's Cleopatra says, "Help me seat him./Send quickly, send for help" (V.360-361). On the one hand, both versions depict the briefest moment of misrecognition: in Garrick's staging, Antony literally cannot see Cleopatra at first, whereas Dryden's Antony questions his very faculty of sight, assuming himself to be already dead. Cleopatra desires to help him in both cases, but she is met with remarkably different responses in the two plays: while Dryden places the couple back within the intimate domestic space of their previous encounters, Shakespeare allows for just a bit more banter, enabling yet another (minor) power struggle between the couple.

In Dryden, Antony answers Cleopatra by saying "I am answered./We live both," making a delayed acknowledgment that he is alive, which reads somewhat humorously since nobody actually answers him, and even as he commands the stage, he still seems to be ignored. But he then commands, "Sit thee down, my Cleopatra: / I'll make the most I can of life, to stay/ A moment more with thee," implying (again) that this staging places them in chairs, literally at equal standing, or, at the very least, that Antony requests this to be their final manner of engaging with one another (5.361-363). Just as Octavia and Cleopatra never speak his name in their dialogue, here, Antony never refers to his own name, nor does she: Antony is "my Lord" or "a man" in Cleopatra's speeches. By contrast, the name "Antony" is foregrounded in one of the most famous exchanges in Shakespeare's play:

Antony: Peace!

Not Caesar's valor hath o'erthrown Antony,

But Antony's hath triumphed on itself.

Cleopatra: So it should be, that none but Antony  
Should conquer Antony. But woe 'tis so!

Antony: I am dying, Egypt, dying; only yet  
I here importune death a while, until  
Of many thousand kisses the poor last  
I lay upon thy lips. Come down. (4.10.16-24)

Similarly to Dryden's Antony, Shakespeare's character also grasps at his final moments with Cleopatra, finding solace in being able to die by her side. But while Dryden's Antony requests that Cleopatra sit with him a while, Garrick's Antony demands that Cleopatra "come down," which is a more complicated request than a simply sharing of chairs. In Garrick, she declines—"I dare not—/Dear, dear my lord, your pardon that I dare not—/Lest I be taken"—which then necessitates the hoisting of his body up to her monument.

The difference between these dialogues is important because it foregrounds the power Cleopatra claims in Garrick's production, as opposed to the subtlety of her control over Antony in *All for Love*. With every sweet word Cleopatra utters in Shakespeare's version, there is the possibility for a double-meaning, a secret agenda, or an indication of her own fears, flaws, and jealousies. For example, her response to Antony's repetition of the phrase "I am dying, Egypt, dying" (followed by the line "Give me some wine, and let me speak a little") represents the general way their relationship has been depicted throughout the play. She interrupts him by saying "No, let me speak," perhaps to maintain the manner in which they have been speaking to one another, which she describes as her "rail[ing] so high/That the false huswife Fortune [will] break her wheel,/Provoked by my offence" (4.10.49-51). Shakespeare's Cleopatra sets up another female rival for herself, making Fortune a domestic housewife whose description recalls

Octavia. Another more direct instance of Cleopatra's insistence on rivalry occurs as she declines to go down to Antony; Cleopatra reminds us of her anger over Antony's marriage to Octavia: "Your wife Octavia, with her modest eyes/And still conclusion, shall acquire no honor/Demuring upon me" (4.10.31-33). While Dryden's Cleopatra also mentions Octavia, she waits until Antony is dead, making the line far less manipulative or connected to her possessiveness. Instead, she aspires to "obey" Antony's last wishes, not to grieve, to perform the good Roman wife, and also therefore to be a better and more devout wife than Octavia—one who will die while Octavia, the lesser wife, lives on:

Charmion: Remember, Madam,

He charg'd you not to grieve.

Cleopatra: And I'll obey him.

I have not lov'd a Roman not to know

What should become his Wife; his Wife, my Charmion;

For 'tis to that high Title I aspire,

And now I'll not die less. Let dull Octavia

Survive, to mourn him dead: My nobler Fate

Shall knit our Spousals with a tie too strong

For Roman laws to break. (5.411-418)

In Dryden, the rivalry between Cleopatra and Octavia goes beyond the petty jealousy apparent in Garrick's production; Octavia as a widow illustrates a lesser form of mourning compared to that of Cleopatra, who believes her death proves her greater love for Antony. Cleopatra's suicide in both Dryden and Garrick has been read as a redemption of her character, both in the long eighteenth century and in current scholarship. By removing the bawdy comical elements with the

Clown, Garrick's ending becomes much more like a controlled heroic tragedy's conclusion. *All for Love* ends much like a she-tragedy: Antony's body is still on the stage, and Cleopatra dies soon after he does. Both versions regard her death as a triumph over Caesar, and arguably, over Octavia. Indeed, it seems *All for Love* pushes this rivalry much further, suggesting that the women's fight over Antony was not a silly matter, as it seems to be in Garrick's production; rather, Dryden's play insists on presenting the audience with a winner and a loser in this contest between lovers, and we are asked to recognize Cleopatra as finally enacting the ideal form of love.

Dryden's privileging of Cleopatra passion over Octavia's reserve seems quintessentially representative of Restoration ideologies, which both explains the popularity of Dryden's version of the play throughout the eighteenth-century and suggests the long afterlife of those ideologies. The relationship between Cleopatra, Antony, and Octavia recalls relationships discussed in my previous chapters, with Isabella, Villeroy, and Biron as one set, and Clarissa and Lovelace as another. *The Fatal Marriage* depended upon Isabella to set up the uncomplicated rivalry between Biron and Villeroy. Richardson's triangle, though, upends this Sedgewickian model: Lovelace reads Clarissa as masculine and himself as feminine, and understands himself as a rival to the very person he attempts to possess. *All for Love* chooses women as rivals, but we are then left wondering, with this emphasis on Octavia and Cleopatra, how to read the love relationship each woman has with Antony. Sarah Fielding foregrounds this very issue, questioning Dryden's decision to have Cleopatra win us over, to triumph in her suicide, and to beat Octavia in being a "better" wife. Fielding's reading of these women and their relationships to Antony provides us with a final, provocative construction of the good girl/bad girl dichotomy.

