

DOUBLE-DEALINGS AND DOUBLE MEANINGS: DOUBTING AND KNOWING IN
EUROPEAN 'ANALYTICAL' FICTION

by

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Abstract

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This dissertation is a survey of what I call “analytical fiction” in nine representative texts: Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Boccaccio’s *Elegy of Madonna Fiammetta*, Lyly’s *Euphues*, Marguerite de Navarre’s *Heptameron*, Lafayette’s *Princess of Clèves*, Richardson’s *Clarissa* and *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, Austen’s *Persuasion*, and Stendhal’s *Armance*. My thesis examines the underlying motifs and narrative temperament of a sub-genre that depicts how narrators and characters dissect, anatomize, and interpret their own thoughts, motivations, and actions in literature written well before the formalization of psychoanalytic theory. Analytical fiction is ultimately about reading; it is concerned with the relationship between knowledge and feeling in characters, and the networks of understanding between authors and readers, between narrators and characters, and between one character and another. The plots of analytical fiction comprise narrators and characters who are constantly faced with false, incomplete, or withheld information, misprision, doubt, and confusion, leading to self-deception, jealousy, and crises of love. Above all, what these works share is a tendency on the part of the narration to keep characters apart, to trap them in a closed, confusing society, and to defer, for as long as possible, any chance of intimacy, finality, or resolution.

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TO AUSTIN,
FOR EVERYTHING

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Chapter 1: An Introduction to Analytical Fiction

“Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind”

– *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* 1:1.

The terms “psychological fiction” and “psychological novel” have been applied so ubiquitously over the last hundred and fifty years that they lack a precise and useful definition. Terms like “psychological realism,” “novel of character,” and in French, “*roman psychologique*,” are used rather loosely and interchangeably to denote prose in which thoughts and feelings, the analysis of hidden motivations, and interior lives are depicted. More often than not, “psychological fiction” implies nineteenth- and twentieth-century works of literature, including novels by Honoré de Balzac, Ivan Turgenev, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Henry James, and James Joyce, to name just a few. Then again, works as varied and chronologically dispersed as Murasaki Shikibu’s Japanese romance *The Tale of Genji* (circa 1021), Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Elegy of Madonna Fiammetta* (1343–4), Marie de Lafayette’s *The Princess of Clèves* (1678), Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Julie or The New Héloïse* (1761), Choderlos de Laclos’s *Dangerous Liaisons* (1782), as well as some novels of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Nathaniel Hawthorne have been called the “first psychological novel” because they are all particularly concerned with representing interiority.

This dissertation is a survey of a sub-genre¹ of psychological fiction that I call “analytical,” or sometimes “proto-psychological” fiction in European literature from Ovid to Stendhal. I am not looking to identify the first author to make use of analytical fiction, which I will begin to define below, but rather to identify the underlying motifs of the sub-genre. Analytical fiction is ultimately about reading; it is concerned with the dissection or anatomy of the relationship between knowledge and feeling in characters, and the networks of understanding between authors and readers, between narrators and characters, and between one character and another. The plots of analytical fiction comprise narrators and characters attempting to read each other, but they are constantly faced with false, incomplete, or withheld information, deception, misprision, doubt, and confusion, leading to self-deception, jealousy, and crises of love. Throughout this dissertation, I examine the narrative temperament and figures (I will discuss, later on, *adynaton*, cyclicity, and deferral) and the motifs (again, deception, misprision, doubt, incomplete or misrepresented knowledge) that together make up analytical fiction.

Covering such a broad timeline of literary creation follows recent trans-channel and multi-period studies like Theresa Anne Sears’s *Clio, Eros, Thanatos: The “Novela Sentimental” in Context* (2001) and Anne-Lise François’s *Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted*

¹ I hinge my definition of analytical fiction as a sub-genre on Jonathan Culler’s description of genre as “a conventional function of language, a particular relation to the world which serves as norm or expectation to guide the reader in his encounter with the text” (*Structuralist Poetics* 136, cited in Sears 2). Culler goes on to explain that “the function of genre conventions is essentially to establish a contract between writer and reader so as to make certain relevant expectations operative and thus to permit both compliance with and deviation from accepted modes of intelligibility” (*Structuralist Poetics* 172). Similarly, Frye allows for a flexible view of genre: “the purpose of criticism by genres is not so much to classify as to clarify such traditions and affinities, thereby bringing out a large number of literary relationships that would not be noticed as long as there were no context established for them” (*Anatomy of Criticism* 247). In this way, analytical fiction should be viewed as a mode of narration, rather than a period in literary history.

Experience (2008)². Moreover, my project, which assembles, as François puts it, what seems to be “an odd assortment of texts” is aided by assuming an implicit methodology that consists of an intersection of genre criticism and narratology, as well as a reliance on the power of intertextuality—the idea that texts are created by other texts—and a confidence in historicity. I will often cite authors’ knowledge about each other’s works; for example, the Early Modern novella’s reliance on the Ovidian oeuvre, Samuel Richardson’s and Stendhal’s references to Lafayette’s *The Princess of Clèves*, or Jane Austen’s admiration and imitation of Richardson’s *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*. But one of the difficulties of writing about analytical fiction, or perhaps of attempting to define a “new” genre, is that there is little concrete story to tell about its genesis and development. While in later chapters I engage in a bit of story-telling in order to historicize the works I analyze, for the most part, I use close reading to identify the techniques and motifs by which authors depict how characters read each other (and themselves), and how narrators attempt to read their characters.

At the same time, I am in no way discounting other “readings” of these texts. John Campbell in *Questions of Interpretation in La Princesse de Clèves*, for example, takes issue with Jean Fabre’s statement in *L’art d’analyse dans la Princesse de Clèves* (1989) that “lorsqu’un roman fait place à l’analyse il faut que cette place soit la première, sinon la seule, et qu’elle se subordonne ou qu’elle élimine tout le reste” (19) (“when a novel makes use of analysis, analysis must be the central, if not the only concern, and it must subordinate or even eliminate everything else”³), reminding his readers that there is no *one* way to read any great novel, but a number of social, economic, political, psychoanalytical, interpersonal, and feminist interpretive approaches

² These, in turn, could not have been possible without landmark studies like Erich Auerbach’s *Mimesis* (1946) and Erich Kahler’s *The Inward Turn of Narrative* (1973).

³ Translations are mine, unless otherwise noted.

that can and should be taken. My own dissertation takes a middle road; instead of arguing that analysis subordinates *all* other ways of reading these texts, I simply wish to make the analysis of motivation and feeling the central focus of my study, and to draw connections between the texts through their use of analysis.

* * *

Why use the new term “analytical fiction” to describe this trans-channel sub-genre? The term “analytical novel” is a translation of the French *roman d’analyse*, coined by Sainte-Beuve in 1837 and resurrected at the end of that century by the novelist Paul Bourget. More recently, critics like Bernard Pingaud have used the term *roman d’analyse* to refer to fiction by French authors writing throughout the centuries: Lafayette, the Abbé Prévost, Stendhal, Proust, and Radiguet. Jean Fabre’s *L’art d’analyse* posits that analysis occupies a central and overarching place in Lafayette’s text, and traces the novel’s influence on other French thinkers like Rousseau. (More often than not, *The Princess of Clèves* is considered the first mature incarnation of the *roman d’analyse*. It is a key text for this dissertation, as well⁴.) While some critics today (for

⁴ While it is a commonplace to call Lafayette’s novel the first “*roman psychologique*” in France, not everyone sees Lafayette as so central a figure in the development of psychological fiction. Ian Watt finds Defoe’s meditations on the psychology of solitude and the realism of the protagonist’s thoughts and motivations in *Robinson Crusoe* to be representative of realism and the psychological novel. Watt is so focused on “authenticity,” however, that it leads him to claim that Defoe’s mode of representing psychology through social and economic realism is far superior to anything that had been tried before: “Defoe brought into the novel a treatment of the individual’s psychological concerns that was a tremendous advance in the kind of forensic ratiocination which had previously passed for psychological description in even the best of the romances, such as those of Madame de Lafayette” (85). Earlier in *The Rise of the Novel*, Watt

example John D. Lyons) use the term *roman d'analyse* in passing, it has not been defined at length in criticism of the last twenty years. Moreover, *roman d'analyse* is a French term, and thus, is only applied to French fiction. In contrast, my dissertation examines analytical fiction as a sub-genre of psychological fiction *vis à vis* the rise of the novel in both France *and* England.

had already dismissed “French fiction from *La Princesse de Clèves* to *Les Liaisons dangereuses*... [as] too stylish to be authentic” (30), despite his admission that these novels are psychologically penetrating (Roger Shattuck describes this as a “lame explanation” (*Forbidden Knowledge* 111)). Watt is not the only critic who finds Lafayette’s novel not quite modern enough; Lydia Ginzburg, too, in *On Psychological Prose* criticizes *La Princesse de Clèves* as an inadequate precursor to the modern psychological novel because “however complex it may sometimes be, the psychological framework of Lafayette’s book still takes its form from two basic and opposed elements [P]assion always comes up against another internal or external force that is opposed to it” (225). It is true that psychology is manifested in a novel like *La Princesse de Clèves* when a character’s desire is thwarted, but psychology in this novel is not merely the matter of a character who is divided between passion and reason or passion and duty, as Ginzburg suggests. I argue instead that the characters in *La Princesse de Clèves* cannot reconcile love and duty; it is always something besides love that ultimately prevails. Indeed, this runs counter to the traditional idea of “formal realism” that we too often think constitutes the whole story of modern novels. Ultimately, Ginzburg’s and Watt’s objection is that *The Princess of Clèves* does not prefigure what psychological literature would become in subsequent centuries; they both commit a teleological fallacy, since they view Lafayette’s novel as not contributing to the legacy of what critics will later call “modern” psychological realism. Watt’s description of novels that aspire to “a guarantee of the authenticity of [the author’s] report, whose prose aims exclusively at what John Locke defined as the proper purpose of language, ‘to convey the knowledge of things’, and whose novels as a whole pretend to be no more than a transcription of real life” (30) sidesteps a whole tradition in “psychological” fiction in which verisimilitude, that is, a mimetic representation of “real life” as it is lived, is besides the point. On the contrary, John D. Lyons notes, Lafayette’s is “a text that . . . consistently transcends mundane and ‘realistic’ details of setting, personnel, and monetary transaction” (“Mlle de Chartres in a Jeweler’s Shop” 117), while it is still rich in psychological insight. There is a whole school of criticism that wishes to further elevate Lafayette’s work among critics of the novel while explaining that realism is not the main interest of the novel. Fabre and Paige are two examples. Fabre writes, “La vérité morale, telle que la conçoit Madame de Lafayette, exclut soigneusement ce que nous appelons le réalisme” (*L’Art d’analyse* 27) (“The moral truth, as conceived by Madame de Lafayette, carefully excludes what we call realism”). The word “authentic,” moreover, is a subjective term that need not be conflated with the idea of “psychology.” Nor should the idea of “realism.”

The term “analytical fiction” presents some challenges, however. First, we must ignore the modern, Freudian implications⁵ of the word “analysis,” and rather focus on “analysis” as dissection or anatomy, and separate from the vocabulary of any particular system of psychology. What I am calling analytical fiction is not to be confused with what might be called the “*psychoanalytical* fiction” of an author like D. H. Lawrence, who directly responds to Freudian theory in his novels. Second, the word “analytical” as I am using it does not imply “rational,” thus precluding the treatment of emotions. We may be tempted to think of analytical narratives as clinical and as distancing emotions, in opposition to romantic or heroic fiction or the fiction of sensibility that elicits sympathy, disgust, or other passionate responses from the reader. Instead, I aim to demonstrate the intersections between sentimental and analytical fiction in the eighteenth century. The main subjects of obsessive analysis *are* the passions, which may be at once effusive and ambiguous, well hidden, or impenetrable.

The works treated in this dissertation are not so much love stories as stories about love. They are about unconsummated love frequently underscored by painful and obsessive crises of jealousy and doubt. As characters look for signs that confirm their suspicions and anatomize their relationships with their would-be lovers, the reader begins to notice that something is awry with the plot: namely, that there is none⁶. More precisely, the plots in analytical fiction are based

⁵ Although certain terms such as Freud’s *Wisstrieb*, translated by James Strachey as “epistemophilia,” could be useful for a further study of analytical fiction. Epistemophilia could well represent the eroticized nature of obsessive analysis in the analytical novel. It is a natural developmental stage wherein a child desires to know the eroticized world through self-deception. In defining epistemophilia, Freud refers to Leonardo da Vinci’s “restless investigative energy and creativity . . . at root an eroticized search for an imaginary object” (Brooks, “Balzac: Epistemophilia and the Collapse of the Restoration,” 121).

⁶ I mean implicitly to reference François’s *Open Secrets* here, a work the critic admits began with a desire to write about texts in which “nothing happens.” I will cite François again in the fourth chapter of this dissertation, in which I discuss Lafayette’s *Princess of Clèves* in detail.

on repetition and cyclicity of insight and counter-insight, discovery and reversal⁷, self-deception followed by renewed doubt. But unlike Aristotelian tragedy, where *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis* enrich the intrigue and steer it toward a resolution, analytical fiction concentrates and reduplicates these devices in such a way that they take over the narrative. As characters go through cycles of recognition and reversal in their readings of other characters, the narrative itself obstructs any action-based plot. In this way, analytical fiction conceives of analysis and, ultimately, non-action as plot itself⁸.

In *L'Art d'analyse dans la Princesse de Clèves*, Fabre traces the history of “analysis,” “dissection,” and “anatomy” through the work of the *Précieuses* in seventeenth-century France to *The Princess of Clèves*, as well as to Rousseau’s *Confessions* (1782), which nods to Lafayette’s work in Book XI and reminds us that a good writer needs to “savoir bien analyser le cœur humain” (quoted in Fabre 12) (“know how to analyze the human heart”). Fabre writes of the analytical text:

Qui dit analyse dit abstraction, réflexion, dédoublement, logique.

Or, le roman, qu’il se fonde sur la vraisemblance ou sur la

⁷ Analytical fiction shares an affinity with the theatre, or more precisely, with Baroque drama. The emphasis on dissimulation, masking, mistaken identities, and other particularly visual tropes of Baroque drama translates exceptionally well into seventeenth- and eighteenth-century novels, which are equally driven by the device of the uneasy gaze that is suspicious of what it finds or what it thinks it knows. Roger Shattuck writes that in the *roman d’analyse* “introspective analysis takes the place of the classic stage scene with a confidant and anticipates the probing of interior monologue” (*Forbidden Knowledge* 114).

⁸ Raymond Radiguet—a twentieth-century author—described his own *Le Bal du comte d’Orgel*, a reworking of *La Princesse de Clèves*, as “[un] roman où c’est la psychologie qui est romanesque. Le seul effort d’imagination est appliqué là, non aux événements extérieurs, mais à l’analyse des sentiments” (*Orgel* 8) (“[a] novel in which it’s the psychology that is novelistic. There, the only stretch of the imagination is applied not to external events, but to the analysis of the sentiments”).

fantaisie, prétend-il à autre chose qu'à faire concurrence à la vie qui, elle, n'est que mouvement, ou à lui substituer l'illusion? Comment pourra-t-on concilier les deux termes? Et, pour que l'analyse pût s'accommoder du roman, ne devait-elle pas commencer par le tuer? (13)

(Analyzing means abstraction, reflection, doubling, logic. But does the novel, whether based on realism or fantasy, claim anything but to compete with life, which itself is nothing but movement, or to replace it with illusion? How can we reconcile the two terms? And if analysis were to find its place within the novel, should it not start by killing the novel?)⁹

Abstraction and reflection, as well as Fabre's word, "*dédoublement*" (which implies distancing and a splitting of oneself or of an object, creating a sense of doubt, confusion, and self-deception) indicate vacillation and redoubling. These, in turn, signify that the plot of the work does not unfold as we would expect: there is no movement forward.

At the same time, character is subordinated to the analysis-as-plot I describe above. Characters in analytical fiction are not beings with individual subjectivity, nor are they representative of types as in allegories or epics. Instead, they embody ideas, emotional states,

⁹ Fabre's word "*roman*," which I translate here as "novel," is ambiguous, as the term in French means both "novel" and "romance," as in *le Roman de la Rose* or the Arthurian *romans*. Though competing accounts of the origins of the novel indicate that it arose either from such romances or from the *nouvelle*, or tale, Fabre's problematic of reconciliation still applies.

ways of thinking and interacting, and above all, as readers of themselves, of others, and of the world. Analytical characters are sustained by a drive for knowledge about one another. But since characters are never “knowable”—comprehensible, mappable—in analytical fiction (as I will show in more detail below), there is always an attendant doubt that comes with this quest for knowledge. Actions become secondary to *reactions*; characters become functions of each other, understandable only in relation to the other. This is in large part because thoughts are tentative and contingent on the thoughts and motivations of others. For example, we *think* we know what the Princess of Clèves and Harriet Byron are thinking because the narrator or the character herself tells us. But in fact, characters frame what they think through the possible thoughts of another; the Princess *thinks* she *might* love Nemours when she catches him gazing at her; Harriet *might* consider Sir Charles for a husband *if* she were to know whether she is not too young and sentimental to be married, *and* if she could be sure that his heart is disengaged. In the first example, since the Princess’s story is told by a third-person narrator, we assume that her thoughts are being accurately represented. And yet, there are times when the narrator will tell us that she had no idea what the Princess was thinking. On a second level, we only know contingently, from the Princess herself, what she *thinks* she *might* feel contingent on Nemours’s thoughts and feelings. In the second example, Harriet’s thoughts are narrated by herself because of Richardson’s epistolary form, so they ought to be accurate. However, as I will show later in this thesis, Harriet, like the narrator in *The Princess of Clèves*, revises her feelings and acknowledges as much to her correspondents; and again, like the Princess, she only knows what she *might* feel if she knew Sir Charles’s mind.

Thus, characters and narrators in analytical fiction obsessively glean insights and analyze *ad infinitum* one another’s speeches, gestures, and glances; they are on the constant lookout for

signs and signals in their environment, in each other, and in themselves that will offer them some truth that constantly seems to recede from their grasp. What truth are they looking for? Often it is certainty about their own emotions, whether the passions they feel are genuine or not, and whether or not they should attempt to achieve their desires. In a realistic (we might be tempted to say psychological) work, characters have a unique subjectivity. On the other hand, in analytical fiction, a character's epistemology—how she thinks about knowing—is more relevant than her subjective experience. I am arguing here that there is a fine distinction between subjectivity and epistemology. Rather than the growth, or *Bildung*, associated with subjectivity, what matters in analytical fiction is the process of deliberation and the search for certainty.

Yet analytical fiction attempts to engage in epistemological and psychological problems that it cannot resolve on the terms of either epistemology or psychology. Nor, as Dorrit Cohn has shown, can the field of linguistics on its own shed light on the way that consciousness is reproduced in narrative fiction, as “it tends to leave out of account the entire nonverbal realm of consciousness, as well as the entire problematic relationship between thought and speech” (11). An examination of narrative temperament and motifs, on the other hand, helps to elucidate the way that narrators, characters, and readers interact and cope with inhibition (to use a Freudian term) in pre-Freudian literature. Analytical fiction, then, cannot bring a reader closer to a better understanding of the human heart and mind, per se, but it can illustrate the often winding and incomplete journey that such a search entails.

* * *

Analytical fiction is characterized by two key narratological elements that I will discuss throughout this dissertation and which appear in literature from both sides of the English channel: first, a circular pattern of insights and the denial of those insights, a main element of which is *adynaton* (defined and discussed below), and second, a particular narrative *durée* that dilates the time of coming to knowledge. Both elements have to do with the search for knowledge and the way in which characters believe they know and understand their own minds and the minds of others, as well as the ways in which narrators claim, implicitly or explicitly, that they understand or do not understand their characters, and ultimately, how readers consume and manipulate this information to interpret the text.

Central to analytical fiction is the idea that the examined life necessitates the search for elusive truths, but that this search is inherently paired with distrust and error in judgment both about the world and about oneself. It is also not necessarily a *reasonable* search, in that the emotions inevitably become embroiled in the quest. In analytical fiction, truth—though it purportedly remains at the center of every search—is a slippery and ungraspable ideal that ultimately is dwarfed by the search itself; the desire to know, to know whether it is right to feel, what exactly is being felt, and ultimately, whether it might be right to act on these perceived feelings, becomes obsessive. There are, of course, moments when characters are suddenly made aware of their own propensity to fall into this pattern of thought. Yet, insights that come from confrontation with the fact that one is constantly searching for knowledge only generate further insights that work against one another, and in the end result in refuting every earlier conclusion drawn. Thus, insight and error are equivalents, creating an elliptical relationship that refuses to allow for stable truth. Obsessive analysis inhibits the plot from continuing toward a climax, conclusion, and denouement. Instead, action becomes a game of chance, and is almost always

forestalled. The impetus to act is contingent on knowledge of what a love object feels, and the plot can only double back on itself and function cyclically. This cyclical narrative structure usually remains sound until a death (or sometimes a marriage) *arbitrarily* breaks the pattern.

On the level of vocabulary, certain verbs (such as to think, to believe, and to dare, as well as verbs of seeing and seeming) illustrate that one character is attempting to produce knowledge about another, to read herself, or to do both. Characters who attempt to look within themselves are usually wrong in some way. They are mistaken about their own knowledge, about a belief, or about someone else, so that characters engage in infinite reciprocities, moving to and fro, never capable of alighting on any stable certainty. For this reason, jealousies come to the surface and love is almost always thwarted. Even when, as in Austen's *Persuasion*, which I examine in the last chapter of this thesis, the story ends with a marriage, there still remain some doubts as to the continued happiness of the characters. Thoughts, beliefs, doubts, seeming, and spying—the vocabulary of interpretation and reading—also serve to undercut a simple progression forward in the narrative in analytical fiction.

Knowledge is viewed by authors of analytical fiction as something that cannot be easily possessed; the acquisition of knowledge must be worked at, at times obsessively, and if a character thinks she has obtained it, she is probably mistaken. Characters in analytical fiction also revise, comment on, correct, and re-edit what they think they know about the world around them and about themselves. They do not stop dissecting their impressions after a meaning has been found, because meaning is always arbitrary in analytical fiction. Any insight will ultimately be doubted and thrown away in favor of a subsequent insight.

The presumption of knowing one's own motivations leads characters astray and into self-deception. The same goes for knowledge about others. Rather than discovering truth, characters

merely deceive themselves into believing that they are on the right track. This formula, in which knowledge is desperately desired but never attained, underlines the theme of self-deception as the basis of analytical fiction. As the work unfolds, self-deception deepens into a pervasive question about whether it is possible to know another person, or even oneself. Along the same lines, the only moments in which we see a character's true feelings happen by accident and by a process that Martha Nussbaum terms "cataleptic impressions," or bouts of genuine and uncontrolled (and generally embarrassing) emotions that are triggered by a stimulus that catches the character entirely off-guard.

The quest for self-knowledge, which, in analytical fiction is marked by a cyclical, redoubling sense of anti-movement, often proceeds via jealousy. As Pingaud points out, it is not necessary for a character in a novel or novella by Lafayette, for example, to know for sure that his or her lover is a cheat; an imagined or possible infidelity is more than sufficient to cause a fit of jealousy: "L'obstacle véritable qui sépare les amants n'est pas la destinée, ou du moins cette destinée n'en est que le symbole. L'obstacle est dans leur cœur" (Pingaud 81) ("The real obstacle between lovers is not destiny, or at least destiny is only its symbol. The obstacle is in their heart"). Thus, doubt and over-analyzing separate characters. Simultaneously, however, jealousy can and often does result in an unintended realization of love, leading to a burst of self-knowledge. But the pleasure of this insight does not last long because, again, it is concomitant with jealousy. Once jealousy has been assuaged the intervening period of happiness is never long. The heart of the lover will surely find another obstacle to achieving intimacy.

The desire for intimacy between characters is a central issue in analytical fiction, but so is its inhibition. As Theresa Anne Sears writes about what she calls the sentimental mode, based on the idea of feeling in the mind, *sentire in mente*, "desire is never dealt with on a simple, bodily

level, but rather is analyzed according to some ethical, moral, rational, or political criteria, which turns love into an aesthetic, rather than a mimetic, phenomenon” (21). Analytical fiction takes place in a closed society, where characters have little to do other than imagine and obsess over what others think and feel, and whether what they themselves are thinking is correct. Most duties to society and family, monetary considerations¹⁰, and other mundane concerns are given secondary status¹¹. We can view intimacy as the completion of knowledge, what Sears sees as an “aesthetic phenomenon,” or the transmission of what one truly thinks and feels to another character. Analytical characters dissect desire, revealing how much it is inhibited by jealousy and self-doubt. In this way, it is difficult, if not impossible, to sustain intimacy between characters.

Analytical fiction illustrates the difficulties of narrating passion, which difficulties become a delaying device as well. Characters in these works explore the relationship between language and feeling, attempting to anatomize and comprehend their thwarted loves. This type of obsessive reading also highlights the tension between the emotions that characters feel and the difficulty the narrative has to express them. For example, in Marguerite de Navarre’s tenth tale in the *Heptameron* and in Lafayette’s *Princess of Clèves*, the narrators tacitly insist on the insufficiency of literary language to express the deep and troubling passions felt by the characters whose stories they are narrating. (We must remember that in Early Modern fiction as a whole, narrators tend to be active characters who comment on and speculate about their characters’ speeches and behaviors.) In these two Early Modern works, emotions are usually completely omitted, or only briefly mentioned in statements by the narrator that indicate it is the

¹⁰ See John D. Lyons’s “Mlle de Chartres in the Jeweler’s Shop: Knowledge and Commerce in *La Princesse de Clèves*.”

¹¹ Again, I certainly acknowledge that other valid “readings” exist; I am merely making analysis the central focus of this dissertation.

reader's responsibility to describe and understand the emotions. Lafayette often employs the pronoun "on" (frequently translated in English by the passive voice) to suggest the emotions of the characters. The Princess leaves the room of her dying mother "en l'état que l'on peut s'imaginer" (173) ("in a state that can be imagined"). The same turn of phrase is used when the Princess realizes for the first time that she is in love, or when Monsieur de Clèves learns that his wife is in love with another man: "il est aisé de s'imaginer en quelle état ils passèrent la nuit" (260) ("it is easy to imagine in which state they passed that night"). When an emotion is extremely strong, there is no visualizing it: "Le trouble et l'embarras de Mme de Clèves était au-delà de tout ce que l'on peut s'imaginer" (255) ("Madame de Clèves's embarrassment and distress were outside of what can be imagined"). It is perhaps surprising that a work that is as focused on analysis as *The Princess of Clèves* should pass over emotion in a way that destabilizes the narrator's authority and confesses her inability to communicate the basic facts of her story¹². Indeed, the almost compulsive use of *adynaton* (in this case not a comparison to the impossible, but rather "a confession that words fail us" (Lanham 3), or simply, a refusal to tell), or silence, or a confession that the narrator simply does not know how the character feels at a particular moment turns out to be a characteristic narrative move in analytical fiction, particularly in the Early Modern period. In the following decades, the role of the narrator changes in works like *Clarissa* and *Grandison*. Characters narrate their own stories, and yet, the admission that they do not know what to think or what to believe or what to feel is still present. The use of *adynaton* merely shifts from the Renaissance-era self-proclaimed non-omniscient narrator to the character, whose knowledge about her own and others' thoughts and feelings the

¹² Not to mention such hyperbole existing in a work that is always praised for its classical structure.

text still manages to confuse, thwart, and mislead. We will look at specific examples of this in the fifth chapter.

The delaying of knowledge and dilation of resolution are the second connected elements of analytical fiction. Beginning with classical Roman literature, we see this treatment of knowledge and lack of knowledge overtly in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as I will illustrate more fully in the following chapter. Using the device of transformation, Ovid's narrator prolongs the moment of not-knowing for his characters in an ironic way, so that the narrator and the reader know what is happening to a character while the character remains ignorant. In later texts, there is no literal metamorphosis to signal changes in characters' epistemologies, but transformations occur nonetheless. Characters in early modern and modern analytical fiction go not from ignorance to knowledge, as I have already explained, but from ignorance to passion, from indifference to jealousy and/or love. These passions ignite a whole new quest for knowledge and certainty (or as we shall see, return characters to a state of indifference), and launch the character into the elliptical, cyclical process I described above.

The relationship between language and feeling proves extremely important in the narration of each of the texts discussed in this dissertation. The refusal to provide the full story—and we will see numerous similar acts of silence in each of the texts that I investigate here starting with Ovid—manifests itself as a form of reluctance or inhibition within the narration. Treating ungovernable passions by hiding them—and again, this can be perpetrated by either narrators (particularly in Early Modern texts) or by characters—creates even more misprisions and self-delusion, and ultimately underscores the motif of the unattainability of knowledge in analytical fiction.

Feelings, then, remain unknown and unknowable to the characters, to the reader, *and*, in some of the texts, to the narrator in analytical fiction. Yet, the unattainability of the love object does not hinder the character from pursuing that object; in fact, it just increases the object's appeal. The inclination to want what one knows one cannot have, perhaps *because* one cannot have it, is the type of error and self-deception that is of foremost significance in analytical fiction. Whereas different texts create this deferral or cyclicity in different ways, there is always something in the narration that delays action and movement forward.

The love object's remoteness—be it in his or her glances, behavior, facial expression, or even overt lack of interest—provides cause for a character to misread these signals, or find them where they do not exist, and interpret them (usually erroneously) as a positive sign. This is a fairly simple paradigm. As we shall see in the discussion of the individual texts, it becomes more complex when the love object inevitably gives in and ends up falling in love himself or herself, and the roles reverse: suddenly the love object becomes the lover, and the original lover loses interest because the former love object has become too available. In this way, because overt interest almost never yields the desired results, some characters learn that the best way to attract their love object is to feign indifference. The paradox of love in analytical fiction keeps characters apart, because an overt declaration of love will never yield as positive a result as will pretending not to care. Each of the works I examine in this dissertation follows this pattern, even *Persuasion*. Although, as I mentioned above, Austen's novel ends with the marriage of Anne Elliot and Frederick Wentworth, the journey to this marriage, as well as the ambiguity of the last lines of the novel concerning Anne's happiness, undercut a straightforward marriage plot.

* * *

There is also a political dimension to the vocabulary of seeing and seeming, to delayed, cyclical plots, and to dissimulation in analytical fiction, particularly in the Early Modern Period¹³. The political danger of being “seen” without one’s mask on is particularly dire in the Early Modern period. While today popular wisdom dictates that we “follow our hearts” and not be “so cerebral” about making decisions, the goal of Early Modern self-fashioning was to appear as emotionless, as calm as possible, and *indifferent*¹⁴. As conduct books from the early modern period testify, there is an inherent social and political danger in *affettazione*, or affectation, as opposed to *sprezzatura* or studied nonchalance¹⁵. To reveal strong emotions was a sign of weakness and of the inevitability of downfall. Though the historical courts that Lafayette describes in her works are not those of her own era, the setting is almost universally read as that of a *roman à clef* actually representing, as Nicolas D. Paige puts it, “the atmosphere of the Sun King’s court, and especially . . . a particular type of sociability in which reputations were constantly in danger of being discredited” (*Zayde* 11). In the court of Louis XIV, cunning acts were covered up by charming demeanors, while there was no greater source of gossip than the *intrigues* (a word that in French means both plot and affair, usually a love affair) and the rumors which comprised the daily intelligence of the residents of Versailles. Courtiers were expected to be capable of controlling and hiding their passions and affecting a sense of calm and virtue (and

¹³ In classical rhetorical terms, *dissimulatio* indicates concealing the truth, while its opposite, *simulatio*, requires pretending something that is not true. I will be examining mainly examples of the former in this dissertation, although Early Modern literature was particularly interested in the interplay of the two.

¹⁴ Kahler puts it, a bit nostalgically, thus: “Today it is forgotten that the most beautiful aspect of love is not its fulfillment—however intensely that is, naturally, desired—but its growth: the delays, aberrations, slow approaches, the sublime joys that can spring only from suffering. This whole process has been lost to us, since the external obstacles have fallen away” (25).

¹⁵ See Jon R. Snyder’s *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe* (2009).

thus, reason) in all matters. In fact, they were required to do so by the system, or else they risked losing their place in it. Since the rigid political structure of the court controlled most forms of communication, watching (which could be remarked upon less than, say, speaking and writing) becomes a standard trope of Early Modern literature¹⁶. The characters analyzed in this dissertation lack the skill to penetrate other characters, the ability to become the kind of adversary that has full control over an opponent by understanding the way his mind works.

Francis Bacon's essay "On Simulation and Dissimulation" lays out three "great advantages" of concealing the truth by means of hiding. "First," writes Bacon, it is an advantage "to lay asleep opposition, and to surprise. For where a man's intentions are published, it is an alarum, to call up all that are against them." Another advantage of dissimulation for Bacon is

the better to discover the mind of another. For to him that opens himself, men will hardly show themselves adverse; but will fair let him go on, and turn their freedom of speech, to freedom of thought. And therefore it is a good shrewd proverb of the Spaniard, Tell a lie and find a truth¹⁷.

¹⁶ According to André Aciman, being too "legible" poses a danger: "the most basic assumption in *cryptomania* is that everyone either is or could easily become an opponent, an *adversaire*. The need to penetrate faces and to sound others was so broadcast in the sixteenth and seventeenth century that its popularity ultimately bespeaks . . . an epistemologic malaise functioning at the heart of Modern social, political, courtly, religious, personal, and aesthetic life" ("L'Esprit de penetration" 99).

¹⁷ http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/bacon/bacon_essays.html. Accessed 11/17/2010. Bacon also outlines three disadvantages of dissimulation in order to maintain a balanced view.

Bacon's essay in many ways resembles the *moraliste* writing of seventeenth-century France, but the element of surprise recalls Lady Macbeth's entreating her husband to be less obvious and to act like a snake ready to strike:

Your face, my thane, is as a book where men
May read strange matters. To beguile the time,
Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,
Your hand, your tongue: look like the innocent flower,
But be the serpent under't (1:5).

To see correctly is the goal, but to be seen correctly is dangerous; thus it is desirable to cover up a lie, sometimes, as Gracian and Bacon recommend, with the truth itself.

Macbeth's vacillation in the first act of Shakespeare's play, his need for certainty, his slips and confidences, all work against him, so that his wife sees the need for affecting a sweet and innocent persona in order to be capable of acting in the subsequent scenes of the play. Similarly, as many critics beginning with A. C. Bradley point out, in *Othello* Shakespeare presents two extremes in Iago and the Moor, the ability to dissimulate the truth and the utter inability to conceal one's passions and beliefs, respectively¹⁸. Even if the goal is not necessarily as extreme as covering up a murder, as in Shakespeare's plays, Gracian's maxim of telling a lie and finding a truth, and the paradox of discovering what is hidden from view in what is obvious, and vice versa, represents the overall worldview of analytical fiction.

¹⁸ See Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy*. Snyder makes a similar point.

* * *

Certainly, philosophers, thinkers, and historians have written pessimistically of the human condition since the beginning of writing: “the heart is deceitful above all things¹⁹” The Greek imperative to “know thyself” was born out of a paradox; “self-searching is most commonly the offspring of self-distrust and misgivings” (Lovejoy 1), as the Greeks were keenly aware. The Greek view of the self was inherently pessimistic and plagued by doubt, the amorality and arbitrariness of the gods, and the instability of appearances. Thus, Herodotus and Thucydides present the inherent irony and inconsequence of heroic speeches that appealed to pathos and which caused devastation, and of logical and sound arguments that failed to convince anyone. These authors viewed the very cosmos, the order of things, as an ironic *mise en abyme*²⁰, filled with tragicomic characters who are poor readers of themselves, of each other, of their environments, and of signs from the gods.

By the fourth century A.D., the possibility of self-knowledge had all but completely transferred only to the realm of the divine. The pessimistic biblical belief about man’s inability to know himself is echoed in Augustine, whose theology preached that human knowledge is limited and incomplete, behavior tending to be self-serving and flawed, the will striving toward the wrong, except through God’s grace. Augustinian theology distinguishes the spirit from the flesh, the city of God from that of man, “God’s love swaying in the one . . . self-love in the other” (*The City of God*, quoted in Tilmouth 158). The two wills, then, the carnal and the spiritual, are in

¹⁹ Jeremiah 17:9; as well as a novel by “JT LeRoy” whose authorship perhaps serves as a self-fulfilling prophecy, considering its title.

²⁰ A term coined by André Gide to describe the effect of “infinite regression” (Cuddon, *Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*).

constant battle, while self-knowledge is not fully possible. Similarly, and many centuries later, Calvin's *Institutes* (1536) argues "there is nothing but depravity within the body and the soul of unregenerate man. Self-examination can only prompt a despondent realization that man, unaided, has no real aptitude for goodness . . . and is polluted by wickedness in his every member" (Tilmouth 33). For Calvin and William Perkins's *Combat of the Flesh and Spirit* (1593), there is no such thing as moral agency. Whereas Augustine saw the grace of God as a beginning and our own will as the means to finding it, Calvinists considered grace the only conduit for correct behavior. Thus, feeling corrupted and needing self-mortification and punishment are signs of spiritual progress and should be cultivated. Within this worldview self-knowledge is nearly impossible to attain; what we can know about others is even more out of reach.

The narrative patterns of analytical fiction in the late Renaissance—which I argue have existed throughout literary history as a particular mode of writing—are rooted in an amalgamation of factors far too complex to be thoroughly treated in this dissertation (but including the wars of religion and the rise of Jansenism in France, the oppressive hold of centralized power, the scientific revolution, and an emerging crisis of European thought). It is especially important to discuss Jansenism, and to point out both the Augustinian and Calvinist precepts regarding moral psychology and governance because of their influence over Jansenist thought as theology that shapes a particularly fatalistic ethos for many literary figures. Jansenists like Antoine Arnaud subscribed to the belief that the only unchanging and eternal force was that of God, while the human is too untrustworthy and unstable to fully let reason guide him. Arnaud wrote of the theatre as a battleground for the human will and Christian virtue: "la plupart des vertus chrétiennes sont incapables de paraître sur le théâtre . . . le silence, la patience, la modération, la sagesse, la pauvreté, la pénitence ne sont pas des vertus dont la représentation

puisse divertir des spectateurs; et surtout on n’y entend jamais parler de l’humilité, ni de la souffrance des injures” (quoted in Gilby 56) (“the theater cannot represent the majority of Christian virtues . . . silence, patience, moderation, wisdom, poverty, and penitence are not virtues that can entertain spectators; and moreover, you never hear about humility or bearing abuse”). Ironically, Baroque theater *does* make use of all of these Christian virtues in a secular way. Returning to Arnaud’s point, though, his use of the verb “divertir” is particularly telling in that it picks up on the powerful force of concupiscible passions that lead the spectator in the wrong spiritual direction. That a viewer cannot turn himself away from the spectacle and toward Christian virtues and God indicates the stronghold that the passions exert on the body and the mind when stirred up by outside forces.

The belief that natural error and self-deception drove human behavior was commonplace in this era. That is not to say that all seventeenth-century French intellectuals who influenced literary production in their time period were necessarily religious. *Moralisme* is a kind of synthesis of Augustinian theology with secular moral governance. Blaise Pascal, for example, cites grace as our only possible “out,” but his argument seems quite secular otherwise. Reason and the senses are both deceptive, he writes, they are “engaged in mutual deception.” The following quotation from the *Pensées* is based on a fragment from Montaigne:

L’homme n’est qu’un sujet plein d’erreur naturelle, et ineffaçable sans la grâce. Rien ne lui montre la vérité. Tout l’abuse. Ces deux principes de vérité, la raison et les sens, outre qu’ils manquent chacun de sincérité, s’abusent réciproquement l’un l’autre; les sens abusent la raison par de fausses apparences. Et cette même piperie qu’ils apportent à l’âme, ils la reçoivent d’elle à leur tour; elle s’en

revanche. Les passions de l'âme les troublent et leur font des impressions fausses. Ils mentent et se trompent à l'envi (*Pensées* Brunschvicg No. 83).

(Man is nothing but a subject full of natural error that cannot be eradicated except through grace. Nothing shows him the truth, everything deceives him. The two principles of truth, reason and the senses, are not only both not genuine, but are engaged in mutual deception. The senses deceive reason through false appearances, and, just as they trick the soul, they are tricked by it in their turn: it takes its revenge. The senses are disturbed by passions, which produce false impressions. They both compete in lies and deception [12–3]).