### Fielding's Alternative Histories

Sara Gadeken regards *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia* as Sarah Fielding's clear rejection of Dryden's interpretation of both women:

[Fielding] rejects the image of the virtuous but misunderstood Cleopatra that John Dryden uses in *All for Love: Or, the World Well Lost* (1678). Instead, Fielding's Cleopatra represents a luxurious orientalism and theatricality that threatens republican manhood. The choice was a careful one. The bluestocking Elizabeth Montagu, in a letter to her sister Sarah Scott, disapproves of Fielding's decision to portray Cleopatra as evil queen rather than virtuous victim, but she understands the reason for it: "Octavia and Cleopatra are to come forth in a few days. As [Fielding] is a virtuous maiden she will make Octavia the more agreeable of the two which will give history the lye and make Anthony appear a greater fool than ever he appear'd."<sup>249</sup>

Fielding's fascinating historical novel is structured around the characters' first-person autobiographical narratives told from beyond the grave. In her framing remarks, Fielding directly argues that Octavia has been long overdue her turn to speak her mind about the ways Plutarch, Shakespeare, and Dryden have depicted her. Fielding does seem to "portray Cleopatra as evil queen," and perhaps this emphasis is motivated by Fielding's understanding of virtue. Rather than focusing, as Montagu did, on the limited motivations behind Fielding's interpretive decisions, I would like to consider the way she flips the dichotomy Dryden created between the two female antagonists in *All for Love*. Fielding essentially reverses what she thinks is Dryden's reading: his Cleopatra is passionate and finally true to Antony, while Octavia is cold and stoic. Fielding, by contrast, represents Cleopatra as false, as never actually loving Antony, and her

---

<sup>249</sup> Sara Gadeken, "Gender, Empire, and Nation in Sarah Fielding's *Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia*," *SEL* 39 (1999): 521.

Octavia appears cold but is filled with love for Antony. Fielding's Cleopatra performs the appearance of love to conceal her power-hungry stratagems, while her Octavia conceals her love to perform her duties.

Fielding's 1757 publication, arriving on the literary scene just a couple years before Garrick's production of *Antony and Cleopatra*, takes us full circle to the reasons Cleopatra was rejected by audiences as a tragic figure. In order to make Octavia a fully realized character, Fielding rejects the notion of Cleopatra actually both loving Antony and being a flawed individual. Fielding cannot allow for both women to remain complex and capable of love for Antony; in this sense, Fielding merely repeats Dryden's own understanding of triangular relationships. For Dryden, Antony could not love Octavia because he had different feelings for her than he did for Cleopatra. Fielding takes issue with this reading but does not want to consider the most complex of interpretations—the idea that all of these people might love each other in their own internally nuanced ways, with their own idiosyncratic definitions and expressions of love. Instead, Fielding interprets Antony as a fool who must not know what love is, Cleopatra as a manipulator who uses Antony's false love for her own empowerment, and Octavia as the one who truly and genuinely loves Antony but whose love is rejected unfairly. By attempting to make Cleopatra the undeniable bad girl and Octavia the absolute embodiment of goodness, however, Fielding essentially ends up with the same implications we have seen in Dryden and Garrick: Cleopatra commands our attention with her complete honesty throughout her version of the narrative, while Octavia's narrative reads as false and highly suspect in terms of its own potential for performance. The very thing about Cleopatra with which Fielding apparently takes issue—her feigned performance of love—becomes the potential aspect of Octavia's character that disrupts our ability to empathize with her.

While this conflict between Fielding's framing remarks and the implications of her characters' narratives could be viewed as a kind of unintentional contradiction, I would argue that Fielding's narratives purposely subvert the reading of them that her prologue claims to provide. In her text's dedication to "The Countess of Pomfret," Fielding reveals her contempt for Cleopatra and her preference for Octavia:

The lives of Cleopatra and Octavia form, perhaps, the strongest contrast of any Ladies celebrated in History. Cleopatra presents us with abandoned consequences, and the fatal Catastrophe, of an haughty, and intriguing woman; whose only Views were to exert her Charms, and prostitute her power, to the Gratification of a boundless Vanity and Avarice, without Regard to the Ruin of her Country or the Suffering of others. The amiable and gentle Octavia gives us, on the reverse, an Example of all the Graces and Embellishments, worthy the most refined Female Character. The Dignity she preserved, and the Delicacy of her Manners, became her elevated Station, and were an ornament to the politest Court. She patronized the Learned, and was of a truly Roman Spirit, in sacrificing her private to the public Good. Nor did this heroine shine with less Lustre in personal than in public Virtues. She was a sincere Friend, and affectionate Sister, a faithful Wife, and a tender and instructive Parent. Such was the accomplished Character of Octavia!<sup>250</sup>

Octavia might have made a lovely friend, but Fielding clearly prefers spending time in Cleopatra's mind, giving Cleopatra the majority of the pages—at least two-thirds of the novel comes through Cleopatra's voice. While Fielding certainly would have been interested in exploring a villain—and I do not mean to suggest that her fascination with Cleopatra indicates

---

<sup>250</sup> Sarah Fielding, *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia* (London, 1757.)

Fielding's agreement with her ethics—it is worth considering why Fielding does not grant Cleopatra the same kind of leeway that she wanted Richardson to give Lovelace. Given the implications of her *Remarks on Clarissa*, in which she provides an alternative happier ending for Clarissa and Lovelace, it seems Fielding has a sexual double-standard in her definition of what constitutes bad behavior. She forgives Lovelace for raping and imprisoning Clarissa, but refuses such redemption to Cleopatra for having controlled Antony through far less violent methods.