These condemning, almost devastating lines could be a guiding principle for all works of analytical fiction. For Pascal, the human condition is such that we are attracted to folly and to self-deception, and that there is no way to debate a battle between reason and passion, reason and the senses, because all of these “manquent chacun de sincérité.”

Similarly, in La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes*, people are understandably suspicious, self-deceived, and often mired in ignorance. Thus, any insight made will ultimately be doubted and thrown away in favor of another insight; as maxim 377 tells us, “Le plus grand défaut de la pénétration n'est pas de n'aller point jusqu'au but, c'est de le passer” (78) (“The greatest fault of insight is not that it pursues its course to the end, but that it goes beyond”). Thus, not even one's insight is trustworthy, since our insights often go too far and then miss their mark. Indeed, as

Robert Green points out about La Rochefoucauld's work, "[f]or each maxim one likes, a countermaxim can be invented" ("Lost Paradise and Self-Delusion" 325) That is, the very nature of *moraliste* thinking presupposes the possibility of error, as well as ever-present ambiguity and human amorality. While there are often moments of satisfaction with knowledge or with self, these moments are always false. The emphasis on changeability inherent to La Rochefoucauld's view of *amour-propre* underscores the sense of motion—contrasted with the idea of stillness and *repos*, also seen as disinterestedness—involved in the feeling self²¹.

Peter Brooks remarks in *The Novel of Worldliness* that the *Maximes* are similar to a *portrait morale* (a popular genre at the time), and are equally concerned with guessing at the state of mind of others: "placed under the emblem of penetration: the frontispiece [of La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes*], with its engraving of Seneca unmasked, is entitled 'L'Amour de la vérité,' and the liminary aphorism, 'Nos vertus ne sont le plus souvent que des vices déguisés,'²² indicates the kind of search for truth La Rochefoucauld has in mind" (63). Brooks, like most critics, agrees that La Rochefoucauld's worldview, as well as that of his good friends the Marquise de Sablé and Lafayette, is marked "by a certain Jansenist pessimistic determinism—a sense of the injustice of the ego, the destructiveness of the passions, the inevitability of dissimulation, the elusiveness of truth" (Brooks 66).

Another *moraliste* and Jansenist, Pierre Nicole, whose work was admired by Madame de Sévigné and John Locke, who translated Nicole into English²³, draws a connection between self-

²¹ For Jon Elster, "La Rochefoucauld offered something like a theory of human motivations. In fact, his views about unconscious motivation and unconscious cognition are probably more valuable than anything found in twentieth century psychology" (84).

²² "Our virtues are often vices in disguise."

²³ See Alexander Sedgwick's *Jansenism in Seventeenth Century France: Voices from the Wilderness*.

love, interest, motion, and the vocabulary of seeing in the following passage from his *Essais de Morale*: “[l’homme] ne forme pas seulement son portrait sur ce qu’il connaît de soi par lui-même, mais aussi sur la vue des portraits qu’il en découvre dans l’esprit des autres”²⁴ (“[man] does not only form his own portrait on what he knows about himself through himself, but also by seeing the portraits that he discovers in the minds of others”²⁵). Nicole’s pronouncement of human nature as inherently concerned with how one is “painted” by others is a useful starting point for a study of seventeenth-century psychology, but it is only a beginning. Ultimately, in more extreme forms of corrective self-seeing, the inherent Augustinianism of the seventeenth-century paradigm of consciousness reflects the view of the other back onto the self, and allows the self to see clearly that it has been self-deluded.

Though the worldview of René Descartes became widespread in the decades after his death in 1650, some late seventeenth-century French literature parts ways rather emphatically with the Cartesian epistemological model. The philosopher describes how the emotions attack the will and lessen its faculties in *The Passions of the Soul* (1649), in which Descartes views the will, or reason, as an active force that governs human behavior. The experience of emotions renders that same faculty of reason passive or reactive (McClure 76). Love, for example, is “an emotion of the soul caused by a movement of the spirits, which impels the soul to join itself willingly to objects that appear to be agreeable to it” (Descartes 356), but which causes the suspension of the will and the immobility of the body. Only by mastering our passions are we able to act productively in Descartes’s system. Moreover, for Descartes, jealousy—a passion we will see very often in analytical fiction—is wholly incompatible with love.

²⁴ *Essays de Morale*. Vol. 6, 12.

²⁵ <http://www.fathom.com/course/10701023/session4.html> Accessed October 21, 2010.

The dualistic Cartesian model of the battle between reason and the emotions is in many ways opposed to analytical fiction's view of the way the heart and mind work. When discussing *The Princess of Clèves*, several critics have already pointed out the inapplicability of the binary Cartesian model (the famous mind/body split) functioning as an organizing principle for Lafayette's novel. Pingaud notes that Lafayette "ne croit plus comme Descartes, que toute âme puisse acquérir un pouvoir absolu sur ses passions" (63) ("no longer believes, like Descartes, that any soul can gain absolute power over his passions"), while McClure illustrates how Lafayette employed the same critical vocabulary of *étonnement*, *admiration*, and *surprise* as Descartes, but ultimately denies his idea that "the active . . . lies with the will rather than the world that surrounds it" (76), meaning that self-governance by reason free from passion represents movement forward. Instead, Lafayette wrote works that showed how "the psyche is inconsequent, unchartable, *dérégulé*, bizarre" (Aciman, "L'Esprit de penetration" 107), and is represented by cyclical movement rather than Descartes's movement forward. This conflation and reciprocal duping—that is, the lack of any rational model for understanding one's feelings and/or the reluctance to impart these feelings—is a key feature in analytical fiction.

Descartes's binary views of reason and the passions, love and jealousy, are absent in analytical fiction, in which the divided psyche is inclined to "look" in every direction except at the truth. In other words, characters turn toward several untruths at once, so that error is multidirectional and is the fault of reason as much as of the passions. Moreover, in analytical fiction, as Koppisch argues in reference to Lafayette's work, "[t]he individual is not the master of his own amorous desire" (759). The mind is not a mirror to the world in analytical fiction; it can never represent the truth. Instead, the production of error and the motif of contradiction become important in analytical fiction. Yet, error and contradiction are not necessarily truth's

opposites. As Fontenelle wrote at the end of the seventeenth century in his treatise on poetry, certain authors of his age were most interested in “La Science du cœur,” but they often found that the heart plays many games of hide and seek:

la finesse, la délicatesse, enfin l’agrément de ces effets de passion, consistent assez ordinairement dans une espèce de contradiction On fait ce qu’on ne croit pas faire, on dit le contraire de ce qu’on veut dire, on est dominé par une sentiment qu’on croit avoir vaincu, on découvre ce qu’ on prend un grand soin de cacher. Celle de toutes les passion qui fournit le plus de ces sortes de jeux, & peut-être la seule qui en fournisse, c’est l’amour (Reflection XIII).

(the fineness, the delicacy, and the pleasure of the effects of passion exist in a space of contradiction One does unbelievable things, one says the opposite of what one means, one is dominated by a sentiment that he believes himself conquered, one discovers that he works quite hard to hide things. Of all the passions that make up these kinds of games and perhaps the only one that produces it, is love.)

Unlike Descartes’s discourse on passion, though, Fontenelle’s analysis of the science of the heart reveals pleasurable contradictions for which both the emotions and reason are responsible.

The term “divided consciousness” appears occasionally when discussing the psychological novel, but we must be careful to define it not in the sense that Ralph Waldo

Emerson and the transcendentalists meant it, as a division between the “understanding” and the “soul” (Emerson 109). The consciousnesses of characters and narrators in analytical fiction are divided, but they are not merely divided between the dualities of reason and passion, soul and body, or virtue and vice. The division in the consciousness of a character in analytical fiction, rather, is more refracted, as is fitting for a work of literature that attempts to represent psyches—those of the characters as well as the narrators—in the process of thinking, discovering, wondering, and speculating. Thus, it is an oversimplification to claim that, for example, characters in an analytical work are torn between two extremes of thought or belief, that they are of “two minds” about an issue, or that they are merely mistaking illusion for reality. Instead, the idea that the heart and mind—the soul—cannot be mapped by any system is the mainspring of the pessimistic worldview of analytical fiction.

This process of knowledge acquisition and revision remains a significant epistemological paradigm through the end of the Renaissance, and is evidenced in subsequent eras as well. As James S. Munro writes about Richardson’s novels,

criticism has looked in quite different directions for an explanation of the author’s interest in psychological analysis: at the drama, at the relationship between Richardson’s characters and his own unconscious mind, at the overall development of western culture as a whole What has not been sufficiently explored is the possibility that instead of Marivaux’s influencing Richardson directly, both may have drawn some, at least, of their inspiration from a common source The eighteenth-century novel did, in

fact, have an existing tradition of prose fiction on which to draw: that of the seventeenth-century romances, the most influential and best known of which were French (752).

In *The Novel of Worldliness*, Brooks, too, sees affinities between late seventeenth-century pessimistic thought and Jansenist-tinged models of love's inseparability from jealousy and self-deception in eighteenth-century literature, though he denies Richardson a place here (I will come back to the issue of where Richardson's novels should be classified in the fifth chapter of this dissertation).

By the middle of the eighteenth century, the ways of knowing that I associate in this study with analytical fiction manifest themselves in the idealization of the "sensible self," or *l'homme sensible*²⁶. As Janet Todd points out, the "sensible" man either naturally felt extremely refined emotion or else learned to be so, and also was quick to display compassion for the suffering of others (7). Thus, "sensibility" implied abundant (and even excessive) sympathy, sublimating feeling into descriptions of weeping or fainting²⁷. Of course, it is not because the

²⁶ See Sergio Moravia, "From Homme Machine to Homme Sensible: Changing Eighteenth-Century Models of Man's Image."

²⁷ Samuel Johnson mocked sensibility in his description of Miss Gentle, a fictional character whose portrait he paints in his journal *The Idler*: "She daily exercises her benevolence by pitying every misfortune that happens to every family within her circle of notice; she is in hourly terrors lest one should catch cold in the rain, and another be frightened by the high wind. Her charity she shews by lamenting that so many poor wretches should languish in the streets, and by wondering what the great can think on that they do so little good with such large estates." (reprinted from *The Idler*, Issue 100, March 15, 1760 [451]). In the same vein, the reaction to sentimental fiction can change over time. Bending and Bygrave cite the example of Lady Louisa Stuart, who at age fourteen "had a secret dread I should not cry enough to gain the credit of proper sensibility" when reading Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* in the late eighteenth century when the novel was first published. She describes how her mother and sisters cried when reading the novel, "dwelling on it with rapture." However, several decades later, in 1826, she reads it aloud to a

English language lacked an adequate vocabulary to describe emotion that physicality is so important to the literature of sensibility. Locke, for example, believed that openness to sensation produced certain thoughts that contained the key to understanding another's feelings. In a passing comment in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* about introspection, Locke "taught the evanescence and primacy of impulse and suggested that sensibility—openness through sensation to the world—was the only route to knowledge" (Todd 24) without any mention of fainting or weeping. Sentiment, like wit in the sixteenth century, as we will see, mediates between the acquisition of intellectual and emotional knowledge in the eighteenth century.

According to Paul Goring in his introduction to Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* "‘sentiment’ was generally used to mean a thought or a reflection which was produced from or informed by emotion; it conveyed a ‘mental feeling’—an attitude which is at once intellectual and emotional, and typically this attitude concerned moral conduct" (xxi). In an idealized form, sentiment was defined in the early eighteenth century as a joining of the heart and mind, accessed through emotion, and as an effect that produced a moral reflection. The *raison d'être* of the novel of sensibility was purportedly the desire to teach a reader how to feel, then to show the reader how to control those feelings and express them judiciously. Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* analyzes the psychological role sympathy plays in the creation of moral theory. Smith's emphasis on aesthetics—that is, the faculty of seeing that informs our moral

group of friends, who did not know the book. She writes "I am afraid I perceived a sad change in it, or myself, which was worse, and the effect altogether failed. Nobody cried, and at some passages, the touches that I used to think so exquisite—oh dear! They laughed." (from the introduction of Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* [1771] [xv]).

judgments—is also particularly significant because it joins empiricism²⁸ to affect in what he describes as an open, sensible man, in whom “[t]o see the emotions of [other men’s] hearts, in every respect, beat time to his own, in the violent and disagreeable passions, constitutes his sole consolation” (27). Though Smith’s treatise on morality, like Locke’s comment, does not go as far as describing an “innate sensitiveness or susceptibility revealing itself in a variety of spontaneous activities such as crying, swooning and kneeling” (Todd 7), the economist’s identification of understanding and moral judgment with sentiment and sensibility is representative of the eighteenth century’s view of moral psychology. Moreover, Smith’s treatise is particularly significant to the understanding of analytical fiction because, as Barbara Benedict points out in her study of the rhetoric of sentimental fiction, *Framing Feeling*, it connects feeling for others to the self, illustrating how “sympathy is the source of all moral feeling, [but] as the individual’s imaginary substitution of himself for the suffering other through spectatorship. By this conscious act of identification, the spectator feels for the sufferer as for himself” (Benedict 3).

But what sort of “reflection” is being produced, exactly? Is it a wise maxim that teaches characters to behave more responsibly, or is this reflection just an invitation for a counter-reflection and a revised reflection later on, as we see in other analytical fiction? Many representations of sensibility in eighteenth-century fiction depict excessive emotionality, but the most analytical of these works also undercut the effusiveness of the passions with a narrative that reveals the “soul error” (to use a term coined by Roger Shattuck about Proust’s work) that effusive expression of emotion implies. The character who is open to sensation, to subtle nuance in feeling and physiognomy, and who possesses the capacity for empathy is also the character

²⁸ Enlightenment notions of empiricism, as Jessica Riskin has shown (in *Science in the Age of Sensibility: The Sentimental Empiricists of the French Enlightenment*) were entirely bound up with the language of sensibility, and the idea that knowledge hinges on the capacity to feel.

who desires most to understand himself. But, I argue, just as we see in analytical literature of the previous centuries, the desire to interpret, to empathize, and to understand does not guarantee success. The literature of sensibility, as much of the post-Augustan, pre-Romantic literature of both England and France has come to be called, gives us a character who is just as obsessively analytical, prone to error, and ambivalent about the possibility of true love as her seventeenth-century ancestor; we will recognize this character in Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe*, and Harriet Byron, as well as in Austen's *Anne Elliot*.

* * *

While *The Princess of Clèves* is the first widely read work that makes a prolonged, systematic, and unwavering study of the psyche groping for truth in an unknowable world, Lafayette was far from being the first to depict the endeavor of characters reading one another as inconsistent, unmappable, divided, blind, self-deceptive, and generally unreliable. A historical study is useful because it demonstrates that *The Princess of Clèves* did not emerge from a vacuum of non-analytical literature, but rather that it had many precursors, some, not all of which Lafayette had read. I use the term "origins" in the sense of a connected family of motifs that link certain texts by their emphasis on reading and whose narratives are cyclical, inhibiting, and stifling. Long before the late seventeenth century, authors from Ovid to Marguerite de Navarre experimented with a treatment of the psyche as unchartable and bizarre. In addition, these authors were concerned with the elements of analytical narration as a means of probing the frailty of human knowledge and self-image.

Chapters Two and Three of this dissertation, "The Origins of the Analytical Author" and "Double-dealings and double meanings: deliberation, dissimulation, and the ebb and flow of intimacy in sixteenth-century analytical fiction" investigate psychologically-penetrating passages

from works written before Lafayette's novel. I am not claiming here that modern analytical fiction emerged from Ovidian poetry or Euphuistic rhetoric specifically as a genre or tradition, but rather that the texts examined in this dissertation treat cognition, doubt, self-deception, and jealousy in homologous ways. Whether some of these earlier, proto-psychological authors influenced the later ones cannot be determined, but there is no question that the Ovidian representations of erotic love, knowledge, and narration in general were central to the development of early modern literature. Boccaccio's *Elegy of Madonna Fiammetta*, Marguerite de Navarre's tenth story in the *Heptameron*, and John Lyly's *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* each makes use of certain elements of narration that are borrowed from Ovid and which I classify here as analytical.

The following chapter of this dissertation focuses on *The Princess of Clèves* as a central analytical text that was shaped, in large part, by the *nouvelles* of Marguerite de Navarre. One part of the chapter involves a close examination of the scene of Mme de Themines's letter to the Vidame de Chartres, which serves as an emotional and behavioral legend for the rest of *The Princess of Clèves*, and helps to illustrate the way in which knowledge is transmitted, intercepted, and misinterpreted in the story. The language of the letter also helps to inform the controversial ending of the novel, in which the Princess, though she is widowed and has no social constraints forbidding remarriage, refuses to accept Nemours's proposal and decides instead to live out her last years in ascetic isolation. Often, the Princess's withdrawal from society is read in a positive light, but I argue here against this reading.

If the analytical novel deals with characters who distrust reason and insight, as well as their senses and emotions, the characters of Richardson's *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison*

are analytical characters *par excellence*. In the third chapter, “Self as the ‘Grand Misleader’²⁹ in *Clarissa* and *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*,” I examine the ways in which Richardson’s heroines resemble the Princess of Clèves in her ambivalence and self-deception. There is an element of tragedy in each novel as well; even *Grandison*, which ends happily, must first cope with the tragic story of Lady Clementina della Poretta, and thus with the motifs of inhibited, unconsummated desire and the impossibility of finding intimacy, motifs it shares with the seventeenth-century French novel which it cites in its seventh volume. Moreover, the way in which information is intercepted, circulated, excerpted, and/or adulterated along the way before it reaches its intended recipient—a motif that Richardson exploits well through his use of the epistolary form—illustrates the elusiveness of knowledge in these novels and the motifs of inhibited, unconsummated desire and the impossibility of finding intimacy.

In the last chapter, “The Cruel Gaze of Society: Stendhal’s *Armance* and Austen’s *Persuasion*,” the reader observes the deeply rooted motif of ambivalence and withdrawal from love in Stendhal’s first novel, *Armance*, and Jane Austen’s last, rather dark, novel, *Persuasion*. I use these two texts, influenced by Lafayette and Richardson, respectively, as a kind of conclusion for looking at pre-modern proto-psychological fiction. Both written in the early nineteenth century, *Armance* and *Persuasion* implicitly look back at and comment on their literary predecessors and the ways in which narratives inhibit romantic love and the fulfillment of intimacy. The characters in both works adhere to a determined silence throughout that takes the motif of *adynaton* examined earlier in this dissertation to a new level. *Armance* further develops the motif of requited love that is at the same time impossible, and while *Persuasion*

²⁹ This phrase comes from one of Clarissa’s letters in the Third Edition of Richardson’s novel, in which she writes: “What strange imperfect beings!--but self here, which is at the bottom of all we do, and of all we wish, is the grand misleader.”

does end with a marriage, it demonstrates the difficulties that characters face in order to obtain love. In this chapter, I explore the motif of silence, and the ways in which both novels investigate the language, behavior, and unwitting motivations of their characters. Stendhal and Austen each express in these works, as Adela Pinch writes of Austen, “a fundamental skepticism about the extent to which . . . heroines can know their own and their lovers’ feelings” (142). Particularly important here is the connection that Pinch makes between knowledge, narration, and feeling, a connection I will explore further in both *Persuasion* and *Armance*. In addition, I explore the role that society—always closed, suspicious, and judgmental—plays in analytical fiction. In this final chapter, I elaborate the ways in which the gaze of society within the novel helps to fuel the uncomfortable silences that hide and reveal at the same time, and the ways in which withdrawal and silence are often caused by the characters’ sense of constantly being observed.

Chapter 2: The Origins of the Analytical Author

Et sanum simula, ne, siquid forte dolebis,

Sentiat; et ride, cum tibi flendus eris.

Non ego te iubeo medias abrumpere curas:

Non sunt imperii tam fera iussa mei.

Quod non es, simula, positosque imitare furores:

Sic facies vere, quod meditatus eris.

Pretend that you are cured, and if your heart still bleeds, never let her suspect it. Let laughter be upon your lips, though tears be in your heart. I do not bid you break with her in the very height of your passion. I lay upon you no mandate so severe as that. But learn to dissemble. Assume a calmness, if you have it not, and soon you'll really be as calm as now you feign to be.

-Ovid, *Remedia Amoris*

The motif of the unknowable psyche can be found in literature from as early as Ovid. In the *Metamorphoses*, the Roman author uses the dilation of time (a key figure in analytical fiction) in order to show the ambiguous relationship between the narrator and the characters he is depicting, and the ways in which the narration suspends time in order for the character to attempt to read and understand (or misread and misunderstand) what is happening to him. I begin the

close reading of texts in this study with several episodes from *Metamorphoses*, published in 8 A.D., just months before the author's exile from Rome to Tomis, because the epic follows characters through various stages of coming to knowledge: intuiting, guessing, deducing, mistaking, and confusing. Transformation from one being into another is the overarching connection between each of the tales of the *Metamorphoses*³⁰, and it illustrates a way in which knowledge and finality are forestalled in an early example of analytical fiction. In Ovid, knowledge begins with questions of ontology: is Galatea flesh, or made of marble? Is Daphne caught or is she still free? Has Diana transformed Actaeon into a stag or is he still a man? But on second reading, these questions reveal themselves to be far more epistemological in nature: does Pygmalion know and understand that Galatea is not a real woman (or, later, that she is)? Does Daphne believe that she has already been caught by Apollo? Does Actaeon understand that he has become a beast?

The familiar story of Pygmalion depicts an artist who forges a statue so lifelike that he falls in love with it. Because he is so desperate for his creation to be a living woman, the goddess

³⁰ Ovid's representations of willing and unwilling transformation, active dissimulation, and the remedies to love served as the definitive model for Early Modern authors who imitated Ovid's tales and exploited his mythological and historical themes. The study of Ovid is of great importance for scholars of the Renaissance, since the Roman author is cited, whether explicitly or implicitly, by every major author of the Early Modern period, from Varesi to Montaigne. The Renaissance paradigm of the erotic and the motivations behind and manifestations of desire are inextricably linked to Ovid and the Ovidian tale. Ovid's mythological poems, treatises, and fictional letters served as models for Medieval and Renaissance writers to recreate the motifs of desire, extreme emotion, and the relationship between language and feeling in their own poetry, drama, novellas, and, in this dissertation, early novels. The first book-length study of the influence of *The Metamorphoses* on Early Modern literature is Leonard Barkan's *The Gods Made Flesh*. As Cora Fox has noted, more recently, in delineating the influence of Ovid's works in Elizabethan England, "Ovidianism served as a code for emotional expression in the period, and it participated in scripting not just private experiences of the self but public uses of emotional rhetoric" (2). Fox's study is part of a growing number of scholarly works dedicated to tracing Ovid's influence—which includes the influence of a more-analytically minded prose—in Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Carolingian England.

Venus grants Pygmalion his wish and transforms the statue into the flesh and blood Galatea, who becomes the sculptor's wife. There are two interconnected layers of dramatic irony in this tale: on the one hand, Pygmalion is a fool since he is kissing a statue, but on the other, he is not, because, as the reader knows, the statue will transform into a woman at the end of the story. Readers tend to see the central motif of the Pygmalion myth as that of the contrast between appearances and reality, and this motif is certainly present. But Ovid's representation of Pygmalion's speech and actions reveal a multi-layered misprision of the truth, and not merely a mistaking of X for Y. Pygmalion's error is pervasive and multidirectional. He conflates—not just mistakes—nature and artifice. Thus, for Pygmalion, illusion and the truth become one. Before the transformation, Pygmalion strokes, speaks to, and adorns the statue he has created; he “oscula dat reddique putat loquiturque tenetque” (“kisses it and thinks his kisses are returned”) (Ovid IV 82–3). Pygmalion *thinks* his kisses are returned; this is the key element of what makes this story an analytical one, since this very mistaking provides entry into Pygmalion's mind.

We see the text endeavoring to penetrate the character's inner thoughts in the language of the moment after the transformation as well, where Pygmalion is caught between ignorance and knowledge. His inner monologue travels back and forth between the real and the imagined until, in the transformation of the statue into a real woman, these two states fuse by an act of the goddess. But even after this has happened, Pygmalion is not fully cognizant of the fact. The narrator seems to delight in Pygmalion's prolonged moment of unknowing and his ironic misprision of the truth: “dum stupet et dubie gaudet fallique veretur,/ rursus amans rursusque manu sua vota retractat./corpus erat!” (“The lover stands amazed, rejoices still in doubt, fears he is mistaken, and tries his hopes again and yet again with his hand. Yes, it was [a body]!”) (84–5). The three lines describing the sculptor suspended in doubt, hoping she is real, unable to speak,

and afraid of the possibly unpleasant truth do two things so typical of analytical writing: they dilate time and defer knowing.

Central to Pygmalion's significance is the paradox "ars adeo latet arte sua" ("with his art, he's hidden art") (82–3), which also indicates that the artist has hidden the illusion from himself³¹. The folly—through which we are able to read Pygmalion's mind—and the irony of that statement is characteristic of the character in analytical fiction who often deceives himself accidentally in an attempt to deceive someone else. *Ars adeo latet arte sua* becomes an Ovidian precept throughout the *Metamorphoses* to show not merely a misalignment of appearances and reality, but a continuum between them, as well as the enduring vacillation between ignorance and knowledge. The suspension of truth—until the last line declaring that Pygmalion is not deceived and that names, finally, what it is that he is not deceived about—that the statue has become flesh—illustrates a device that Ovid will continue to use throughout his work. It is variations of this suspension of knowledge, I argue, that will serve as an epistemological model in all analytical fiction. Metamorphosis signals that physical characteristics, states of mind, and seemingly intrinsic traits are not so stable after all. Ovid illustrates how even the most inherent attributes—species, gender, family bonds—are not actually reliable signifiers of truth, and that even the most inherent sources of authority and a sense of self are shifting and provisional.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* represents characters in extreme emotional situations: fear, irrational hatred, desire, love, and sorrow. It explores these emotions by dilating the fictional space between error and truth, between ignorance and (self-) knowledge, through the trope of transformation. Ovid's language allows metamorphosis to unfold not only by creating dramatic

³¹ Similarly, in the *Ars Amatoria* Ovid writes that "ars est celare artem" ("true art is to conceal art").

irony but highlighting the progress and process of transforming from one shape to another. More important, it dilates the space between ignorance and a form of awareness. How do characters (and narrators) know they are in love, and once they feel they may be in love, how do they express it? Do they announce it? Do they pursue it, or do they hide it? Do they ignore it? Writing about love necessarily brings the issue of the representation of emotion into the equation. Here, the terms—knowledge (which is usually ascribed to reason) and feeling (normally ascribed to the passions)—are easily confused. But feeling does not advance the cause of knowing and knowing in no way advances those of feeling. The metamorphosis creates a moment *before awareness*, where a character has not yet come to terms with the transformation of his body because his mind lags behind what has already occurred, or is in the process of occurring to the body, the way reason lags behind the passions. In this idle midst of irresolution, where identity, to say nothing of body and desire, are suspended, death is also delayed.

The story of Actaeon provides another good example of the way in which delayed knowledge functions. Having accidentally stumbled upon Diana's secret cave while hunting for deer and having seen the goddess bathing nude, Actaeon is punished by being transformed into a stag. Ignorant of his penalty, the hunter, still believing he is a man, attempts to flee the goddess's wrath. Here we have classic dramatic irony: the poet and the reader are aware of the metamorphosis while the character remains ignorant: "[F]ugit Autonoeius heros/et se tam celerem cursu miratur in ipso" ("Away in flight goes Autonoe's heroic son, marveling to find himself so swift of foot") (*Ovid III* 138–9) He does not take stock of his metamorphosis, and even after he sees his reflection in a pool,

ut vero vultus et cornua vidit in unda,

'me miserum!' dicturus erat: vox nulla secuta est!

ingemuit: vox illa fuit, lacrimaeque per ora

non sua fluxerunt.

(when he sees his features and his horns in a clear pool, ‘Oh, woe is me!’ he tries to say; but no words come. He groans—the only speech he has—and tears course down his changeling cheeks) (138–9)

Actaeon is unable to grasp that he has become a stag. His voice “fuit”—literally flees, and Actaeon is *about* to say “poor me” but finds his speech is gone. Like Pygmalion, Actaeon vacillates in an in-between state (his tears flow down a face that is not his own), as his misunderstanding of himself reveals the workings of his mind.

Farther on, it is as if the narrator pauses the action in mid-air as Actaeon, “dum dubitat” (“while he stands perplexed”) (138–9), sees his own dogs who, keen for prey, already begin to chase him. Ovid gives us a catalogue of the dogs in the hunters’ party, continuing to expand the moment before they rip Actaeon limb from limb. Irony permeates the scene, with the hunters calling out for their leader, believing him to have become lazy, while Actaeon continues to try to yell to them that it is he whom they are hunting:

at comites rapidum solitis hortatibus agmen

ignari instigant oculisque Actaeona quaerunt

et velut absentem certatim Actaeona clamant

(ad nomen caput ille refert) et abesse queruntur

Nec capere oblatae segnem spectacula praedae.
vellet abesse quidem, sed adest; velletque videre,
non etiam sentire canum fera facta suorum.

(But his companions, ignorant of his plight, urge on the fierce pack with their accustomed shouts, looking all around for Actaeon, and call, each louder than the rest, for Actaeon, as if he were far away—he turns his head at the sound of his name—and complain that he is absent and is missing through sloth the sight of the quarry brought to bay. Well, indeed, might he wish to be absent, but he is here; and well might he wish to see, not to feel, the fierce doings of his own hounds) (*Ovid III* 140–1).

Finally Actaeon perceives that he is at once hunter and prey. Ironically, Ovid pauses to tell the reader that Actaeon knows that he would be proud of his hounds' fierceness and strength, but is about to feel that viciousness himself; he wishes to join his friends, but they are the ones who are chasing him. Thus, Actaeon's terrible fate at the same time doubles and annihilates him.

Actaeon, not quite human, not quite animal, represents a paradox and a tragedy of interstitial consciousness.

Ovid's characters, moved by the hands of fate, error, desire, or pride, are confronted with a force that turns the world on its end and subverts what was previously believed and known. Story follows story where little is learned, and episodes repeat one another seemingly *ad infinitum*. In this way, when Apollo mocks Cupid for being a lover and not a fighter, the god of

love causes the god of calm and reason to fall desperately in love with Daphne, a virgin nymph infected with Cupid's arrow of hate, who is sworn to celibacy. She flees, and he pursues.

ut canis in vacuo leporem cum Gallicus arvo
vidit, et hic praedam pedibus petit, ille salutem;
alter inhaesuro similis iam iamque tenere
sperat et extento stringit vestigia rostro,
alter in ambiguo est, an sit comprehensus, et ipsis
morsibus eripitur tangentiaque ora relinquit.

(Just as when a Gallic hound has seen a hare in an open plain, and seeks his prey on flying feet, but the hare, safety; he just about to fasten on her, now, even now thinks he has her, and grazes her very heels with his outstretched muzzle; but she knows not whether she be not already caught, and barely escapes from those sharp fangs and leaves behind the jaws just closing in on her) (38–41)

Here, Apollo believes he has already captured Daphne, and she cannot be sure that she has not already been caught; they are both, in fact, “in ambiguo.” These two characters, caught in flux, lose their individual identities and become entangled so that it is unclear where one body begins and the other ends. Daphne slips away from him at the last moment, from out of his very grip

that *almost* touches her.³² The extended moment of confrontation is the time when insights are finally made. In the case of Daphne and Apollo, the scene is loaded with false insights: the god believes he has caught his beloved, while she believes she has already been caught, and she is surprised that she manages to escape. We see quite clearly into Daphne's and Apollo's minds, just at the moment they are both suspended in doubt. The narrator uses the epic simile of the hound and the hare to articulate the mind-reading that is happening in the passage above, revealing the deepest truths about humans through the medium of a comparison to animals, one hunted and one prey. What I wish to highlight here is the vocabulary Ovid uses: the hound seeks to catch the hare; the hare seeks safety, he *thinks* he has her, she knows not whether she is already caught. Thus, as the metaphor unfolds, so does the pattern of suspended ambiguity and so does the language of mindreading.

* * *

³² The motif of “almost but not quite touching” is repeated in the story of Procris and Cephalus’s dog, Laelops, who is so swift in his pursuit of the Theban monster that he both catches and does not catch him all at once: “iamdudum vincula pugnat/exuere ipse sibi colloque morantia tendit. Vix bene missus erat, nec iam poteramus, ubi esset./scire; pedum calidus vestigia pulvis habebat./ipse oculis ereptus erat . . . collis apex medii subiectis inminet arvis./tollor eo capioque novi spectacula cursus,/ quo modo deprendi, modo se subducere ab ipso/vulnere visa fera est; nec limite callida recto/in spatiumque fugit, sed decipit ora sequentis/et redit in gyrum, ne sit suus impetus hosti:/inminet hic sequiturque parem similisque tenenti/non tenet et vanos exercet in aera morsus” (Long since he had been struggling to get loose from the leash and straining his neck against the strap that held him. Scarce was he well released when we could not tell where he was. The warm dust kept the imprint of his feet, he himself had quite disappeared from sight . . . There was a high hill near by, whose top overlooked the surrounding plain. Thither I climbed and gained a view of that strange chase, in which the beast seemed now to be caught and now to slip from the dog’s very teeth. Nor does the cunning creature flee in a straight course off into the distance, but it eludes the pursuer’s jaws and wheels sharply round, so that its enemy may lose his spring. The dog presses him hard, follows him step for step, and, while he seems to hold him, does not hold, and snaps at the empty air”) (*Ovid III* 396–7).

Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as well as his amatory writings (*Amores*, *Ars Amatoria*, and the *Remedia Amoris* that provided the epigraph for this chapter), and fictional *Heroides* (letters by languishing or abandoned women) had a profound impact on European literature from the Middle Ages through the eighteenth century. The *Heroides* had, in particular, along with the *Metamorphoses* and, as Pamela Waley has shown, the tragedies of Seneca, a strong effect on a now little-read novella by Boccaccio: the *Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta*. Boccaccio's novella about a jilted woman, narrated by herself and addressed to women in love, has been called one of the first works to portray the psychology of a character. At the end of the nineteenth century, one of the first modern commentators on the *Elegy*, John Addington Symonds, described it as "the first attempt in modern literature to portray subjective emotion exterior to the writer. Since Virgil's 'Dido,' since the 'Heroidum Epistolae' of Ovid, nothing has been essayed in this region of psychological analysis . . . [Boccaccio is] a skilled anatomist of feeling by the subtlety with which he dissected a woman's heart and laid bare the tortured nerves of anguish well-nigh unendurable" (54). Moreover, according to Jacob Burckhardt:

In the 'Fiammetta' we have another great and minutely-painted picture of the human soul, full of the keenest observation, though executed with anything but uniform power, and in parts marred by the passion for high-sounding language and by an unlucky mixture of mythological allusions and learned quotations (204).

More recently, Warren Ginsberg mentions in passing that "so many consider [this text by Boccaccio] the first psychological novel" (101). Of course, as Burckhardt points out in the

passage above, there is the problem of “high-sounding” language, a verbosity on Boccaccio’s part, which both Waley and Janet Smarr have pointed out exist at least on a first and superficial reading of Fiammetta’s descriptions of her own life. This is what Michael A. Calabrese dubs an “inflated sense of her own drama . . . Fiammetta ruins her own case through her inflated rhetoric” (26). To go even further, Katherine Heinrichs sees the book as “an exasperating work whose insistent and unrelieved psychopathology soon approaches burlesque, an effect clearly intended by Boccaccio” (156). Nevertheless, as Robert Hollander has pointed out, Fiammetta is a ‘fictive narrator’ who gives way to Boccaccio’s own warning voice that argues that this text “is not a celebration of love, but an analysis of its terrible power” (52).

Interestingly, the *Elegy* was long considered a partially autobiographical work³³. In a more recent analysis, Mariangela Causa-Steindler and Thomas Mauch (in the preface to their English translation of the *Elegy*) view the work as a proto-feminist one in which “Boccaccio, like Ovid, moves into the emotional indefiniteness of a feminine psyche—or into the darkness of his own psyche, recognized as feminine” (xix). Judith Powers Serafini-Sauli goes so far as to write that Fiammetta is “the progenetrix of novelistic heroines such as the Princesse de Clèves, Emma Bovary, and Anna Karenina” (8). These critics seem to miss the point, preferring to label Boccaccio’s mind feminized than to explore what that emotional indefiniteness really entails. The emotional indefiniteness is what ties these works together, not gender (which the word progenetrix implies), and the turbulence is not necessarily a product of femininity.

³³ According to Nathaniel Edward Griffin, Boccaccio may have modeled *The Elegy* on his relationship with Maria d’Aquino: “Boccaccio takes an ungallant revenge upon Maria for having proved faithless to him by reversing the role which each has played in real life, representing her, under the soubriquet Fiammetta, as pining at home in Naples while he, the gay young Lothario, significantly named Panfilo, goes joyfully forth in search of fresh conquests in Florence” (10). Waley and Robert Griffin both make cases against the *Elegy* as autobiographical.

While it was not as popular as the *Decameron* or even the *Teseida*, which provided a source for Chaucer's "Knight's Tale," the *Elegy* nevertheless exerted a strong influence on the literature of generations to come³⁴. Its odd genre, neither a romance nor a proper novel, but a secular confession written in poetic prose³⁵, in the *nouvelle* style but without an outer frame, may have paved the way for the novel in subsequent centuries.

After falling in love at first sight³⁶ with the unnamed young man, Fiammetta (whose fictitious name implies her ardor and passion) begins to have doubts about herself, about him, and about the world around her. She questions the value of her own beauty, claiming that for the first time she takes care to adorn herself quite extravagantly and spends much time in front of the mirror³⁷. She also learns the art of hiding her love from her husband and her friends:

³⁴ See, for example, for its influence on Spanish and French literature Isabel de Sena, Teresa Sanhueza, and Alan S. Trueblood. As to the Italian text's possible influence on Lafayette, according to Denise Gras, writing about the affinities between the anonymous *Lettres Portugaises* and the *Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta*: "la lecture des grands auteurs italiens faisait partie de la formation de l'honnête homme du XVIIe siècle. Mme de Sévigné et La Rochefoucauld, notamment, connaissaient bien l'italien" (546). Gras found no fewer than nine editions of the *Elegia* translated into French and published between 1532 and 1622. F. Deloffre in the introduction to a 1962 edition of the *Lettres Portugaises* also sees the *Elegia* as a source of analytical French fiction: "On ne peut imaginer d'action plus intime, plus dégagé des événements extérieurs, puisque les émotions de Fiammetta, après le départ de Pamphile, sont moins déterminées par les circonstances du dehors que par les idées qu'elle se forge dans sa solitude" (58).

³⁵ Symonds remarks that for Boccaccio, "to tell the tale with brief and hasty energy, to dilate upon its voluptuous incidents and themes of passionate emotion with burning rhetoric, satisfied his sense of poetry. In fact, he was working with inappropriate materials. Nature had made him an artist; but verse was not the vehicle his genius demanded; when he quitted verse for prose, he became a poet" (51).

³⁶ Earnest H. Wilkins points out that Boccaccio's description of the moment they fall in love reflects the language of myth. A ray of light from Panfilo's eyes pierces Fiammetta's heart while she is looking at him and he at her.

³⁷ However, Fiammetta does not seem to realize that this self-assessment was previously contradicted. At the very beginning of the narrative, Fiammetta writes that "come la mie bellezze, de' miei mali special cagione, multiplicavano. Ohimè, che io, ancora che piccolo fossi, udendole a moti lodare, me ne gloriava, e loro con sollecitudini e arti faceva maggiori" (31) ("as

che non insegna Amore a' suoi soggetti, e a che non li fa egli abili ad imparare? Io, semplicissima giovine e appena potente a disciogliere la lingua nelle materiali e semplici cose tra le mie compagne, con tanta affezione li modi del parlare di costui raccolsi, che in breve spazio io avrei di fingere e di parlare passato ogni poeta; e poche cose furono alle quali, udita la sua posizione, io con una finta novella non dessi risposta dicevole (62).