Fielding's narrative from Cleopatra's (often hilariously devious) point-of-view begins with the claim that she will be completely honest about her motivations for treating men the way she does. Interestingly, like Dryden and Shakespeare, Fielding chooses to avoid discussing Cleopatra's relationship with Julius Caesar:

I shall not here relate the Manner in which I managed Caesar's Passion, nor the Arts made use of by me to work and engage him to my Designs, as there will be so much to offer on that subject in the Account I shall have Occasion to give of my Intrigues with Mark Anthony. My Invention, improved by Experience, then shone in its highest Lustre; and therefore, to avoid needless Repetitions, I shall at present only mention such matters of Fact as are proper for your Information.<sup>251</sup>

All of these authors want to avoid mentioning Cleopatra's past relationship: in Shakespeare's text, Cleopatra is prompted to explain herself and she admits to being young and inexperienced, not knowing what love really was at the time; in Dryden's, Cleopatra goes further, suggesting she did not care for Caesar at all. We can understand these authors' motivations for sweeping Caesar under the proverbial rug, or rather, for creating a Cleopatra who dismisses the topic. But with Fielding, someone who clearly wants to critique the queen, downplaying this seemingly

---

<sup>251</sup> Sarah Fielding, *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia*, 14-15.

interesting piece of information would seem to run counter to her objectives. Elliptically maneuvering around Cleopatra's relationship with Caesar, Fielding inadvertently highlights the queen's obsession with Antony; in doing so, Fielding reproduces the slightly more sympathetic Cleopatra we've already seen and suggests that Cleopatra might not know her own mind or feelings.

While Fielding's Cleopatra constantly refers to her relationship with Antony as a power-play in which she is the dominant force, I would argue that her first-person narrative makes everything she says with such apparent honesty all the more suspect. Fielding's character is the typical unreliable narrator. We read against her relentless insistence that she does not love Antony as protesting far too much. For instance, Fielding suggests that Cleopatra's vanity and ego determine her need to "conquer" Antony: "I was most solicitous to adorn in such Manner as my Imagination flattered me would, with most likelihood, engage and conquer the Heart of Anthony."<sup>252</sup> Fielding here articulates her critique of the coquette, something she has taken from the Shakespeare play. She cannot be referring to *All for Love*'s version of the queen, whose domestic qualities and private confessions of love for Antony fly against the basic definition of the coquette. Fielding aligns herself with the series of critics who similarly label Cleopatra this way; ultimately the reader is left interpreting Cleopatra not as Antony's loveless manipulator, but as a woman who constantly lies about her own feelings both to herself and to the reader.

In another way, however, Fielding seems to read against the text of *All for Love* in the framing of her narrative. As she discusses her various successes, Cleopatra depends upon the same language that Dryden uses, describing herself as being so "certain" of the "Pre-eminence of [her] Charms" that "those of any other Woman were incapable of giving the least Jealousy"; as

---

<sup>252</sup> Fielding, *The Lives*, 23.

she further explains, “I always took care to have the most celebrated Beauties about my Person; where they served as a constant Offering to my Pride, by showing all who approached me how much I excelled the fairest of my Sex.”<sup>253</sup> Fielding often notes Cleopatra’s understanding of her own “charms,” recalling the exchange between Dryden’s queen and Octavia. Like Octavia, Fielding recognizes the falseness inherent within the term “charms” and uses it against Cleopatra. In fact, Fielding’s representation of Cleopatra often borrows from Octavia’s language in *All for Love*. Fielding’s failure to provide a convincing critique of Cleopatra (or to give her a fully-realized character) derives from this limited vantage point. By reading Cleopatra from the point of view of her rival, Fielding’s narrative superficially brushes across the character, creating yet another misleading performance of the queen. Perhaps this should not be viewed as a failure at all, however; by allowing Cleopatra yet another performance, Fielding’s narrative allows us to see how she thinks Cleopatra would want the world to perceive and remember her. Cleopatra wants the reader to think she did not really love Antony, that he was her constant “dupe”: “I was sensible Anthony was born to be a Dupe to Women; and therefore the Woman I should have least feared would have been one whose Affection to him was so sincere that she did not desire to make him a Dupe.”<sup>254</sup> Finally, the way Fielding represents Octavia, in her much shorter narrative, runs completely counter to the intent expressed in the introduction. Octavia reads as false as (perhaps more false than) Cleopatra, but Octavia’s falsity comes from her over-niceness and her overcompensation throughout, as opposed to Cleopatra’s naked opportunism and machinations.

Cleopatra’s desire to control her own narrative, to perform to the reader even as she supposedly writes a confessional, suggests that Fielding’s Cleopatra continues the tradition of

---

<sup>253</sup> Fielding, *The Lives*, 29.

<sup>254</sup> Fielding, *The Lives*, 60.

impenetrability foregrounded by the stage representations of her character. Looking at the following passage, I would like to interpret it with this doubleness of performance in mind, understanding Cleopatra's identity as the woman who confesses lying about her love for Antony as yet another performance of her deception. Fielding has Cleopatra describe her seduction of Antony as the achievement of a woman well-studied in her craft:

Thus did I contrive to heighten his Passion by every trifling Incident Chance threw in my Way. I smiled and frowned, was pleased and displeas'd, so judiciously, and mix'd his Pleasure and Pain so artfully, that I perpetually kept up in him a Passion of one Kind or other...the Transition from Passion of Rage to that of Love was so very pleasing to such a Disposition as Anthony's, that if I had made it my Study continually to humour him, he would not have been half so sensible to the Obligation. I every Day thought of new Schemes to entertain him with varied and additional Elegance; but yet I generally took some Opportunity amidst these Entertainments, and in the Heights of Jollity, to affect being out of Humour, and suddenly to dash all his Pleasures, which I could easily do....but Power was my Pursuit.<sup>255</sup>

Fielding's critique of Cleopatra depends upon our belief in the machinations and manipulations about which she casually brags to the reader. Cleopatra is proud of her ability to scheme and plot in ways that make it difficult not to read her as a Lovelace figure. Unlike Lovelace, however, Fielding's Cleopatra refers directly to other representations of her very character. The narrative must be read as an interpretation, not just of the historical figure, but of the fictional versions that Fielding clearly wants to read against. Fielding takes issue with Cleopatra's pride in her power over Antony as much as she critiques Cleopatra's "wanton" behavior:

---

<sup>255</sup> Fielding, *Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia*, 48-49.