([i]s there anything that Love does not teach his subjects and which he does not make them capable of learning? I was a very innocent young woman barely able to speak of simple and concrete matters with my women friends when I picked up his manner of speaking with such enthusiasm that in a short time I could have outdone any poet in speech and fiction; and once I understood his approach, there were few things to which I could not give a proper answer by inventing a fictitious story [24])³⁸.

my body grew with the passing of time, my charms, which were the specific cause of my troubles, multiplied. Alas, what pride I took in them, although I was still young, and how I improved on them with care and artful means upon hearing them praised by many people” [3]). Similarly, when she first departs for the church in which she first sees Panfilo; she says: “io con sollecitudine li drappi di molto oro rilucenti vestitami e con maestro mano di me ornate ciascuna parte, simile alle dee vedute da Paris nella valle d’Ida tenendomi” (35) (“I dressed most carefully in robes resplendent with much gold and adorned every part of myself with a masterful hand, since I considered myself similar to the goddesses whom Paris saw in the valley of Ida” [6]).

³⁸ English translations of *The Elegy* are by Mariangela Causa-Steindler and Thomas Mauch.

The act of hiding goes hand in hand with distrust and the fear of error or of being discovered. Fiammetta is consumed by jealousy, as well as by the denial of jealousy. Thus, she wavers. In retrospect, Fiammetta realizes “quanto falsamente argomentava, fatta sofistica contro al vero!” (91) (how falsely I was arguing and quibbling with the truth!” [45]). As soon as Panfilo is gone to Florence, Fiammetta begins to suspect him of loving another woman, or else of not having been in love with her at all, or perhaps of being still delayed at home. Her thoughts vacillate from possibility to possibility, first convincing herself of one scenario and then of another. All possibilities, however, are equivalent in the text, since the reader never hears from Panfilo himself. Furthermore, Fiammetta’s suffering never quite ends; it flows more than it ebbs, and there is an obsessive cyclical to her suffering that folds back in on itself with every new piece of (usually false) intelligence she receives about Panfilo.

The story of what happens to Panfilo after he leaves Fiammetta is left ambiguous, and all the stories that Fiammetta hears are open to further scrutiny. They conflate hearsay³⁹ and eyewitness accounts, and are reported to the reader via Fiammetta’s own admittedly jealous and desperate narrative. First she is told by a merchant that he saw a beautiful woman entering Panfilo’s house, and that later he heard that they had been married. Later this report is found to be untrue, but this does not assuage Fiammetta’s suffering. In fact, her suffering even increases once she discovers that Panfilo is not married after all. It is almost as if the reopened possibility of being reunited with her lover once again is more disquieting to Fiammetta than believing in a finished story; the finality of his marriage would have been preferable to this return to unknowing, which represents a redoubling of the narrative and a return to the middle of the text

³⁹ For more on hearsay, see Giulia Natali’s “La 'diceira' di madonna Fiammetta.”

again. The absence of closure delays clarification with respect to facts, and Fiammetta's emotions remain ambiguous throughout the novella.

Fiammetta's sins return to her as well, as is evidenced in the scene at Baia. Because she is suffering from such irremediable melancholy, Fiammetta's husband takes her to the resort near the birthplace of Venus, where he hopes the baths and entertainments will provide the cure she needs. Ironically, as Fiammetta reports to "Her Ladies in Love," to whom the text is dedicated, staying at Baia causes even chaste young women to succumb to love affairs because of all of the sensual entertainments that it provides: "e per le molte lagrime e dolori sostenuti, raccese in sì gran fiamma, che mai tale non mi ve la pareva avere avuta" (128) ("Love rekindled in [my soul] the hottest flame which I seemed to have ever experienced" [73]). In fact, it is, she only admits later, because she had already been to Baia with Panfilo that she is so troubled by her arrival at the resort. Thus, her second trip there mockingly recreates a pale imitation of the first, and causes her to feel his loss more painfully in every place she visits: "Niuno lito, né scoglio, né isoletta ancora si vede, che io non dicessi:—Qui fui io con Panfilo, e così mi disse, e così quivi facemmo" (73–4) (I could scarcely see beach, rock, or little island without saying: 'I was here with Panfilo, and here he said this, and here we did that'" [29]). Here again is an example of the text's cyclical structure.

Fiammetta's reference to Diana in the next passage, and her descriptions of hunting and birding, associated with the goddess of the moon⁴⁰, indicate another return to her past: while she reports having been an expert hunter and rider in Baia on her first visit, Fiammetta's grief causes

⁴⁰ Boccaccio's first work was the *Caccia di Diana*.

her to drop things, as if she had never been one of Diana's followers⁴¹. Thus, each time Fiammetta is reminded of her former lover the experience of the second time around is an inadequate and mishandled repetition of life with Panfilo.

In some ways, we can interpret Boccaccio's Fiammetta as a stereotype of the lovelorn woman, overly consumed by her passion. The hyperbolic representations of emotion, the comparisons to ancient tragic figures, and the sheer number of words dedicated to suffering in the *Elegy* make it a latter-day echo of Ovid's *Heroides*. For example, Fiammetta laments:

e tanto opera più verso me che l'usato il mio ingrata signore, che
quanto più vede la speranza da me fuggire, tanto più con disideri
soffiando nelle sue fiamme, le fa maggiori; le quale come
crescono, così le mie tribolazioni s' aumentano; ed esse mai a
unguento debito non essendo allenite, più ognora inaspriscono e,
più aspire, più affliggono la trista mente. Né dubito che ad esse
secondo il loro corso seguendo, che già esse alla mia morte da me
tanto per addietro disiderata con dicevole modo avessero aperta la
via (220).

⁴¹ It seems strange that Fiammetta should liken herself to the virgin goddess, particularly when she is reminiscing about her relationship with Panfilo. The reference could be to Vergil's *Aeneid*, where in Book I Venus, disguised as a huntress, addresses her son, or to Book IV where the "marriage" of Dido and Aeneas takes place while the lovers seek shelter in a cave after Juno's storm ruins their plans for hunting. Fiammetta's loss of prowess can also be compared to Dido's, whose great power and leadership in Carthage diminishes as soon as she falls in love. It is possible that Boccaccio was seeking to invert and subvert the Dido and Aeneas story with the *Elegy*, undercutting Fiammetta's own comparisons of herself to the queen of Carthage. If read in this way, Fiammetta's narrative becomes even less trustworthy. We should also remember that Dido self-immolates at the end of book IV, while Fiammetta (on fire since being given her pseudonym by Panfilo before the book is written) lives on.

(the more my ungrateful master acts in an extraordinary way against me and the more he sees hope fleeting from me, the more he blows onto his flames of desire and makes them greater; and as the flames grow, my tribulations increase, and since they are never soothed by a proper ointment, each becomes ever more violent, and the more violent they are, the more they torture my miserable mind. I do not doubt that if I had followed them to their course, they would have opened the way to death [142]).

There is something psychologically penetrating about, on the one hand, Fiammetta's narrative, and on the other, the author's analysis—a criticism of that narrative—emerging throughout the text. It is significant that Fiammetta emphasizes how many “more” obstacles are put in her way by Love. Indeed, the word *pie* is repeated no fewer than six times in this short passage, mirroring Fiammetta's own growing passion. Fiammetta's exaggerated rhetoric builds without adequate resolution. This speaks to the *inconsequentialism*, and thus to the analytical nature of this text. Her insights arrive cyclically, and as soon as she makes one insight, she denies it, and the pattern begins again.

In this way, the implicit critique being offered by Boccaccio of Fiammetta as self-deceived and not knowing what it is that she wants makes the *Elegy* a work of proto-psychological, or analytical fiction. Whatever the author's intent was in writing the *Elegy*, the text comes across as ironic, ambiguous, and critical of the female narrator's voice. But what underscores the proto-psychological matrix of this text is that despite Fiammetta's denials, she is

aware of the jealousy and self-deception involved in her tortured meditations. For example, she says to Panfilo in apostrophe:

Io, dal tuo parlare e da te e da me medesima ingannata, mi
consumo piangendo e con le mie lagrime apro la via alla mia
morte, la quale con titolo della tua crudeltà debitamente segnerà la
sua dolente venuta (111–2).

(I, who am self-deceived and deceived by you and by your words,
waste away weeping, and with my tears I make way for my own
death, whose painful approach will rightly be attributable to your
cruelty [61]).

She tells herself to “rimanti d’amarlo, e dimostra che con quell’arte che egli ha te ingannata tu abbi ingannato lui” (106) (“stop loving him, and show how you deceived him just as he deceived you” [57]). The word “*ingannarer*,” “to deceive,” recurs frequently in the *Elegy*, and it is often as self-directed at the heroine as at her lover. Nevertheless, the recognition that she has been deceived both by Panfilo’s words and by her own does nothing to placate Fiammetta’s emotions.

Fiammetta’s nurse warns her that she should act more rationally, but Fiammetta is beyond reason:

Sogliono le discrete persone, trovandosi ne’ faticosi luoghi e pieni
di dubbii, tirarsi indietro, volendo anzi avere la fatica, la quale

infino al luogo hanno spesa dove già pervenuti s'avvengono, perdita, e ritornare sicuri, che più Avanti andando, mettersi a rischio di guadagnare la morte. Segui adunque tu, mentre che tu puoi, cotale esempio, e più ora temperata che tu non suoli, metti la ragione innanzi alla volontà (178).

(Discerning people normally draw back when they find themselves full of doubts and in difficult places, preferring, once they have wasted the energy they spent in arriving where they think they are, to return safely rather than proceed further and risk death. Follow such an example then while you can and now that you are more self-restrained than usual, be wise and pull yourself out of the dangers and anxieties into which you have foolishly let yourself be drawn [111]).

Fiammetta is overly blinded by her passion; all her attempts to follow reason are thwarted by false signals, false reports either of Panfilo's return or of his marriage. It is as if the narrative is purposely acting against her every time she begins to calm herself. Not coincidentally, her suffering is also redoubled in the act of writing:

Le quale cose, non che sostenendole, ma pur pensando di doverle altrui scrivendo, mostrare, tanta di me stessa compassione m'assilisce che, quasi ogni forza togliendomi, e infinite lagrime

agli occhi recandomi, appena il mio proposito lascia ad effetto
producer; il quale, quantunque male io possa, pur m'ingegnerò di
fornire (67).

(Not only while undergoing the experiences but also whenever I
think that I must reveal them to others in writing, I am assailed by
such self-pity that it drains nearly all my strength away and brings
innumerable tears to my eyes, scarcely allowing me to carry on
with my task, which I shall do my best to accomplish, no matter
how badly [28]).

The *Elegy's* structure is that of a confession—*confessio* meaning both an admission of sin and providing a testimony of the self—combined with debates with her nurse that Fiammetta transcribes in the text, which are more often than not interventions in which the nurse attempts to make Fiammetta see that she is being unreasonable rather than virtuous. The idea that Fiammetta represents a moral counter-example for virtuous women was popular in the fifteenth century. For example, Margaret Anne Doody writes that the “postscript by ‘Hieronymo Squarzasigo Alexandrino’ of a printing of Fiammetta in 1491 [the first printing was in Padua in 1472] is addressed to Fiammetta’s suspect audience of women in love, *donne innamorate*, and argues that fiction about love can be good in that it makes us see how *bad* it is. Fiammetta is useful as an example of what to avoid” (emphasis added, *True Story of the Novel* 233). For this reason as well we should view Fiammetta’s voice with a certain amount of skepticism. Though her

suffering is clear and her lamentations poetic, there is a certain amount of distance and irony with which Boccaccio seems to want his readers to interpret his character's lament.

Through this coolness, we are able to see clearly into Fiammetta's mind. The young woman uses duplicitous language on several occasions throughout the novella, revealing a calculating approach to alternately exposing and hiding her sorrow. For example, in the episode at Baia, Fiammetta hears young women singing songs about unrequited love, and claims that she wished to learn them by heart "acciò poi fra me ridicendola, con pie ordinate parlare e pie coperto mi sapessi e potessi in pubblico alcuna volta dolere" (130) ("so that by repeating it to myself I would and could sometime lament in public in a more orderly and covert language" [75]). This kind of hiding of true motivation—that is, mediating one's motivations—is a staple of analytical fiction. Singing the sad love songs also adds another layer to the *Elegy's* repetitive structure, and highlights its cyclicity as a main theme in the text. Dissimulation takes on other guises as well: later in the story, Fiammetta bemoans that she cannot give voice to her suffering because she must dissimulate cheerfulness and appear to be a happy young woman and a dutiful wife.

Fiammetta's nurse sees a link between the young woman's language and the emotions she feels: she contends that Fiammetta's words are the cause of her suffering. Indeed, much earlier, Fiammetta herself recounted how language can affect her heart:

E dietro a queste parole con molte altre séguito a me dicendo, e in
esse accendevami di fiera ira, la quale con timorosissimo caldo sì
m'infiammava l'animo, che quasi ad atti rabbiosissimi
m'induceva. Né prima il concretoo furore trapassava, che le

lagrime abbondevolissimamente per gli occhi uscissero, con le quali, molto alcuna volta duranti, esso del petto m'usciva; nel quale per conforto di me medesima, dannando ciò che l'indovina anima mi diceva, quasi a forza la già fuggita speranza con ragioni vanissime rievocava (106)

(I kept repeating these and many other words to myself, and they enkindled in me a fierce anger that made my soul burn with such a violent heat that it almost led me to the most enraged behavior. And it was not before this self-born fury passed all bounds that my tears flowed so abundantly and lasted so long that this rage left my heart, taking the tears with it; to comfort myself, I rejected in my heart what my prophetic soul was telling me and I nearly forced the hope, which had already fled, to come back on the poorest of excuses [57]).

In the passage quoted above, Fiammetta's passions form a dialectic between self-awareness and self-deception, between being both misled and disabused. Words, or the excuses that she comes up with about Panfilo's treachery, cause her "soul to burn." Because of her self-deception, her violent agitation causes her to cry and, like water, she implies, her tears staunch the flames. Here, false and self-deceptive words, even when she is trying to cure herself of love, stoke the embers of desire and jealousy. Similarly, Phyllis in the *Heroides* says that she is responsible for her suffering, and compares words (*verbis*) to weapons (*telis*).

heu! patior telis vulnera facta meis!
credidimus blandis, quorum tibi copia, verbis;
credidimus generi nominibusque tuis;
credidimus lacrimis—an et hae simulare docentur?
hae quoque habent artes, quaque iubentur, eunt? (II.48–52)

(My pain is caused by weapons that I gave you.
I believed your many begging words;
at last your family's great names convinced me
and I even believed in your tears.
But perhaps even tears can be taught to lie
and flow whenever they are required [12–13]).

Like Phyllis, who is injured by *verbis* and *nomini* (names), in a world where even tears can feign and lie, Fiammetta's own words cause her pain. Fiammetta, it turns out, is the author of her own suffering, which she writes and rereads over and over again as her passion rekindles with each reminder of Panfilo. Analytical fiction privileges the lag of reason behind the passions; there can be no adequate resolution to Fiammetta's pain.

Fiammetta's confession is in an unusual style as compared to the typical Augustinian confession; it lacks an overt conversion narrative that acts as counterpoint to the suffering. When she ends the book, "con più sollecito piede che quella de' nostri danni" (238) ("more quickly

than [the end] of our misfortunes” [156]), Fiammetta is leaving the door open for future pain and disquiet⁴².

The narrative ends abruptly. There is no real resolution to the story, since Fiammetta still does not know what happened to Panfilo. Months rather than years have elapsed, but the arc of the narrative exists outside of specified time. The arbitrary ending, as well as the feeling of sorrow folding back in on itself every time Fiammetta learns something new about her lover, creates the effect of waves crashing against the shore. While Ovid’s narratives suspend time but eventually move on, Fiammetta’s narrative lacks a progressive movement forward. There is no Ovidian transformation in the *Elegy*, nor is there a transporting to another story as there is in the *Decameron* or the *Metamorphoses*. Most analytical texts, since their plots are so scant, tend to feel static or cyclical in their movements. Here, there are references to seasons and holidays, but the passing of time does not play a significant part in the story. The redoubling of Fiammetta’s suffering once and again throughout the narrative inhibits progress and resolution, and we sense Boccaccio’s voice admonishing against extreme displays of passion and narratives that cannot move forward. Fiammetta tells her reader several times throughout the book that she writes in

⁴² She personifies the book that she is writing, and asks it to go out into the world and instruct others about her plight. In treating her book as a person who can be affected by its readers, Fiammetta in some ways transfers part of herself into her work, further underscoring the dialectic between self-awareness and self-deceptive emotion. She wants to leave the cover of the book unadorned, and instructs it: “e però non ti sia cura d’alcuno ornamento, sì come gli altri sogliono avere, cioè di nobili coperte di colori vari tinte e ornate, o di pulita tonditura, o di leggiadri minii, o di gran titoli” (238) (“do not concern yourself with any ornamentation such as other books are accustomed to have, namely, with elegant covers, painted and adorned with various colors, with clean-cut pages, pretty miniatures, or grand titles” [156]). She ends her text, thus, as Ovid began his first work from exile, the *Tristia* or *Lamentations*, with instructions to the book itself. She asks the book to be humble and to run from men, though if it should fall into Panfilo’s hands it should chastise him for the suffering he has inflicted on his mistress. In this way, Fiammetta hopes that the overtly passionate account of her sufferings will operate as a weapon against Panfilo.

order to serve as an exemplum to other women, to warn them of the dangers of love. In truth, it is Boccaccio who is doing the warning, in spite of the inversion of roles, setting Fiammetta as an ironic, pitiable, and almost ridiculous example of behavior. He suggests, with the *Elegy*, that the very act of narrating extreme emotion begets even greater displays of emotion, that the search for self-knowledge and meaning can only be thwarted by such display, and that there is an open-endedness and lack of finality in Fiammetta's narrative.

Chapter 3: Double-dealings and double meanings: deliberation, dissimulation, and the ebb and
flow of intimacy in sixteenth-century analytical fiction

J'ay peur que nous avons les yeux plus grands que
le ventre, et plus de curiosité que nous n'avons de
capacité. Nous embrassons tout, mais nous
n'étreignons que du vent.

(I am afraid our eyes are bigger than our bellies, and
that we have more curiosity than capacity; for we
grasp at all, but catch nothing but wind.)

–Montaigne, “Des Cannibales”

So far we have seen two examples of the psyche grasping for knowledge in an unknowable world and about an unknowable self: in Ovid, the moment of confrontation, a moment of emotional upheaval, is dilated to explore what happens when knowledge and ignorance meet, while Boccaccio inhibits action by contrasting self-deception with an outpouring of uncontrollable emotion. Similarly, each text discussed in this chapter delays action and finitude through characters who, as Montaigne’s essay on cannibals describes, desire knowledge, love, and friendship, but do not have the capacity to use or to fulfill them. In the following two sections of this chapter I examine sixteenth-century analytical motifs (particularly deliberation and self-deception) and how it is that we see into the minds of characters in Marguerite de Navarre’s *Heptameron* (1558) (the tenth *nouvelle*) and John Lyly’s *Euphues: The Anatomy of*

Wit (1578). Characters in these two works engage in a cycle of doubling back on their previously held ideas, finding themselves mired in ruminative analysis and paralyzing deliberation. After a close reading of each work, I argue that deliberation—the device through which, as in Ovid, we “see” into characters’ minds—and the analytical mode both drive and inhibit desire in characters. This increased or diminished desire leads characters, by turns, toward or away from each other. Ultimately, what these texts share is a cyclical pattern of ebbing and flowing intimacy that delays characters’ coming-to-knowledge about each other and about themselves.

* * *

The English fascination with French, Italian, and Spanish novellas (especially those that are more serious than bawdy in tone) in the sixteenth century led to a manifest increase in cross-channel translations⁴³ as well as the production of original English tales. These were the progenitors of longer non-Romance prose works, which, according to J. J. Jusserand’s landmark book on the Elizabethan English novel (first published in 1890), depict “the analysis of passion and refined emotion . . . [and] pictures of manners and of society” (27) as much as their continental counterparts. Increasingly concerned with the representation of mind and motivation,

⁴³ The practice of which dates back at least to the time of Boccaccio, with whose works Chaucer was familiar both through his own travels in Italy and through French and Latin translations. Fourteenth-, fifteenth-, and sixteenth-century novellas from Boccaccio, Matteo Bandello, Marguerite, and others were assembled and translated into English by the schoolmaster and clerk William Paynter (sometimes spelled Painter) between 1566 and 1567 in the extremely popular collection known as *The Palace of Pleasure*, containing ninety-four tales in two volumes, including, notably, Marguerite’s tenth nouvelle. According to Dora Polachek, *The Palace of Pleasure* “would become a treasure trove for Elizabethan authors to plunder” (32), particularly Shakespeare and other contemporary dramatists. For scholars of translation history today, it represents one of the most important collections of early modern novellas.

English authors like George Pettie, John Lyly, and Robert Greene were thoroughly engaged in “the exploration of complex emotion and motivation, and the articulation of desire” (Moore 41). John Lyly in particular, who developed the English prose style that would become known as euphuism or the euphuistic mode (named after the main character in his two novels, *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* and *Euphues and his England* [1580]), is considered the forerunner of the proto-psychological novel in England⁴⁴.

The part of *The Anatomy of Wit* that I examine here has a simple plot: in Naples, Euphues goes in search of wisdom, but instead falls in love with Lucilla, engaged to Euphues’s friend Philautus⁴⁵. Lucilla ends in deceiving them both, and each abandons her. Then the two men must repair their friendship and begin anew their search for knowledge, this time without the interference of women and love. The rhetoric used to narrate this novel, however, is far more complex. In *The Anatomy of Wit*, irony and didacticism combine long dialogues, debates, and speeches⁴⁶ that constitute a dissection of the passions involved in courtly gallantry and “a pervasive rhetorical style” with which characters must “persuade [themselves] to undertake a particular course of action” (Salzman 39). Euphuism is characterized by “see-saw oppositions” (Scragg 3) and is a style “rooted in antithetical balance, promoted by the use of schemes or figures of sound, notably *isocolon* (the repetition of clauses of the same length), *parison* (similarly structured sentences) and *paramoion* (sound patterning, e.g. syllabic repetition,

⁴⁴ See, for example, Dover’s *John Lyly*, Madelon Gohlke’s “Reading ‘Euphues,’” and Theodore Steinberg’s “The Anatomy of Euphues.”

⁴⁵ The story is also reminiscent of the eighth story from the tenth day in Boccaccio’s *Decameron*.

⁴⁶ Euphuism, as Henry Morley tells us, evolved when “[t]he fashion of ingenious talk had been brought home to England by the young men traveling in Italy to finish their education Whatever they said must display wit or culture, both at once if possible” (306–7). For a full development of Lyly’s style, see Paul Salzman’s *English Prose Fiction 1558–1700, A Critical History*.

assonance and alliteration)” (Scragg 3). It is through wit as a mode of deliberation, then, that characters’ minds become intelligible. In the sixteenth century, “wit” signified not only humor, but also the “seat of consciousness or thought or the mind”⁴⁷ and of human understanding and reason. *Euphues*’s style is distinctive for pairing opposites, either in paradoxes (“in the coldest flint there is hot fire”) or by contrasting two contradictory courses of action (“she fed him indifferently, with hope and despair, reason and affection, life and death”), where there is no clear moral superior. “Wit” used as a narrative strategy makes characters “revise” their earlier thoughts, behaviors, and feelings of certainty. Ultimately, wit is a discourse of frustration whose rumination and thought is presented to the reader through these opposites. According to Theodore Steinberg, “wit is itself of an ambiguous character. It is, in fact, nothing more than that faculty which is capable of acting on, organizing, and reacting to any field of human endeavor” (33).

Lyly borrowed and satirized the character of Euphues from another prose text, Roger Ascham’s *Schoolmaster* (1570), whose Euphues resembles more the ancestor of Samuel Richardson’s Sir Charles Grandison than Lyly’s Euphues. Ascham’s well-grown character is “apte by goodnes of witte and appliable by readines of will, to learning, having all other qualities of the minde and partes of the bodie that must an other day serve learning, not troubled, mangled or halfed, but sounde, whole, full, and hable to do their office” (quoted in Jusserand 127). On the other hand, Lyly’s characters are not straightforward at all about their intentions, and they do not live in pursuit of wisdom and goodness. Perhaps they are on their way to learning how to be “whole, full or able,” wise and judicious, but in the meantime they are only “troubled, mangled

⁴⁷ According to the Oxford English Dictionary online, accessed 2/8/2011.

or halved” as far as their virtue is concerned; at the beginning of *The Anatomy of Wit*, Euphues⁴⁸ is “more inclined to wantonness, than to wisdom” (42), so the motif of “education” from *The Schoolmaster* is distorted into one of desire for pleasure in Lyly’s novel. This initial folly sets the stage for scenes of dissimulation, duplicitous language, and, most of all, the strategies of characters who think they know what they want, but who discover that they no longer desire their love objects as soon as their love is reciprocated. The narrative strategy of euphuism aids in creating ambiguities and delays, prolonging desire from reaching fulfillment, and ignorance from attaining knowledge.

Lucilla’s character undergoes a dramatic course of self-deception and self-persuasion in the novel as her affections move from man to man. At the beginning of the novel, she is engaged to Philautus, but she falls in love with Euphues almost at first sight. Later in the text, her affections move on to a third man, Curio. Lucilla’s long speech deliberating whether to begin a liaison with Euphues—after he and Philautus abruptly leave her house one evening, Euphues being overcome by a secret love for Lucilla—is exemplary of the manner in which wit works both as a way into a character’s consciousness as well as a dilatory device. I will quote the beginning and the end of Lucilla’s speech. In the first part, she is very much aware of the contradictions of her feelings:

Ah wretched wench Lucilla, how art thou perplexed! What a doubtful
fight dost thou feel betwixt faith and fancy, hope and fear, conscience
and concupiscence! O my Euphues, little dost thou know the sudden

⁴⁸ Euphues means “well-grown,” but he is a man whose wit is “like wax, apt to receive any impression.” Steinberg even sees the novel as a parody of behavior manuals in the style of Castiglione’s *Cortegiano* and Ascham’s *Schoolmaster*.

sorrow that I sustain for thy sweet sake, whose wit hath bewitched me, whose rare qualities have deprived me of mine old quality (51).

But as her speech continues, she becomes more and more self-deceived:

Let my father use what speeches he list, I will follow mine own lust. Lust *Lucilla*, what sayest thou? No no, mine own love I should have said, for I am as far from lust, as I am from reason, and as near to love as I am to folly. Then stick to thy determination, and show thy self, what love can do, what love dares doe, what love hath done. Albeit I can no way quench the coals of desire with forgetfulness, yet will I rake them up in the ashes of modesty: Seeing I dare not discover my love for maidenly shamefastness, I will dissemble it till time I have opportunity (53–4).

Here we see the main themes of analytical fiction: self-deception, error (even a Freudian slip!), dissembling, and the confusion of reason and passion where there is no one suitable guide for behavior. Lucilla's speech travels from defiance against her father and certainty in her passions (even though she did not mean to say it) to a revision and a reconsideration of her feelings. Lucilla does not realize that she is in love with Euphues in the tradition of a romantic tale, that is, in a transcendent and everlasting present. Instead, she carefully considers and reconsiders her feelings, and how she will represent them to the world. Lucilla implies that she is treading a thin

line between reason and folly; she is not feeling lust (though her parapraxis indicates that she is deceiving herself), nor is it love that she feels. The closest she comes to admitting her passion is when she says she feels something *near* love. The use of euphuism, or again, this contradictory language, reveals in Lucilla a resistance to admitting her love plainly, even privately to herself. Her promises to hide her love in modesty and “maidenly shamefastness” are belied by her accidental admission of “lust” at the beginning of the passage, as well as her admission of feeling the heat of the “coals of desire.” This speech illustrates that her strategy for seducing Euphues consists of dissembling modesty or shame, devices that allow Lucilla to put off the decision of pursuing Euphues’ affections openly. At the same time, they provide the author space to tease out the hidden motivations and secret feelings of his character and to allow her to change her mind several times about whether or not she loves Euphues.

When Lucilla addresses her new lover directly, she first pushes him away, then warms to him, and then recoils again; “[t]he favor Lucilla denies with the one hand, she extends with the other” (Gohlke 104). In one passage, Lucilla tells Euphues:

In the coldest flint there is hot fire; the bee that hath honey in her mouth hath a sting in her tail; the tree that beareth the sweetest fruit hath a sour sap I would not, Euphues, that thou shouldst condemn me of rigour in that I seek to assuage thy folly by reason . . . whensoever I shall love any I will not forget thee. In the mean season account me thy friend, for thy foe I will never be (68–9).

The use of braided opposites (cold and hot, honey and sting, sweet and sour, folly and reason, friend and foe) in Lucilla's speech foreshadows her fickle and ultimately cruel behavior later on toward the men who love her. Here she does not tell Euphues she is in love with him, but rather projects into some possible-future that she may love him, were she ever to fall in love. Euphues rightly notices how Lucilla denies and then accepts, flirts and then pushes away by responding on a physical level: he "was brought into a great quandary as it were a cold shivering to hear *this new kind of kindness*—such sweet meat, such sour sauce; such fair words, such faint promises; such hot love, such cold desire; such certain hope, such sudden change" (69, emphasis added), that he is unable to move or speak. Again, just as Lucilla only feels that she is "near" love, her kindness is expressed in alternately seductive and unsatisfying halves, causing Euphues to freeze "like one that had looked on Medusa's head and so had been turned into a stone" (69).

By contradicting and doubling back on what has just been said, wit mediates between strong passions and the analysis that tempers them, delaying decisions and certainty and acting as a medium for deliberation, analysis, and thought. Moreover, wit functions to keep both relationships and speech unconsummated and open-ended. The contradictions that make up Euphuism as a mode of speech make for perplexing and counter-intuitive discourse, through which characters vacillate about and debate contrary claims and desires.

When a character does make a decision, it usually is an irrational or impetuous one. For example, Euphues ultimately interprets Lucilla's speech above as a lover would, deceiving himself in the belief that her hedging words indicate she truly loves him (he reacts "to this new kind of kindness" as a true admission of love). Thus, he actively ignores half of the words she speaks: "[i]f my tongue were able to utter the joys that my heart hath conceived, I fear me thought I be well beloved, yet I should hardly be believed. Ah my Lucilla, how much am I bound

to thee. . . ” (70). Euphues deceives himself in his willingness to disregard Lucilla’s ambiguity and, furthermore, to mistake her vagueness for a sign of intimacy. And yet, just as Euphues stands stone still, paused in the act of reflecting on Lucilla’s words, their intimacy is diminishing.

Eventually Philautus implores Euphues to abandon Lucilla by using a slightly different kind of discourse⁴⁹:

Couldst thou . . . for the love of a fruitless pleasure violate the
league of a faithful friendship; didst thou weigh more the
enticing looks of a lewd wench than the entire love of a loyal
friend? If thou didst determine with thyself at the first to be false,
why didst thou swear to be true; if to be true, why art thou false?
(77)

Philautus’s series of questions to Euphues provides a striking contrast to the way in which Lucilla constructs her sentences with intentionally paired opposites. Instead, he untangles the contradictions and asks logical questions about Euphues’s motivations (if you swore to be true, why were you false? Why can you not see clearly the difference between lewdness and loyalty?).

Thus, he claims to be baffled by Euphues’s lack of reason (ignoring the fact that he himself had

⁴⁹ The trope of “the two friends,” a popular theme for Renaissance writers, attempted to prove that male friendship was morally superior to heterosexual liaisons, and that two men could be spiritually and intellectually joined better than any male-female couple. For example, when Euphues looks for a friend, he hopes to find “the express image of mine own person” and “at all times another I” (44). The device of the two friends highlights two opposed kinds of discourse; here we see Philautus distinguishing between the duplicitous discourse of heterosexual love and the reasonable, logical nature of the discourse between friends. But of course, his distinctions are not nearly as clear-cut as he believes since he also uses euphuistic rhetoric, turning the device of the two friends on its head.

been in love with the “lewd wench” at the beginning of the novel). Here, Philautus makes a strong argument that critiques losing sight of the “true” intimacy of friendship: “If thou wast minded both falsely and forgedly to deceive me, why didst thou flatter and dissemble with me at the first; if to love me, why didst thou flinch at the last? If the sacred bands of amity did delight thee, why didst thou break them?” (77). Philautus refuses to participate in the dissembling discourse of what, we will see, Amadour in Marguerite’s tenth *nouvelle* calls “vicious” love⁵⁰.

Even the narrator pauses his story every now and again in an attempt to explicate what Lucilla thinks, adding another dilatory layer to the action of the story. For example, the narrator says:

. . . truly I know not whether it be peculiar to that sex to dissemble with those whom they most desire, or whether by craft they have learned outwardly to loath that which inwardly they most love: yet wisely did she cast this in her head, that if she should yield at the first assault, he would think her a light huswife: if she should reject him scornfully a very haggard: minding therefore that he should neither take hold of her promise, neither unkindness in her

⁵⁰ This sort of discourse, if it must be employed, should be reserved for romantic affairs because the bonds of male friendship should strengthen and draw characters closer together. Yet Philautus himself still uses a kind of Euphuistic rhetoric, even when he is pointing out its follies. He still cannot speak directly; his words are always shaded. Not surprisingly, during this time, and even after they have reconciled, the two best friends drift further and further apart. It turns out that they are not so similar after all, and since Euphues is in search of wisdom and Philautus is more interested in seeking out the pleasures of the court, they decide to separate amicably soon after the conclusion of the drama with Lucilla.

preciseness, she fed him indifferently, with hope and despair,
reason and affection, life and death (74).

The passage above is exemplary of what I am calling analytical fiction. Just as Lucilla mistakes folly for reason earlier in the novel, here again, she half-rejects Euphues in order to further draw him in to her. Dissecting each possible reaction that her would-be lover could have to different modes of her behavior, Lucilla chooses neither to yield nor to scorn, neither promise nor unkindness. And yet, Lucilla's "careful" hedging leads her, in fact, to treat Euphues rather badly, forcing him to endure the extremes of "hope and despair," and ultimately, "life and death." Though the narrator claims that he does not know precisely why Lucilla behaves the way she does⁵¹, it is also unclear to the reader why Euphues responds so positively to Lucilla's ambivalent—and apparently harmful—speeches, and moreover, why he believes that Lucilla is truly falling in love with him.

We can interpret the grammar of Euphuistic rhetoric as a device that creates both inroads and barriers between characters, mirroring the structure of the episodes that draw characters close together and then separates them physically. For example, the first time that Euphues and Lucilla meet, when Philautus takes his friend along to Lucilla's house for dinner, "[t]he gentlewoman, whether it were for niceness or for niggardness of courtesy, gave him such a cold welcome that he repented that he was come" (47). Yet, her refusal to "lend him a friendly look" (47) encourages Euphues to pursue her all the more:

⁵¹ Again, this is a rhetorical move typical of Early Modern narrators.

Euphues, though he perceived her coy nip, seemed not to care for it, but taking her by the hand . . . fed of one dish which ever stood before him, the beauty of Lucilla. Here Euphues at the first sight was so kindled with desire that almost he was like to burn to coals (47–8).

Again, this turns out to be a typical move of analytical fiction: the best way to attract a would-be lover is to feign rejection and dissimulate indifference. Euphuism as a discourse, though it is highly mannered, works quite well to explore this romantic strategy in analytical fiction.

Gohlke interprets ambiguous language in *The Anatomy of Wit* in a historical-political context:

[t]he opposition is consistent between faith and fraud, words and works, mouth and mind In a world where words cannot be trusted, where appearances are deceptive, speech serves both as a barrier and protection, simultaneously aggravating and mitigating the problem to which it responds The ambiguity of the euphuistic rhetoric provides a measure of protection in an ambiguous and potentially dangerous environment (106).

Read in light of Early Modern ambiguity and Baroque deceptive appearances, games of hide and seek, and the “potentially dangerous environment” to which Gohlke refers, the *Euphues* text, like so many other conduct manuals of this era (even the ones Lyly himself mocked), can be viewed as

veiled political texts that warn of the perils of revealing one's true feelings. Those who have all of their mental faculties must necessarily maintain a strict distinction between appearances and reality to succeed in Early Modern courtly culture. When a character ceases to maintain this doubleness, as is the case for Amadour in the following section, it is often a mark of madness. That Philautus thinks the bonds of male friendship exempt him and Euphues from this social precept is folly, too, and his inability to speak in anything but Euphuistic discourse highlights his error.

For Raymond Stephanson, in *Euphues* even the “apparent ambiguities of human action and feeling are referred to a universe that displays its own kinds of ambiguities” (6). By putting off decisions, resisting assurance that a certain course of action is the right one—in short, by remaining ambiguous—the narrative swells not only with representations of characters' failed readings of the world around them, but of inhibited action and failed intimacy. Yet, at the same time, it is these failures that keep the narrative moving (even cyclically, rather than forward), and which ultimately transport the characters into the subsequent series of adventures. The cyclical pattern of hiding and seeking knowledge and meaning is evidenced in Lyly's narrative from the beginning until the second part of *The Anatomy of Wit* where Euphues cuts off his relationships with both Lucilla and Philautus and returns to Athens to take up a life of study, renouncing women and assuming a Stoic voice. By the end, he has learned to control his passions, and the “anatomy” becomes more didactic and linear than experiential and cyclical. At the same time, it becomes less revelatory of what is happening in the minds of characters. In the meantime, however, the “ambiguity of the euphuistic rhetoric” serves to delay action and certainty, causing characters to be in turns drawn closer together and then farther apart by long speeches that claim contradictory emotions. Rather than helping characters find meaning and wisdom, wit in

Euphues is an inhibiting force that causes them to over-deliberate their choices and to become lost in rhetoric.

* * *

Euphues demonstrates how a “lewd wench” can fool a number of men into falling in love with her and then abandon them each in turn. Similarly, the narrator of Marguerite de Navarre’s tenth nouvelle in *The Heptameron* claims that her story is a challenge to men who believe that the virtue of *women* is conquered without much difficulty. She prefaces her tale by asking whether her friends would believe a story describing a lady, Florida, “bien aimante, bien requise, pressée et importunée et toutefois femme de bien, victorieuse de son cœur, de son corps, d’amour et de son ami” (93) (“who had been truly in love, who had been desired, pursued and wooed, and yet had remained an honest woman, victorious over her love and victorious over her would-be lover?” [120])). This statement could frame the story as a feminist tale, but I argue that the tenth *nouvelle* is about unconsummated love, the struggle to abstain from passion⁵², and inhibited desire. In this section, I claim that Florida only “triumphs” over her would-be lover Amadour because the two can only express themselves in half-truths and coded language. As in the example of *The Anatomy of Wit* above, the characters of Marguerite’s tenth *nouvelle* are constantly drawn apart from each other, even as they believe that their intimacy is growing. When they are drawn closer together, it is ironically only by way of careful hedging of emotion and incomplete avowals of love.

⁵² For a history of the reception of this tale, see M. J. Baker’s “Didacticism and the Heptaméron: The Misinterpretation of the Tenth Tale as an Exemplum.”

The tale of Florida and Amadour opens with a series of deliberations and ironic counter-moves. Even though Florida is the most beautiful lady at court and Amadour is the most handsome man⁵³, given their disparate social status, their love is impossible. Nevertheless, when the two first meet, Amadour consciously decides to love her:

après l'avoir longuement regardée, [il] se délibéra de l'aimer,
quelque impossibilité que la raison mit au-devant, tant pour la
maison dont elle était que pour l'âge, qui ne pouvait encore
entendre tels propos. Mais, contre cette crainte, il se fortifiait d'une
bonne espérance (95)

([he] gazed at her [for a long time]. His mind was made up. He
would love her, even though she was not yet of an age to hear and
understand the words of love. But his misgivings were as nothing
against the firm hope that grew within him, as he promised himself
that time and patient waiting would in the end bring his toils to a
happy conclusion [123]).

⁵³ “c’était bien la plus belle et honnête personne qu’il avait jamais vue, et que, s’il pouvait avoir sa bonne grâce, il en serait plus satisfait que de tous les biens et plaisirs qu’il pourrait avoir d’une autre” (95) (“Never had he beheld so fair and noble a creature. If only she might look with favor upon him, that alone would give him more happiness than anything any other woman in the world could ever give him” (123)). “Si la beauté était tant exquise, la parole la suivait de si près que l’on ne savait à qui donner l’honneur, ou à la grâce, ou à la beauté, ou au bien parler” (95) (“Not only was he a man of sound judgment, he was also endowed with an appearance so handsome, so open and natural, that he was a delight for all to behold” [122]).