It is scarce to be credited how good an Effect this little Trick (trifling as it may appear) had on the Mind of Antony. I read my Success in his Eyes, and inwardly applauded my own Wisdom. My Fall and Fright moved his Pity; whilst the Turn I gave it raised his Admiration, and at the same time reminded him of his own Greatness. He little imagined how this was in Reality an Omen, that by Tricks and Deceit I should rule him for the Remainder of his Life.<sup>256</sup>

Fielding highlights Cleopatra's ability to play the victim, to ensnare Antony's affections by using her feminine wiles. If we were to take this narrative literally, to read it as Fielding's introduction tells us to, Cleopatra becomes a caricature—much like the squeaking boy she laments she'll become in Shakespeare's play:

Saucy lictors  
 Will catch us like strumpets, and scald rhymers  
 Ballad us out o'tune. The quick comedians  
 Extemporally will stage us, and present  
 Our Alexandrian revels. Antony  
 Shall be brought forth, and I shall see  
 Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness  
 I'th' posture of a whore. (5.2.210-217)

Fielding's Cleopatra gives us this "posture of a whore" and the very extremity of her rendition announces its falseness. It might seem unlikely that Fielding would create this seemingly superficial version of Cleopatra only to reveal the performance of that version. She ends Cleopatra's narrative with the exact same trajectory, however, as Shakespeare and Dryden allow.

---

<sup>256</sup> Fielding, *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia*, 29.

Fielding gives Cleopatra her revelation in death, a recognition that perhaps she might have loved Antony after all. Throughout the majority of the narrative Cleopatra announces her indifference to Antony—“as I had no Passion for him, my Judgment was cool, and enabled me to turn his Passions to my own Advantage as I pleased”<sup>257</sup>—but in the final pages she suggests her true feelings for him: “Now, likewise, was I, for the first Time, touched with Sorrow, wherein there was any Mixture of Compassion, for the wretched Anthony.”<sup>258</sup> To be sure, Cleopatra undermines this sentiment shortly thereafter by explaining that “A little Compassion for Anthony, and a good deal for myself, overwhelmed me with Tears of Sorrow”, but I would still argue that Fielding cannot help but allow Cleopatra the same complexity we saw in Dryden and Shakespeare.<sup>259</sup> Fielding’s intent for the narrative to display a corrupt and wanton queen unravels by the end, leaving the reader with far more unanswered questions about how Cleopatra’s mind works than with a clear sense that she was telling the reader the truth. Fielding’s Cleopatra ends her narrative with a final dogged assertion of her lack of love for Antony; she describes writing a letter to Caesar

most earnestly entreating that I might be buried in the same Tomb with Antony; for I imagined this would preserve the Appearance of my dying for Love of him... But now at the Approach of my last Hours I could not help reflecting on my past Life; and found, upon the whole, that the Indulgence of my Ambition, and the cultivating in myself the Spirit of Pride and Vanity, had produced far more Misery than Happiness.<sup>260</sup>

Fielding’s Cleopatra wants to be buried with Antony only to give “the appearance” of love and, again, we could take this narrative at face value; but Antony’s body seems like a counterintuitive

---

<sup>257</sup> Fielding, *The Lives*, 29.

<sup>258</sup> Fielding, *The Lives*, 203.

<sup>259</sup> Fielding, *The Lives*, 204.

<sup>260</sup> Fielding, *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia*, 214.

object for Fielding to have Cleopatra fixate on in her final moments if the point of the whole narrative is to emphasize the falsity of Cleopatra's love. Previously, Cleopatra tells the reader that she killed herself to avoid ridicule and to give the "appearance at least to die for Antony."<sup>261</sup> Though she then admits that she wept over Antony's tomb, she undermines that appearance of genuine emotion by saying that "in reality" she "mourned" for herself.<sup>262</sup> In spite of her insistent confessions about her lack of love for Antony, it is hard not to fall back on the cliché that Fielding's character protests too much. Given that pride is the main character flaw Fielding consistently ascribes to Cleopatra, it follows that Cleopatra's self-representation even in these closing moments must still be motivated by that essential character trait: Cleopatra does not want to create the impression that she could actually be so weak as to succumb to her passions. Instead, she wants us to think she is above passion, that she is as stoic as the earlier representations made Octavia out to be. Thus, the very aspect of Cleopatra's character that Fielding wants us to critique becomes the rationale for reading against this untrustworthy narrator.

In the end, Fielding's Cleopatra takes us back full circle to Dryden's play: in her attempt to diminish Cleopatra's virtue by contrasting her with Octavia, Fielding establishes the limited choices faced by both women, drawing attention to the ways they both perform their virtue. Fielding's Octavia, like Dryden's, becomes unsympathetic to the reader because of her belief in the authenticity of her own virtue, whereas her Cleopatra gains sympathy from the reader, perhaps in spite of authorial intent, because of her double-performance. Fielding's Cleopatra ironically lacks the self-awareness of her tragic predecessors: she performs a virtuous woman

---

<sup>261</sup> "The horror of being led in Triumph, pointed at, and scorned by the Roman in general, and in particular, of being insulted by Livia (which I was assured would be my Fate) tempted me to seek Death as my only Refuge." Fielding, *The Lives*, 210.