Despite reason telling him that Florida is unapproachable, he acts against his reason, with the “mais” at the beginning of the second sentence in the passage above indicating Amadour’s interior struggle against his doubts (“contre cette crainte”). As is a mark of analytical fiction, we see into the characters’ minds through the vocabulary of deliberation. The words *délibérer* and *contre* appear frequently in the tenth *nouvelle*, as characters repeatedly analyze and deliberate, and ultimately act against their intentions, against their hearts, against better judgment.

To overcome the impediments that keep him from remaining close to his beloved, Amadour, “contre la délibération qu’il avait faite” (96) (“contrary to his previous intentions” (123)], marries a Catalan woman so that he can at least live in the same country as Florida. Thus, a double *contre* is in play here: Amadour claims that his love is true, but he needs to hide this love to keep it active; he acts against reason *and* against his heart simultaneously. For the moment, Florida remains ignorant of Amadour’s machinations to win her over. Ironically, but not coincidentally, the woman Amadour marries happens to be Florida’s closest friend, Aventurada. Amadour considers his marriage as only a cover (“une *couverture*”), and Aventurada is not bothered by his wishes to speak about Florida; not suspecting her husband’s motives, she confides all of Florida’s secrets to him. When Amadour is called away to war⁵⁴ his letters to his wife serve a double purpose: they are oblique and full of “couched” messages to his love, Florida. Amadour’s seemingly sound strategy to hide his true feelings while still expressing them initially thwarts Aventurada and Florida from deciphering it. He

⁵⁴ Each time the gulf between them narrows, Amadour is called away to war; a similar pattern exists in Lafayette’s *La Princesse de Montpensier*.

se conduisait si sagement et froidement, que même celle qu’il aimait ne connaissait point son affection. Mais, pour l’amour de sa femme, qu’elle aimait plus que nulle autre, elle était si privée⁵⁵ de lui, qu’elle ne lui dissimulait chose qu’elle pensât; et eut cet heur qu’elle lui déclara toute l’amour qu’elle portait au fils de l’Infant Fortuné. Et lui, qui ne tâchait que à la gagner entièrement, lui en parlait incessamment; car il ne lui chassait quel propos il lui tînt, mais qu’il eut moyen de l’entretenir longuement (99–100)

(behaved in such a sensible, such a restrained manner, that even the lady whom he loved so dearly failed to perceive his feelings. In fact, being so fond of Amadour’s wife, she hid nothing from Amadour himself, not even her most intimate thoughts, [and went so far as] to tell him about her love for the son of the Infante of Fortune. Amadour’s sole concern was to win her completely, and he talked to her constantly about the Infante’s son. Provided he was able to converse with her, he did not care what was the topic of their conversation (127–8])

Amadour’s *sagesse* and *froideur*, paired in the first line of the above passage, combine to mold the perfect semblance of indifference to Florida (despite his passionate love for her). Here again, the narrator reveals the thought process that governs Amadour’s behavior and allows us to see

⁵⁵ i.e. “intime avec.”

into his mind. Feigning indifference grants him what he wants: namely to be allowed in Florida's company without arousing suspicion about his intentions for a long period of time, and delays having to admit his unrequited love and to face its consequences. Life imitates Amadour's art here, and since he conceals outward signs of his love for Florida, he also feels no jealousy for her inclination toward someone else. The passage above also highlights the two kinds of indirect expression of love, dissimulative/deceptive and non-dissimulative, that Amadour and Florida each feels. Her love is non-deceptive and, in the passage above, it is directed at Aventurada and is mediated to Amadour through this female friend ("*pour l'amour de sa femme*"). This ultimately serves to contrast with Amadour's counter-intuitive and deceptive behavior, i.e., he tricks his wife's friend into confiding in him her secrets, capitalizing on Florida's friendship with Aventurada. Nevertheless, these are both indirect ways of showing love for another character.

Amadour is concerned that Florida will detect an uncontrollable blush or gleam in his eye, and thus be able to discover his true feelings⁵⁶. For this reason, he decides—completely counter-intuitively—to court yet another woman, Paulina, "*en lui faisant accroire une mensonge, il lui couvrirait une vérité*" (101) ("it would be possible to cover up the truth of his real feelings by making her believe a lie" [129]). This game continues for some time, until Paulina—whose perceptiveness is heightened by her love for Amadour—is on the verge of discovering and announcing his secret love for Florida. Furthermore, Amadour "*avait une merveilleuse peine à contraindre son regard contre son cœur*" (101) ("[i]t was only by making the most painful effort that on such occasions he was able to control the expression in his eyes" [129]). Fearing that Paulina might enlighten Florida, Amadour, "*pour éviter qu'il n'en vint inconvénient*" (101) ("to

⁵⁶ Feminist critics like Carla Freccero claim that this tale in the *Heptaméron* underlines the silencing of female desire and its relegation to physiognomic signs. But as David LaGuardia points out, both Amadour and Florida's feelings are evidenced on their faces.

forestall any unfortunate consequences in the future” [129]), finally confesses his passion to the woman he has always loved. To quote once more Fontenelle’s “La Science du cœur,” which defines the mental state of the lover: “la finesse, la délicatesse, enfin l’agrément de ces effets de passion, consistent assez ordinairement dans une espèce de contradiction.” A victim of Venus or Eros, the lover is left conquered, but uninstructed in the correct management of his love. He tries to show it and hide it simultaneously, and ends up lost in the kind of paradox that Fontenelle describes.

Even in this moment of panic, Amadour speaks to Florida about his love in half-truths. Similar to Lucilla’s speech in *The Anatomy of Wit*, Amadour at once reveals and hides his feelings. He tells her:

Je ne suis point de ceux qui prétendent par ce moyen avoir de vous
ni bien ni plaisir autre que vertueux. Je sais que je ne vous puis
épouser, et quand je le pourrais, je ne le voudrais *contre l’amour*
que vous portez à celui que je désire vous voir pour mari (102–3,
emphasis added).

(I am not one of those men who would exploit this advantage. I
desire no favor, nor pleasure, from you, except what is in
accordance with the dictates of virtue. I know that I cannot marry
you. And even if I could, I should not seek to do so, for your love
is given to another, and it is he whom I long to see your husband
[130–1]).

With subtle and economic phrasing, Amadour reveals that he fears acting “contre l’amour” that Florida bears for the son of the Infante of Fortune. Yet, he claims that he loves her. He is already acting against Florida’s best interests merely by avowing his love, and in the same breath he claims that he will not pursue her or act against her desires. His behavior forestalls any action. This incomplete confession is counterintuitiveness itself, as Florida will point out no sooner than she has heard this perplexing speech. Amadour contrasts deceptive love (“*une amour vicieuse*”) with the more virtuous kind of love that Florida displays:

Et aussi, de vous aimer d’une amour vicieuse, comme ceux qui espèrent de leur long service une récompense au déshonneur des dames, je suis si loin de cette affection que j’aimerais mieux vous voir morte que de vous savoir moins digne d’être aimée, et que la vertu fût amoindrie en vous pour quelque plaisir qui m’en sût advenir (103).

(Nor is my love a base love. I am not one of those men who hope that if they serve their lady long enough they will be rewarded with her dishonor. Such intentions could not be further from my heart, for I would rather see you dead, than have to admit that my own gratification had sullied your virtue, had in a word, made you less worthy to be loved [131]).

Here again Amadour simultaneously confesses and denies his love; he develops what he hopes will prove a foolproof strategy to pursue his passion, though the outcome is far less calculable than he deludes himself to believe. Amadour is hedging when he delivers his incomplete avowal; he is afraid Florida will discover the truth on her own, so tells her himself. Yet, he is unwilling to attempt to seduce her just yet. Ultimately, the hedging serves to forestall the moment when he will truly have to speak honestly to her, and at the same time it covers up any potential losses to his reputation and protects him from the danger inherent in courting Florida either with or without her consent. Florida, perplexed by Amadour's quasi-avowals (she does not hold the same privileged position as the reader who can see into Amadour's mind), meets his duplicitous speech with one of her own that addresses acting against one's inclination and against one's heart with the same vocabulary Amadour had used previously:

Car de refuser l'honnête amitié que vous m'offrez, je ferais *le contraire* de ce que j'ai fait jusqu'ici, que je me suis plus fiée en vous qu'en tous les hommes du monde. Ma conscience ni mon honneur *ne contreviennent point* à votre demande, ni l'amour que je porte au fils de l'Infant Fortuné [S]i vous avez ce que vous demandez, qui vous contraint d'en parler si affectionnément?
(103–4, emphasis added).

(If I were to reject the noble love that you offer me, I would only be contradicting the way I've behaved towards you up till now, because in you I've placed more trust than in any other man in the world.

Neither my honor nor my conscience stand in the way of your request. Nor does the love I bear the son of the Infante of Fortune If you already have what you desire, what can it be that now makes you tell me about it in such an emotional manner? [132]).

By this point, though, Florida has begun to fall in love with Amadour. All of his half-truths and quasi-avowals seem to have worked, and now Florida looks forward to speaking to Amadour out of more than just disinterested friendship.

A new problem arises: now Florida takes up the duplicitous behavior. For example, when Amadour is taken prisoner by the king of Tunis, Florida “qui savait bien dissimuler . . . dit que c’était grande perte pour toute leur maison Mais, voyant sa mère pleurer très fort, laissa aller quelques larmes pour lui tenir compagnie, afin que, par trop feindre, sa fainte ne fût découverte” (108) (“knew how to hide her true feelings . . . she merely said that it was a great loss for all the family But seeing her mother weeping bitterly, she shed a few tears with her, lest her secret be discovered by being too well disguised” [136–7])⁵⁷. Suddenly, Florida is afraid of revealing her feelings for Amadour. Similarly, when he is allowed to leave in order to gather up ransom money to free himself, Florida continues to affect having feelings for Amadour, lest her indifference be discovered as feigned. Florida

s’en réjouit comme pour l’amour d’elle [Aventurada]. Mais,
craignant que la joie qu’elle avait de le voir lui fit changer de

⁵⁷ Although she does not focus on the epistemological implications, Patricia Francis Cholakian points out that in this tale “[m]other and daughter are . . . engaged in a curious game of cat and mouse in which each hides from the other what both know to be true” (92).

visage, et que ceux qui ne la connaissaient point en prissent
mauvaise opinion, se tint à une fenêtre, pour le voir venir de loin.
Et, sitôt qu'elle l'avisa, descendit par un escalier tant obscur que nul
ne pouvait connaître si elle changeait de couleur (110).

(as if for Avanturada's sake, expressed her joy. But she was afraid
lest the joy she felt at seeing him again should show in her face, and
lest people who did not know her well should put a bad
interpretation on it. So instead of going to meet him, she stood at a
window to watch his arrival from afar. As soon as he came into sight
she went down by way of a staircase, which was dark enough to
prevent anybody seeing whether her cheeks changed color [138]).

Now that Florida is cognizant of being in love with Amadour, her behavior changes, and each of these examples contains a double deception, a double-feint; affecting indifference could reveal the truth, so she simulates even stronger feelings than she already has. Here, Florida's double disguise makes the truth itself function as a cover.

Throughout most of the tale, the characters cannot actualize their love and instead anatomize and dissect their feelings obsessively. The discoveries that they have made about their feelings are upset by *false* impressions of the world and of other characters, and by the characters' own self-deception about what they think they desire. The process of analyzing the passions actually heightens them, bringing Amadour and Florida closer together until another

plot twist draws them farther apart again, for example, by Amadour's having to go to war and then returning again.

Often, extremes of joy and sadness come in the very same paragraph. For example, early on in the tale, when Amadour has confessed his love to Florida, this confrontation causes Florida to “en son cœur à sentir quelque chose plus qu'elle n'avait accoutumé” (104–5) (“within her heart she began to feel stirrings that she had never felt before” [133]). His feelings of love make her “tant contente qu'elle n'en pouvait plus porter [supporter]” (104) (“filled with delight beyond bounds” [133]), and “Amadour fut joyeux” (105) (“Amadour was transported with joy” [133]) at the same time. She becomes much more sensible to love in general, so that all of a sudden, Florida's happiness is overturned by feelings of jealousy. In this way, just as quickly as they had felt the mutual joy of loving each other, Florida “commença à ne le chercher pas comme elle avait accoutumé” (105) (“began not to seek Amadour's company at all in the way she had in the past” [133]) and they are “en . . . éloignement” (105) (“distanced from each other”).

Something changes, however, in one of the last scenes of the novella. When Amadour again tries his hand at a confession, his feelings are revealed to be less virtuous than he had previously claimed, and he too uses truth as a cover for earlier lies:

Ha! madame, dit Amadour, il n'est possible de plus aimer pour
votre honneur que je fais car, avant que fussiez mariée, j'ai su si
bien vaincre mon cœur, que vous n'avez su connaître ma volonté;
mais, maintenant que vous l'êtes, et que votre honneur peut être
couvert, quel tort vous tiens-je de demander ce qui est mien? Car,
par la force d'amour, je vous ai si bien gagnée que celui qui

premier a eu votre cœur a si mal poursuivi le corps, qu'il a mérité de perdre le tout ensemble. Celui qui possède votre corps n'est pas digne d'avoir votre cœur : pourquoi, mêmes le corps ne lui appartient. Mais, moi, madame, qui durant cinq ou six ans, ai porté tant de peines et de maux pour vous, que vous ne pouvez ignorer qu'à moi seul appartiennent le corps et le cœur, pour lequel j'ai oublié le mien (113).

(Ah! my lady, he said, 'no one in the world could possibly hold your honor as dear as I do! Before you were married I was able to overcome the desires of my heart so successfully that you knew nothing at all of my feelings. But now you are a married woman. You have a cover and your honor is safe. So what wrong can I possibly be doing you in asking for what is truly mine? It is I who have really won you, through the power of my love. The man who first won your heart so irresolutely pursued your body that he well deserved to lose both. As for the man who now possesses your body—he's not worthy of the smallest corner of your heart. So you do not really belong to him, even in body. But consider, my Lady, what trials and tribulations I have gone through in the last five or six years for your sake. Surely you cannot fail to realize that it is to me alone that you belong, body and heart, for is it not for you that I

have refused to give thought to my own body and my own heart?

[141])

Here, Amadour is willing to risk everything—his reputation, his rank, even his life, as well as his relationship with Florida—in order to possess something that earlier he claimed to have never wanted. The catch, though, is that he was much closer to attaining his secret desire when he pursued it only in a clandestine way. When Amadour attempts to court Florida overtly, these moves serve only to push her further away.

Below is the language the narrator uses when Amadour is truly desperate and is about to attempt to rape Florida. He sees all hope is lost, and though he had managed to hide his love for so long, something gives out, and Amadour can only act irrationally:

Lui, qui se voyait du tout désespéré de jamais la pouvoir
[recevoir], qui si longuement l'avait servie et n'en avait jamais eu
nul autre traitement que vous avez ouï, fut tant combattu de
l'amour dissimulée et du désespoir qui lui montrait tous les
moyens de la hanter perdus, *qu'il se délibéra de jouer à quitté ou à
double, pour du tout la perdre ou du tout la gagner*, et se payer en
une heure du bien qu'il pensait avoir mérité (111–2, emphasis
added).

(Now he despaired of ever being able to return to see her again,
and, racked by a love that had been hidden away within him, he

made up his mind to make one last desperate gamble—to risk losing all, or to gain everything and treat himself to one short hour of the bliss that he considered he had earned [140]).

The word *délibéra* here again highlights the internal struggle that governs Amadour's behavior. He argues, to cover up his bad act, that “la passion ne donne lieu à la raison. Et . . . la passion d'amour est la plus importable de tous les autres, et celle qui plus aveugle tous les sens” (113) (“passion leaves no room for reason. And . . . the passion of love is the most intolerable of all others, and that which most blinds all the senses” [142])⁵⁸. Amadour uses this idea as a rationale to explain why he tries to rape Florida. When she forces him away, he argues that he was merely testing her⁵⁹. Florida, now a good reader, is not fooled by Amadour's trick. She

commençait à connaître la malice des hommes par lui, tout ainsi qu'elle avait été difficile à croire le mal où il était, ainsi fut-elle et encore plus, à croire le bien où il n'était pas (115).

(“was beginning to understand the evil ways of men. If she had before found it hard to believe that Amadour's intentions were bad,

⁵⁸ The *Princesse of Clèves* claims at the end of Lafayette's novel, by contrast, that “les passions peuvent me conduire; mais elle ne sauraient m'aveugler” (306).

⁵⁹ We see similar tests in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, in Cervantes' *El Curioso impertinente*, in several novels of Lafayette, as well as in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. The best discussion of this for this device, though he does not talk about Marguerite, is found in David Kaplan's “The Lover's Test Theme in Cervantes and Madame de Lafayette.”

she now found it even harder to believe him when he said that in reality they were good” (143–4).]

Amadour’s “fall,” as Lucien Febvre calls it, leads Florida to see that she was deceived about him. She is ambivalent at this point about whether or not she can trust anything he says or anything he has said before. And yet, even as she refuses to listen to Amadour’s entreaties, she is still in love. After the first time he attempts to attack her, she,

tant que la nuit dura, ne fit que pleurer, sentant si grande douleur en cette mutation, que son cœur avait bien à faire à soutenir les assauts du regret qu’amour lui donnait. Car, combien que, selon la raison, elle était délibérée de jamais plus l’aimer, si est-ce que le cœur, qui n’est point sujet à nous, ne s’y voulut onques accorder. Pourquoi, ne le pouvant moins aimer qu’elle avait accoutumé, sachant qu’amour était cause de ceste faute, se délibéra, satisfait à l’amour, de l’aimer de tout son cœur , et, obéissant à l’honneur, n’en faire jamais à lui ni à autre semblant (115–6).

(The whole night long she wept. This sudden change chased her such pain that her heart was hard pressed to withstand the assaults of bitter regret, which love hurled against it. For, while in accordance with reason she was determined to love him no more, the heart, over which none of us has control, would never yield.

Thus, unable to love him less than before, she resolved to propitiate love, since love it was that was the cause. She resolved, in short, to go on loving Amadour with all her heart, but, in order to obey the dictates of honor, never to let it be known, either to him or to anyone [144]).

Florida is stuck in a cyclical pattern of not knowing whether to follow her love or her reason. She had deliberated and vowed never to love Amadour again, but none of her insights and recognitions can help steer her conduct. As in the beginning of the novella, she decides to act against her reason and accept her feelings, but again, to no consequence since she cannot act on them.

Florida deliberately disfigures her face, so as no longer to appear so beautiful to Amadour. Even though she is no longer attractive he tries to rape her again. This time, Amadour's façade matches the deliberations within; just as his intentions have become warped, so has his countenance:

quant Floride vit son visage et ses yeux tant altéré, que le plus beau teint du monde était rouge comme feu, et le plus doux et plaisant regard si horrible et furieux qu'il semblait qu'un feu très ardent étincelât dans son cœur et son visage (118).

(His whole expression, his face, his eyes, had changed as he spoke. The fair complexion was flushed with fiery red. The kind, gentle

face was contorted with a terrifying violence, as if there was some raging inferno belching fire in his heart and behind his eyes [147]).

In this part of the novella, we do not as often gain access into Amadour's thoughts. He has allowed his madness and his obsession with Florida to consume him. Thus, he is no longer able to dissimulate, and there is no more strategy to "read" into his behavior. Amadour's position, in the same way that Gohlke analyzes *Euphues*, carries political connotations. The sixteenth century did not share our contemporary view that "it is what is inside that counts;" the courtier who can no longer master his passions and whose appearance corresponds accurately to reality is in a great deal of danger. Why does Amadour assault Florida? Whether it is because his pride has been wounded or because he truly goes mad in the second half of the tale, or because his passion has merely reached its limit and now belongs to the realm of cruelty and savagery, Amadour's behavior cannot be analyzed as part of a broader strategy. As the narrator says, "it is impossible to tell" what was felt at the moment of Amadour's madness.⁶⁰ There is a fundamental discrepancy between these two characters, which David LaGuardia describes as "desire sublimated in discourse:" In the beginning, and again at the end of the novella, "Amadour hides the seductive nature of his discourse, which serves as a substitute for the impossible fulfillment of his physical need. It is evident here that a distinct relation to language as emotional medium separates the two characters" (1999 123). But at moments when Amadour stops dissimulating

⁶⁰ Parlamente (whose name, as Marc-André Wiesmann points out, carries "ambiguous onomastic resonances. . . [and] can suggest both a respect for the truth (Parler/'mens,' to speak one's mind") and a propensity to lie ('Parler/mentir')" (438), prefers to elide information about the specifics of the intense emotional state of the characters. Rhetorically speaking, this elision of the power to narrate is a precursor to the seventeenth century trope of the *je ne sais quoi*, which I discuss in the next chapter.

and reveals his true feelings, the narrator suddenly reports that it is not possible to explain his actions. Temporarily, at least, he no longer deliberates and we cannot gain access to his thoughts.

When Amadour ceases to conceal his true feelings, the perfect structure that he has so carefully built with lies begins to fall apart. Even earlier in the novella, before Amadour's "madness" strikes, no sooner do the two lovers draw closer, than Amadour goes off to war. When he returns, Florida finds herself afraid or reluctant to be seen with him in public, she is jealous of Paulina, and her relationship with Aventurada, Amadour's wife, becomes strained. Soon the King of Granada goes to war again, taking Amadour with him. Again, the pattern repeats itself: as soon as the possibility of a growing intimacy between Florida and Amadour presents itself, the war interrupts and pulls the two farther apart. At the end of the tale, Amadour redoubles his efforts to speak to Florida, and, after failing, just as in the episode with Paulina, he takes a new lover, a lady in waiting to the Queen of Spain named Loretta. This time, however, Amadour is less discrete and rumors of their affair circulate, are misreported, exaggerated, and diffused. When Florida hears that Loretta's husband is jealous and has sworn to kill Amadour, she breaks her own promise to abstain from speaking to Amadour and warns him of the husband's plan. Amadour resolves not to fight. Instead, he tells Florida that he will never again see his new lover if Florida will grant him three hours of her conversation each day. When she refuses, he seems determined to die. He accuses Florida of wishing him further pain by trying to keep him alive without returning his love. Throughout the *nouvelle*, the more Florida denies Amadour's advances, the braver his deeds are in war. In the end, he is killed in battle, and Florida, whose husband has also died in the meantime, retires to a convent.

Yet, the love that Florida feels for Amadour ebbs and flows, but is never fully extinguished. Amadour, as the story goes on, loses his ability to hide his passion and openly

begins to suffer again from their physical distance and unconsummated love. In this way, Amadour and Florida's feelings are never aligned: speaking in hints may draw Florida closer, but he drives her away from mutual love by his open pursuit. His mask never leaves her truly indifferent and always allows us access into his motivations, but his obvious desire always signals the renewal of a diminishing intimacy and of less access into what moves him. As I wrote in the introduction, treating ungovernable passions by hiding them creates even more misprision and self-delusion in characters, and ultimately underscores the motif of the unattainability of knowledge in the works treated in this dissertation. Yet, the inclination toward wanting what one knows one cannot have, perhaps wanting in some ways *because* one cannot have it, is the type of error and self-deception that is of foremost significance in analytical fiction.

Chapter 4: Sign reading and mind reading in *The Princess of Clèves*⁶¹

“Si vous jugez sur les apparences en ce lieu-ci, . . . vous serez
souvent trompée: ce qui paraît n’est presque jamais la vérité”

(“If you judge from appearances at the court, . . . you will often be
deceived; truth and appearances seldom go together”)

- *The Princess of Clèves* 157

In this chapter, I wish to take a closer look—and that word is loaded—into the particular style that we typically think of as “Baroque”⁶² but which is also a key to identifying and

⁶¹ I limit my analysis here to *La Princesse de Clèves*, though a similar examination of *Zaïde* and *La Princesse de Montpensier* would also be useful for a future study.

⁶² The term Baroque originally referred to architecture and painting. In *Renaissance and Baroque* (1888), Heinrich Wölfflin defines this movement as a “painterly” style that conveys to the observer a sense of spirit, movement, and psychology. Wölfflin compares the distinction between Renaissance and Baroque as follows: “[w]here the linear style employs the pen or the silver-point, the painterly uses charcoal, red chalk or the broad water-colour brush” (30-1) to make a sketch. The charcoal sketch “works with broad, vague masses, the contours barely indicated . . . [in which] the entire composition [is] made up of areas of light and dark” (31), as opposed to a linear outline. Moreover, “light and shade contain by nature a very strong element of movement . . . a mass of light tends to a movement of dispersal, leading the eye to and fro” (31). This type of work emphasizes at the same time the asymmetry of the individual parts, the grandeur and exaggeration of the whole work, as well as a model of dialectical dual-focus that, because the eye is constantly redirected from the parts to the whole, creates a sense of movement and of emotion. In the same way, the element of chiaroscuro “gives an illusion of physical relief, and the different objects seem to project or recede in space” (31), which in *trompe l’oeil*, for example, creates an artificial sense of movement on a flat surface. Jean Rousset describes “l’esprit baroque le projette sur une multitude de points éparpillés autour de [l’homme], à chacun

analyzing the formal workings of analytical fiction. Ocular metaphors and verbs of seeing and seeming, “to look into,” “to appear,” “to resemble,” and “to watch,” appear with increased frequency in literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Such empirical accounts of experience and knowledge through visual intelligence are no doubt in part related to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century advances in the study of optics, but are also, as Michel Foucault shows, part of a larger system of knowledge, or *episteme*, developing at this particular moment in time. The use of mirrors, verbs of seeing and seeming, and scenes of hiding and spying are far more than tropes in seventeenth century art and literature; visual metaphors shaped the very epistemology of society, “framing” the way a person defined himself as reflected and refracted in the eyes of others. Indeed, as Julia V. Douthwaite points out, the verb “*voir*” appears 419 times in *The Princess of Clèves*, making it the fourth most-frequently used verb in the novel, after *être* (to be), *avoir* (to have), and *faire* (to do or to make) (in *Approaches to Teaching* 112). “Seeing” is central to *The Princess of Clèves*, and critics often point to Baroque painting to elucidate some precepts that can aid in understanding of the literature of the time.

Foucault begins *Les Mots et les choses* (*The Order of Things*) with a long description of Velasquez’s painting *Las Meninas*. This work of art functions as a legend for understanding Baroque tropes of illusion not only contrasting with reality, but also becoming reality itself. *Las Meninas* contains a painting within the painting, *mise en abyme*,⁶³ and multiple subjects and

desquels il peut commencer à chaque fois une vie toujours interrompue et réinventer un personnage” (248). It is important to note that Wölfflin’s preference for sketch over outline directly opposes Aristotle’s sense of aesthetics in his *Poetics*: “if an artist were to daub his canvas with the most beautiful colors laid on at random, he would not give the same pleasure as he would by drawing a recognizable portrait in black and white” (*Aristotle, Horace, Longinus: Classical Literary Criticism* 40).

⁶³ A term coined by André Gide to describe the effect of “infinite regression” (Cuddon, *Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*).

scenes acting at once. We see the artist himself on one side in the foreground, forming one end of a central scene with the Infanta Margerita and her entourage. The scene depicts the King and Queen of Spain having their portraits painted. But these subjects are omitted from the foreground, and instead they are reflected in a mirror in the far background and just off-center of the scene; they are two small figures gazing at the spectator as if from a painting within a painting. They are, though central, oddly distant. And then again, they are oddly central, too. Foucault conjectures that what Velasquez manages to show us is “pure représentation” (31), or the non-linear ways in which the Baroque mind structures the world in figures of seeing and being seen. Encapsulated within the represented painter’s gaze out toward the spectator is “cette mince ligne de visibilité [qui] en retour enveloppe tout un réseau complexe d’incertitudes, d’échanges et d’esquives . . . le regardant et le regardé s’échangent sans cesse” (Foucault 20) (“this slender line of reciprocal visibility embraces a whole complex network of uncertainties, exchanges, and feints . . . the observer and the observed take part in a ceaseless exchange” [4-5]). Indeed, the painter is looking at the people he is painting, but in reality he is looking at us, implicating the spectator in the creation of representation and meaning. In this way, writes Foucault, “Nul regard n’est stable [L]e spectateur et le modèle inversent leur rôle à l’infini” (20–21) (“No gaze is stable, or rather [S]ubject and object, the spectator and the model, reverse their roles to infinity” [5]). The significance of the gaze between subjects both present and absent, or somewhere in between, is reciprocity to the infinite power.

In studying paintings, we use descriptive terms such as *spectator*, *aspect*, *focus*, *view*, *regard*, *visibility*, and *gaze*. Paintings are created with a searching eye, the look of silent and stealthy reading that attempts to probe the psyche of the object, to look beyond the tricks and masks in order to reveal a hidden truth or deception before it slips away. In painting, the artist

examines emotions and relationships by portraying the gazes between personages inside the frame and between the subjects and the imagined spectator. A homolog to this study of the meaning of looks and the vocabulary of seeing and seeming can be found in prose. In literature and philosophy, the seventeenth century was an age of anatomizing, of analyzing, and of searching for what, in Poe's words, is hidden in plain sight.

As I wrote in the introduction, in analytical fiction, seeing and being seen means to be caught without one's mask on, but it also means having to see oneself honestly. It is in this milieu that Mademoiselle de Chartres, later known as the Princesse de Clèves, is exposed for the first time to intrigues and political maneuverings at the court. Beautiful and rich, she is "un des grands partis qu'il y eût en France" (137) ("one of the greatest matches in France" [8]). She has been kept away from the court until the age of sixteen, and she is relatively naïve about the manner in which courtiers behave. Though the Princess does not know it yet, dissimulation and deflection are the keys to success in this world, as is the sagacious interpreting of signs revealed by others, and the ability to hide the proofs of love in oneself. Indeed, characters in Lafayette's later work are obsessed with signs, insights, and their ability to read one another. As John D. Lyons points out, they "perceive the world as a set of *signs* and the people in it as producers and receivers of signs" (*Before Imagination* 166)⁶⁴ rather than as actors in the world. The signifying mode in which characters constantly search for meaning in each other's signs frames *The Princess of Clèves* as a different type of work than one in which action, or sensation, as Lyons

⁶⁴ Regarding analytical fiction, Lyons notes "(t)he accepted description of Lafayette's narratives as 'psychological' and as *romans d'analyse* conveys (the) aspect of a discourse that penetrates deeply into the mind of each important character so that we not only know what she or he is thinking and feeling but sometimes even know more about their emotions than the characters themselves do. On the other hand, Lafayette refuses to share with the reader one all-important category of thought, sensory thought, even when the narrator explicitly states that the characters are overwhelmingly preoccupied by their senses" (170).

puts it, is still equally important to signification and analysis. There are many shades to the truth, depending on how one looks at it, and the truth and the lie are never so far apart.

Because of this need to search deeply into characters to discover what is hidden beneath multiple masks, the vocabulary of seeing and being seen, revelation, and appearances occurs with astonishing frequency in *The Princess of Clèves*. In Lafayette's work, "violent passions struggle to find an adequate medium of expression" while "an alternative language of vision subtly competes with words" (Koppisch 757). The seeing and seeming verbs, such as *voir*, *regarder*, and *ouvrir les yeux*, as well as the verb *croire*, take on particular significance around scenes that center on imitability or negative examples (a point I will discuss in detail later). According to Helen Karen Kaps, "*voir* is often used by Lafayette to represent an intellectual process (understanding, learning), as well as a sensory one." In addition, "As a baroque painter might use a mirror to introduce otherwise extraneous objects into a picture, and to give their reflected, stylized presence a certain necessity, which a direct representation would not have, Mme de Lafayette often shows us extraneous material refracted through the intellect of another character" (Kaps 72). Lyons writes that these verbs "provide the signposts of a novelistic structure based on the characters' constant interpretation of the voluntary and (more often) involuntary physical details that come to their attention . . . for these perceptions are the basis of the inferences that the characters are constantly making" (*Before Imagination* 177). John Campbell also sees verbs like *se représenter*, *rêver*, *songer*, and *voir* as verbs "denoting the act of thinking These terms coexist with expressions pointing to the need to see clearly (e.g. *s'avouer*, *se reconnaître*), and with others suggesting defeat for any such attempt (e.g. *s'abandonner*, *se flatter*, *se tromper*)" (*Questions of Interpretation* 151). The scenes of spying, in particular, of which there are many, illustrate this complicated game of hide and "see." Indeed,

it is during these scenes that we are allowed glimpses into the characters' minds, how they dare (*oser*—another frequently-used verb) to watch, glean, suspect, and draw conclusions about the what lies behind other character's actual words. But instead of constructing epistemology through a Cartesian model of the mind as a mirror to the world, the mind receives visual input and misreads it, mangles it, and misinterprets it every which way.

Examining the myriad examples of the use of verbs of seeing and seeming serves not only as a reminder that appearances are mostly deceiving (a basic Stoic motif), but also that the atmosphere of the novel is closed, voyeuristic, and above all, treacherous. Simultaneously, however, it is through spying that the characters are able to catch glimpses of the truth. As Erich Kahler puts it:

The obstacles of court society, with the concealments and constraints it imposes, significantly affect the evolution of emotional expression and self-observation. They require and elicit extreme delicacy in the manifestations of love—reversed tokens, sprung from the need for guardedness—and a constant cultivation of emotion Moreover, a change takes place in the nature of psychological observation. In the initial stages it was directed toward the interplay between the lovers and the demands of etiquette. In fact, the whole art of psychological observation grew out of that interplay. But later on . . . observation is directed more and more toward the observer's self, is developed into an ever more probing self-analysis. Thus the outer

world becomes included within inner space, becomes in fact a part of the expanded psyche (25–6).

The characters in the novel navigate their world with this double and contradictory focus in mind: first, that nothing is ever as it appears to be; and second, that secretly watching sometimes reveals the signs necessary to perceive some truth.

* * *

Marie Madeleine Pioche de la Vergne, Comtesse de Lafayette began to show her writing to members of her social and intellectual circle just after her marriage at age twenty-one to the Comte de Lafayette. Her interest in literature, however, particularly about love and indifference, began in her early youth and under the tutelage of her friend Giles de Ménage. The author's own acknowledgment of the dangers of passionate love and her wish never to succumb to such sentiments are first evidenced at nineteen years of age, when living with her family in exile because of the Fronde (the civil war that took place in the middle of the seventeenth century and ended in solidifying the absolute power of the monarch). Mademoiselle de la Vergne declares in a letter to Ménage: "Je suis si persuadé que l'amour est une chose incommode, que j'ai de la joie que mes amis et moi en soyons exempts" ("I am so convinced that love is an inconvenient thing, that I am happy that my friends and I are exempt from it"⁶⁵). While it is not by any means a wholly favorable solution, indifference is, even for the young Lafayette, the closest that we are capable of coming to happiness and stability. In the same vein, *Le Triomphe de l'indifference*, a

⁶⁵ Quoted in André Beaunier's *La Jeunesse de Madame de Lafayette* 84.

literary dialogue attributed by Beaunier to Lafayette, concludes that “L’indifférence est un état assez languissant; mais la paix ou le repos dont il est accompagné le rend infiniment préférable aux amères douleurs de l’amour” (“Indifference is a desultory enough state; but the peace and the *repos* that go with it renders it infinitely preferable to the bitter cares of love”) (*La Jeunesse de Madame de Lafayette*, 89–90).⁶⁶ This early text, written in the mid-1650s around the time of Lafayette’s marriage, would indeed support Beaunier’s and other critics’ conclusions that Lafayette categorically rejected the idea of love.

While it remains unknown whether she did write *Le Triomphe de l’indifference*, we do know for certain that Lafayette was a comparatively liberated woman, and thus could afford the freedom to contemplate love. She had more important pursuits. Lafayette was well-educated by her parents, was taught Latin and Italian by Ménage, and was granted relative freedom by her husband, François Motier, Comte de Lafayette. After spending several years in Auvergne with her husband Lafayette returned to Paris for part of each year to attend various salons. In particular, she frequented the gatherings of Mlle de Scudery, Mme de Sablé, and the Duchesse de Montpensier (La Grande Mademoiselle). It was at La Grande Mademoiselle’s that, at the age of twenty-five, Lafayette wrote her first attributable literary production, a portrait of her close friend Mme de Sévigné⁶⁷. Afterwards, Lafayette wrote, or had a hand in writing, in addition to

⁶⁶ The authorship of this dialogue, which was never published, and of which only one handwritten manuscript exists in the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève in Paris, remains strongly disputed.

⁶⁷ This portrait is included in *Diverses Portraits*, a collection of works by various members of the salons that Lafayette frequented. According to Jean Segrais, only 30 copies were printed, though other sources indicate that there were 60. It is known for sure that these copies were distributed to members of the salons, and were not available for sale. In addition, Lafayette had also already written some memoirs, which are now lost. The preface to the first edition of her posthumous *Mémoires de la cour de France pour les années 1688 et 1689* indicates that “il

The Princess of Clèves, several texts that have as their subject the idea of inconvenient love: two novellas, *La Princesse de Montpensier* and *La Comtesse de Tende*, *L'Histoire de Madame Henriette d'Angleterre*, another novel, *Zayde*, and the *Mémoires de la cour de France pour les années 1688 et 1689*⁶⁸.

The aim of the previous chapter was to define a literary context and to provide a historical precedent for Lafayette's analytical fiction. So far we have seen a number of works grounded on the premise that the human psyche struggles, and usually fails, to overcome the gulf between self-deception and self-knowledge. *The Princess of Clèves* is the novel in which the motifs of analytical fiction achieve maturity in Lafayette's work, as well as in seventeenth-century French literature. The inconvenience of love, the suffering, deceptions, and the self-deception that it causes, are among the major motifs found in *The Princess of Clèves*. While the

est certain que Mme la comtesse de Lafayette avait écrit des mémoires de tout ce qui s'était passé à la cour de France depuis sa première jeunesse" (XIII).

⁶⁸ In the late seventeenth century, the Parisian salon functioned as the laboratory for novelists, authors of maxims and essays, and for playwrights to explore their interests in psychological analysis. In particular, the salon of the Marquise de Sablé (Madeleine de Souvre), which was frequented by La Rochefoucauld, the Marquise of Sevigné, Lafayette, and Pascal, among others, was particularly fertile. As Joan DeJean shows in her book *Tender Geographies*, "within that relatively small circle of well-connected and generally well-born Parisian intellectuals...all kinds of literary partnerships were standard occurrences" (*Tender Geographies* 98). It is probable, then, that many authors had a hand in the production of the work we now attribute to Lafayette, but that she likely directed the writing. According to Faith Evelyn Beasley: "[f]or Lafayette, as for many of her female contemporaries, active participation in the salons was fused together with literary creativity and composition, with each activity consciously and constantly nourishing the other. It is not surprising that Lafayette's works, as productions of the worldly milieu, bear the signature of that world in a particularly intense manner" (*Salons, History, and the Creation of Seventeenth-Century France* 134). In this way, the main themes of all of Lafayette's work—jealousy, dissimulation, and the renunciation of love—were in part a group effort, and reflected, to an extent, the views of her circle of friends and collaborators. For the purposes of this dissertation, I will refer to the literary works listed above as having been written by "Lafayette" as a convention (most modern editions of these works list Lafayette as their author), with an acknowledgment that it also stands for a kind of shorthand for what was probably a collaborative effort.

novel has long been celebrated for its classicism, subtlety, its use of understatement, and the power of what it leaves open⁶⁹, the text's frequent hyperboles with regard to love and its consequent anguish are noteworthy as well. The suffering that love causes is often described as "the most painful" that one can imagine. Indifference to love, therefore, is a goal about which the Princess dreams throughout the novel, but it is never fulfilled. Thus, the calm and untroubled life that Madame de Chartres, her mother, and Madame de Clèves wish for is one of the most considerable ellipses that the author leaves open. In *The Princess of Clèves*, control over one's passions is, like achieving any degree of satisfactory self-knowledge, an impossible ambition.

Behind this impossibility lies the fact that the world—specifically the sixteenth-century court of Henri II that the characters of *The Princess of Clèves* inhabit—is unknowable. The advice Madame de Chartres gives her daughter upon her introduction to court life in *The Princess of Clèves*, which provides the epigraph for this chapter—if one were to judge based on appearances, one would often be mistaken—is representative of Lafayette's worldview as well as of the more general worldview of analytical fiction. This maxim appears early on in *The Princess of Clèves* and is a focal point to which the novel always returns. We see the characters in Lafayette's work in the process of analyzing, deliberating, guessing, and interpreting at moments of confrontation between deceptive appearances and hidden reality, as well as when they are overcome by bouts of jealousy, when they realize that their lovers are deluding them, or that they are self-deceived.