<sup>262</sup> Fielding, *The Lives*, 211.

being performed by what she believes to be her authentic self, the deceiver. The double-mask once removed, however, reveals that Fielding's Cleopatra actually wants to confess her own duality. The entire narrative, if we read it as a confessional, takes us back to the final act of a she-tragic heroine or even to Lovelace's final scene before his death. Fielding's Cleopatra writes this narrative in order to let it "expiate" her of what she believes are sins. Witnessing Cleopatra's confession, the reader cannot help but sympathize and question her feelings for Antony; indeed, we are left assuming the reality of her love for him, just as Dryden insisted on it in his interpretation. *All for Love*'s persistence in the eighteenth century, even when it is met with open disdain from writers like Fielding, influences readings of Cleopatra and Octavia that would oppose it—pushing readers to reverse, even to deconstruct, the virgin/whore dichotomy. Both women gain complexity in spite of their authors' attempts to read them through limited definitions of virtue and vice. They become commentators on the very extreme versions of femininity that they are taken to enact.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allestree, Richard. *The Ladies Calling in Two Parts*. (Oxford, 1673).
- Anselment, Raymond A. "The Deliverances of Alice Thornton: The Re-creation of a Seventeenth-Century Life." *Prose Studies* 19 (1996): 19–36.
- . "Katherine Austen and the Widow's Might." *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 5 (2005): 5-25.
- Armstrong, Nancy. *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- Avery, Emmet L. "The Popularity of *The Mourning Bride* in the London Theatres in the Eighteenth-Century." *Research Studies of the State College of Washington* 4 (1941): 11-116.
- Backscheider, Paula. *Revising Women: Eighteenth century "Women's Fiction" and Social Engagement*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2000.
- . *Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
- Bacon, Jon Lance. "Wives, Widows, and Writings in Restoration Comedy." *SEL* 31 (1991): 427–443.
- Ballaster, Ros. *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- Barbeau, Anne T. *The Intellectual Design of John Dryden's Heroic Plays*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970.
- Barchas, Janine. *Graphic Design, Print Culture, and the Eighteenth-Century Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Barish, Jonas. *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*. Berkley: University Press California, 1981.
- Barker, Hannah and Elaine Chalus. *Gender in Eighteenth Century England: Roles, Representations, Responsibilities*. New York: Longman, 1997.
- Béat, Louis de Muralt. *Letters describing the character and customs of the English and French Nations, 1726*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. London: T. Edlin.
- Beaurline, L.A. and Fredson Bowers, eds. *John Dryden: Four Tragedies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967.
- Behn, Aphra. *The History of the Nun; Or, the Fair Vow-Breaker from Oroonoko and Other Writings*. Edited by Paul Salzman. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

- Benedetti, Jean. *David Garrick and the Birth of Modern Theatre*. London: Methuen, 2001.
- Bernard, Stephen Jarrod. "Edward Bysshe and *The Art of English Poetry*: Reading Writing in the Eighteenth Century." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 46 (2012): 113-129.
- Bevington, David, ed. *The New Cambridge Shakespeare: Antony and Cleopatra*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- . *The Arden Shakespeare: Troilus and Cressida*. Surrey: Arden, 1998.
- Boulton, Jeremy. "London Widowhood Revisited: the Decline of Female Remarriage in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries." *Continuity and Change* 5 (1990): 323–55.
- Brathwait, Richard. *The English Gentlewoman, drawne out to the full Body*. London, 1631.
- Brodsky, Vivien. "Widows in Late Elizabethan London: Remarriage, Economic Opportunity and Family Orientations." In *The World We Have Gained: Histories of Population and Social Structure*, edited by Lloyd Bonfield et al, 122-154. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.
- Kristin and Bross Kathryn Rummell. "Cast Mistresses: The Widow Figure in *Oroonoko*." In *Troping Oroonoko From Behn To Bandele*, edited by Susan B. Iwanisziw, 59-82. Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004.
- Brown, Laura. *English Dramatic Form, 1660-1760: An Essay in Generic History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.
- . "The Defenseless Woman and the Development of English Tragedy." *SEL* 22 (1982):429-43.
- Bueler, Lois, E. *Clarissa's Plots*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994.
- Bueler, Lois E, ed. *Clarissa: The Eighteenth-Century Response, 1747-1804, Vol 1 Reading Clarissa*. New York: AMS Press, 2010.
- . *Clarissa: The Eighteenth-Century Response, 1747-1804, Vol 2 Rewriting Clarissa*. New York: AMS Press, 2010.
- Burns, Landon C. "Pity and Tears: The Tragedies of Nicholas Rowe." PhD Diss., University of Salzburg, 1974.
- Bysshe, Edward. *The Art of English Poetry, 1702*. In *English Linguistics 1500-1800 (A Collection of Facsimile Reprints)*, Edited by R.C. Alston. Menston: The Scholar Press Limited, 1968.
- Bysshe, Edward. *The Art of English Poetry. Containing, I. Rules for making verses. II. A collection of the most natural, agreeable and sublime thoughts, viz. Allusions, Similes,*

- Descriptions and Characters of Persons and Things, that are to be found in the best English Poets. III. A dictionary of rhymes.* London: 1737. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Web. 25 Mar. 2016.
- . *The Art of English Poetry. Containing, I. Rules for making verses. II. A collection of the most natural, agreeable and sublime thoughts, viz. Allusions, Similes, Descriptions and Characters of Persons and Things, that are to be found in the best English poets. III. A dictionary of rhymes.* London, 1718. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Web. 25 Mar. 2016.
- . *The Art of English Poetry: containing, I. Rules for making verses. II. A collection of the most natural, agreeable, and sublime thoughts, viz. Allusions, Similes, Descriptions, and Characters of Persons and Things, that are to be found in the best English Poets. III. A dictionary of rhymes.* London: 1714. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*.
- Canfield, J. Douglas. *Nicolas Rowe and Christian Tragedy*. Gainesville: The University Presses of Florida, 1977.
- Carlton, Charles. "The Widow's Tale: Male Myths and Female Reality in 16th and 17th Century England." *Albion* 10 (1978): 118–29.
- Carroll, John. "Richardson at Work: Revisions, Allusions, and Quotations in *Clarissa*." *Studies in the Eighteenth Century*, Edited by R.F. Brissenden. Canberra, 1970.
- . "Lovelace as Tragic Hero." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 42 (1972): 14-25.
- Castle, Terry. *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction*. Stanford: Stanford U Press, 1986.
- . *Clarissa's Ciphers: Meaning and Disruption in Richardson's Clarissa*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982.
- Cavallo, Sandra and Lyndan Warner, eds. Introduction to *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, 3-23. Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1999.
- Corman, Brian. "Restoration Drama after the Restoration: The Critics, the Repertory and the Canon." In *A Companion to Restoration Drama*, edited by Susan J. Owen, 177-192. Malden: Blackwell, 2001.
- Crawford, Patricia. *Women and Religion in England, 1500–1720*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Crawford, Patricia and Laura Gowing, eds. Introduction to *Women's Worlds in Seventeenth-Century England*, 1-12. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Craft-Fairchild, Catherine. *Masquerade and Gender: Disguise and Female Identity in Eighteenth-Century Fictions by Women*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993.
- Culler, A. Dwight. "Edward Bysshe and the Poet's Handbook." *PMLA* 63 (1948): 858-885.

- Deats, Sara Munson. "Shakespeare's Anamorphic Drama: A Survey of *Antony and Cleopatra* in Criticism, on Stage, and on Screen." In *Antony and Cleopatra: New Critical Essays*, edited by Sara Munson Deats. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- DeRitter, Jones. *The Embodiement of Characters: The Representation of Physical Experience on Stage and in Print, 1728-1749*. Philadelphia: University Press of Pennsylvania, 1994.
- Deutsch, Helen and Felicity Nussbaum, eds. "*Defects*": *Engendering the Modern Body*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000.
- Dircks, Phyllis T. *David Garrick*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985.
- Doody, Margaret Anne. *A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974.
- Doody, Margaret Anne and Peter Sabor, eds. *Samuel Richardson: Tercentenary Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Drouge, Helga. "'We'll Learn That of the Men': Female Sexuality in Southerne's Comedies." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 33 (1993): 545-563.
- Dunton, John. *The Ladies Dictionary; Being a General Entertainment For the Fair-Sex*. London, 1694.
- Dussinger, John. "Richardson's Tragic Muse." *Philological Quarterly* 46 (1967): 18-33.  
———. *Samuel Richardson: Correspondence with Thomas Edwards*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Eagleton, Terry. *The Rape of Clarissa*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982.
- Eaves, T.C. Duncan and Ben D. Kimpel. *Samuel Richardson: A Biography*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.
- Erickson, Amy Louise. *Women and Property in Early Modern England*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Everett, Barbara. "Dryden's Hamlet: The Unwritten Masterpiece." In *John Dryden (1631-1700) His Politics, His Plays, and His Poets, A Tercentenary Celebration Held at Yale University 6-7 October, 2000*, edited by Claude Rawson and Aaron Santesso. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004.
- Ezell, Margaret J. M. *The Patriarch's Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987.
- Fielding, Sarah. *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia*. London, 1757. *Eighteenth Century*

*Collections Online.*

- Foley, Helene and Jean E. Howard. "Introduction: The Urgency of Tragedy Now." *PMLA* 129 (2014): 617-633.
- Foyster, Elizabeth. "Marrying the Experienced Widow in Early Modern England: the Male Perspective." *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, edited by Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner. Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1999.
- Frank, Marcie. *Gender, Theatre, and the Origins of Criticism from Dryden to Manley*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Freeman, Lisa A. *Character's Theater: Genre and Identity on the Eighteenth-Century English Stage*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.
- . "Reconsidering the Trickster and the Fop: The Cultural Politics of Vanburgh's *The Relapse*." Paper presented at the annual meeting for the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Literature, Los Angeles, California, March 19-22, 2015.
- Froide, Amy M. "Marital Status as a Category of Difference: Singlewomen and Widows in Early Modern England." *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250–1800*, edited by Judith M. Bennett and Amy M. Froide, 236-269. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1999.
- Fysh, Stephanie. *The Work(s) of Samuel Richardson*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997.
- Gadegen, Sara. "Gender, Empire, and Nation in Sarah Fielding's *Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia*," *SEL* 39 (1999): 523-538.
- Gerrard, Christine, ed. *Samuel Richardson: Correspondence with Aaron Hill and Hill Family*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Goldstein, Malcolm, ed. *Nicholas Rowe's The Fair Penitent*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1969.
- Gwilliam, Tassie. *Samuel Richardson's Fictions of Gender*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993.
- Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Translated by Thomas Burger. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989.
- Haggerty, George E. *Men in Love: Masculinity and Sexuality in the Eighteenth Century*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
- . *Unnatural Affections: Women and Fiction in the Later 18<sup>th</sup> Century*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998.

- Hammond, Paul and David Hopkins, eds. *John Dryden: Tercentenary Essays*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000.
- Harris, Jocelyn. *Samuel Richardson*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Hughes, Derek. *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001.  
 ———. *English Drama, 1660-1700*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.  
 ———. *Dryden's Heroic Plays*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981.
- Hughes-Hallett, Lucy. *Cleopatra: Histories, Dreams and Distortions*. London: Bloomsbury, 1990.
- Hultquist, Aleksandra. "Equal Ardor: Female Desire, Amatory Fiction, and the Recasting of the Novel, 1680--1760." PhD Diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2008.
- Hume, Robert D. "Before the Bard: 'Shakespeare' in Early Eighteenth-Century London." *ELH* 64.1 (1997): 41-75.  
 ———. *Reconstructing Contexts: The Aims and Principles of Archaeo-Historicism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.  
 ———. *The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976.  
 ———. *Dryden's Criticism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970.
- Hutner, Heidi, ed. *Rereading Aphra Behn: History, Theory and Criticism*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993.
- Huse, Ann A. "Cleopatra, Queen of the Seine: The Politics of Eroticism in Dryden's *All for Love*." In *John Dryden: A Tercentenary Miscellany*, edited by Susan Green and Steven N. Zwicker. San Marino: Huntington Library, 2001.
- James, Heather. *Shakespeare's Troy: Drama, Politics, and the Translation of Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Johanson, Kristine. *Shakespeare Adaptations from the Early Eighteenth Century: Five Plays*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2014.
- Jordan, Robert and Harold Love, eds. *The Works of Thomas Southerne: The Fatal Marriage; or, the Innocent Adultery*. 5-83. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.
- Karpuk, Susan Price. *Samuel Richardson's Clarissa, An Index: Analyzing Characters, Subjects, and Place Names with Summaries of Letters Appended*. AMS Press: New York, 2000.
- Kavenik, Frances M. *British Drama, 1660-1779: A Critical History*. New York: Twayne