Since the lifeblood of court life is intrigue and dissimulation, characters in *The Princess of Clèves* attempt to reconstruct the truth through a complex system of reading clues and signs.

⁶⁹ See, in particular, DeJean's "Lafayette's Ellipses: The Privileges of Anonymity."

This chapter examines in detail examples of this sign reading and its attendant vocabulary of seeing and seeming as the way in which we enter into characters' minds and hearts.

* * *

Careful readers of *The Princess of Clèves* will notice that the novel begins with a puzzling celebration of infidelity. The text opens in the following way: “La magnificence et la galanterie n’ont jamais paru en France avec tant d’éclat que dans les dernières années du règne de Henri second” (129) (“There never was in France so brilliant a display of magnificence and gallantry as during the last years of the reign of Henri II” [3]). The king is described in typical Renaissance parlance as “galant, bien fait et amoureux” (129) (“gallant, handsome, and amorous” [3]), and furthermore, it is stated that “quoique sa passion pour Diane de Poitiers, duchesse de Valentinois, eût commencé il y avait plus de vingt ans, elle n’était pas moins violente, et il n’en donnait pas des témoignages moins éclatants” (129) (“although his love for Diane de Poitiers, Duchess of Valentinois, had lasted twenty years, its ardor had not diminished, as his conduct testified” [3]). The word “galanterie,” which is found in the first sentence of the text, functions as a clue to the subject of the rest of the novel, since the word had already acquired in the seventeenth century the meaning of a sexual liaison⁷⁰. Contrary to what may be expected, it is the king’s enduring love for his mistress (rather than his wife, Catherine de Médicis) that serves as an introduction to Lafayette’s novel. Madame de Valentinois, we learn, is everywhere at court; the king even dons her favorite colors and her initials during jousts.

⁷⁰ According to La Bruyère, “la galanterie n’est qu’un libertinage auquel on a donné un nom honnête” (quoted by Joyce O. Lowrie 71).

Furthermore, we learn that Madame de Valentinois had been the king's *father's* mistress first; François I had asked her to make his son "plus vif et plus agréable" (158), which, as Tara and Philip Collington point out, "is a sexual initiation, not a refinement of Henri's manners; as Lafayette wryly observes, 'Elle y réussit comme vous le voyez'" (200).

While it has been noted that the main plot of the novel starts where most novels end, with a marriage, it is actually with infidelity that Lafayette's text begins. The insight into the court's true nature at the very beginning of the novel frames Lafayette's work not as a history or a romance, nor as a text that merely wishes to expose corruption at the court, but rather as a work of analytical fiction. An infidelity, whether it is real or imagined, is significant not from a moralistic point of view, as I will discuss later, but rather as a secret that is always threatening to be exposed. It is the ideal motif for analytical fiction. From the point of view of narrative, the infidelities and cover-ups that make up the plot, or, rather, plots, of *The Princess of Clèves* recapitulate that the text is written in point and counter-point, belief soon followed up by a harsh reality, followed by a new layer of deception. Despite the potentially dangerous motif—especially in a novel that has been long considered a *roman à clef* for seventeenth-century politics—Lafayette exploits infidelity as a metaphor for dissimulation and the way in which appearances are invariably deceiving. The queen, we learn, is ambitious and loves to rule, so "il semblait qu'elle souffrit sans peine l'attachement du roi pour la duchesse de Valentinois, et elle n'en témoignait aucune jalousie, mais elle avait une si profonde dissimulation qu'il était difficile de juger de ses sentiments" (130) ("[s]he seemed indifferent to the king's attachment to the Duchess of Valentinois, and never betrayed any jealousy; but she was so skilled a dissembler that it was hard to discover her real feelings" [3]). This sentence about the queen reveals how *The Princess of Clèves* is built from revisions: truth and counter-truth, insight and counter-insight.

Thus, the court is made up of “une sorte d’agitation sans désordre, qui la rendait très agréable, mais aussi très dangereuse pour une jeune personne” (143) (“a sort of agitation without disorder, which rendered it very charming, but also very dangerous, for a young woman” [11]). Each member of the court has his or her political loyalties, love affairs, and interests. Everyone gossips. Love is usually mixed with politics and vice versa. The ruling women, in particular—the queen, the king’s mistress, the king’s sister, the queen of Navarre, and the crown Princess—each have their adherents and these “cabales avaient de l’émulation et de l’envie les unes contre les autres” (143) (“cliques were separated by rivalry and envy” [11]). In the court, “[p]ersonne n’était tranquille, ni indifférent; on songeait à s’élever, à plaire, à servir ou à nuire” (142) (“[n]o one was calm or indifferent; every one sought to rise, to please, to serve, or to injure” [10–11]). The court may not be in disarray, but the agitations that drive it always threaten to cause irreparable damage⁷¹. This uncertainty and sense of fear, which is reported in counterpoint to the narrator’s initial statements about the glory of Henri II’s reign, casts a darker shadow over the “magnificence” of the court.

The Princess of Clèves is not really a love story, but rather a story about love; it fundamentally questions what love is, and whether or not it can exist in a disinterested and pure form. For Descartes, love is a passion that makes us strive toward the good, and it is ultimately kept in check by reason. In Lafayette’s work, neither marriage nor love affairs, nor any of the other myriad words for love present in the novel—*inclination, galanterie, affection, aventure, charme, commerce, passion, intérêt, sentiment, tendresse*—manage to fulfill this Cartesian

⁷¹ In fact, there are many tragedies in the novel, indicating that there is, in fact, occasional disorder: the Vidame de Chartres is exiled because he is caught deceiving the queen, the king dies as a result of a horrible accident, the Prince de Clèves dies of a broken heart, and outside of the story, the reine dauphine, Mary Stuart, is executed by Elizabeth I.

mandate of love. On the contrary, in *The Princess of Clèves*, love seems to be a truly inconvenient matter.

* * *

How do characters in *The Princess of Clèves* fall in love? The Prince of Clèves falls madly in love with Mademoiselle de Chartres not only in spite of her very indifference, but perhaps even because of it. In other words, he loves her because of the signs she *does not* give him. The Princess and Nemours fall in love indirectly, by way of surprises, subtle clues, and the things they hear said about each other. These are not the overt declarations of the Prince, which only serve to push the Princess away from him. Lafayette's narrative is built on these kinds of clues and signs, these *marques de l'admiration*. Reading clues is akin to a complicated sort of mind reading in *The Princess of Clèves*. Indeed, it is almost *soul* reading that takes place in this novel; gestures, looks, and occasionally speech are interpreted not only for their surface meaning, but also for the motivations, beliefs, and feelings behind them, and for clues as to how a character has interpreted and reinterpreted what another character has said or done. A poorly read sign can also catapult a character into a state of extreme bliss or terrible suffering, and yet characters cannot stop themselves from engaging in sign reading.

The initial subtle scene of mind reading occurs right after Mademoiselle de Chartres first appears at the court, and the Prince of Clèves and the Chevalier de Guise, among other men, fall immediately in love with her. After the first time they meet her at the house of Madame, the king's sister, the two men leave the party together, and at first, they cannot speak of anything else: "(i)ls louèrent d'abord Mlle de Chartres sans se contraindre" (140) (at first they praised

Mademoiselle de Chartres without reserve” [10]). But then something changes: “Ils trouvèrent enfin qu’ils la louaient trop, et ils cessèrent l’un et l’autre de dire ce qu’ils en pensaient” (140) (“then they found that they were praising her too much, and both stopped saying what they thought of her” [10]). This abrupt change in their conversation is motivated by the Prince knowing what the Chevalier is thinking, and vice versa. Neither one wishes the other to know that he is continually thinking of Mademoiselle de Chartres, and yet it is an open secret that they are both thinking of no one but her.⁷²

During the first part of the novel, we see into the mind of the Princess only when her thoughts and feelings are guessed at by other characters like her mother and the Prince de Clèves. Against her mother’s wishes, she becomes a set of signs or an open book to be read and interpreted. From the Prince de Clèves, who is as desperate to win Mademoiselle de Chartres’s affections as he is to marry her, we learn that she gives off “un certain air de douceur qui suffisait pour donner de l’espérance à un homme aussi éperdument amoureux que l’était ce prince; de sorte qu’il se flatta d’une partie de ce qu’il souhaitait” (148) (“a certain gentleness, which was quite sufficient to feed the hope of a man as much in love as he was, and he counted on attaining at least a part of what he desired” [14]). The understatement of the sentence above is quite

⁷² The striking scene described above highlights the way in which, as John Campbell puts it, “*La Princesse de Clèves* is a novel of eloquent and embarrassed silences, unformulated thoughts, understatement and allusion” (*Questions of Interpretation* 138). The agreement between the Prince de Clèves and the Chevalier de Guise—in itself a tacit one—to remain silent lends itself to comparisons to the Princess’s famous confession to her husband at the end of the novel, what Anne-Lise François calls “l’aveu sans suite.” They are both, we will see, paradoxically, simultaneously acts of silence that speak volumes and confessions that lead nowhere. There are many other examples of meaningful silence (silence that “speaks volumes”), including the scene in which the Princess witnesses Nemours stealing her portrait. Here, the Princess is torn; her reason tells her that she should demand the portrait back, but ultimately decides that is better to keep silent. While this undesired knowledge causes the Princess pain, they ultimately both take pleasure in their mutual awareness of this secret.

significant, as is the caveat inherent in the second clause. The use of the verb *flatter*, both here and again later on the same page, indicate that the Prince is deceiving himself.

Soon, the Prince finds himself happy enough, but “sans être néanmoins entièrement content” (149) (“not perfectly satisfied” [14]). He finds “que les sentiments de Mlle de Chartres ne passaient pas ceux de l’estime et de la reconnaissance et il ne pouvait se flatter qu’elle en cachât de plus obligeants” (149) (“he could not flatter himself that she nourished any warmer feeling” [15]). He cannot but make the Princess herself aware that he is conscious of her poorly covered-up indifference to him, and he enumerates the signs that Mademoiselle de Chartres reveals: her courtesy and her calm trouble him, since he is looking for passion, impatience, and agitation, signs that he would interpret as proofs of love:

Est-il possible, lui disait-il, que je puisse n’être pas heureux en vous épousant ? Cependant il est vrai que je ne le suis pas. Vous n’avez pour moi qu’une sorte de bonté qui ne peut me satisfaire; vous n’avez ni impatience, ni inquiétude, ni chagrin; vous n’êtes pas plus touchée de ma passion que vous le seriez d’un attachement qui ne serait fondé que sur les avantages de votre fortune, et non pas sur les charmes de votre personne...Je ne me trompe pas à votre rougeur...c’est un sentiment de modestie, et non pas un mouvement de votre cœur, et je n’en tire que l’avantage que j’en dois tirer’ (149).

(‘Is it possible,’ he said, ‘that I may not be happy in my marriage? Yet assuredly I am not happy. You have a sort of kindly feeling for

me which cannot satisfy me; you are not impatient, uneasy, or
grieved: you are as indifferent to my love as if this were given to
your purse, and not to your charms' I am not deceived by your
blushes [T]hey come from modesty, and not from any thrill of
your heart' [15].)

Because the Princess has not yet felt passionate about anyone, she cannot even dissimulate loving her husband. She protests, claiming that propriety's sake keeps her from expressing her emotions passionately, but again, the Prince is not fooled; he intuitively perceives that the Princess is only using propriety as a cover for her lack of passion. He correctly perceives that she is merely putting on a kind of performance, without even knowing it: 'vous me donnez de certaines apparences dont je serais content s'il y avait quelque chose au-delà' (149) ("you have a certain air with which I should be satisfied if there were anything behind it" [15]) he says, but he cannot see the Princess's inability to be moved by him: "au lieu que la bienséance vous retienne, c'est elle seule qui vous fait faire ce que vous faites. Je ne touche ni votre inclination ni votre cœur, et ma présence ne vous donne ni plaisir ni trouble" (149) ("instead of your being restrained by a sense of propriety, it is a sense of propriety which inspires your actions. I do not touch your feelings or your heart; my presence causes you neither pleasure nor pain" [15]). Thus, a dark cloud seems to hover over the Clèves' marriage, evidenced by a pessimistic tinge and a certain irony that permeates the description of the Prince's state of mind:

M. de Clèves ne trouva pas que Mlle de Chartres eût changé de
sentiment en changeant de nom. La qualité de mari lui donna de

plus grands privilèges; mais elle ne lui donna pas une autre place dans le cœur de sa femme. Cela fit aussi que, pour être son mari, il ne laissa pas d'être son amant, parce qu'il avait toujours quelque chose à souhaiter au-delà de sa possession; et, quoiqu'elle vécût parfaitement bien avec lui, il n'était pas entièrement heureux. Il conservait pour elle une passion violente et inquiète qui troublait sa joie; la jalousie n'avait point de part à ce trouble: jamais mari n'a été si loin d'en prendre et jamais femme n'a été si loin d'en donner. Elle était néanmoins exposée au milieu de la cour; elle allait tous les jours chez les reines et chez Madame. Tout ce qu'il y avait d'hommes jeunes et galants la voyaient chez elle et chez le duc de Nevers, son beau-frère, dont la maison était ouverte à tout le monde (151).

Monsieur de Clèves did not find that Mademoiselle de Chartres had altered her feelings when she changed her name. His position as her husband gave him greater privileges, but no different place in her heart. Though he had married her, he did not cease to be in love with her, because there was always left something for him to desire; and though she lived on the best of terms with him, he was not yet perfectly happy. He preserved for her a violent and restless passion, which marred his joy. Jealousy had no part in it, for never had a husband been further from feeling it, or a wife from inspiring

it. Yet she was exposed to all temptations at the court, visiting the queen and the king's sister every day. All the young and fashionable men met her at her own house and at that of her brother-in-law, the Duke of Nevers, whose doors were always open (16).

Some observations about the long passage quoted above: first, the Prince feels a violent and troubling passion that is more akin to what a lover feels (today, of course, we would think this normal and certainly favorable, but to love a wife like “son amant” was considered very strange in seventeenth-century France!). Second, the narrator starts by telling us that the Prince's disquiet does not have to do with jealousy, because the Princess is the person least likely to attach herself to someone else, but in the following sentence, a second fear, as if a revision of the previous sentence, reveals itself: in fact, the Princess is always “exposed” at the court, that the doors of the houses she attends are always open. In analytical fiction, love and jealousy always go together, even if it is clear that there is nothing to be jealous of⁷³. As the Princess points out

⁷³ The Princess does not understand her own feelings until she becomes jealous and fearful that perhaps Nemours does not love her. After the Princess meets and falls in love at first sight with Monsieur de Nemours, Madame de Chartres attempts to convince her daughter that she has been mistaken about his feelings, attempting to forestall her daughter's love—countertintuitively, perhaps, as in Marguerite's tenth *nouvelle*—by praising Nemours and wanting to continue to speak about him. Among other things, Madame de Chartres slips into her conversation with her daughter the Duc's “admirable” quality of never falling in love. That he has had many love affairs, in turn, is extremely troubling for the Princess, who has just started becoming cognizant of her feelings for him. At the same time, it is a boon for her love, as well; while Madame de Chartres is seeking to intercept the truth and keep the two young people apart, her attempt actually backfires. Due to this false information, the Princess is led to realize her own love, we are told, for the first time: “L'on ne peut exprimer la douleur qu'elle sentit, de connaître, par ce que lui venait de dire sa mère, l'intérêt qu'elle prenait à monsieur de Nemours: elle n'avait encore osé se l'avouer à elle-même” (169) (“One can't express the grief she felt to discover, by what her

much later, the Prince's passion is fueled by searching for something that she cannot give him.⁷⁴ In addition, he is on the lookout for the wrong kind of signs; the fact that his wife is calm and untroubled in and of itself troubles the Prince. And though she gives him no reason to feel jealous, he seems to be almost searching for that feeling, loving her all the more perhaps not only in spite of her absence of love, but because of it.

Though the Princess is not yet versed at reading signs, other interested parties certainly are. For example, the Chevalier de Guise, through the sagacity that comes with being in love, can read the Princess's face even when she is unaware of her own passions: "il eût paru quelque trouble sur son visage, ou que la jalousie fît voir au chevalier de Guise au-delà de la vérité, elle avait été touchée de la vue de ce prince" (154) ("whether it was that he saw something in her face, or that jealousy sharpened his fears, he believed that she had been moved by the sight of this prince" [18]). Signs of the Princess's feelings are mediated and made known to the reader through the Chevalier, who continues to spy on her throughout the novel. The passive constructions of the quotation above are also significant, in that they mirror the indirect manner

mother had been just saying, the interest her heart had in the Duke de Nemours; she had not dared as yet to acknowledge it to her secret thoughts"). This *douleur* is exactly what the Princess's husband was searching for, but it is directed at the wrong man. As Michael S. Koppisch writes about the way in which jealousy functions in Lafayette's work, it is a passion that is "woven into the fabric of . . . love" and is "understood by the characters only when they recognize as their own feelings formerly ascribed to others" (758). This view of jealousy as a kind of conduit to love contradicts the Cartesian understanding of jealousy as incompatible with love, and rather indicates that the passions and reason "s'abusent réciproquement l'un l'autre," as Pascal says. In the passage above, *connaître* is contrasted both with Lafayette's refusal to describe the emotion ("on ne peut exprimer") and the Princess's inability, her lack of daring, to have realized it before this moment.

⁷⁴ At the end of the novel, she says, "peut-être aussi que sa passion n'avait subsisté que parce qu'il n'en aurait pas trouvé en moi."

through which we glean this information, and how little the Princess understands about her own heart and mind at this point in the novel.⁷⁵

* * *

Impatience and jealousy come to the Princess when she falls in love with Nemours. The narrator reveals her thoughts (beyond her earlier embarrassment and confusion) for the first time

⁷⁵ The *trouble* that the Duc de Nemours is stirring in the Princess's heart is also visible to her mother. Madame de Clèves praises Nemours "avec un certain air qui donna à Madame de Chartres la même pensée qu'avait eue le chevalier de Guise" (155) ("she praised Monsieur de Nemours with a certain air that made Madame de Chartres entertain the same suspicion as the Chevalier de Guise" (18)). Madame de Chartres reads her daughter's mind quite quickly, and is greatly pained at seeing her falling into the trap of having an affair. The Princess's mother, concerned with the virtue and happiness of her daughter, warns the Princess at the very beginning of the novel about the dangers of becoming involved in *galanteries*. Madame de Chartres instills in her daughter a rather frightening image, citing her long experience in the ways of court life and attempting to convince her daughter that she should find a husband and remain faithful to him: "La plupart des mères s'imaginent qu'il suffit de ne parler jamais de galanterie devant les jeunes personnes pour les en éloigner. Mme de Chartres avait une opinion opposée; elle faisait souvent à sa fille des peintures de l'amour; . . . elle lui contait le peu de sincérité des hommes, leurs tromperies et leur infidélité, les malheurs domestiques où plongent les engagements; et elle lui faisait voir, d'un autre côté, quelle tranquillité suivait la vie d'une honnête femme, et combien la vertu donnait d'éclat et d'élévation. . . . mais elle lui faisait voir aussi combien il était difficile de conserver cette vertu, que par une extrême défiance de soi-même et par un grand soin de s'attacher à ce qui seul peut faire le bonheur d'une femme, que est d'aimer son mari et d'en être aimée (137) (Most mothers imagine that it is enough never to speak of gallantry to their daughters to guard them from it forever. Madame de Chartres was of a very different opinion; she often pictured love for her daughter, showing her its fascinations, in order to give her a better understanding of its perils. She told her how insincere men are, how false and deceitful; she described the domestic miseries which illicit love-affairs entail, and, on the other hand, pictured to her the peaceful happiness of a virtuous woman's life She taught her, too, how hard it was to preserve this virtue without extreme care, and without that one sure means of securing a wife's happiness, which is to love her husband and to be loved by him (8)). The Princess's mother is not only concerned about the political position of her daughter and their family; though many critics interpret this feeling on the mother's part as a desire to maintain complete control over her daughter, Madame de Chartres believes that by exposing the young girl to stories of jealousy, intrigue, and revenge that take place at court, she will learn how to effectively "read" the men and women she encounters, how to see beyond their masks and feints.

when Nemours arrives at the court. Lafayette uses the vocabulary that she always employs when characters fall in love: the Princess is *surpris* by him, and he is *étonné* by her; these “belles personnes” are surprised by “le mieux fait et de plus agréable à la Cour.” The Princess is anxious to meet Nemours because she has heard so many speak about him. Yet, given her lack of experience in love affairs, the Princess does not yet recognize what her feelings are. In the meantime, the thoughts and deliberations of the Duc de Nemours take center stage.

A few paragraphs after they meet, Nemours’s passion for the Princess has grown so strong that he needs to send out false messages that confuse everyone into thinking he is in love with the Princess’s friend Mary Stuart, the Reine Dauphine. He begins to frequent the Dauphine’s salon more often than usual, because Madame de Clèves spends a good deal of time there, and also because he wishes people to intuit what they will: “il n’était pas fâché de laisser imaginer ce que l’on avait cru de ses sentiments pour cette Reine” (163) (“he was not unwilling to give some justification to the widespread suspicions about his feelings for the dauphiness” [23]). Even passionately in love, Nemours very carefully strategizes how to go about pursuing the Princess without revealing too many signs at once, and without allowing anyone to guess the truth about his intentions.

Something similar happens in the scenes leading up to the Princess and Nemours’s mutual absence at the ball given by the Maréchal de Saint-André. The Princess overhears a courtier say that Nemours believes that a woman who is in love with a man should attend a ball that he gives, but should absent herself from where he will not be present. Being immediately affected by this theory, the Princess decides that she will not attend Saint-André’s ball while Nemours is away in England (supposedly wooing the future queen Elizabeth), and uses the pretext that the Maréchal had been in love with her and it would seem inappropriate for her to

attend the party of a man who may still harbor feelings for her. Thus, as Peggy Kamuf puts it, she “had contrived to send an encouraging message to Nemours through . . . absence” (217). She also wishes to send the Duc a sign of her affection by merely listening to and following his advice. In this way, the two lovers send each other furtive signs, sometimes unintentionally, sometimes intentionally. The Princess’s absence speaks in such a way as to send him a positive sign of her love, though she cannot be sure that he will ever discern her meaning.

One would think that the Princess’s decision not to attend the ball, and the Duc’s learning that information, is significant to illustrate a growing intimacy between them, all communicated by mutual absence. However, that is not the way in which the story is resolved. In fact, there is no definite knowledge gained at all. When the Princess appears at Mary Stuart’s a few days later, looking quite healthy, the Dauphine repeats the rule that Nemours had developed, teasing Madame de Clèves about being in love. Nemours, of course, happens to be there as well. While the Princess is embarrassed that they are discussing her absence at the ball, she is also disappointed when her mother—realizing, by her daughter’s blush, that the Dauphine had guessed correctly that it had to do with feelings of love—assures the party that her daughter had indeed been very ill. The Duc, too, intercepts the Princess’s blush: “la rougeur de Madame de Clèves lui fit soupçonner . . . la vérité.” And yet, the Princess does not know what to think:

Madame de Clèves avait d'abord été fâchée que monsieur de Nemours eût eu lieu de croire que c'était lui qui l'avait empêchée d'aller chez le maréchal de Saint-André ; mais ensuite elle sentit quelque espèce de chagrin, que sa mère lui en eût entièrement ôté l'opinion (168).

(At first Madame de Clèves had been annoyed because Monsieur de Nemours had reason to suppose that it was he who had kept her from going to the ball, and then she felt regret that her mother had entirely removed the grounds for his supposition [25–26]).

The Princess fears that her intention to signal to Nemours that she was not there because of his absence is not perceived. Madame de Chartres, wishing to intercept the hidden message, succeeds to a certain extent, but still ends on shaky ground. Nemours becomes wary of the Maréchal, “tant par l'attention qu'il avait à observer ceux qui approchaient Madame de Clèves, que par le progrès qu'il pouvait faire auprès d'elle” (168) (“from a rival who was more to be dreaded on account of his close observation of all those who approached Madame de Clèves than from any real success of his own” [26]). In this way, Madame de Chartres’s message is lost because Nemours becomes distracted by jealousy.

More misunderstandings and misreadings come when Madame de Clèves goes to visit Mary Stuart the following day. The Reine Dauphine remarks on the change in Nemours’s behavior, noting that he seems no longer to care about his many former mistresses, on whom he had always lavished much attention, whether, she says, they were worthy of him or not. Mary is fishing for information; she has her own interest in Nemours, and is disappointed that he has begun to ignore her. Here, each one is stealthily trying to read the other’s possible hints about the woman with whom the Duc seems to be in love. Though the Princess should immediately recognize herself in the Reine Dauphine’s description, she falsely comes to the conclusion that Nemours’s violent passions must be directed at her friend:

Quel poison pour madame de Clèves, que le discours de madame la dauphine! Le moyen de ne se pas reconnaître pour cette personne dont on ne savait point le nom, et le moyen de n'être pas pénétrée de reconnaissance et de tendresse, en apprenant, par une voie qui ne lui pouvait être suspecte, que ce prince, qui touchait déjà son cœur, cachait sa passion à tout le monde, et négligeait pour l'amour d'elle les espérances d'une couronne? (189–190)

(All this story that the dauphiness told her was as poison to Madame de Clèves. It was impossible for her not to feel sure that [the Dauphiness] was the woman whose name was unknown; and she was overwhelmed with gratitude and tenderness when she learned from one who had the best means of knowing that this prince, who had already aroused her interest, hid his passion from everyone, and for love of her gave up his chances of a crown [37]).

The narrator intervenes to comment on the Princess's lack of self-knowledge in the passage above and asks the question: how was the Princess to understand that the simplest explanation was the real one, that the Duc de Nemours is really in love with her? Instead, all of the signs that he has sent her in the past are negated by the Reine Dauphine's words. The Princess, however, misreads the situation again, and takes her friend's statements to mean that she is boasting of Nemours's increased affection for the Dauphine. And so it goes on, with the Princess constantly

misreading hints and signs, over-analyzing, and remaining blind to the truth until she receives yet another subtle hint.

We see even more instances of sign reading—and thus, mind reading—during the horoscope scene that takes place in the Queen’s rooms. Nemours and the Princess, forced to be together by circumstance and coincidence, are engaged in a conversation about whether or not to believe in horoscopes and predictions. Nemours teases Madame de Clèves by whispering in her ear that he does not believe in horoscopes because it was once predicted to him that his ardent and respectful passion would be returned by the woman he loves. Meanwhile, the Princess is trying to avoid Nemours, but does not manage to completely steel herself when he begins to whisper to her:

Quelque application qu’elle eût à éviter ses regards, et à lui parler moins qu’à un autre, il lui échappait de certaines choses qui partaient d’un premier mouvement, qui faisaient juger à ce prince qu’il ne lui était pas indifférent (198).

(In spite of the care she took to escape his glances and to talk less with him than with others, certain things inadvertently escaped her which convinced this prince that she was not indifferent to him [42]).

While a man with less penetration than the Duc would perhaps not have noticed, Nemours is able to pick up on the Princess’s small and unintentional signs very quickly. As we saw in the analysis of earlier texts, in analytical fiction, love between characters is often expressed in

understatement; “I do not dislike you” becomes code for “I feel a violent passion for you.” The litotes in the passage above is particularly striking and highlights the subtlety of the messages the Princess is inadvertently sending the Duc. In fact, he notices that she was working hard *not* to send him any signs, which alerts Nemours to her growing affection.

In many scenes, the Princess and Nemours’s revelations and insights—through which, again, we are able to read the characters’ minds and hearts—circle around each other in a subtle dance of tacit avowal and dissimulation. The Princess, for her part, is troubled by not understanding what she is feeling. She feels both embarrassment and delight to see Nemours when he comes to visit her while her mother is ill, but soon feels uneasy about him, almost hates him, because she is troubled by the idea of a guilty passion. Lyons interprets this practice of constant clue reading as a lack of the faculty of imagination in characters:

This inner world is a fevered reviewing of significant moments of the outer world from which the heroine, her husband, and Nemours cannot free themselves even for a moment. In this respect, Lafayette’s characters lack *imagination* in the sense of the capacity and the will to envisage the world freely, to master the flow of images, and to create alternatives to the world as immediately perceived by the senses (*Before Imagination* 177).

Lafayette’s characters merely read and reread the raw data with which they are provided or which they stealthily perceive, and then begin to interpret these images and signs in the most *mistaken* of ways. As I have asserted, in the sub-genre of analytical fiction, reason, the senses,

and emotion all fail to serve characters in judging how they should react or behave to a given situation. Instead, characters in analytical fiction begin to create scenarios in their minds that are, at best, just relative misfires, and at worst, as far from the truth as possible. In *The Princess of Clèves*, the characters' propensity to review, or what I call to analyze, constantly leads them off the right track and onto a wrong one.

* * *

As we have already seen, there is a certain reveling in delay that occurs in analytical fiction. Faced with a problem of belief or in seeking out a truth, characters tease out all possibilities and interpretations before choosing one seemingly at random. But because the kinds of revelations that characters in analytical fiction experience are ultimately deemed untrustworthy, the very notion of the possibility of revelation remains in question. Though the desire for knowledge exists, looking at just one more possible interpretation to a problem proves overly tempting. As are other examples of analytical fiction, *The Princess of Clèves* is a cyclical work, with many parallel episodes and repetitions. Scenes in which characters read and misread each other—and there are too many of these to include in just one chapter—do not lead toward a climax and denouement in any linear fashion. Instead, like insights, the scenes repeat, recall, and double back on each other, and dilate almost *ad infinitum* the Princess's final adieu and retreat from the world.

Lyons points out the parallel structures between that scene of the Indian cane, in which Nemours spies on the Princess, and the scene that takes place in a park, where the roles are reversed and the Princess spies on Nemours. But there are actually four spying scenes in the

novel that contribute to the cyclicity of the plot. I would like to start by looking at a scene from the middle of the novel, when Madame de Clèves witnesses Nemours stealing her portrait:

Madame de Clèves aperçut, par un des rideaux qui n'était qu'à demi fermé, monsieur de Nemours, le dos contre la table, qui était au pied du lit, et elle vit que, sans tourner la tête, il prenait adroitement quelque chose sur cette table. Elle n'eut pas de peine à deviner que c'était son portrait, et elle en fut si troublée, que madame la dauphine remarqua qu'elle ne l'écoutait pas, et lui demanda tout haut ce qu'elle regardait. Monsieur de Nemours se tourna à ces paroles ; il rencontra les yeux de madame de Clèves, qui étaient encore attachés sur lui, et il pensa qu'il n'était pas impossible qu'elle eût vu ce qu'il venait de faire (202–3).

(One of the curtains was only partly closed, and Madame de Clèves was able to see Monsieur de Nemours, whose back was against the table at the foot of the bed, without turning his head pick up something from the table. She at once guessed that it was her portrait, and she was so embarrassed that the crown princess noticed she was not listening to her, and she asked her what she was looking at. At these words, Monsieur de Nemours turned round and met Madame de Clèves' eyes fastened on him; he felt sure that she must have seen what he had just done [45])

Here, the characters are aware of what the other one knows, and it is their mutual silence—like their mutual absence at the ball of the Maréchal de Saint-André earlier in the novel—that is significant to the building of a *kind of intimacy*. The Princess chooses to say nothing about the theft, either to Nemours or to her husband, because she feels that she is caught in a double bind: “[I]a raison voulait qu’elle demandât son portrait; mais, en le demandant publiquement, c’était apprendre à tout le monde les sentiments que ce prince avait pour elle, et, en le lui demandant en particulier c’était quasi l’engager à lui parler de sa passion” (203) (“Her reason bade her ask for her portrait; but if she asked for it openly, she would announce to every one the prince’s feelings for her, and by asking for it privately, she would give him an opportunity to speak to her of his love” [45]). Here she even considers confessing her passion for Nemours to her husband, just so that he could help her stay away from him, but she realizes that “elle y trouva de la folie” (204) (“she deemed it madness” [46]) and falls back into the agony of indecision. And yet, this scene creates complicity between the two would-be lovers. The portrait scene, though it yokes pain to the Princess’s pleasure, helps to build a sort of psychic relationship, what François calls an “unspoken mental life [that] makes redundant any physical action” (68) between the Princess and Nemours. The Princess’s fixation on Nemours, who catches her gazing at him, dilates the time before analysis, before the Princess takes stock once again of her feelings and despairs at recognizing herself stuck at an epistemological impasse. The moment of impasse itself, the moment of watching before analysis happens, represents a kind of instinctive intimacy that exists in spite of the Princess herself.

Another central spying scene is that of the avowal, in which the Princess confesses to her husband that she is in love with another man, but then refuses to tell him who it is. She swears

that their relationship is chaste, and in fact that she would love nothing better than never to see him again. Nemours happens to be spying on them when he overhears this confession. Verbs of seeing tend to appear in great numbers in scenes that are observed and overheard by characters absent from the main action, because characters' clue reading, insight making, and reversing, and their general "mind reading," is rooted in visual sensation. This creates multiple layers of seeing and seeming, in which, according to Kaps, "the literal use of the verbs in reference to Nemours contrasts with their figurative, intellectualized use by Clèves and his wife, underlining the former's presence only as an onlooker in contrast to the role of the latter two as knowing participants" (73).

The avowal scene illustrates the way in which the search for impossible knowledge functions in analytical fiction. It begins when the Princess tells her husband that she wishes to withdraw from the court and spend her time at Coulommiers, the Clèves's country estate. Monsieur de Clèves is immediately suspicious, and pressures her to tell him what secret she is hiding: "Il la pressa longtemps de les (des raisons pour souhaiter d'être seul) lui apprendre sans pouvoir l'y obliger" (239–40) ("For a long time, the prince besought her to tell him the reason" [66]). Ultimately, the Princess only half confesses, because she refuses to tell her husband the name of the man with whom she is in love. In this way, the avowal is both preceded and followed by silence and by the Prince's frustration at his wife's refusal to speak. That is not to say that the avowal hardly exists; on the contrary, it is very real and causes a great deal of damage. The confession's essence, however, is in itself a troubling and enigmatic absence that the Prince can only fill in with jealousy and fear. At this point in the novel, however, the Princess seems to have already made up her mind about ultimately rejecting Nemours. As François points out, "just as she promises faithfulness precisely by her acknowledgement of her withheld *power*

to be unfaithful, the open secret asks that one accept as sufficient and real facts that may never become operative, and of which one may have no direct, empirical evidence” (76). Although the Princess tells Nemours at the end of the novel, when he admits to her that he had overheard the confession, that “enfin cet aveu n’aura point de suite, et je suivrai les règles austères que mon devoir m’impose” (303) (“this avowal will have no consequences, and I shall follow the rigid rules that my condition imposes” [102]), the Prince, in fact, never does find direct evidence of the Princess’s infidelity, but it does not matter. The infidelities of the court confirm the Prince’s fears, without the need for his wife to actually be culpable. In many ways, she is guilty merely by association.

Going back to the role that Nemours plays in this scene, his lack of knowledge of the Princess’s heart, ironically, is what leads Nemours to misunderstand her avowal. He believes, in fact, that she must be speaking of a third man; the narrator claims that he heard every word the Princess said, but these words:

ne lui donnait guère moins de jalousie qu’à son mari. Il était si éperdument amoureux d’elle, qu’il croyait que tout le monde avait les mêmes sentiments. Il était véritable aussi qu’il avait plusieurs rivaux; mais il s’en imaginait encore davantage, et son esprit s’égarait à chercher celui dont Madame de Clèves voulait parler
(242)

(made him quite as jealous as it made her husband. He was himself so desperately in love with her that he supposed every one else was

just as much so. It was true in fact that he had many rivals, but he imagined even more than there were; and he began to wonder whom Madame de Clèves could mean [67]).

In this way, Nemours, being on the outside of the conversation can see something different than Clèves and his wife. Thus his insights are of another nature than theirs. He cannot guess correctly in this case that the Princess is speaking of her love for him. Ironically, “(i)l était si transporté qu’il ne savait quasi ce qu’il voyait, et il ne pouvait pardonner à Monsieur de Clèves de ne pas assez presser sa femme de lui dire ce nom qu’elle lui cachait” (242–3) (“He was almost beside himself with excitement, and could not forgive Monsieur de Clèves for not insisting on knowing the name his wife was hiding” [67]). Yet again, a character in Lafayette’s novel mistranslates a moment of potential intimacy into exactly the wrong interpretation.

Nemours’s misreading of the Princess’s words add another layer to what François calls the “uncounted . . . undoing, unthreading, unraveling with which narrative itself has come to be identified” (13) in the scene of the *aveu* in *The Princess of Clèves*. For François, the Princess’s avowal “would ‘disclaim’ or ‘un-claim’ love (claim it so as to leave it untouched) and still not amount to disavowal in the sense of a denied, unconscious, or evasive affirmative” (13). In the same way, Nemours “disclaims” or “un-claims” the possibility of the Princess’s love embroidered into her avowal. His self-denial and self-deception are representative of the analytical mode in general, represented by “open secrets” that cyclically affirm and deny themselves, such that the impossibility of knowledge is a foregone conclusion.

The following scene of spying and being spied, the Cabinet or Indian cane scene, is one of the most famous in the novel, and it also serves to develop the theme of instinctive and

unnamed intimacy between the characters. So called because it takes place in a kind of dressing room off the garden at Coulommiers, the Cabinet scene shows a rare moment of happiness and obvious mutual love between Nemours and the Princess. It is short, barely a flash of narrative, and it occurs when the couple is separated and yet linked together by even less than a gaze.

Nemours spies on the Princess; she is picking up some yellow ribbons, and winding them around an Indian cane that Nemours had once carried, and which she had somehow managed to steal from his sister. Nemours remembers that he had worn yellow at a recent tournament, specifically because he knew that the Princess avoided the color, though she was quite fond of it, because of her blonde hair. They are connected by this color through their gestures and thoughts. At the same time, Madame de Clèves is gazing at a painting of the battle of Metz that features Nemours fighting in the war. He watches her as she gazes at his portrait with rapt attention “que la passion seule peut donner” (282) (“such as love alone could give” [89]).

While Nemours is spying on the Princess, his scarf blows unexpectedly against the window and makes a noise. Madame de Clèves moves from being almost sure that she saw him, to convincing herself that she did not:

[elle] soit qu'elle eût l'esprit rempli de ce prince, ou qu'il fût dans un lieu où la lumière donnait assez pour qu'elle le pût distinguer, elle crut le reconnaître Quand elle eut fait quelque réflexion, elle pensa qu'elle s'était trompée, et que c'était un *effet de son imagination* d'avoir cru voir Monsieur de Nemours (283)

(whether it was that her mind was full of this prince, or that his face was actually in the light, she thought that she recognized him After a little reflection she decided that she had been mistaken, and that the vision of Monsieur de Nemours was a mere illusion [90]).

As Michel Butor writes, “the man she is dreaming of appears to her and she cannot tell if it is a ghost or a reality [S]he was truly haunted by him, ‘crazy’ about him, without any possibility for her to regain her free will” (in the Norton Critical Edition, 158). In other words, Madame de Clèves is so intoxicated by her internal vision of Monsieur de Nemours, and she has so entirely lost herself in her daydreaming, she no longer has control over herself.

Something very similar happens in the park scene, another episode of mutual spying. The Princess notices that she can see her own window through that of a silk merchant’s shop opposite her garden. The merchant tells her that there is a man who sits in the back room of the shop “pour dessiner de belles maisons et des jardins que l’on voyait de ses fenêtres” (296) (“to draw the fine houses and gardens to be seen from the windows” [98]). The Princess “se joignit, *dans son imagination*, à cet homme bien fait qui venait proche de chez elle, et lui fit une idée de M. de Nemours, et de M. de Nemours appliqué à la voir” (296) (“her vision of this handsome man who had taken quarters near her house, made her think of that prince, and suggested that he was trying to see her” [98]). In both the Cabinet and park scenes, the Princess blames her overactive imagination for inventing a vision of Nemours. In a realistic novel, this sort of imagining would probably be just a psychologically significant accident of thought; Nemours would not actually have to be there for the Princess to daydream about him. On the contrary, in *The Princess of*

Clèves, the ghost- or fantasy-Nemours is not really a ghost: he is really there. The Princess is, to appropriate Lyons's interpretation of the novel, not imagining Nemours, but rather reacting to a real phenomenon, the truth. It is significant, however, because she convinces herself that the truth was only fantasy.