- Publishers, 1995.
- Kearney, Anthony. *Samuel Richardson: Clarissa*. London: Edward Arnold, 1975.
- Kewes, Paulina. *Authorship and Appropriation: Writing for the Stage in England, 1660-1710*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- . "Otway, Lee and the Restoration History Play." In *A Companion to Restoration Drama*, edited by Susan J. Owen. Malden: Blackwell, 2001.
- Keymer, Tom. *Richardson's Clarissa and the Eighteenth-Century Reader*. Part of *Cambridge Studies in Eighteenth-Century English Literature and Thought* 13. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Keymer, Tom, ed. *Samuel Richardson's Published Commentary on Clarissa: 1747-65. Volume I; Prefaces, Postscripts, and Related Writings*. London: Pickering and Chatto, 1998.
- King, Bruce. *Dryden's Major Plays*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966.
- Kinkead-Weekes, Mark. *Samuel Richardson: Dramatic Novelist*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973.
- Kinsley, James and Helen Kinsley, eds. *Dryden: The Critical Heritage*. London: Barnes and Noble, 1971.
- Kittredge, Katharine. "Proto-Butch or Temporally-Challenged Trans? Considering Female Masculinities in Eighteenth Century Britain." In *Development in the Histories of Sexualities: In Search of the Normal, 1600-1800*, edited by Chris Mounsey, 173-207. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2013.
- . "Men-women and Womanish Men: Androgyny in Richardson's *Clarissa*." *Modern Language Studies* 24 (1994): 20-26.
- Konigsberg, Ira. *Samuel Richardson and the Dramatic Novel*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1968.
- Kroll, Richard. "The Political Economy of *All for Love*." In *Enchanted Ground: Reimagining John Dryden*, edited by Jayne Lewis and Maximillian E. Novak, 127-147. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004.
- Langbauer, Laurie. *Women and Romance. The Consolations of Gender in the English Novel*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- Lanser, Susan Sniader. *The Sexuality Of History: Modernity And The Sapphic, 1565-1830*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.
- . *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and the Narrative Voice*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992.

- Loomba, Ania, ed. *William Shakespeare: Antony and Cleopatra*. New York: Norton, 2011.
- Lowenthal, Cynthia. *Performing Identities on the Restoration Stage*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003.
- Lupton, Julia Reinhard and Kenneth Reinhard. *After Oedipus: Shakespeare in Psychoanalysis*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.
- Lynch, Deidre and William B. Warner, eds. *Cultural History of the Novel*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996.
- Macfarlane, Alan. *Marriage and Love in England: Modes of Reproduction, 1300–1840*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.
- Madelaine, Richard, ed. *Antony and Cleopatra*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Malone, Edmond. *An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the English Stage in The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare*, 10 vols, London, 1790.
- Mandell, Laura. *Misogynous Economies: The Business of Literature in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1999.
- Markley, Robert. "The Canon and its Critics." In *The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre*, edited by Deborah Payne Fisk, 226-242. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Marsden, Jean. *Fatal Desire: Women, Sexuality, and the English Stage, 1660-1720*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006.
- . *The Re-Imagined Text: Shakespeare, Adaptation, and Eighteenth-Century Literary Theory*. Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1995.
- . "Rewritten Women: Shakespearean Heroines in the Restoration." In *The Appropriation of Shakespeare: Post-Renaissance Reconstructions of the Works and the Myth*, edited by Jean Marsden, 43-56. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991.
- . "Tragedy and Varieties of Serious Drama." In *A Companion to Restoration Drama*, edited by Susan J. Owen, 228-242. Malden: Blackwell, 2001.
- McFadden, George. *Dryden: The Public Writer, 1660-1685*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.
- McKeon, Michael. *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987.
- McKillop, Alan Dugald. *Samuel Richardson: Printer and Novelist*. Chapel Hill: The University Of North Carolina Press, 1936.
- McMaster, Juliet. *Reading the Body in Eighteenth-Century Fiction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave

- Macmillan, 2004.
- Mora, Maria José. "Type-Casting in the Restoration Theatre: Dryden's 'All for Love', 1677-1704." *Atlantis* 27 (2005): 75-86.
- Munns, Jessica. *Restoration Politics and Drama: The Plays of Thomas Otway, 1675-1683*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995.
- . Introduction to *Venice Preserved*, by Thomas Otway, 1689. In *The Broadview Anthology of Restoration and Early Eighteenth-Century Drama*, edited by J. Douglas Canfield. Ontario: Broadview, 2002.
- Nicoll, Allardyce. *A History of Early Eighteenth-Century Drama, 1700-1750*. Cambridge: University Press, 1925.
- . *A History of the Restoration Drama: 1660-1700*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1940.
- Novak, Maximillian E. and Alan Roper, eds. *The Works of John Dryden: Plays, All for Love, Troilus and Cressida, and Oedipus*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.
- Nussbaum, Felicity. *Rival Queens: Actresses, Performance, and the Eighteenth-Century British Theater*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.
- O'Driscoll, Sally. "The Molly and the Fop: Untangling Effeminacy in the Eighteenth Century." In *Development in the Histories of Sexualities: In Search of the Normal, 1600-1800*, edited by Chris Mounsey, 145-172. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2013.
- Orr, Bridget. "Poetic Plate-Plate Fleets and Universal Monarchy: The Heroic Plays of the Restoration." *John Dryden: A Tercentenary Miscellany*. Susan Green And Steven N. Zwicker, eds. San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 2001.
- . *Empire on the English Stage, 1660-1714*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Otway, Thomas. *Venice Preserved; or, A Plot Discovered*, In *Six Restoration Plays*, ed. John Harold Wilson, 246-318. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959.
- Owen, Susan J. *Restoration Theatre and Crisis*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.
- Oya, Reiko. *Representing Shakespearean Tragedy: Garrick, the Kembles, and Kean*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Panek, Jennifer. *Widows and Suitors in Early Modern English Comedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Park, William. "Clarissa as Tragedy." *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 16 (1976): 461-471.

- Pearson, Carol and Katherine Pope. *The Female Hero in American and British Literature*. New York: R.R. Browker, 1981.
- Pearson, Jacqueline. "The History of *The History of the Nun*." In *Rereading Aphra Behn: History, Theory, and Criticism*, edited by Heidi Hutner. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993.
- Pedicord, Harry William and Fredrick Louis Bergmann, eds. *The Plays of David Garrick: Garrick's Adaptors of Shakespeare, 1759-1773*, Vol 4. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981.
- . *The Plays of David Garrick: Garrick's Adaptors of Shakespeare, 1744-1756*, Vol 3. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981.4
- . *The Plays of David Garrick: Garrick's Alterations of Others, 1757-1773*, Vol 7. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981.
- Perry, Gill, Joseph Roach, and Shearer West. *The First Actresses: Nell Gwyn to Sarah Siddons*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2011.
- Perry, Ruth. *Women, Letters, and the Novel*. AMS Press: New York, 1980.
- Reinert, Otto. "Passion and Pity in *All for Love*." In *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of All for Love*, edited by Bruce King, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1968.
- Richards, Sandra. *The Rise of the English Actress*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.
- Richetti, John J. *Popular Fiction before Richardson: Narrative Patterns, 1700-1739*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969.
- Ritchie, Fiona. *Women and Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Roper, Alan, ed. *The Works of John Dryden: All for Love, Oedipus, Troilus and Cressida*. Vol 8. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.
- Rounce, Adam. "Eighteenth-Century Responses to Dryden's Fables." *Translation and Literature* 16 (2007): 29-52.
- Sale, William M. Jr. *Samuel Richardson: Master Printer*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950.
- Sanders, Julie. *Adaptation And Appropriation*. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.
- Shuttleton, David E., ed. *Samuel Richardson: Correspondence with George Cheyne*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

- Smith, David Nichol. "All for Love." In *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of All for Love*, edited by Bruce King. Englewood Cliffs, N.J. : Prentice Hall, 1968.
- Smith, James E. "Widowhood and Ageing in Traditional English Society." *Ageing and Society* 4 (1984): 429–49.
- Staves, Susan. *Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660–1833*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.
- . "Tragedy." In *The Cambridge Companion to British Theatre, 1730-1830*, edited by Jane Moody and Daniel O'Quinn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- . *Players Scepters: Fictions of Authority in the Restoration*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979.
- Straub, Kristina. *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth-Century Players and Sexual Ideology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Stone, Lawrence. *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977.
- Stone, George Winchester, Jr. "The Making of the Repertory." In *The London Theatre World, 1660-1800*, edited by Robert D. Hume. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980.
- Stone, George Winchester, Jr. "Garrick's Presentation of *Antony and Cleopatra*." *Review of English Studies* 13 (1937): 20-38.
- Stuber, Florian, ed. *The Clarissa Project: Samuel Richardson's Clarissa*. New York: AMS Press, 1990.
- Suckling, Norman. "Dryden in Egypt: Reflections on *All for Love*." In *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of All for Love*, edited by Bruce King. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1968.
- Summers, Montague, ed. *Dryden: The Dramatic Works*. Vol 4. London: Nonesuch Press, 1932.
- Sutherland, J.R., ed. *Three Plays: Tamerlane, The Fair Penitent, Jane Shore by Nicholas Rowe with introduction, bibliography, and notes*. London: The Scholartis Press, 1929.
- Thomson, Clara Linklater. *Samuel Richardson: A Biographical and Critical Study*. Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1900.
- Todd, Barbara J. "Demographic Determinism and Female Agency: the Remarrying Widow Reconsidered...again." *Continuity and Change* 9 (1994): 421–50.
- . "I Do No Injury by Not Loving': Katherine Austen, a Young Widow of London." *Women & History: Voices of Early Modern England*, edited by Valerie Frith, Toronto: Coach House, 1995.

- . “The Remarrying Widow: a Stereotype Reconsidered.” *Women in English Society, 1500–1800*, edited by Mary Prior, London: Methuen, 1985.
- Trickett, Rachel. “Dryden’s Part in *Clarissa*.” In *Clarissa and Her Readers: New Essays for the Clarissa Project*, edited by Carol Houlihan Flynn and Edward Copeland, 175-187. New York: AMS Press, 1999.
- Van Ghent, Dorothy. “On *Clarissa Harlowe*.” In *Samuel Richardson: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by John Carroll, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1969.
- Van Lennep, William, Emmett L. Avery, Arthur H. Scouten, George Winchester Stone, Jr. and Charles Beecher Hogan. *Index to the London Stage: 1660-1800*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979.
- Vives, Juan Luis. *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*. Edited by Virginia Walcott Beauchamp. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002.
- Waith, Eugene M., “Dryden and the Tradition of Serious Drama.” In *Writers and Their Background: John Dryden*. Edited by Earl Miner, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1972.
- William Warner. *Reading Clarissa: The Struggles of Interpretation*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.
- Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1959.
- . “*Clarissa* and *Lovelace*.” In *Samuel Richardson: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by John Carroll, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1969.
- Weber, Harold. *Memory, Print, and Gender in England, 1653-1759*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Webster, John. “A vertuous Widdow.” *The Complete Works of John Webster*. Edited by F. L. Lucas. New York: Oxford University Press, 1937.
- Wiesner, Merry E. *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Wyman, Lindley A., “The Tradition of the Formal Meditation in Rowe’s *The Fair Penitent*.” *PQ* (1963): 412-416.