In the park scene, the Princess, full of the image of Nemours spying on her from the silk merchant's window, goes out into a garden in the hopes of being alone. But there, she sees none other than Nemours. She stops and watches the "homme couché sur des bancs, qui paraissait enseveli dans une rêverie profonde" (297) ("man lying on the benches, who seemed sunk into a deep thought" [98]). As in the Cabinet scene, while the Princess is gazing at Nemours who is lost in his thoughts of her, they are suddenly interrupted; "ses gens qui la suivaient firent quelque bruit, qui tira M. de Nemours de sa rêverie. Sans regarder qui avait causé le bruit qu'il avait entendu, il se leva de sa place pour éviter la compagnie qui venait vers lui et tourna dans une autre allée" (297) ("her servants, who were followed her, made some noise that aroused him. Without looking at them, he arose, to avoid their company, and turned into another path" [98]). Nemours leaves the place without investigating whether it might possibly be a noise made by the very woman about whom he was just thinking. While it is clear that she was the object of his daydreaming, the scene is slightly less optimistic; it holds less of the promise of potential intimacy than the Cabinet scene. Similarly, Madame de Clèves suddenly finds her love rekindled for Nemours (she suddenly loves him for his being "respectant jusqu'à sa douleur, songeant à la voir sans songer à en être vu" (298) ("respecting even her grief; trying to see her, without himself being seen; abandoning the court, where he was a favorite, to look upon the walls behind which she was immured, to come and muse in places where he could not hope to meet her" [99]), but

these thoughts are quickly overturned by others, in which she remembers that this happy love in fact had been the cause of her husband's death.

After the park scene, the narrator tells us that Nemours, when he is finally alone again, “songea aux moyens dont il devait se server pour la voir” (299) (“he dreamed about devising ways of seeing her”). Moving backwards to the avowal scene, after he overhears the confession, Nemours wonders whether “ce qu’il avait entendue n’était point un songe, tant il y trouvait peu de vraisemblance” (248) (“what he had heard hadn’t been a dream, so unlikely did it appear” [70]). The repetition of the verb “songer,” is intended to mean something similar to “envisager,” but the word also carries the implication of reverie and represents, according to Michel Glatigny, a break with the real. In addition, as opposed to a *rêve*, a *songe* can have the implication of kind of false vision with which the imagination deceives us. These parallel scenes, in which the Princess and Nemours recreate each other in their mind’s eye, actually move from greater intimacy to lesser intimacy, as if the narrator is purposely trying to keep them apart. In the portrait-stealing scene, the two are aware of each other, and send each other signs of mutual understanding before the Princess begins to despair at her situation. In the avowal scene, Nemours is physically present, and he ultimately understands that the Princess means that she is in love with him. In the Cabinet scene, the Princess is at first convinced that she has seen Nemours before she talks herself out of that true-false impression. And finally, in the park scene, which takes place close to the end of the novel, Nemours does not even look for the source of the noise, and the two would-be lovers are once again separated by a wide gulf of misunderstanding, by an impossibility that is built into the text by the narrator. The possibility of the Princess and Nemours expressing to each other their mutual love, and moreover, the possibility of their acting

on it, is forever delayed. Even when they are both in the same place at the same time, their own over-thinking causes them to deny the possibility of the other's presence.

* * *

Another way in which we see the centrality of mind reading, dissimulation, and the idea that love is an inconvenient state in *The Princess of Clèves* is through an examination of the interpolated stories that various characters communicate throughout the novel. There are five seemingly unconnected digressions interspersed in the main narrative of *The Princess of Clèves*: the story of Madame de Valentinois's longstanding affair with the King, the tale of Madame de Tournon's infidelity to Sancerre, the tale of Henry VIII's treatment of Anne Boleyn, the text of Madame de Thémynes's lost letter, and finally, the story of the Vidame de Chartres about his contemporaneous affairs with three different women at the same time. Commentators on the novel, from Lafayette's contemporary critic Valaincour and on, have argued over whether these exemplary stories are important to the novel. However, few critics today would claim that these interpolated stories do not help us—and the Princess—to understand better the main plot, whether or not they reveal a break with seventeenth-century French classicism. The five stories are all tales of betrayal and infidelity, and are generally read as embedded narratives that work in two ways: they mirror the events that occur and the feelings that are felt in the main plot, and also, with the exception of the Vidame's story, which he tells to Nemours rather than to Madame de Clèves, they provide the Princess with an analog, or an outside frame on which to reflect so as to better consider her own conflicted emotions. This is particularly true of the story of Madame de Tournon.

After the death of Madame de Chartres, and after the Princess has fallen in love with Nemours, the responsibility of educating and undeceiving the young Princess as to the true nature of courtiers falls to her husband, who models for his wife how one can learn to decipher the complexities of a psyche that is always hiding secrets. The Princess is surprised to find out from her husband that Madame de Tournon, a seemingly virtuous widow, who had herself died the day before, was in love with both the Count of Sancerre and Estouteville, and had given them each hope that she would marry him. The Prince discovers this information himself through a meticulous process of deduction that rests on the overriding assumption that everyone is always hiding the truth, but that everyone loves to spread gossip.⁷⁶ He hears some exciting information about the King and Madame de Valentinois from Monsieur d'Anville, and then tells it to Sancerre and swears him to secrecy. Later, at the house of his sister-in-law, he meets Madame de Tournon, who is revealing the same gossip to the woman of the house, who then repeats it back to Clèves, not realizing that it was he who had spread it in the first place. He then begins to piece together the truth about how Madame de Tournon had found out:

‘Vous pouvez juger comme j'en fus étonné. Je regardai madame de Tournon, elle me parut embarrassée. Son embarras me donna du soupçon ; je n'avais dit la chose qu'à Sancerre, il m'avait quitté au sortir de la comédie sans m'en dire la raison ; je me souvins de lui avoir ouï extrêmement louer madame de Tournon. Toutes ces choses m'ouvrirent les yeux, et je n'eus pas de peine à démêler qu'il

⁷⁶ Later in the novel, the Queen will complain to the Vidame de Chartres (who is repeating the story to Nemours, ironically) that no one in France can keep a secret, which is problematic because that unfortunate fact detracts from the pleasure of gossiping.

avait une galanterie avec elle, et qu'il l'avait vue depuis qu'il m'avait quitté' (179).

'You will understand my surprise. I looked at Madame de Tournon, who seemed embarrassed, and her embarrassment aroused my suspicions. I had mentioned the matter to on one but Sancerre, who had left me after the play, without saying where he was going; but I remember hearing him praise Madame de Tournon very warmly. All these things opened my eyes, and I soon decided there was a love affair between them, and that he had seen her after he left me' (31).

Clèves demonstrates a great deal of sagacity in “reading” Madame de Tournon. Here, a number of verbs of seeing and seeming are present: *paraître*, *souçonner*, and *ouvrir les yeux*, all the vocabulary that signals that a character is guessing, reading, and deciphering the mind of another, or, in the terms that I put it before, who is engaged in sign reading.

When the Prince confronts Sancerre about his affair with Madame de Tournon, he reveals yet another hidden part of the story. The very same day that Sancerre learns of Madame de Tournon's death, he receives a visit from his friend Estouteville, who has come to open his heart to him, to weep at the death of his beloved mistress. Astounded, Sancerre asks for proof of Estouteville's entanglement with Madame de Tournon. The latter man produces a portrait of his mistress and several letters written by her. Sancerre is suddenly thrown into a fit of jealousy and confused feelings. He claims that no one has ever felt such conflicting pains at once: “j'éprouve

à la fois la douleur de la mort et celle de l'infidélité; ce sont deux maux que l'on a souvent comparés, mais qui n'ont jamais été sentis en même temps par la même personne” (185) (“I suffer at the same time grief for her death and for her faithlessness—two misfortunes which have often been compared, but have never been felt at the same time by one person” [34]). The contrasting emotions that Sancerre feels seem to mirror each other and converge in the same way that love is almost always paired with jealousy, and the realization of one is concomitant with the other. Sancerre claims that he is astonished by his devastation, caused by his mistress’s death on the one hand, and by the realization of her betrayal on the other. The sum of his suffering is certainly greater than its parts. But in the world of analytical fiction such a pairing is not surprising. Here, Sancerre realizes all his feelings have turned out to be false, but the chaos undermines all conventional readings of emotional life: “Je paye à une passion feinte qu'elle a eue pour moi le même tribut de douleur que je croyais devoir à une passion véritable. Je ne puis ni haïr, ni aimer sa mémoire; je ne puis me consoler ni m'affliger.” (185) (“Today all my feelings are false ones; I pay to the pretended love she felt for me the same tribute that I thought due to a real affection. I can neither hate nor love her memory; I am incapable of consolation or of grief” [35]). The sign of his suffering, “le même tribut,” like all feelings in *The Princess of Clèves*, is like a commodity that can be given or exchanged. More important, however, is the simultaneous comparison and contrast of “une passion feinte” and “une passion véritable.” Sancerre equates the two in the quotation above, illustrating again how truth and lies are never very far apart in *The Princess of Clèves* and in analytical fiction. Madame de Tournon, it turns out, knows how to dissimulate and her claims to virtue turn out to be merely very well wrought

appearances. Madame de Tournon's public appearance of mourning for her husband was only a mask,⁷⁷ and then her claims of loving only Sanserre were false, too.

There is not a little dramatic irony in this scene. The Prince's words affect Madame de Clèves profoundly, as she finds that there is "un certain rapport avec l'état où elle (Mme de Tournon) était, qui la surprit, et qui lui donna un trouble dont elle fut longtemps à se remettre" (181) ("finding a certain likeness to her own condition which surprised her and distressed her for some time" ([32])). She blushes at hearing this statement, though Clèves is so busy recalling how he had ferreted out Madame de Tournon's treachery that he ironically misses his own wife's tacit confession. It is also ironic that Clèves insists upon sincerity and openness—he originally counseled Sancerre to reason with Madame de Tournon and persuade her to accept his proposal of marriage—when he himself has learned all of this through stealth deduction. Third, the continuation of the story of Madame de Tournon leads Clèves to pronounce that "les femmes sont incompréhensibles" (174) ("women are incomprehensible"), and that he is happy to have a wife as faultless as his own. This misreading—particularly at a moment when the Prince is demonstrating his remarkable ability to extract and circulate knowledge in the court—further highlights the suffering of Madame de Clèves as she struggles to understand her own divided passions. At the same time, these misaligned insights allow the reader to see more clearly the ways in which Clèves is deceiving himself. Later in the novel Clèves himself will undergo the same sort of violent emotional upheaval and utter the same sorts of ravings as Sancerre, completely forgetting both the advice he had given his friend and his pronouncement that his wife is uncomplicated and virtuous.

⁷⁷ This is a repetition from an exemplary story told by Madame de Chartres much earlier in the novel.

* * *

While the story of Madame de Tournon is particularly well suited to helping the Princess understand her own situation with regards to her love for Nemours and her concern about her duty to her husband, some of the exemplary stories included in *The Princess of Clèves* should be read as significant on their own, in that they elucidate the way in which analytical fiction copes with jealousy, unfulfilled desire, deception, and error. Because they are shorter tales, these interpolated stories dispense with the usual conventions of novelistic plot even more so than does the larger narrative of *The Princess of Clèves*, and zero in directly on examples of obsessive analysis, self-deception, dissimulation, trickery, and the misreading of signs. The letter of Madame de Thémynes, which I examine in detail, is especially important in this sense.

The most central of the interpolated exemplary stories embedded in *The Princess of Clèves*—both metaphorically and literally—is the episode of the letter written by Mme de Thémynes to the Vidame de Chartres expressing her disdain for the Vidame and her desire to end their affair. The Vidame accidentally drops an unsigned letter at the court. It is picked up by some of Monsieur de Nemours's rivals, circulated, and given by the Dauphine to the Princess, who is led to believe that it is actually written to the Duc de Nemours by a lady who must be his lover. The letter is interposed at the end of the second part, almost exactly in the center of the novel. Like the other exemplary stories in the book, the letter serves two main purposes: as a counter-example that models the sort of dissimulative behavior and ambivalent representation of feeling that the Princess is deliberately and desperately trying to avoid, and also as a psychological legend for the rest of the novel. The letter also helps to illustrate the way in which

knowledge is transmitted, intercepted, and misinterpreted in the story (what Peter Shoemaker calls the “network of confidences [that] reveals the human propensity toward dissimulation and betrayal” [51]) as it is passed around, whispered about, returned to its original addressee, and then clumsily forged. But, the language of the letter by itself, even separate from a connection to the main plot of *The Princess of Clèves*, is significant on its own. As Niderst writes, “la lettre de Mme de Thémynes n’est qu’un brillant développement sur le thème de la dissimulation” (57), and it embodies analytical fiction in its most Baroque, most elaborate, hyperbolic, and intricate.

With the exception of Niderst and, more recently, Joyce O. Lowrie, who argues persuasively for a mathematical mirroring structure to the letter in relation to the rest of the novel, most critics tend to focus on the circulation of the letter rather than the language of the letter itself. For example, Catherine Labio writes that the contents of the letter “are not particularly memorable,” that they are “unreadable” (because the Princess herself does not understand them at the end of her reading) and that “the tale of the relationship between its author and addressee and of the people directly affected by it is not central to the main plot The letter’s importance lies elsewhere, i.e. in its circulation and reception by third parties” (8). Elizabeth C. Goldsmith writes similarly that “the discourse of passion (in the letter) is neither unique nor inimitable, but generic and eminently transferable” (51), here, too, referring to the letter’s role as a psychological legend for the Princess’s dilemma. Like Labio, Louise K. Horowitz does not treat the language of the letter at all, and reads its importance in the way that circulation functions as one part of a motif of repetition that governs the whole novel. Indeed, the reception of the letter is quite strange. Madame de Thémynes’s language bewilders the Princess, who only thinks she reads Nemours’s deception in it, and while it affects the Vidame somewhat, the letter does not devastate him enough not to enter into yet another liaison with a third woman,

Madame de Martigues. In this way, it is true that the letter's existence and its circulation are what most significantly impact the characters: they prove that the Vidame has been deceiving the queen, and they are the ultimate reason for his exile.

Before responding to Lowrie's reading of the text, I would like to provide my own reading of the letter, whose motifs and structures not only reflect the larger novel, but on their own reveal a richness of rhetorical structures that repeat, overlap, and encircle each other to expose how characters in analytical fiction think. Overall, the letter presents a highly complex model of thought that is central not only to an understanding of *The Princess of Clèves*, or Lafayette's work more generally, but to analytical fiction as a whole. The letter bears reading in its entirety, to get a feeling for its sweep and drama, but for ease of reading, I will break it up into large, but more manageable sections:

I

Je vous ai trop aimé pour vous laisser croire que le changement qui vous paraît en moi soit un effet de ma légèreté ; je veux vous apprendre que votre infidélité en est la cause. Vous êtes bien surpris que je vous parle de votre infidélité ; vous me l'aviez cachée avec tant d'adresse, et j'ai pris tant de soin de vous cacher que je la savais, que vous avez raison d'être étonné qu'elle me soit connue. Je suis surprise moi-même, que j'aie pu ne vous en rien faire paraître. Jamais douleur n'a été pareille à la mienne. Je croyais que vous aviez pour moi une passion violente ; je ne vous cachais plus celle que j'avais pour vous, et dans le temps que je

vous la laissais voir tout entière, j'appris que vous me trompiez, que vous en aimiez une autre, et que, selon toutes les apparences, vous me sacrifiez à cette nouvelle maîtresse. Je le sus le jour de la course de bague ; c'est ce qui fit que je n'y allais point. Je feignis d'être malade pour cacher le désordre de mon esprit ; mais je le devins en effet, et mon corps ne put supporter une si violente agitation. Quand je commençai à me porter mieux, je feignis encore d'être fort mal, afin d'avoir un prétexte de ne vous point voir et de ne vous point écrire.

(I have loved you too much to let you think that the change you see in me is the result of my fickleness; I want you to know that the real cause is your infidelity. You are surprised that I say your 'infidelity'; you have concealed it so craftily, and I have taken such pains to hide from you my knowledge of it, that you are naturally astonished that I should have detected it. I am myself surprised that I have been able to keep it from you. Never was there any grief like mine. I imagined that you felt for me a violent passion. I did not conceal what I felt for you, and at the time when I let you see it, I learned that you were deceiving me, that you loved another, and, according to all appearances, were sacrificing me to a new mistress. I knew it the day of the running of the ring, and that is why I was not there. I pretended to be ill, in order to conceal my

emotion; but I really became so. For my body could not stand the intense agitation. When I began to get better, I pretended to still be suffering in order to have an excuse for not seeing or writing to you [49]).

The letter begins with a double confession: “Je vous ai trop aimé pour vous laisser croire que le changement qui vous paraît en moi soit un effet de ma légèreté” (210). Thus: 1) Madame de Thémynes confesses to truly having loved the Vidame; and 2) she alludes to the fact that she has previously deceived him (“le changement qui vous paraît en moi”). Several key words repeat throughout the passage quoted: *cacher*, *paraître*, *apprendre* (which connects the idea of seeing to learning), *voir*, and *feigner* among them. Immediately noticeable are a number of interconnected motifs: passion, *changement* in behavior, dissimulation, appearances and deception (*paraître*), and the opposite of passion: *légèreté*. *Passion*, which is usually sincere but also dangerous and self-exposing, stands in contrast to *légèreté*, which, like indifference, is usually feigned but safe. Madame de Thémynes’ letter, then, is not only an avowal of deeply hidden feelings, but is also intended to manufacture an abrupt revelation, something that should launch the Vidame back into a passionate love for her. It is a pattern that we have already seen many times before: if a character in analytical fiction wishes to draw closer to another character, all he or she must do is pretend no longer to be interested.

Madame de Thémynes alludes to the fact that she had been passionately in love with the Vidame, and he with her. She claims that she had been honest with him about her love when their relationship began: “je ne vous cachais plus celle (passion) que j’avais pour vous” (210) and that “je vous la laissais voir tout entière.” But, she writes, this had been a dangerous position

for her, for “dans le temps que je vous la laissais voir tout entière, j'appris que vous me trompiez, que vous en aimiez une autre, et que, selon toutes les apparences, vous me sacrifiez à cette nouvelle maîtresse” (210). Here, the letter contrasts Madame de Thémynes’s exposing herself fully to the Vidame to his mere “*apparences*” of passion, and signals her growing jealousy and anger. What she had believed was the Vidame’s “*passion violente*” (210), but which is now revealed as having been extinguished by his infidelity, gives way to Madame de Thémynes’s own “*violente agitation*” (210).

When she discovers the Vidame’s indiscretion, she writes: “Je feignis d'être malade pour cacher le désordre de mon esprit ; mais je le devins en effet, et mon corps ne put supporter une si violente agitation” (210–11). In this way, she is able to repair some of the damage done by not having hidden her true feelings earlier by hiding the change in those feelings.⁷⁸ Even after Madame de Thémynes recovers from her illness, however, she continues the pretext of illness to be able to avoid seeing or writing to the Vidame. The hiding game inevitably leads to revelations: Madame de Thémynes says definitively: “Vous êtes bien surpris⁷⁹ que je vous parle de votre infidélité; vous me l'aviez cachée avec tant d'adresse” (210). This “*surpris*” indicates that she does not believe the Vidame capable of as much insight as she has (she claims she herself was surprised to have maintained the presence of mind not to let him see that she had made the discovery) and also provides a contrast to the many references to hiding in the letter. *Surprise*, similar to *étonnement*, or astonishment, according to Shattuck, refers to “a sudden and

⁷⁸ That the hiding of emotion by pretending illness can effect real illness is an unexpected outcome that will prove tragic later in the novel when Monsieur de Clèves, tortured by the fear that his wife has been unfaithful, dies of a broken heart.

⁷⁹ A phrase that is mirrored at the end of the letter: “vous m'avez trompée ; cela suffit pour m'ôter le plaisir d'être aimée de vous, comme je croyais mériter de l'être, et pour me laisser dans cette résolution que j'ai prise de ne vous voir jamais, et dont vous êtes si surpris” (212).

wrenching self-beholding” (113), where usually *étonnement* is used to describe the sensation characters feel when falling in love in Lafayette’s novels.⁸⁰ In this case, Madame de Thémynes combats the Vidame’s hiding of his infidelity with her own hidden motivations.

II

Je voulus avoir du temps pour résoudre de quelle sorte j'en devais user avec vous ; je pris et je quittai vingt fois les mêmes résolutions ; mais enfin je vous trouvai indigne de voir ma douleur, et je résolus de ne vous la point faire paraître. Je voulus blesser votre orgueil, en vous faisant voir que ma passion s'affaiblissait d'elle-même. Je crus diminuer par là le prix du sacrifice que vous en faisiez ; je ne voulus pas que vous eussiez le plaisir de montrer combien je vous aimais pour en paraître plus aimable. Je résolus de vous écrire des lettres tièdes et languissantes, pour jeter dans l'esprit de celle à qui vous les donniez, que l'on cessait de vous aimer. Je ne voulus pas qu'elle eut le plaisir d'apprendre que je savais qu'elle triomphait de moi, ni augmenter son triomphe par mon désespoir et par mes reproches. Je pensais que je ne vous punirais pas assez en rompant avec vous, et que je ne vous donnerais qu'une légère douleur si je cessais de vous aimer lorsque

⁸⁰ Surprise and astonishment are used together when Clèves first sees Mlle de Chartres: “Il fut tellement surpris de sa beauté, qu’il ne pût cacher sa surprise, et Mademoiselle de Chartres ne pût s’empêcher de rougir en voyant l’*étonnement* qu’elle luy avait donné” (138). Similarly, when the Princess must face the fact that she loves M. de Nemours, she is astonished at her own thoughts and does not know which way to turn or what to think.

vous ne m'aimiez plus. Je trouvai qu'il fallait que vous m'aimassiez pour sentir le mal de n'être point aimé, que j'éprouvais si cruellement. Je crus que si quelque chose pouvait rallumer les sentiments que vous aviez eus pour moi, c'était de vous faire voir que les miens étaient changés ; mais de vous le faire voir en feignant de vous le cacher, et comme si je n'eusse pas eu la force de vous l'avouer. Je m'arrêtai à cette résolution ; mais qu'elle me fut difficile à prendre, et qu'en vous revoyant elle me parut impossible à exécuter ! Je fus prête cent fois à éclater par mes reproches et par mes pleurs ; l'état où j'étais encore par ma santé me servit à vous déguiser mon trouble et mon affliction. Je fus soutenue ensuite par le plaisir de dissimuler avec vous, comme vous dissimuliez avec moi ; néanmoins, je me faisais une si grande violence pour vous dire et pour vous écrire que je vous aimais, que vous vîtes plus tôt que je n'avais eu dessein de vous laisser voir, que mes sentiments étaient changés. Vous en fûtes blessé ; vous vous en plaignîtes. Je tâchais de vous rassurer ; mais c'était d'une manière si forcée, que vous en étiez encore mieux persuadé que je ne vous aimais plus.

(I wanted time to decide how I should act toward you. Twenty times at least I formed and changed my decision ; but at last I judged you unworthy to see my grief, and I determined to hide it

from you. I wished to wound your pride by letting you see my love for you fade away. I thought thus to diminish the price of the sacrifice you made of it ; I did not wish you to have the pleasure of showing how much I loved you in order to appear more amiable. I resolved to write to you indifferent, dull letters, to suggest to the woman to whom you have them that you were loved less. I did not wish her to have the pleasure of learning that I knew of her triumph over me, or to add to her triumph by my despair and reproaches. I thought I could not punish you sufficiently by breaking with you, and that I should inflict but a slight pain if I ceased to love you when you had ceased to love me. I thought you must love me, if you were to know the pang of not being loved, which tormented me sorely. I thought that if anything could rekindle the feelings you had had for me, it was by showing that my own were changed, but to show this by pretending to hide it from you, as if I had not strength to tell you. I decided on this ; but how hard it was to do so, and when I saw you, how almost impossible to carry it out ! Hundreds of times I was ready to spoil all with my reproaches and tears. The state of my health helped me to conceal my emotion and distress. Afterward I was borne up by the pleasure of dissimulating to you as you dissimulated to me ; nevertheless I did myself such violence to tell you and to write to you that I loved you, that you saw sooner than I had intended that I

had not meant to let you see that my feelings were altered. You were wounded, and complained to me. I tried to reassure you, but in such an artificial way that you were more convinced than ever that I did not love you [49–50]).

The real illness that follows the feigned one further represents Madame de Thémynes's loss of power and self-possession. Like the Princess, who announces to M. de Nemours at the end of the novel that "les passions peuvent me conduire ; mais elles ne sauraient m'aveugler" (306), Madame de Thémynes needs to reassert her control over herself and over the relationship with the Vidame. To do so, she needs to surprise him; she needs to unhide her deceptions—or at least to pretend to reveal them all—in part to make him realize the truth about his own feelings. Madame de Thémynes's letter gives an account of her duplicitous actions, and how her dissimulation yielded exactly the effects she had desired: "Je crus que si quelque chose pouvait rallumer les sentiments que vous aviez eus pour moi, c'était de vous faire voir que les miens étaient changes" (211). The tone here becomes self-congratulatory, almost boastful. Whereas the Vidame had thought her a dupe, he in turn is duped by her. The most complicated part of the ruse is a deception to the second degree: "de vous faire voir que les miens (sentiments) étaient changés ; *mais de vous le faire voir en feignant de vous le cacher*, et comme si je n'eusse pas eu la force de vous l'avouer" (211, emphasis added), wherein 1) she made him think that her sentiments had changed—i.e. that she no longer loved him; but 2) she wants to make him think her love is cooled by the act of *pretending to hide less passionate feelings*. She claims that she felt "le plaisir de dissimuler avec vous, comme vous dissimuliez avec moi" (211) from making him jealous in the belief that she had become indifferent to him. When the Vidame is injured by

her coolness, she repeats the double deception: “Je tâchais de vous rassurer; mais c'était d'une manière si forcée, que vous en étiez encore mieux persuadé que je ne vous aimais plus” (212). Thus, Madame de Thémynes has realized that the best way to exact revenge on the Vidame's fickleness is to pretend to be indifferent. The reader sees her thought process very clearly in the descriptions of her double deceptions.

It is significant that Mme de Thémynes's letter affects the Princess most profoundly among all of the counter-examples that she receives (“[j]amais affliction n'a été si piquante et si vive” [212]⁸¹ [Never was affliction so cutting as hers]), and at the same time, it is the piece of intelligence that she obtains accidentally and without any proper guidance or instruction for how to interpret it. In Madame de Thémynes's letter, the Princess gains certain knowledge of herself—namely that she is capable of both love and jealousy, and that these emotions cause her more unease and disquiet than she had ever felt before. The subject of the letter is dissimulation and avowal, and the blurring of the lines between them, but ironically it is through the letter that the Princess is able to glance inside her own heart. Even more ironically, she does not understand anything in the letter at all, except that in incorrectly believing it was written to her lover. She must reread it several times, but she ultimately sees herself, as Lowrie puts it, as a female Narcissus, “looking at her own reflection in the mirror/letter” (49). It is through the letter that the Princess discovers that “elle se trompait elle-même” (212) (“she was deceiving herself” [50]):

[e]lle voyait seulement que monsieur de Nemours ne l'aimait pas
comme elle l'avait pensé Quelle vue et quelle connaissance

⁸¹ As Lowrie observes, a variation on this claim to singularity had just been written by Madame de Thémynes in the letter: ‘jamais douleur n'a été pareille à la mienne’ (211).

pour une personne de son humeur, qui avait une passion violente, qui venait d'en donner des marques à un homme qu'elle en jugeait indigne Elle voyait par cette lettre que Monsieur de Nemours avait une galanterie depuis longtemps. Elle trouvait que celle qui avait écrit la lettre avait de l'esprit et du mérite; elle lui paraissait digne d'être aimée (212).

...all that she made out was that Monsieur de Nemours did not love her as she had thought This was a grievous blow to a woman of her character, who was deeply in love and had just shown this to a man whom she deemed unworthy [T]his letter showed her that Monsieur de Nemours had had a love affair for some time. She thought that it attested to the writer's cleverness and worth, and she seemed a woman who deserved to be loved [50–1]).

Mme de Thémis's letter becomes crucial in deciphering the Princess's reading and misreading of the world around her, and like the other exempla and counter-exempla provided by Madame de Chartres and other characters, the letter should attempt to teach a lesson to the Princess. But the letter proves more challenging, cyclical, and intentionally ironic than any of the advice the Princess has received before. It is not surprising that she needs to reread it to try to understand it, as she frequently needs to reevaluate her own feelings and attempt to translate them. Since the letter has as its central topos the paradoxical confession of a deception, which is in itself another act of concealment, the letter, were she to understand it, would be a far better model for the

contradictory nature of a lover's heart than any advice that the Princess's mother or husband could give her.

III

Enfin, je fis tout ce que j'avais eu intention de faire. La bizarrerie de votre cœur vous fit revenir vers moi, à mesure que vous voyiez que je m'éloignais de vous. J'ai joui de tout le plaisir que peut donner la vengeance ; il m'a paru que vous m'aimiez mieux que vous n'aviez jamais fait, et je vous ai fait voir que je ne vous aimais plus. J'ai eu lieu de croire que vous aviez entièrement abandonné celle pour qui vous m'aviez quittée. J'ai eu aussi des raisons pour être persuadée que vous ne lui aviez jamais parlé de moi ; mais votre retour et votre discrétion n'ont pu réparer votre légèreté. Votre cœur a été partagé entre moi et une autre, vous m'avez trompée ; cela suffit pour m'ôter le plaisir d'être aimée de vous, comme je croyais mériter de l'être, et pour me laisser dans cette résolution que j'ai prise de ne vous voir jamais, et dont vous êtes si surpris.

(At last I succeeded in what I had meant to do. The capriciousness of your heart made you turn again toward me when you saw me leaving you. I have tasted all the joy of vengeance ; it has seemed

to me that you loved me better than ever, and I have shown you that I did not love you. I have had reason to believe that you had entirely abandoned her for whom you had left me. I have also had grounds for supposing that you never spoke to her of me. But your return and your desertion have not been able to make good your fickleness ; your heart has been divided between me and another ; you have deceived me : that is enough to deprive me of the pleasure of being loved by you as I thought I deserved, and to fix me in the resolution that I had formed never to see you again, which so surprises you [50]).

Why does Madame de Thémynes even write the letter if she is satisfied with the outcome of the finished relationship with the Vidame? I suggested above that she is boasting. Indeed, she writes: “J’ai joui de tout le plaisir que peut donner la vengeance” (212). But a careful reader must ask whether this is the whole story; Madame de Thémynes lets the Vidame know that she is aware that the “bizarrerie de (son) cœur ” led him to revive his passion for her following her deception. If he is already suffering from his unrequited love for her, a situation she is satisfied to have orchestrated herself, why does she need to confess this to him? Is it possible, as Aciman proposes, that she is attempting to reopen the affair? Is she protesting too much when she announces once again at the end of the letter that she is determined to keep “cette résolution que j’ai prise de ne vous voir jamais, et dont vous êtes si surprise” (212)? Since the story of Madame de Thémynes and the Vidame de Chartres is never resolved for the reader, it is impossible to say for sure. However, in the realm of analytical fiction, the satisfaction of revenge is no true ending;

the letter reopens the affair by its very existence, and whether it serves as a reminder of a former love, as a confession, or as boast, is ambiguous. Besides, how can a document that confesses to so many lies possibly tell the whole truth? Madame de Thémynes has not regained her power in the relationship indefinitely. Instead, the letter serves to show that no passion, no behavior, and certainly no belief is constant and unchanging. For these reasons, I disagree with part of Lowrie's reading of the letter's relationship to the Princess's feelings, in relation to the final dialogue between Nemours and Mme de Clèves that repeats the word *jamais*. Lowrie writes that the "final and irrevocable *jamais*" is a resolve, a final statement, like that of Mme de Thémynes. Perhaps the machinations of dissimulation that Madame de Thémynes explains in her letter come close to offering us a map of the psyches represented in this novel, but I cannot see how the letter represents her last word or a final statement on the matter.

The stories of Madame de Tournon and Madame de Thémynes in many ways foreshadow the end of the story for Monsieur and Madame de Clèves, and also provide alternative modes of behavior that inform the Princess's renunciation of love at the end of the novel. However, these embedded narratives should not be read as moral tales in the conventional sense. All of the intercalated stories in the novel function more like *nouvelles* in and of themselves, tireless in their analytical maneuvering and dazzling in their layers upon layers of insights and counter-insights and their examples of dissimulation and discovery. The Vidame's story, like Madame de Thémynes's letter, about the way in which he deceived the queen and managed to carry on affairs with three other women simultaneously, certainly stands on its own as an impressive account of a high-stakes mental chess game between two powerful opponents.⁸² And while there is certainly a

⁸² While the Vidame is in love with Madame de Thémynes and at the same time another, anonymous woman, the queen approaches him and asks for his absolute confidence. She

cautionary “don’t try this at home” undertone to these stories, there is no indication that Lafayette means to morally condemn the Vidame or Madame de Tournon or any of the other characters who cheat. On the contrary, the gambits of these skilled courtiers are impressive in their complexity and danger, and even if the narrator does not overtly wonder at them, the reader certainly does.

What, then, is the nature of virtue in Lafayette’s work? It is dubious whether there is a straightforward sense of morality evidenced in *The Princess of Clèves*. Virtue as a Christian principle does not exist in this novel,⁸³ given the lack of any mention of religion. Instead, it is a worldview similar to that depicted in Pascal’s *Pensée* 674, which tells us that there is no such thing as virtue in this world, but rather that “[n]ous ne nous soutenons pas dans la vertu par notre propre force, mais par le contrepoids de deux vices opposés, comme nous demeurons debout

demande to know who his lovers are, because she feels she cannot confide in someone who is in love; “Ils sont trop distraits et trop partagés, et leur maîtresse leur fait une première occupation qui ne s’accorde point avec la manière dont je veux que vous soyez attaché à moi” (221). When the Vidame claims there is no one with whom he is in love, she threatens him, saying that he is being watched “même des personnes intéressées. On vous observe, on sait les lieux où vous voyez votre maîtresse, on a dessein de vous y surprendre” (218). The Vidame again chooses to lie to her and tell her that he has no mistress. He says: “Je voyais aussi le péril où je m’exposais en trompant la reine et combien il était difficile de la tromper; . . . Je rompis avec cette femme dont on pouvait découvrir le commerce, et j’espérai de cacher celui que j’avais avec Mme de Thémises” (220). Thus, the Vidame hopes to gain the intimacy of the queen and yet continue seeing Madame de Thémises. Having broken off his affair with the unnamed woman, the Vidame, for some inexplicable reason, begins an affair with a third woman, Madame de Martigues. It is because of her that things begin to fall apart: Madame de Thémises, who had been aware of the Vidame’s relationship with the unnamed woman, hence her passionate letter, continues to remain cold to him; his distress at this leads him to start slipping in his relationship with the queen, who suspects the Vidame of being unfaithful to her, and she begins to try to catch him at it. This is why the Vidame is so desperate at having lost Madame de Thémises’s letter; it is about to make its way to the queen.

⁸³ See Lawrence Gregorio’s “Ideals and Ideas: Platonism in *La Princesse De Clèves*.” For an argument in favor of reading a small degree of Christianity into *La Princesse de Clèves*, see Leanna Bridge Lezvani’s “Marguerite de Navarre’s *Heptaméron*; the Inspiration Behind *La Princesse de Clèves*.”

entre deux vents contraires. Otez un de ces vices nous tombons dans l'autre"⁸⁴ ("We do not keep ourselves virtuous by our own power, but by the counterbalance of two opposing vices, just as we stay upright between two contrary winds. Take one of these vices away and we fall into the other" [214]). Characters in analytical fiction in general cannot necessarily achieve virtue in a conventional sense, but they can learn to recognize the opposing vices that create the equilibrium that mimics it. Although the vocabulary of "virtue" and "exemplarity" is threaded through the narrative, it is something besides moral goodness that makes the Princess abstain from love at the end. Dissimulation of indifference is what protects the self from the self; as Alain Niderst puts it, "(l)a dissimulation est une valeur. Elle atteste la maîtrise de soi" (56) that was so prized in Renaissance court culture. In *The Princess of Clèves*, the way to do this is through abstention from love and passions. As Madame de Chartres insists at the beginning of the novel, the absence of trouble or pain is the closest one can get to virtue, and even if the Princess cannot manage to achieve this absence, she can at least pretend to.

When the Princess sees Nemours just before the episode with the letter, the story of Madame de Tournon is still fresh in her mind. Nemours visits Madame de Clèves in her room, and he speaks almost openly to her of his love, or at least he claims that a great change has come over him: "c'est de devenir entièrement opposé à ce que l'on était, et de n'avoir plus d'ambition, ni de plaisir, après avoir été toute sa vie occupé de l'un et de l'autre" (192–3). Nemours's renunciation of his previous life has the effect of making the Princess feel pleasure and pain simultaneously. She finds his language too open, too "readable":

⁸⁴ <http://www.ub.uni-freiburg.de/fileadmin/ub/referate/04/pascal/pensees.pdf> Accessed 12/20/2010.

Le discours de monsieur de Nemours lui plaisait et l'offensait quasi également ; elle y voyait la confirmation de tout ce que lui avait fait penser madame la dauphine ; elle y trouvait quelque chose de galant et de respectueux, mais aussi quelque chose de hardi et de trop intelligible (193).

(The remarks of Monsieur de Nemours pleased and offended her equally; she saw in them a confirmation of what the crown princess had made her think,—she found them full of gallantry and respect, but also bold and only too clear [39]).

Here we see another recognition and admission of the Princess's feelings. Not surprisingly, the tacit understanding and the quiet intimacy that builds in this scene between Nemours and Madame de Clèves is abruptly interrupted by the entrance of the Monsieur de Clèves, coming, ironically, to tell her more news of Sancerre. While Clèves is speaking, the Princess realizes that she cannot deny her feelings for Nemours any longer. She gives up hope of being indifferent to him, and instead resolves to avoid him as much as she can so as to remain, to paraphrase Pascal, balanced between two vices: her guilt at not feeling “correctly” about her husband and her guilt for loving Nemours.

Yet, it is impossible for the Princess to stay away from the court and from the Duc. Just as Madame de Clèves pronounces that she will avoid society, in the following paragraph the narrator announces that she is present at the King's palace for a grand tournament. We see Madame de Clèves react without being able to control her emotion in the episode in which the

Princess sees Nemours fall off his horse. She cannot master her anguish at seeing him possibly hurt and she accidentally divulges her feelings:

Ce lui était une grande douleur de voir qu'elle n'était plus maîtresse de cacher ses sentiments, et de les avoir laissé paraître au chevalier de Guise. Elle en avait aussi beaucoup que Monsieur de Nemours les connût; mais cette dernière douleur n'était pas si entière, et elle était mêlée de quelque sorte de douceur (209)

She was deeply pained to see that she could not control her emotions, and had even made them manifest to the Chevalier de Guise. It distressed her, too, to perceive that Monsieur de Nemours had seen them; but this distress was tempered by a certain pleasure [49]).

Here again the Princess's anguish, mixed with a slight pleasure at realizing that he has recognized her concern for him, amounts, in the restrained nature of analytical fiction, to practically *flirting* with the Duc.

Passions in *The Princess of Clèves* are never felt in a straightforward manner. Love is always concomitant with jealousy, pleasure always with fear and pain. The passage cited above is immediately followed by a disappointment; though Madame de Clèves had just been made to feel by Nemours that he correctly interpreted her concern for him as a sign of her love, this certainty is overturned in the next scene in which the Princess reads Madame de Thémines's

letter and believes it to be addressed to Nemours. This leads her to realize that Pascal's balance between two vices is far too painful and upsetting a way of life.

Still, in terms of the question of virtue, as François points out, the Princess's ultimate decision to leave her love unconsummated is without consequence as well: "Her husband profits so little from her faithfulness to him that, where he is concerned, she might as well have committed the physical act of adultery . . . Her virtue is as free of effect as her passion is innocent of consequence" (68). The Princess was raised by her mother to believe in a sort of virtue and calm that is incompatible with the society in which they live. Once she no longer has her mother to guide her in the "right" direction, the Princess must, alone, face this society head-on. But the gossiping, scheming, dissimulating court can never really be challenged; like a machine, it attempts to swallow up the Princess and make her a part of it. She does manage to resist the allure of an intrigue with Nemours, but the fact that she does not actually effect any change in virtue in anyone else, and that even her own virtue is inconsequential, points to the court and its amoral ways as an unstoppable, preeminent power in *The Princess of Clèves*.

After reading Madame de Thémis's letter, even after the Princess has been disabused about its being written to Nemours, she still cannot shake the feeling of having felt the bitter pains of jealousy, of the "cruels repentirs et aux mortelles douleurs que donne l'amour" (237) ("the cruel repentance and mortal anguish that are inseparable from love [64]):

Quoique les soupçons que lui avait donnés cette lettre fussent effacés, ils ne laissèrent *pas de lui ouvrir les yeux sur* le hasard d'être trompée, et de lui donner des impressions de défiance et de jalousie qu'elle n'avait jamais eues. Elle fut étonnée de n'avoir

point encore pensé combien il était peu vraisemblable qu'un homme comme Monsieur de Nemours, qui avait toujours fait paraître tant de légèreté parmi les femmes, fût capable d'un attachement sincère et durable. Elle trouva qu'il était presque impossible qu'elle pût être contente de sa passion (236)

Although the suspicions that this letter had aroused were wholly removed, they opened her eyes to the danger of being deceived, and gave her impressions of mistrust and jealousy such as she had never felt before. She was astounded that she had never yet thought how improbable it was that a man like Monsieur de Nemours, who had always treated women with such fickleness, should be capable of a sincere and lasting attachment. She thought it was almost impossible that she could ever be satisfied with his love [64]).

She realizes that the danger in loving Nemours is the danger of losing herself. She even acknowledges: “Je suis vaincue et surmontée par une inclination qui m'entraîne malgré moi” (237) (“I am overwhelmed by an affection which carries me away in spite of myself” [64]). The Princess’s words “malgré moi” indicate that her love for Nemours risks overtaking, and thus annihilating, her entire psyche.

As time goes on, the Prince becomes increasingly jealous, not a little bit because Nemours boasts to his friend about being in love and being loved back (though, of course, he is not entirely sure that the Princess *does* love him). The story of the Princess’s avowal then

circulates: Nemours tells the Vidame a story about an anonymous woman who has made such a confession to her husband, the Vidame tells his lover, the lover tells her friends, it travels to the Reine Dauphine who then summons Madame de Clèves to hear the story, and Nemours happens to be present during this discussion. Thus, as Gilbert Chaitin points out, “the message [returns] to its sender, reversed” (297). Although the Prince is sympathetic to Sancerre’s situation when he recounts the affair with Madame de Tournon, the Prince cannot stomach the rumors propagating through the court, even though no one knows that the rumors concern him.

Eventually, Clèves’s passions swell to such proportions that he loses control of his senses entirely and seems to go almost mad. When he becomes not only violently jealous but admits to his wife how he feels, he also loses his strict, calm, calculating persona. He has Nemours followed by a friend, but this spy does not return any reliable evidence:

Sitôt qu’il le vit, il jugea, par son visage et par son silence, qu’il n’avait que des choses fâcheuses à lui apprendre. Il demeura quelque temps saisi d’affliction, la tête baissée sans pouvoir parler; enfin, il lui fit signe de la main de se retirer: —Allez, lui dit-il, je vois ce que vous avez à me dire; mais je n’ai pas la force de l’écouter (288)

([a]s soon as Monsieur de Clèves saw him, he read in his expression and his silence that he had brought only bad news. He remained for some time overwhelmed with grief, his head bowed, unable to speak; then he motioned to him to withdraw. ‘Go,’ he

said; 'I see what you have to tell me, but I ma not strong enough to hear it' [93]).

His basis for believing that his wife has been unfaithful to him is, in fact, a lack of information. As Lyons points out, Clèves's spy tells him that he has nothing to report, only that Nemours entered the garden where the Princess was staying at Coulommiers, once alone, and once with his sister. "This succinct report frames a void into which the Prince de Clèves can project his interpretation, although he has no apparent consciousness of freedom that is offered to him by this void" (175). Faced with this paradoxical certainty of his wife's unfaithfulness, or really her potential for unfaithfulness, Clèves thinks he will die of sorrow (241). He confronts his wife, and seems to have lost his reason:

Comment pouviez-vous espérer que je conservasse de la raison ?
Vous aviez donc oublié que je vous aimais éperdument et que
j'étais votre mari ? L'un des deux peut porter aux extrémités : que
ne peuvent point les deux ensemble ? . . . [J]e n'ai que des
sentiments violents et incertains dont je ne suis pas le maître. Je ne
me trouve plus digne de vous ; vous ne me paraissez plus digne de
moi. Je vous adore, je vous hais ; je vous offense, je vous demande
pardon ; je vous admire, j'ai honte de vous admirer. Enfin il n'y a
plus en moi ni de calme ni de raison...vous m'avez rendu le plus
malheureux homme du monde (276-7).

How could you expect me to retain my self-control? Have you forgotten that I loved you madly and that I was your husband? Either case is enough to drive a man wild: what must it be when the two combine? . . . I am torn by wild and uncertain feelings that I cannot control; I find myself no longer worthy of you—you seem no more worthy of me. I adore you and I hate you; I offend you, and I beg your pardon; I admire you, and I am ashamed of my admiration—in a word, I have lost all my calmness, all my reason . . . [Y]ou have made me the unhappiest man in the world (86–7).

The Prince's heart having been broken, he feels conquered. His speech is composed of contradictions and binaries, and his comprehension of himself, his wife, and the world has disintegrated into ambivalence. Here we are privileged to his thoughts, but there is no insight or reading required to access them; he is no longer able to dissimulate or hide anything and the whole exercise of sign reading disappears into the background for a short time. Having lost his reason when he confronts his wife, Clèves immediately becomes ill. On his deathbed, he shows his anger and threatens his wife that no one will love her the way he did. To lose control and to express emotion in this novel is to lose one's self, one's ability to control one's speech, one's thoughts, to see properly. I would argue that Clèves's death should be interpreted as the death of the strategically constructed self under which, ultimately, are left only uncertainty, fear, and pain. At the same time, however, at the end, the Prince decides that he has learned all that he can about his wife, and that he does not like it. The fact that his information about his wife's infidelity is false hardly matters any longer. Like the Princess, who had decided long before that she would

not pursue her attraction to Nemours, the Prince realizes that the only knowledge he can have for certain is that knowledge is impossible.

After the death of her husband, the Princess vacillates between suffering from loving Nemours and punishing herself for having caused the Prince's death. She is alternately happy and devastated at that happiness:

Elle s'abandonna à ces réflexions si contraires à son Bonheur; elle les fortifia encore de plusieurs raisons qui regardaient son repos et les maux qu'elle prévoyait en épousant [Nemours]. Enfin . . . elle s'en revint chez elle, persuade qu'elle devait fuir sa vue comme une chose entièrement opposée `a son devoir. Mais cette persuasion, qui était un effet de sa raison et de sa vertu, n'entraînait pas son Cœur. Il demeurait attaché à M. de Nemours avec une violence qui la mettait dans un état digne de compassion et qui ne lui laissa plus de repos (298–9).

She gave herself up to these reflections, which were so hostile to her happiness, and confirmed them by many arguments concerning her peace of mind and the evils she foresaw in case she married [Nemours]. At last . . . she returned home, convinced that she ought to avoid the sight of him as a real obstacle to her duty. But this conviction, the product of reason and virtue, did not control her

heart, which remained attached to Monsieur de Nemours with a violence that reduced her to the most restless and pitiable state (99).

Although the narrator claims that these are new feelings for the Princess, there are a number of examples from earlier in the text when she feels just as overwhelmed and divided by her passion for Nemours, her sense of duty, her feelings of shame, and her desire to remain untroubled by love. This last example of her suffering from not being able to reconcile her heart and her mind is, in fact, a return to old feelings.

In her final conversation with Nemours, after her husband has died, the Princess claims that the nature of love is so fickle that she fears that if they marry he will eventually love her less. More likely, however, the adieu, like Clèves' death, is the Princess's only option out of an epistemological abyss. She admits:

Je sais bien qu'il n'y a rien de plus difficile que ce que j'entreprends . . . je me défie de mes forces au milieu de mes raisons. Ce que je crois devoir à la mémoire de M. de Clèves serait faible s'il n'était soutenu par l'intérêt de mon repos; et les raisons de mon repos ont besoin d'être soutenues de celles de mon devoir . . . Mais, quoique je me défie de moi-même, je crois que je ne vaincrai jamais mes scrupules et je n'espère pas aussi de surmonter l'inclination que j'ai pour vous. . . . [L]a seule bienséance interdit tout commerce entre nous (308).

I know that there is nothing harder than what I undertake; I mistrust my own strength, supported by all my arguments. What I think due to the memory of Monsieur de Clèves would be ineffectual, if it were not reinforced by my anxiety for my own peace of mind; and these arguments need to be strengthened by those of duty. But though I mistrust myself, I think I shall never overcome my scruples, and I do not hope to overcome my interest in you [M]ere etiquette forbids that we should meet (104).

In the passage above, the Princess even admits that she knows her self-imposed exile will be difficult to maintain, and that her reasons, namely duty, propriety, and her desire for *repos*, are merely constructs that she invents herself (“je sacrifice beaucoup à un devoir qui ne subsiste que dans mon imagination” (309) (“I make a great sacrifice to a duty which exists only in my imagination” [105])).

Strangely, Nemours reacts to the Princess’s circular logic as if it is another positive sign: He “était si plein de joie, de tristesse, d’étonnement et d’admiration, enfin, de tous les sentiments que peut donner une passion pleine de crainte et d’espérance, qu’il n’avait pas l’usage de la raison” (309) (“was in such a whirl of joy, sadness, surprise, and admiration—in short, so possessed by all the emotions that spring from a passion full of hope and dread,—that he seemed beside himself” [105]). Nemours confides in the Vidame what has just happened, and they both agree that the Princess will never hold fast in her resolution. Indeed, she spends the whole night again taking stock of all her arguments, and still feeling a passionate love for Nemours. Only a

few pages from the end of the novel, there still seems, at least to Nemours and to the Vidame, and perhaps even to the Princess herself, to be hope for love.

In the end, what causes the Princess to stay resolved in her decision to distance herself from Nemours is actually a violent illness. When she recovers, she feels a change in herself:

[c]ette vue si longue et si prochaine de la mort fit paraître à madame de Clèves les choses de cette vie de cet œil si différent dont on les voit dans la santé. La nécessité de mourir, dont elle se voyait si proche, l'accoutuma à se détacher de toutes choses, et la longueur de sa maladie lui en fit une habitude (313).

([t]his long and near view of death enabled Madame de Clèves to judge mundane matters in a very different spirit from that of health. Her imminent peril taught her indifference to everything, and the length of her illness enforced this upon her [107]).

Here again is present the vocabulary of seeing and appearing, but in a new context. The contradiction between the view of death, both “si longue” and “si prochaine” in the passage above is striking. In this intermediate space, the narrator tells us that the Princess gained the necessary vision to put her life into perspective. In life, as her mother had guessed, she was teetering on the edge of a steep precipice⁸⁵—that is, her love for Nemours. As she hovers near

⁸⁵ According to Louis A. MacKenzie, “[t]he term précipice resonates in a particularly incisive way with the Jansenist sensibility” (41); the affinity of précipice with its synonym abîme, in

death, she is able not to realign herself and regain the balance that she lacked while healthy, but rather to close herself off more completely than she could before and make herself less legible than ever. In the ambiguity of seeing death approaching for a long period of time, the Princess distances herself from the world. She manages to recover from this illness; in almost losing her life, she learns what it means to abnegate the emotions and live a tranquil—though not necessarily happy—existence. She learns through the example of her husband that love is entirely narcissistic, self-centered, and one sided. It is motivated by inescapable and all consuming *amour-propre*, and having been the target of her husband's self-love, she is cured of it herself.

During her illness the Princess learns to renounce the desire for self-knowledge. Just as she transcends the *douleur sensible* that afflicts her throughout the novel, she becomes capable of restraining, but also of not feeling, the obsessive need to decode and understand that which is around her. In fact, she moves into an extreme state, that of utter solitude and self-abnegation. Here again are indifference and inaction. She lives half the year in a convent and half the year at home, but “dans une retraite et dans des occupations plus saintes que celles des couvents les plus austères” (“constantly employed herself in exercises more holy than the severest convents can pretend to”), and she dies a short time later. For Domna Stanton, the Princess is “in the end, physically independent, emotionally and morally self-sufficient” and represents “the virtuous, fixed, atemporal, and self-sufficient state to which Mme de Lafayette's heroine rises” (101). But this description of stability and self-sufficiency does not seem to concur with the isolation and self-imposed punishment in which the Princess lives her last days. I do not believe that the

Pascal's *Pensées* signals the need for “a program of self-denial and -abnegation undertaken in the service of loftier principles” (MacKenzie 42).

Princess's decisions "reveal the rewards of temperance and abstinence over those of indulgence and hedonism. Not prudery and fear impel these stories but, rather, a vital role assigned to the imagination in grasping life and upholding one's identity" (Shattuck 109–10). In this way Shattuck sees abstinence in the *roman d'analyse* as conscious and definitive, and ultimately a positive choice made by the character. And yet, after all the choices are made, there remains something fundamentally inhibited, something that remains ambivalent and unresolved that could resurface at any moment.

Comparing this ending with the ending of Madame de Thémynes's letter yields some parallels. Neither woman is necessarily content in her decision; the pain of renunciation is only somewhat lesser than that of pursuing love. The letter ends with Madame de Thémynes telling the Vidame that "votre retour et votre discrétion n'ont pu réparer votre légèreté;" in other words, the damage is already done, and she will not love him in the same naive and untroubled way again. Similarly, although Nemours never betrays the Princess, she feels deceived and disappointed by love in general, no less for having been exposed to these negative examples of behavior from Madame de Thémynes and others. In a discourse on love—and it is clear that Madame de Clèves and Monsieur de Nemours actually love each other—we see pain and pleasure cohabiting in the characters. But the only solution out of the quagmire of repetition and revision of painful love is to remove oneself from the story.

Should the ending of *The Princess of Clèves* be read in terms of Stoicism? As Stanton has shown, one of the meanings of "repose" in this era was a lack of movement, of stillness. Many seventeenth-century Neostoicists equated movement with dangerous passion and an unruly stirring up of the soul, but the Princess's specific brand of Stoicism at the end of Lafayette's

novel is what keeps her from making a decision for so long.⁸⁶ In the end, she chooses the extinguishing of love over fear of later rejection. Martin Pokorny sees the Princess as a Stoic whose *repos* is inherently detrimental:

the Princess stands out as a Stoic: the text, assuming as it does a virtual synonymy of sanctity and austerity, immediately brings to mind the characteristic notion of *askesis*. Yet just as significantly, the description does nothing to protect the Princess from objections usually raised against Stoicism. Any mention of *bonheur*, *repos*, or autonomy is conspicuously missing; throughout the novel, virtue has functioned negatively, as an obstacle, a check to passions (Pokorny 2–3).

In this view, the Princess and the narrator who tells her story are really skeptics. The kind of relative virtue that Pascal describes as a balance of two vices has impeded the passions, but it has not supported the cause of reason, either. Rather than spiritual exercise at the end of the novel,

⁸⁶ In contrast to Plato's distinction between soul and body, where the passions reside, the Stoic view that passions acted on the soul from some external force (Leary, *Metaphors in the History of Psychology*, 108), was commonplace for the development of later ideas as well (though he insisted that he wrote from no earlier sources Descartes also believed in the soul as the seat of the passions as well). The Stoic model taught that self-knowledge is attainable through the will of reason. Epictetus' *Enchiridion* of Stoic governance, for example, teaches that "freedom from passions, liberty, [and] tranquility" can be achieved. "You must either cultivate your own ruling faculty, or external things; you must either exercise your skill on internal things or on external things; that is, you must either maintain the position of a philosopher or that of a common person" (XXIX). Epictetus does not allow much room for enumeration of particular feelings, and about behavior merely says that we would "like an ape . . . imitate everything that [we] see, and one thing after another pleases [us]" (XXIX) if we were to follow our sensual emotions rather than what is reasonable. Nevertheless, the Stoics' relationship to literature is contradictory; see Martha Nussbaum's *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*.

Pokorny sees, rightly, the Princess's self-denial and self-sequestering as an objection to living in the world. But beyond that it is the only kind of ending that she can have from the repetition of a necessarily cyclical, painful love.

Fundamental is the fact that the Princess does not only reject the *passions*, but *reason* as well. There is no apparent logic that she can apply to understand the world through reason, because, as her mother says at the beginning of the novel, appearances are always deceiving. Thus, Lafayette searches for a third solution for her heroine, having found both reason and passion ill fitting as governing agents of behavior. The Princess, in rejecting the world, necessarily rejects the world of Madame de Thémis, in which all endings are arbitrary and relationships can be ended and reopened at will. The Princess sees this cyclicity as bringing nothing but pain, and she fears a similar outcome, or, we should say, lack of outcome, as befalls Madame de Thémis. In many ways, her self-imposed austerity at the end of the novel is motivated by a fear of reopening her relationship with Nemours. She must seclude herself in the harshest of conditions so that she does not relapse into the pattern that she manifested throughout the novel. *Repos* provides rest and inaction only on the most literal level. As Pokorny points out, at the end of the novel, it is not that the Princess is finally allowed to retire happily to her garden (the Epicurean ideal), but she fails to achieve this goal and she feels the need to punish herself for it. In other words, her realization of herself as a failure—having failed at having a happy marriage and having failed at truly remaining indifferent to Nemours—unbalances the Princess's sense of self. While the narrator tells us that she dies an "inimitable example," there remains an indecision, or perhaps skepticism, in this statement. She has just finished recounting the painful end of the Princess's short life. Madame de Clèves is certainly not a model of virtue, for virtue would imply happiness. Who is it that believes Mme de Clèves is an "inimitable example"? It

seems unlikely that the Princess is able to convince herself that she is a positive example for all women, and the narrator, as if staring from a mirror in the deep background, does not appear to think so either.

Chapter 5: Self as the “Grand Misleader” in *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison*

“But *self* here, which is at the bottom of all we do,
and of all we wish, is the grand misleader”

–*Clarissa* C3, 2:378-9.

“Young women in a beginning love are always willing
to conceal themselves from themselves; they are
desirous to smother the fire, before they will call out for
help, till it blazes, and frequently becomes too powerful
to be extinguished by *any* help. They will call the
passion by another name; as *gratitude*, suppose; but, my
Harriet, gratitude so properly founded as yours is, can be
but another name for love”

–*The History of Sir Charles Grandison* 1:212.

I began this dissertation by writing that the term “psychological fiction” is too imprecise and vague, and I have already stated that analytical fiction, though it is tempting to define it as *psychological*, does not lead to the nineteenth-century realistic novel. The way in which psyches read other psyches in analytical fiction represents a completely different lens than the one through which nineteenth century realism examines psychology. As Nicholas D. Paige writes in his preface to his English translation of Lafayette’s *Zayde*,

When most readers today think of “the” novel . . . it is in fact a certain type of novel that comes as if naturally to mind—the realist novel that, we have been taught, ‘rose’ triumphantly over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries This view is not so much wrong as incomplete: other vibrant fictional genres were practiced before and alongside the development of the realist novel (1).

Brooks’s *The Novel of Worldliness* identifies a sub-type of novel that takes place in a closed society and coolly analyzes the thoughts and motivations of the characters who inhabit it. It is this study that serves as a jumping-off point for my own investigations here. Yet my dissertation opens the field wider to both earlier and later texts, some of which, like the novels of Richardson (because they do not take place in an aristocratic society), Brooks does not see as belonging to the novel of worldliness. In my view, the world of epistolary fiction is especially confined, since characters in these types of novels interact only by reading each other’s innermost thoughts, spying on each other, and intercepting and forging letters. By definition, epistolary novels, especially those so little driven by plot as *Clarissa* and *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, are defined by a narrow and, indeed, closed, set of data. Brooks examines a narrow body of French texts inscribed by the very notion of *mondanité*, i.e., written in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French salon society, as a distinct kind of psychological fiction. For Brooks, novels of worldliness do not “depend . . . on narrative movement and the creation of a sense of passing time.” Instead, they “resolve themselves into scenes which represent and summarize aspects of human experience in society more than they advance the action” (91–2). Like the moral portrait,

which “summarizes and fixes [a] whole life . . . in order to perform a critical census of society” (Brooks 51), fiction too, for Brooks, is a closed performance and a final word; not only the search for knowledge, but its discovery. Or perhaps Brooks means that the characters painted in novels of worldliness do not have individual consciousness, but rather represent types, or, as La Bruyère puts it, “less a particular character than collection of examples of distraction” (*De l’homme*, No. 7, quoted in Barthes 233). We can compare Brooks’s use of “worldliness” to Roland Barthes’s definition of a closed society as “an enclosure” that “guarantees access to the psychological and the social without passing through the political” (227), from his essay on La Bruyère that appeared around the same time as Brooks’s study. The “closed” society of this certain type of psychological fiction functions by removing itself, ironically, from the heroic, political, legal, financial, and one might say, practical, world and enclosing itself in a world made up of minds attempting to read other minds. In a text like *Clarissa*, which does not take place in an aristocratic milieu, the closed society is formed, as we will see in this chapter, by a feeling of being trapped and enclosed. As Pingaud points out, a closed society remains impenetrable in the sense of Sartre’s *Huis Clos*: “La loi de cette société est l’apparence C’est l’enfer tel que l’imagine Sartre, un monde clos où chacun n’existe que dans la conscience des autres” (82) (“The law of this society is appearance It is hell as imagined by Sartre, a closed world where everyone exists only in the minds of others”).

The novelistic sub-genre that Brooks defines is based on Roman Jakobson’s distinction between “metaphoric” and “metonymic” fiction, where metonymic fiction is marked by passing time and an interest in atmosphere, history, and context, and works of metaphoric fiction “arrest action and fix life in order to permit final knowledge” (*The Novel of Worldliness* 92). It is around the matter of permitting final knowledge—or in other words, perhaps, the completion of the

metaphor—where my study disagrees with Brooks. Here I examine the other side of Brooks’s “worldliness,” both its opposite and its complement: sociability’s attendant interiority and analytical probing, again, the motif of reading that permeates analytical fiction as a sub-genre, which is not necessarily linked to aristocratic literature only. The particular distinction I am making here can also be compared to the one Northrop Frye makes in his designation of the realistic novel as a medium that diagnoses social diseases, and another kind of fiction that Frye calls the “anatomy” type and that is concerned with dissection, analysis, and the diagnosis of intellectual diseases rather than social ones⁸⁷. In the last few years, a “new” history of the novel has been emerging, concerning itself with “literary causes and effects rather than theories of writing” (Spacks, *Novel Beginnings* 4). I wish this dissertation to contribute to such a new, alternative history of the novel’s literary causes and effects.

In this chapter I argue that *Clarissa, or, The History of a Young Lady* (1748) and *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753) demonstrates the affinities between the fiction of sensibility and what I am calling analytical fiction. In particular, I show that there are strong links between the pessimistic view of love taken in *The Princess of Clèves* and the anti-romantic stance regarding marriage evidenced in *Clarissa* and *Grandison*. Anti-romanticism as a motif highlights Clarissa’s, Harriet’s, and Clementina’s self-deception and ambivalence about love, and in the case of Clarissa and Clementina, their ultimate withdrawal from love. Even Harriet, whose story ends in marriage, is skeptical about love and for much of the novel, is self-deceived about her own feelings for Charles. Harriet’s inclination, as we will see, is to actively deny love while her letters reveal, accidentally, how she truly feels.

⁸⁷ See especially pages 308-312 of *Anatomy of Criticism*.

Like *The Princess of Clèves*, both *Clarissa* and *Grandison* are stories about love rather than love stories. Clarissa's life ends, like the Princess's, with a refusal of love, and even though the main narrative of *Grandison* concludes happily with a number of marriages, it must cope with the almost-tragic story of Clementina, whose story ends with continued deferral of love and marriage, and thus with the motifs of inhibited, unconsummated desire. Like *The Princess of Clèves*, Richardson's novels explore the impossibility of mapping the psyche and the subjective nature of attempting to analyze the thoughts and actions of others. Whenever characters believe that they understand how another's mind works, what another character's motivations are, they become lost "in a sort of wilderness" (*Grandison* 1.284) or "in a wilderness of doubt and error" (*Clarissa* 565)⁸⁸. Knowledge is controlled and limited by what gets put into letters and by who is privileged to read them, and even when honesty is continuously touted as a goal—especially in *Grandison*—the letters themselves evidence more hiding and dissimulating than frankness. The characters in Richardson's novels are just as self-deceived and confused about how to read themselves and one another as are the characters in any other work of analytical fiction.

One of the first comparisons of Richardson's work to French literature was made by Denis Diderot, who gushes over *Clarissa* (which he had read in the Abbé Prévost's incomplete translation) in his *Éloge de Richardson*. He offers the English author the ultimate praise, that he thinks and writes like a Frenchman: "Tout ce que Montaigne, Charron, La Rochefoucauld et

⁸⁸ The technique of letter writing aids this as well, especially in the "clumsy" (Kahler, 153) way in which Richardson handles epistles: "Deeper psychological penetration was furthered by another innovation, which the epistolary technique made possible: splitting the point of view. The same event is described by different persons in terms of their special nature, the narrator immersing himself in these characters By this amorphous structure Richardson succeeds in showing the deep consistency of fates originating from within the characters. Choderlos de Laclos, a greater artist of lesser force, who rid the epistolary technique of all its excrescences and achieved complete formal mastery of it, failed in his *Liaisons dangereuses* to achieve anything like the fateful if ponderous impact of *Clarissa*" (Kahler 153).

Nicole ont mis en maxime, Richardson l'a mis en action. . . . [In Richardson] J'avais entendu les vrais discours des passions; j'avais vu les ressorts de l'intérêt et de l'amour-propre jouer en cent façons diverses" (213) ("Everything that Montaigne, Charron, La Rochefoucauld, and Nicole wrote in the maxim, Richardson has rendered into action [In Richardson] I have heard a real discourse on the passions; I have seen the mainsprings of affection and of self-love depicted a hundred different ways"). The encomium compares Richardson's insights to those of some of the most influential moralists of the seventeenth century in France, but in a way that, like *The Princess of Clèves*, puts the maxim into narrative. According to Diderot, Richardson makes the tradition of *moralisme* come to life in a new century. He reads it as a sentimental work, modeling his ebullient encomium in some ways on the style with which Richardson's characters write, legitimizing the novel of thought and feeling as a new literary form.

Clarissa is narrated through a series of letters, roughly half of which are written by Clarissa Harlowe to Anna Howe, her best friend and confidante. Clarissa's letters deny the possibility that she loves the rake Robert Lovelace. For his part, Lovelace recounts his version of the story in letters to his friend John Belford, in which he details how he wishes to trap Clarissa and catch her secretly loving him. At other times, Lovelace desperately confesses his ambivalent feelings about Clarissa and suggests that he in fact may truly be in love with her. Other letters from minor characters, as well as falsified letters written by Lovelace in Clarissa's hand to Anna, make up the narrative as well. *Clarissa's* plot is well known: Clarissa's officious brother, James, forbids an allegiance with the wealthy and charismatic Lovelace (who is initially a suitor for Clarissa's less-beautiful older sister Arabella, but who transfers his affections to the title character), because of a college rivalry. James instigates a duel with Lovelace and is injured. Despite the animosity between Lovelace and her family, Clarissa continues a correspondence

with her sister's former suitor. Still wishing to enrich his fortune, James orchestrates for his sister a marriage to Solmes, a man Clarissa finds detestable. Clarissa's controlling parents and sister support the marriage to Solmes, but Clarissa, fearing this wedding, allows herself to be "rescued" by Lovelace. Lovelace tricks Clarissa into eloping with him; he takes her to London and hides her in a number of hostile environments, including a brothel, whose regular inhabitants Lovelace dresses up as respectable ladies. Lovelace hopes to restrain Clarissa's desire to remain single and free, and also wishes to avenge himself on the members of her family who have mistreated him. Throughout the novel, Clarissa refuses Lovelace, whose attempts to seduce and marry her grow increasingly desperate, and clings to the hope that she can both heal the rupture with her family and avoid marrying Solmes. Her unbending family, however, is less than amenable to bargaining with their daughter. Eventually, with the help of Mrs. Sinclair, the brothel owner, along with her employees, Lovelace drugs and rapes Clarissa. This attack does not lessen Clarissa's resolve to return home to the Harlowes. Rejected by them once again, Clarissa manages to definitively escape Lovelace, finding refuge with a poor family. In safety, she falls physically and mentally ill, and begins to slide toward death. During Clarissa's infirmity, Belford, Lovelace's now-reformed fellow libertine, tends to the dying woman and narrates her suffering. After she dies, Belford sends Lovelace Clarissa's will, which forces him to realize the extent of his misdeeds. Finally despairing at Clarissa's misfortunes, he seeks a duel with Clarissa's cousin Colonel Morden and dies by Morden's hand.

Most critics of Richardson agree that his second novel is an unwieldy and contradictory work, "like a geological formation, with layers of sharply differentiated strata" (Warner 77). For Warner, the novel is "a vast plain where Clarissa and Lovelace . . . and the two ways of interpreting the world they embody, collide and contend" (cited in Gordon 478). Other critics

like to point out that *Clarissa* is also a novel of anticipation and suspension. As Robin Valenza writes, *Clarissa* is “a novel of prolepsis . . . Richardson seals off exits, denies Clarissa escape routes at every turn. Our sense of the uncanny in reading *Clarissa* derives from what seems to be Clarissa Harlowe’s occasional glimmers of knowledge of what will befall her.” (232) Valenza’s interpretation also reinforces the idea that Richardson’s characters inhabit a “closed society” of their own making, an idea I first mentioned in the Introduction to this dissertation. For John Richetti, both Clarissa and Lovelace as characters “are defined by a process of constant introspection,” (102)⁸⁹—Kahler calls it “the Puritan fondness for poking into the recesses of the soul” (151)—though, it must be noted, whatever insights Lovelace and Clarissa make deliver no stable truth either to themselves or to one other. Richardson’s polyphonic narrative in *Clarissa* works in mathematical, repeating structures that keep Clarissa and Lovelace always at arm’s length from each other, always misreading each other’s signs, and always desperate to know for certain what the correct signs are.

Imagination and misreading each play an important role in Richardson’s second novel, as Clarissa invents and reinvents much of the drama with Lovelace through the act of writing. As soon as she sets her impressions about him, about Solmes, about her family, Clarissa begins to exaggerate and even imagine outside forces weighing down upon her and forcing her in undesirable directions. I am not suggesting here that Clarissa is to blame for her abduction or her

⁸⁹ Richetti, in fact, is arguing the opposite. He writes: “*Clarissa* is an affirmation or at least an exploration of human agency and efficacy, which are rendered as theoretically elusive and strenuous but practically attainable in particular and local transactions and interactions. In *Clarissa*, intellectual force and moral will . . . are shown to operate and to effect individual purposes, and the novel’s enormous canvas is necessary precisely to dramatize the densely situational and historically specific moments in which individual will can manage to operate successfully . . . *Clarissa* is a deeply serious, highly intellectual inquiry into the possibility of human freedom and authentic communication” (102–3).

rape, but merely that the role of imagination and self-deception are at play in the narration of Clarissa's letters.

Clarissa unfolds in cycles, a narrative pattern that is typical of analytical fiction. The moment one threat is mollified, another appears. (Similarly, as we will see, Harriet's ability to declare her love for Charles is delayed by a number of potential rivals.) Lovelace even claims in one of his early letters to Clarissa: "if a man could not make a woman in courtship own herself *pleased* with him, it was as *much* and sometimes *more* to his purpose to make her *angry* with him" (17, emphasis Richardson's). Lovelace's strategy is, thus, always to reopen what seems to have been closed. The words above serve as the foundation of the cyclical plot of the next fifteen-hundred pages; Lovelace knows, from the very beginning, how to attract Clarissa, how to compel her to write to him, even when she has previously claimed that she will stop. He knows how to keep her just interested enough to keep their correspondence going. Later in the text, this tension re-manifests itself in what Patricia Spacks defines as "two kinds of self-splitting: a woman's conscious choice, a man's confused endurance. The woman resists, the man indulges self-love. Social pressures and assumptions impede self-knowledge for both" ("The Grand Misleader" 7). As in other works of analytical fiction, the obsessive struggle and desire for knowledge and certainty take center stage, but knowledge and certainty are never achieved, or they are never allowed to be achieved by various forces within the text, at times Lovelace, and at times the implicit narrator, the author-"editor" of the letters.

Richardson's novels are epic-like in their movement from episode to episode and their dilation and suspension of time through the use of letter writing as a time-stopping device. But unlike most epics, *Clarissa* does not move along toward a determined ending. It is more like Ovid's *Metamorphoses* than *The Iliad*. The drama of *Clarissa* is alternatively heightened and

suspended, seemingly infinitely, without any climax. Even Clarissa's death scene is prolonged so that her actual death is subordinated to the dilation of her deterioration. Throughout, the focus on motivation, thought, and error are central. In this way, dilation and suspense make up the very plot of *Clarissa*, with the major sections and episodes—from Lovelace's increasing influence over Clarissa's thoughts and behavior in the Harlowe household to his aiding the orchestration of her flight, to her captivity, escape, recapture, rape, and second escape from Lovelace, to her death—only providing a structure on which the suspense rests. As Sears writes, "plot itself becomes a strategy to both bring about the satisfaction of erotic desire and, conversely, to stave it off, as if in inchoate and futile recognition of its inevitable end" (23).

Many critics have pointed out the possible influence of *The Princess of Clèves* on *Clarissa*, whose heroine resembles Lafayette's in her self-deception and ambivalence as she withholds her true feelings from herself and from Anna, her only confidante. Clarissa is similar to the Princesse in that she chooses early on in the narrative to abstain from love rather than to embrace it, though her true feelings about Lovelace remain unclear throughout the novel. There are other striking similarities between the two novels, such as the often intrusive and overbearing role of parents in a woman's decision to marry, and the two heroines' penchant for the pastoral: John Campbell points out that Madame de Clèves often withdraws into an "inner garden"—as well as into a real one ("The Cloud of Unknowing" 402) while Clarissa is, at the beginning of the novel, intent on using her inherited estate for a dairy house and living out a calm life as a milkmaid, but when she actually does manage to escape from her parents' house and from Sinclair's brothel later, manages only to run into Lovelace and further self-doubt. There are similarities between the men in the two books as well: "the feminine hero first appears as the courtly lover in medieval romance, then again in the Renaissance as the *galant*" and "reappeared

in the next century as the rake, whose femininity is aptly evoked by the very name of Richardson's Lovelace." ("Mediation of Desire in La Princesse de Clèves" in *Approaches to Teaching Lafayette's The Princesse of Cleves* 168)⁹⁰

In addition, there is present in both of Richardson's novels a tension between inimitability, exemplarity, and negative behavior, all three of which ideas are central to this dissertation, particularly, as we have seen, in *The Princess of Clèves*. As Paula R. Backscheider writes, Richardson contrasts Clarissa with Lafayette's Princess by "making her a ruined woman in the world's eyes, redeeming her reputation and 'consecrating' her Clarissa is not primarily the penitent fallen woman nor is she the seduced woman" ("The Woman's Part" 217). Yet, the consequences are the same for both her and the Princess in Lafayette's work, both "are completely unsuited for the societies in which they live, and both reject a series of compromises available in their societies" ("The Woman's Part" 218). Another element, which is central for this dissertation, and that links the three novels is the way in which *Clarissa* and *Grandison* perennially return to the notion that passionate feeling, when it is expressed directly and forcefully, serves to push the love object away. And on the contrary, when the lover shows more restraint, even indifference, it has the opposite effect of bolstering the passionate feelings of the love object.

In *Clarissa*, as in *The Princess of Clèves*, marriage, as Backscheider points out, is not represented as a happy state. Sears argues similarly about sentimental literature in general, including Lafayette's, that sentimental texts "question the very possibility of 'sanctioned

⁹⁰ It is interesting to note that as early as the late nineteenth century, critics were making references to Richardson's blurring of traditional feminine and masculine traits. George Saintsbury, in the introduction to his abridged edition calls Richardson himself "too thoroughly feminine to forgive" Fielding for his satires of Richardson's works.

satisfaction' of desire, and in several instances even invert or vacate the meaning of the conventional marriage plots. Rather than moving *towards* the safety and repose of marriage, the characters move *away* from that secure haven into the perilous world of uncontrolled desire” (18). There are, in fact, almost no happy marriages represented in *Clarissa*—even Anna and Hickman’s marriage at the end of the novel is fraught because Anna has seemed so dissatisfied with him throughout her letters. Only Belford’s marriage to Charlotte Montagu, which he reports at the very end, serves as a counter-point to the treatment of marriage in the rest of the novel. Ironically, this last, happy marriage by a reformed rake, Lovelace’s former partner-in-crime, highlights the alternative pathway that Lovelace and Clarissa might have taken if they had been characters in a very different kind of novel. Because there is no finality in happiness, stability, or marriage for the main characters, the narrative remains uncertain until the last, when death becomes, for Clarissa, “one common point, in which all shall meet, err widely as they may. In that I shall be laid quietly down at last: and then will all my calamities be at an end” (566). As Clarissa herself explains, death is the only way out of the cyclical, unstable, and uncertain narrative.

It is sometimes forgotten that Lovelace is initially a viable suitor, as well as a step up, socially speaking, for the Harlowe sisters. But after Clarissa’s sister Arabella rejects Lovelace’s less-than-enthusiastic marriage proposal, Clarissa—the real object of his affections—continues to communicate with him.⁹¹ When she rejects the idea of marrying him as well, for reasons that

⁹¹ Initially, she is acting as a go-between for one of her uncles, who wishes to pass on Lovelace’s stories about his travels to a young friend. Clarissa admits that Lovelace is a skilled and seductive writer, and she innocently enjoys his correspondence. Though we never read a physical description of Lovelace, beyond his being young and handsome, we learn that Clarissa’s brother loathed him because of a college jealousy: he was always very successful at school, and excelled at literature and writing. Moreover, a servant on Lovelace’s estate reports to Clarissa’s aunt that

include her brother's longstanding quarrel with him from college, and because she fears that it would be damaging to her sister, Lovelace writes to her that he will continue to pursue her. After Clarissa's brother challenges Lovelace to fight him in a duel and is injured, Clarissa's would-be lover continues to visit their house, to attempt to apologize to the family, and, with the backing of his uncle Lord M., to continue to court Clarissa. Because of the delicate balance of social and economic forces, Clarissa's family cannot definitively force Lovelace to end his calls. Lovelace uses this fact to his advantage to continue to pay "amicable visits" (31) to the family, and to remain present in Clarissa's psyche, whether this presence causes her pain or joy.⁹²

As the Princess's mother points out in *The Princess of Clèves*, if one were to judge based on appearances, one would often be mistaken. This pronouncement, which sets the tone for the entirety of Lafayette's narrative, also encapsulates the epistemology of Richardson's novels as one of inherent distrust and error in judgment. Clarissa's letters to Anna reveal her self-doubt, and it becomes evident that Clarissa is a far less reliable translator of her heart than she claims:

Yet I can tell you how, I believe—one devious step at setting
out!— that must be it:—which pursued, has led me so far out of
my path, that I am in a wilderness of doubt and error; and never,
never, shall find my way out of it But I, presumptuous

he is a bon vivant and sort of *enfant terrible*: "he was never known to be disguised with liquor; but was a great plotter, and a great writer: that he lived a wild life in town, by what he had heard: had six or seven companions as bad as himself; whom now and then he brought down with him; and the country was always glad when they went up again" (20). It seems that these recurring literary connections continue to attract Clarissa, who herself illustrates love of and skill in writing through her letters.

⁹² She claims, in fact, that she is completely indifferent to him, though her insistence fails to convince her brother and sister. James Harlowe calls her attitude toward Lovelace "*apparent indifference*" (the emphasis on his sarcasm is Clarissa's).

creature! must rely so much upon my own knowledge of the right path!—little apprehending that an ignus fatuus with its false fires . . . would arise to mislead me! And now, in the midst of fens and quagmires, it plays around me, and around me, throwing me back again, whenever I think myself in the right track (565–6).

Clarissa attributes her becoming irremediably lost in the wilderness to “one devious step at setting out”⁹³. Clarissa also laments that she has only herself to rely on to tell her what is the right course of action with Lovelace—should she believe him, or should she try to flee, is she really in love with him and doesn’t know it, etc.,—but that the only truth she can discover within herself is that she is never correct in her judgment. As Spacks puts it, “[h]er letters, taken all together, convey a persuasive pattern of vacillation, confusion, and ambivalence” (106).

Clarissa’s impulse is to flee from Lovelace and from her family as well, and her language evokes wandering and movement; Lovelace’s implies caging and immobility. But they come to the same thing. The more she tries to run away from Lovelace, the more she runs straight into him. Faced with Lovelace as an enigma, a sometimes monstrous, sometimes attractive, force, Clarissa is metaphorically trapped as much as she becomes physically trapped. Richardson provides a way in to Clarissa’s mind through the very confusion she is describing. It is not merely to show that she is confused that such contradictory vocabulary is employed, but rather to provide access into the characters’ consciousnesses. In this way, passionate emotions are mediated by confusion, fear, and self-deception.

⁹³ This phrase parallels Lovelace’s philosophy: “The first step is the last, and once the bird has been caged she will ultimately give in and eat.”

The senses and reason engage in mutual deception quite clearly in *Clarissa*, perhaps most notably in the abduction scene. Here, Richardson's heroine reports that all was "amaze and confusion" (380), and that her own imagination propels her to run away from home and into Lovelace's waiting arms:

. . . expecting a furious brother here, armed servants there, an enraged sister screaming and a father armed with terror in his countenance, more dreadful than even the drawn sword which I saw or those I apprehended . . . calling out to others, whom I supposed he saw, although the turning of the wall hindered me from seeing them; and whom I imagined to be my brother, my father and their servants (380).

Clarissa's vocabulary in the passage above, namely the verbs "to expect," "to apprehend," "to suppose," and, finally, "to imagine," are significant. Clarissa illustrates how very impressionable the mind can allow itself to be as she imagines that she saw her father's face as more terrifying "than even the drawn sword which I saw or those I apprehended" (380). At the moment of her retelling the story to Anna, she has been disabused about the plot, and has more or less figured out that Lovelace has tricked her: "and so, to save . . . an *apprehended* rashness, I have rushed into a *real* one myself" (380). Nevertheless, she recounts the story in so much detail as to even have remembered that she believes she saw something which she couldn't have possibly seen, because it was not there: her father's "dreadful" countenance. She is even capable of recalling that this fearful "sight" was more terrible than what she actually had "apprehended." She admits

that she could not see what was actually happening because of the garden wall, but the scene that she created in her mind—that of an enraged and also armed family coming after her—is more vivid than reality.

Another example of the ways in which Clarissa is duped by Lovelace's tricks, but which also serves as an example for the ways in which Lovelace fundamentally cannot understand Clarissa, is the ipecacuanha episode. Here Lovelace tests Clarissa by feigning illness: he takes medicine to make himself vomit, and he uses chicken blood procured from a butcher to pretend he has burst a blood vessel. Lovelace's justification to Belford for this charade is that he wants to "catch" Clarissa loving him. He claims that he will not even need to speak the words, for "if she has *love*, let it have been pushed ever so far back, it will, on this occasion, come forward, and show itself; not only in her eye, but in every line of her sweet face" (673). Here, Lovelace is relying on Clarissa's physiognomic signals to tell him the truth. As in the spying scenes in *The Princess of Clèves*, Lovelace imposes himself not only into Clarissa's physical space, but her psychological space as well. She can never be entirely sure of whether he is being truthful or untruthful, while he believes that he can perfectly read her psyche. But how could Clarissa possibly not show affectation at this plot? Anna points out, much earlier, in teasing Clarissa: "don't you find at your heart somewhat unusual make it go throb, throb, throb, as you read just here?—If you do, don't be ashamed to own it—It is your *generosity*, my love!" (71).

Nevertheless, Clarissa manages to deceive Lovelace as well in this scene, as her "goodness"—to which the rake can never become accustomed since it is so far from his own nature—becomes baffling to him. The episode shows that *Clarissa* is a study of unrequited expectations; the characters are distant and protean to each other, they watch and attempt to

understand what the other is thinking and going to do, and they wish to penetrate each other's thoughts. But they always fail in their attempts.

Similarly, Lovelace is duped—even to the verge of tears—by Clarissa's nature, fundamentally inconsistent with what he had previously considered the nature of woman. While Lovelace's plots are convincing to Clarissa—such as when he brings the counterfeiter McDonald to pose as “Tomlinson,” a man who is supposed to be her family's neighbor, in order to reconcile her with her family—her reaction is so very genuine and innocent that Lovelace himself is drawn into the charade and becomes affected by it. In the episode with Tomlinson, Lovelace sobs when he sees Clarissa's tears, even though he knows full well that he is merely furthering his “trial” of her chastity and virtue:

Then drying her tears with her handkerchief, after a few moments pausing, on a sudden, as if recollecting that she had been led by her joy to an expression of it which she had not intended I should see, she retired to her chamber with precipitation; leaving me almost as unable to stand it as herself. . . . In short, I was—*I want words to say how I was*—my nose had been made to tingle before; my eyes have before been made to glisten by this soul-moving beauty; but so very much affected, I never was—for, trying to check my sensibility, it was too strong for me, and I even sobbed—Yes, by my soul, I audibly sobbed, and was forced to turn from her before she had well finished her affecting speech (695).

Richardson shows how indeed every now and then Clarissa manages—unwittingly—to produce in Lovelace some human feeling. Moreover, his emotion is so strong and so uncontrolled that he even hesitates to find words to describe it. Earlier in the novel, Anna had congratulated Clarissa “on your being the first of our sex that ever I heard of, who has been able to turn that lion, Love, at her own pleasure, into a lap-dog” (73). As Anna says much earlier, she is capable of piercing his misleadingly attractive surface: “But were he deep, and ever so deep, you would soon penetrate him, if they would leave you to yourself” (75). Thus, Lovelace—who boasts that he is so skillful in deception—is duped by his own trick.

In this way, Lovelace misreads Clarissa, his mistake being that he cannot conceive of someone (or, perhaps, of a woman) whose emotional range goes beyond the extremes of love and hate. Because Clarissa’s reactions do not always fall into these categories, Lovelace is propelled to continue his trials, perhaps even out of frustration. He orchestrates so many tests that, one after another, Clarissa falls victim to his plots. And yet, he is never satisfied. Clarissa’s reactions to his trials are sensitive and generous, but never cause her to submit fully to him. His trials are always laced with malice and disingenuousness, which are incompatible with Clarissa’s nature. The ipecacuanha scene, in the end, only frustrates Lovelace. While he garners the hoped-for reaction from Clarissa, the signs of concern that she gives him end up not satisfying his desire to conquer her, because he never fully manages to do so.

Several pages later, Lovelace reminds Clarissa of that particular scene, in which she had shown him much care, but she refuses to discuss it. She seems even complacent in her situation, as if she knows that her trials are far from over. She sighs and turns away from him to go to church (one of the few places she is allowed to visit during her captivity). Her attempted

departure and her indifference launch Lovelace into a renewed passion for Clarissa, and he admits to Belford that he begged her for forgiveness:

Bless me, my beloved creature, bless me with the continuance of this affecting conversation.—Remorse has seized my heart!—I have been excessively wrong—give me farther cause to curse my heedless folly, by the continuance of this calm but soul-penetrating conversation. (853)

Lovelace becomes obsessed with the fact that Clarissa half-rejects him. He asks Belford, “why will she break from me, when good resolutions are taking place?” And yet, “the red-hot iron she refuses to strike—O why will she suffer the yielding wax to harden?” (853) Lovelace’s metaphor underscores the push-and-pull of their cyclical relationship, and, moreover, the cyclical nature of the novel. Not unlike many other works that we have already examined, it is precisely because Clarissa alternately shows concern for Lovelace (again, only because his tricks are often so devious) and then turns away from him that keeps the rake ambivalent about his own feelings. Clarissa is not merely being indecisive, however. Instead, she is kept suspended between acts of Lovelace’s deception and her own doubts about whether his intentions are honorable, and this uncertainty is ingrained in the cyclical narrative.

For much of the novel, Lovelace becomes the creator of a whole false universe for Clarissa, pulling all the marionette strings in a world that repeatedly and implacably challenges the title character’s sense of right and wrong, illusion and reality: “Ovid was not a greater master of metamorphoses than I,” he says. In another passage, he describes himself as protean. The form that knowledge takes in *Clarissa* is actually closure: for Lovelace it would come in the form of

conquest and subduing Clarissa's spirit. On the other hand, the closure that Clarissa desires is escape and solitude. Yet, outside of death, these two goals are completely incompatible. The contrast between Lovelace's desire to contain Clarissa and her insistence on abstaining from love is too strong. Moreover, as is always the case in analytical fiction, knowledge and closure are nearly impossible to achieve; the very narration (in this case, the way that knowledge is disseminated and contorted through letters) prohibits closure.

In Lovelace, we see a feature that we have not witnessed nearly so overtly in characters of analytical fiction: he is a liar. Even his name conjures images of intricate woven patterns that mirror the ways in which he invents stories. Yet, as Lisa Zunshine points out, Lovelace does not always seem to know that he is a liar, and the first time one reads the book it may take five hundred pages or more "to realize that one of the narrators of the story is misleading not just Clarissa but also himself" (Zunshine 86). Thus, Lovelace's dissimulations and deceptions work so well that he manages to fool himself at times, and to forget where the truth ends and the lie begins. To use again the vocabulary I used frequently in the previous chapter, Lovelace collapses the limits between appearances and reality.

The two main characters, of course, are diametrically opposed: she is supposed to be goodness, honesty, virtue, and he is diabolical, plotting, and sometimes deranged, and yet their distinct voices share certain features: humor, cleverness, pride, misguided and erroneous confidence, and eventually, self-doubt and desperation. Lovelace himself writes that they are quite similar, with one significant difference: "My charmer, I see, has a pride like my own: but she has no *distinction* in her pride: nor knows the pretty fool that there is nothing nobler, nothing more delightful, than for lovers to be conferring and receiving obligations from each other" (quoted in Kahler 161). From Lovelace's point of view, which Kahler reads quite skillfully:

“[T]he fact that Clarissa’s resistance is not due to another man, but to sheer indifference to his charms, offends his vanity just as much as it increases his ardor” (159). As much as Clarissa views Lovelace as a monster and herself as an angel, the rake “is not cold enough to be a sheer devil; . . . The tricks of the dandy, the Don Juan, the master of intrigue fail him; the bravado becomes desperation, the seducer a hounded, suffering human being. But it takes, to produce such a development, an antagonist as narrow-minded and unfeeling as Clarissa, utterly obsessed with family and propriety” (Kahler 160). Throughout the central part of the novel, after Clarissa has flown from her family, Lovelace begins to feel as if he is just as much confined as Clarissa: “in his feeling for her he is a captive, and a Marianne would have known how to seize upon that feeling and use it to tame him by more feminine wiles” (Kahler 161). Furthermore, Lovelace is trapped by his inability to read Clarissa properly. She is not interested in participating in Lovelace’s games, and thus she traps him another way, in inaction. Like the Princess in Lafayette’s novel, a withdrawal from both life and love is far more appealing to Richardson’s heroine.

* * *

Grandison, on the other hand, is a comedy, as it ends in a series of marriages and arguably averts tragedy. Nevertheless, there are even greater correspondences between *The Princess of Clèves* and *Sir Charles Grandison*, particularly when it comes to the idea of marriage as resolution. In fact, *Grandison* ends decisively *without* a marriage between Clementina and the Count of Belvedere, who is very much in love with her. The Italian heroine remains ambivalent about marriage and considers entering a convent like the Princess of Clèves. Sir Charles actually

resembles Nemours far more than does Lovelace, since Nemours is not truly a rake in the same sense as Lovelace (he is not a rapist, as far as Lafayette's reader is informed). The Duc and Charles are both highly respected, sought-after bachelors torn between two potential liaisons (Nemours renounces a marriage to Elizabeth of England in favor of pursuing the Princess, who is already married, and Charles finally breaks with Clementina in order to marry the heroine of the story, Harriet). In turn, both Harriet and the Princess are threatened with a "foreign" rival, each of whom also represents a potential religious taboo (Clementina as a Catholic whose family objects to Charles's Protestantism and Elizabeth as a Protestant who was to marry the Catholic Nemours).⁹⁴ Even as the threat of foreign marriages are looming, Harriet and the Princess both live with or spend a considerable amount of time with Charles and Nemours. Of their own volition, they participate in a salon-like environment (Harriet at Colnebrook and the Princess in the apartments of Mary Stuart). In both cases, these are actually ambivalent spaces, where relationships between young people develop, but also where conflicts of jealousy and misaligned emotions arise.

About half of the letters in Richardson's third novel are written to Lucy Selby by her cousin Harriet Byron, a wealthy young woman from Northhamptonshire, who, unlike the Princess and Clarissa has been given complete freedom to choose her own husband. As a result, Harriet at one point has seven different suitors simultaneously, none of whom she wishes to marry. (Like the Princess at the beginning of Lafayette's novel, she has not yet experienced love.

⁹⁴ Rivero, by contrast, interprets Clementina's story as a foreign element which must be expunged from the novel in order to allow romance to triumph at the end. He argues that Clementina is subordinated in the end by the now domesticated Lady G's story. By contrasting Clementina's bleeding scene with Charlotte's nursing scene, Rivero claims that "those who wish to read Clementina correctly must, paradoxically withhold their sympathy" (214) and forget that the novel ends with Clementina's ambivalence about marriage.

Harriet writes of herself: “she is too good to *hate any-body*; and as for *love*, her time seems not to be yet come” [1.104]). In the first volume, the most rakish of Harriet’s suitors, Sir Hargrave Pollexfen, kidnaps her from a masquerade ball that she attends in London while visiting her cousins, the Reeves. Pollexfen imprisons Harriet, and tries to force her to marry him. To keep her from escaping into London, Pollexfen attempts to move Harriet to his house in Windsor, but on the way there a good Samaritan, Sir Charles Grandison, hears Harriet’s calls for help from Pollexfen’s carriage. Grandison disarms and injures Pollexfen, then carries Harriet to safety. At Colnebrook, the house of Grandison’s sister and her husband, Lord and Lady L., Harriet befriends the entire Grandison family, and becomes particularly attached to Charlotte Grandison, Sir Charles’s younger sister. This family adopts Harriet as their own, the women calling her their and Charles’s third sister. Soon, Harriet falls in love with Sir Charles, but unable to admit it to herself. Lucy and the rest of her family, as well as the Grandison sisters, in fact identify Harriet’s inclination long before she does. But Sir Charles, whose feelings for Harriet remain unknown until much later, has his own secret: many years before in Italy, he had become attached to Clementina. Clementina’s family refused to sanction their engagement because of the difference in religion, and Sir Charles agreed to leave Italy and return to England. However, Clementina grows desperately ill after their separation, causing her family to change their minds and accept Sir Charles’s Anglicanism. In the middle of the third of seven volumes of *Grandison*, Sir Charles is recalled to Italy to attempt to save Clementina and possibly marry her. When he arrives, it is Clementina who refuses to marry him—on the grounds of religion—and so Sir Charles is free to wed Harriet. They marry, but the novel does not end. Instead, Clementina visits the Grandison family in England, and most of the seventh volume revolves around whether or not she will marry the Count of Belvedere or return to Italy to join a convent.

In analyzing Richardson's novels, I deviate from a strictly sympathetic or even empathetic reading, which was particularly prevalent in the eighteenth century. This view, which is still well-respected today, casts *Clarissa* as a book that draws the reader in and makes him tremble and weep along with the characters. Diderot's analysis is one of the first critical works that call for a sentimental and empathetic reading of *Clarissa*. Novels written in the sentimental style connect the notion of feeling to the accumulation of knowledge, and novels of sensibility aimed to teach readers how to feel correctly in order to become virtuous. However, many of the novels that fit into this category are ambiguous in terms of their moral precepts. In Richardson's novels, the narrative remains ambiguous about whether or not the characters in the have actually learned how to read and how to feel throughout the course of the text, in part because the exchange of letters (and thus, of information) is so fraught.

Epistolary exchange and subversion are central issues in both *Clarissa* and *Grandison*, and the circulation of letters indicates the subjective nature of reading, interpretation, and knowing. The letter in Richardson's novels is not always meant to be a private document, and even personal conversations are subject to public exploitation. This matter of private versus public communication becomes quite significant in *Clarissa*, when letters are very often intercepted, circulated, excerpted, adulterated, or counterfeited by Lovelace. In *Grandison*, letters are not forged, but they are circulated among, and translated, interpreted, and reinterpreted by, the members of the Grandison and Selby families⁹⁵. The idea of "frankness" supposedly governs letter writing and reading in Richardson's third novel, and yet as much is withheld from

⁹⁵ Rebecca Anne Barr and Margaret Anne Doody pronounce *Grandison* almost totalitarian, labeling its social structure and development of character "ineluctably authoritarian" (Barr 397). Similarly, Tita Chico points out the oppressive and claustrophobic affective relations in *Grandison*, which she sees as harking back to an older sense of communal identity.

characters' letters as is expressed, supporting the idea that knowledge is always tentative and inhibited by the narrative.

Harriet is very much aware of the split between herself as letter writer and herself as actor in the world: "How often . . . did I turn my eye *to* myself, and *from* myself . . . !" (1.168) she exclaims when she reviews, with disgust, her mistreatment by Pollexfen. Her writing is self-conscious and probing. At the same time, however, Harriet's self-reading knowingly falls short. As we will see, as she turns her eye to and from herself, the reader grasps that she is self-deceived.

Since we do not see the characters reacting in real time, revision and self-examination are key elements of self-expression through letters. The relationship between expression and revision is paradoxical, however, since revision ultimately inhibits free expression, and self-censorship is an indication of doubt. Harriet's tendency to doubt and revise her first impressions is itself doubled in the plot, namely in Sir Charles's famously divided, or doubled, heart. The overarching narrative of *Grandison* is focused on a comprehensive dissection of the suffering and joys that divided love can cause. As we will see later in this chapter, Charles's return to Italy in the middle of the text, for example, serves to delay closure (i.e. marriage to Harriet) in the narrative, and redoubles Harriet's worries that her would-be lover's heart is not entirely disengaged.

Grandison's plot is almost entirely composed of characters' struggling to guess at and intuit whether they are in love and whether those they love are in love with them. Like in the other texts that I examine in this dissertation, knowledge and reality are not stable entities. In Richardson's epistolary novels, meaning and understanding are only as old as the most recent letter read, the most recent insight and counter-insight made. "Self, my dear Lucy, is a very

wicked thing,” writes Harriet in *Grandison*; it is “a sanctifier, if one would give way to its partialities, of actions, which, to others, we should have no doubt to condemn. Delicacy, too, is often a misleader [I]t should be called *Indelicacy*” (2.1). Harriet knows that she must “keep a *look-out* . . . upon [her]self” (1.233, emphasis Richardson’s) so as not to reveal too much, or suffer too greatly from love, but this self-examination also inhibits her true feelings about Sir Charles. She suspends and suppresses the possibility of her love throughout most of the novel. After she learns about Charles’s Italian interests, she distances herself even farther from the possibility of a love match between herself and the man who probably also loves Clementina.

Harriet frequently performs close readings of the letters she receives from her family, and reacts to their language in her letters to Lucy. Later, she writes explicitly about her tendency to revise her own feelings: “I am not generally so much affected at the moment when any-thing unhappy befalls me, as I am upon *reflection*, when I extend, compare, and weigh consequences” (3.173 emphasis added). Harriet’s comparison of her previous self compared to her current self constitutes for Joe Bray and other critics a form of free indirect style that creates a “dual-voiced” system of narrative in *Grandison*. The contrast of what one believes and what one *used* to believe is important for understanding analytical fiction, especially when it exposes a dichotomy between the heart and the mind. Harriet writes to Lucy, “what a *rememberer*, if I may make a word, is the heart!—Not a circumstance escapes it.” In other words, feelings are better at recording memories than the mind, which is sometimes incapable of correctly reading other people’s behavior, or, in some cases, of correctly reading oneself.

When Harriet admits to Lucy that she thinks she might be in love, but is not sure, she uses very similar language as Clarissa does in Richardson’s second novel, though of course, she is in no physical danger here:

I am in a sort of wilderness But it cannot be from *Love* Yet to lie under such a weight of obligation Yet it is not from *Envy*, surely: That is a very bad passion Can it be from *Pride*? *Pride* is a vice that always produces mortification [D]on't I remember that you said . . . that there was a sort of you-know-not-what of *pleasure* in sighing? Yet that it was involuntary?—Did you not say, that you were ready to quarrel with yourself, you knew not why? (1.284)

This constitutes an examination of conscience, or a taking-stock of feelings, that is reminiscent of Lafayette's novels. The part about quarreling with oneself is particularly significant, as it shows her divided consciousness in the act of deliberating. Moreover, Harriet is concerned with not seeming "far gone in a certain passion" (1.292), "so *vehement* a folly" (1.293), from which there is no return (she reports these phrases, with distaste, as what her family has begun to think of her). Harriet's descriptions of her love for Sir Charles are rather anti-romantic in nature, because an unqualified idealization of love would leave Harriet too exposed to the dangers of being rejected. She cannot openly declare her feelings—even to herself—for fear of being mistaken about Charles.

Early on in the text, Harriet claims to "have been careful ever to shut the door of my heart against the blind deity, the moment I could imagine him setting his encroaching foot on the *threshold*, which I think *liking* may be called" (1.67). Moreover, Harriet echoes the feelings of the Princess in *The Princess of Clèves* at the end of Lafayette's novel when the Princess tells

Nemours that she will not marry him because she fears his passion will cool in the future. Harriet says:

I could not bear when I had given a man my heart with my hand (and they never shall be separated) that he should behave to me with less affection than he shewed to me before I was his I wish not *now* to be made an idol of, I may the more reasonably expect the constancy due to friendship, and not to be affronted with his indifference after I have given him my whole self. In other words, I could not bear to have my love slighted; or to be despised for it, instead of being encouraged to shew it (1.110).

And even when Harriet observes Sir Charles, with whom she will fall in love, she narrates to Lucy: “And O, thought I, now-and-then, as I looked upon him, Sir Charles Grandison is a man with whom I would not *wish* to be in love” (1.209) on the grounds that she would have too many rivals. Harriet banishes the possibility of passionate love before she feels it in order to protect herself against its pain. Even if she is self-deceived (and she certainly is), by admitting her love indirectly, framing it in a tentative clause, and trying to preempt a bout of uncontrollable feeling by naming it in advance, Harriet casts herself as a hopeful anti-romantic.

With the excision of romance comes the excision of Clementina, the foreign and threatening element from *Grandison*. This feat is predicated on her becoming indifferent to Sir Charles, and Sir Charles becoming indifferent to her. Clementina must become yoked to Harriet, the legitimate wife of Sir Charles, and be transformed into a “sister-excellence,” a double for

Harriet and more like a sister to Sir Charles. Ultimately, happiness can only be achieved when Clementina returns to Italy and, even better, marries Belvedere. The wild card in *Grandison*, what makes the novel dark, is not the rake Sir Hargrave, who attempts to kidnap and rape Harriet, but rather Sir Charles's first love, Clementina. In *Grandison*, Harriet's letters help to shape her place in the Grandison milieu, particularly fashioning her as a potential wife for Sir Charles while coping with the threat of a serious rival. Even after Clementina and Charles accept that they will not marry, and that Harriet will become Lady Grandison, the specter of foreignness and uncertainty still hovers as Clementina's story refuses to resolve itself.

Even after she has acknowledged that she is in love with Charles, and after she learns that Clementina will no longer pursue him, Harriet still is not sure how to feel or whether she is permitted to fully rejoice. She writes:

I felt such a variety of sensibilities in my heart, as I never felt before, sensibilities mixed with wonder; and I was sometimes ready to doubt whether I were not in a reverie; whether indeed I was in this world, or another; whether I was Harriet Byron—I know not how to describe what I felt in my now fluttering, now rejoicing, now dejected heart (3.18).

Rather than rejoicing, Harriet finds at every one of love's turns that passion is in fact "a narrower of the heart" (1.387 and 2.131). The sensations that she feels in learning that Sir Charles and Clementina will not be married are governed, ultimately, by doubt. "I don't know whether," Harriet writes later "while it is in suspense, and is only on one side, it be not the parent of jealousy, envy, dissimulation; making the person pretend generosity, disinterestedness, and I

cannot tell what; but secretly wishing, that her rival may not be so worthy, so lovely” (1.387). Here, she lists all of the motifs of analytical fiction and diagnoses the very problems that are concomitant with love. She claims she does not understand why she feels dejected at the same time as she rejoices when she discovers that Sir Charles intends to seek her hand in marriage, but it is not surprising to a reader who has read Harriet’s anti-romantic rhetoric about love throughout the novel. This realization that she will marry Sir Charles after all takes place only at the start of the sixth of seven volumes, and is slightly marred by Sir Charles’s constant praise of Clementina. Moreover, Harriet has spent the previous five volumes convincing herself first that she will never marry at all, and second, after she discovers she is in love, that she will never marry the man she wants.

Other oppressive and enclosing forces exist as well, even before Clementina’s story is elucidated. One of the first epithets that is used about Sir Charles—and it is repeated throughout the novel—is that of heartbreaker; were he to get married at least half a dozen women would suffer from broken hearts. At some point, Lord L. bungles this cliché, and claims that it would be half a score. This can only serve to increase Harriet’s disquiet and legitimize her anti-romantic stance regarding love and marriage. The omnipresence of Emily Jervois, Sir Charles’s young and pretty ward, seems to threaten the happiness the potential match between Grandison and Harriet as well, even though Harriet claims to love Emily like a sister. The arrival of two other potential rivals for Harriet, Lady Anne and the Italian Lady Olivia, increases the drama and suspense yet again. Like other narratives examined in this dissertation, the mere *possibility* of Charles’s heart being divided, first in two, and then, potentially, as Harriet imagines it, into even smaller fractions, is enough to turn her away from love.

Everyone keeps secrets in *Grandison*, and no one is ever straightforward about the person they love. The only characters who overtly declare their passion are the impetuous Italians (that is to say, Olivia, who at one point threatens Sir Charles with a knife if he will not have her), and Harriet's aggressive suitors, Pollexfen being the worst of them. This fact casts a dark shadow over emotional sincerity in a novel in which frankness is considered a virtue and a necessity for friendship. Yet, Harriet cannot name her love for Sir Charles, Sir Charles is hiding the secret of his attachment to Clementina (though he castigates Charlotte for "love[ing] to puzzle, and find out secrets where none are intended" [1.394]), and Charlotte is hiding her secret contract with Captain Andersen while also keeping it a secret whether she feels inclined to marry Lord G. Harriet even writes to Lucy: "have I . . . any [secret] to reveal? It is, I hope, a secret to myself, that never will be unfolded, even *to* myself, that I love a man who has not made professions of Love to me" (1.386).

Love is both idealized and feared in *Grandison*, and passionate expression of love is considered downright dangerous. Matters become even more ambiguous when Sir Charles's heart seems to be both engaged and disengaged; Harriet collects some phrases from one of Dr. Bartlett's letters, and jumbles their context into uncertainty: "'Issue hidden from himself.' 'Engaged in some affairs at Bologna and Florence, that embarrass him'—[*Is, or was* so engaged, means the Doctor?] 'Sir Charles not reserved; yet reserved'" (1.464). These fragmented lines confuse the clear-cut boundaries of taken and not taken that other characters are so intent upon knowing.

It is no wonder that characters probe for faults in their potential matches. When Harriet paints the portrait of Charles for Lucy, she focuses on what may be wrong with him: "I wonder why a man of a turn so laudable, should have *any* secrets? The more a good man permits any one

to know of his heart, the more good he might do, by way of example.—And has he, can he have, *so many* love-secrets, and yet he will not let them transpire to such a sister?” (1.189). The unknown or unnamable flaw is worse than any discernable one, because it is wide open, unbounded, and potentially pervasive. Ultimately, Harriet can only conclude that “[i]t is very difficult . . . to know one’s self” (1.189) and to know one’s own heart, let alone anyone else’s.

For a long time, even Richardson was unsure about which way Sir Charles’s divided heart would go, claiming that it was anyone’s guess who was the heroine of his third novel. Saintsbury comments that as readers

We are left to ourselves to find out whether Harriet or Clementina is the heroine, as well as to discover the precise moral which the fortune or misfortune of each is to point, as Pamela’s misfortune pointed that of ‘virtue rewarded,’ and Clarissa’s fate that of the need of distrusting ‘men void of principle’ (*Letters from Sir Charles Grandison* xxviii).

A. D. McKillop reports that Richardson, in a letter from October of 1751 to William Duncombe, wrote:

Clementina’s fate is not yet come to my Knowledge. I have been hinder’d from enquiring after her; in other words, from pursuing her story. But I think she rises upon me. And as I know not what to offer next, being too irregular a scribbler to be able to write by a

plan, I seem to be at a loss, to know what to do with her, or to fetch
up Harriet again, and make her the principal Female character
(*Samuel Richardson: A Collection of Critical Essays* 128)

To accept Saintsbury's tempting implication that Clementina may be the real heroine of this story⁹⁶ strengthens the connection between Richardson's third novel and Lafayette's *The Princess of Clèves*. Although several of her own letters are included throughout the novel, in the seventh volume, Clementina's conversation is narrated mostly in Harriet's letters to Lucy, which Tita Chico reads as "Clementina's epistolary silence [that] opens the way for Harriet's narrative control" (61). Harriet deceives herself when she continuously champions Clementina at the end of the novel as an "inimitable example" (Sir Charles even calls her an "inimitable woman" [2.567] in the fifth volume) to borrow the famous epithet from *The Princess of Clèves*: "O Lucy! you will be delighted with Clementina: You will even, for a while, forget your Harriet . . . never did a young Lady do more honour to her sex" (2:163). But even this ebullient praise of Harriet's former rival signals a threat hanging over the heroine's happiness; it reveals that she finds Clementina a threat that needs to be watched closely. This is, perhaps, because Clementina may still be in love with Sir Charles, even after his marriage to Harriet.

Clementina often blushes when the issue of a second love comes up in conversation, which could be interpreted as her enduring inclination for her first love. While there are a

⁹⁶ On the other hand, though, in another letter to Lady Echlin on May 17, 1754, Richardson wrote: "Will I give you Leave to think, that Harriet is superior to Clementina?" Indeed I will. I have owned the Superiority to our dear Lady B[radshaigh]. And have reflected upon the Judgment of those who are struck with the Glare of a great Action, which was owing principally to a raised Imagination. Your beloved Sister [Bradshaigh again] is of Opinion with you, madam, in preferring Harriet: And I will not choose for my Judges of the Work, any of those, who are of a contrary one" (cited in McKillop 129).

number of successful second-love marriages that occur in this novel (not only Harriet and Sir Charles, but also Charlotte and Lord G., as well as Lucy's to Lord Reresby), Clementina refuses to marry the Count of Belvedere, which leaves the question of whether or not the marriage plot in this novel completely triumphs at the end⁹⁷.

There is direct evidence that Richardson was familiar with Lafayette's work, as he cites *The Princess of Clèves* in the seventh volume of *Grandison*⁹⁸. We know that Richardson neither

⁹⁷ As far as whether Sir Charles may still be in love with Clementina, Chico writes: "While raising suspicions about Clementina's feelings for Sir Charles, Harriet willfully denies that Sir Charles harbors any lingering and inappropriate affection for the Italian. Harriet reads Clementina's studied avoidance of Sir Charles as a sign of her desire for him, but refuses (as does the novel) to speculate on the other side of the amorous coin" (62).

⁹⁸ Novels like *La Princesse de Clèves* were exceedingly popular in England throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. French novels were loved for their fine dissection of sentiment, long speeches, epistolary interventions, and inclusion of portraits. J.J. Jusserand points out novels like *Polexandre*, published in English in 1647; *Ibrahim ou l'illustre Bassa*, *Cassandra*, and *Cléopâtre* in 1652; *Le Grand Cyrus* in 1653, the very year in which Cromwell became Protector; the first part of *Clélie*—which contains the famous "Carte de Tendre" or the Map of Tendre—in 1656; *l'Astrée* appeared in 1657; and *Scipion* in 1660 (364). As Munro points out: "it is in their detailed descriptions and lengthy discussions of the origins and effects of love that romance writers begin to evolve techniques of analysis considerably more sophisticated than they are often given credit for—techniques which, in a refined and modified form, reappear in the eighteenth-century novel" (753). *La Princesse de Clèves*, though quite different in style from the novels listed above, was equally popular. Lafayette's novel came out in its first English edition in 1679, only a year after its publication in France and enjoyed great success well into the eighteenth century. When Nathaniel Lee's near-universally condemned burlesque dramatic adaptation of Lafayette's novel, *The Princess of Cleve*, appeared on the London stage, most of the audience was familiar either with the original French novel or with its first English translation (Backscheider, *A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel and Culture* 508). Lee's adaptation, which until recently has been denounced as not only offensive and grotesque, but also a complete departure from its French source, was performed briefly between 1680 and 1682, and was published only in 1689. It has not been performed since. Even at the beginning of the last century, Lee's *The Princess of Cleve* was admonished not only for its own faults, but as a representation of everything that the English do not understand about what only the French can do well, as is evidenced by Harry Ashton's account of the play: "On était en pleine licence à cette époque et si Lee a emprunté le sujet pour le mettre au théâtre c'est dans une pièce ignoble qui n'est qu'une indigne caricature de la *Princesse* et qui montre combien l'original fut au-dessus des esprit grossiers des Anglo-Saxons de l'époque" (from *Madame de Lafayette: Sa vie et ses oeuvres* 1922, Quoted in Collington and Collington 196). A closer

read French nor did he read many French books,⁹⁹ but he was familiar with *The Princess of Clèves* (as well as the letters of Madame de Sévigné), perhaps from a second English edition, edited by Richardson's rival in printing and acquaintance Samuel Croxall¹⁰⁰. By examining Mrs. Shirley's reference to *The Princess of Clèves* in *Grandison* we can see that Richardson's last novel does not criticize Lafayette, but rather that it corresponds a great deal with the French text's meditation on unrequited love. The reference to *The Princess of Clèves* and its context, that of a debate between women about the virtues of love and duty, provides a metafictional support for the idea that *Grandison* should be read as an anti-romance, a text that is paradoxical and ambivalent about the triumph of marriage.

The topic of conversation and storytelling among Lucy and her family is unrequited and jilted love, sparked by accounts about the plight of Clementina. As a young cousin describes it:

reading of the play, however, suggests that Lee was a sophisticated dramatist who provides a nuanced and provocative interpretation of Lafayette's novel, as Collington and Collington, Backscheider, and Campbell have pointed out.

⁹⁹ According to Richardson's biographers Eaves and Kimpel, from an often-quoted letter to William Warburton (dated April 19, 1748) that can be read in *The Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson*, pp. 85-6).

¹⁰⁰ A second translation of the *La Princesse de Clèves*, heavily influenced by the one from 1679, is included in *A Select Collection of Novels*, edited by Samuel Croxall (with whose translation of Aesop's Fables Samuel Richardson was surely familiar) and translated "by several eminent hands" from French, Italian, and Spanish, in four volumes, was published in 1720 in London by John Watts (it was reprinted two, and again nine years later in 1722 and 1729 in six volumes). *The Princesse of Cleves* (along with "The History of the Captive" excerpted from Don Quixote and two other novellas) appears in the second volume. It is possible that Richardson was familiar with this edition. The continued popularity of Lafayette's work in English translation is corroborated by both Richardson's and Eliza Haywood's referencing of the novel. Haywood's *Betsy Thoughtless* (1751), a *Bildungsroman* that incorporates a great number of literary styles and genres, includes a burlesque version of the famous Cabinet scene from Lafayette's novel, wherein the heroine is gazing at a portrait of her lover, unaware that he is spying on her. However, in Haywood's version of the story, Truworth comes out of the shadows and "threw his arms about her waist, not regarding the efforts she made to hinder him, and clasp'd her to his breast with a vehemence, which in all his days of courtship to her he never durst attempt" (quoted in Backscheider, *A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel* 517). Betsy, even though she refuses him, finds a certain "guilty pleasure in the touch."

The struggles [Clementina] had had between her first duties and her inclination; the noble preference she had given to the former; and the persecution, as [Kitty Holles] called it, of all her friends to induce her to marry when she chooses to live single all her life (3:394).

Here, Charles Grandison's former lover is being discussed by the young girls who, according to Mrs. Shirley, are most in danger of succumbing to perilous and false romanticized notions. Clementina's story—which consumes almost half of the overall narrative and most of the seventh volume—is a counter-exemplary one (such as we find in *The Princess of Clèves*) in *Grandison* that depicts an alternative to the happy life in marriage that Harriet, Lucy, and Charlotte find. As is the case in Lafayette's novel, exemplary (in the sense of instructive or moral) stories are both crucial to the main characters' self-fashioning as lovers or abstainers from love.

The conversation turns to exemplary stories in general, both from the women's lives and from literature. Henrietta Shirley, Harriet's grandmother, claims that as a young woman she “could not depend on [her] own sentiments” to make a prudent decision about whether or not to marry Mr. Shirley, a man for whom she felt esteem, but not love. Playing the role of Madame de Chartres from Lafayette's novel, Henrietta's friend Mrs. Eggleton urges her to marry this man because:

A match so advantageous for you, will be of real benefit to your whole family. Esteem, heightened by gratitude and enforced by duty . . . will soon ripen into love: the only sort of love that suits this imperfect state; a tender, a faithful affection My dear Henrietta, concluded she, condescend to be happy in such a way as suits this mortal state (3:398).

What is particularly striking about Mrs. Eggleton's advice is her contrast between the world of literary romances and the "imperfect [mortal] state" of reality, that requires one to "condescend." Not unlike Madame de Chartres, she urges her young friend to consider the world of difference between "les malheurs domestiques où plongent les engagements" (Lafayette 248) ("the domestic misfortunes occasioned by liaisons," [29–30]) and a happy existence that comes with marrying for duty rather than for love. Madame de Chartres wishes to teach her daughter:

quelle tranquillité suivait la vie d'une honnête femme, et combien la vertu donnait d'éclat et d'élévation à une personne qui avait de la beauté et de la naissance . . . [et] aussi combien il était difficile de conserver cette vertu que par une extrême défiance de soi-même et par un grand soin de s'attacher à ce qui seul peut faire le bonheur d'une femme, qui est d'aimer son mari et d'en être aimée (248).

(how much tranquility [is] attached to the life of a respectable woman, and how much brilliance and grandeur might accrue to

one who already possessed both beauty and birth, by the addition of virtue; she also showed her how difficult it was to preserve that virtue, other than through extreme self-discipline and scrupulous dedication to that which, alone, can make for the happiness of a woman: namely, to love her husband and be loved by him [30]).

We can compare this quotation from *The Princess of Clèves* with the parallel one from *Sir Charles Grandison* cited above. Each of these passages emphasizes duty and affection as virtues, and implicitly considers passionate love as dangerous and fleeting. Madame de Chartres insists that the only way to protect oneself from the harm of a troubled mind is constant self-reflection and self-doubt. Tranquility and freedom from *trouble* requires quite a bit of work and self-analysis. For Mrs. Eggleton, tranquility and family happiness requires condescension.

But Henrietta responds with doubts in favor of true love: “suppose,” she says:

after I had vowed love to a man quite indifferent to me, I should meet with the very one, the kindred soul, who must irresistibly claim my whole heart? . . .

A Duke de Nemours! said she [Mrs. Eggleton], taking up the Princess of Clèves, that unluckily lay on my table—Ah, my Henrietta! Have I found you out?—That Princess, my dear, was a silly woman. Her story is written with dangerous elegance; but the whole foundation of her distresses was an idle one. To fancy herself in love with a mere stranger, because he appeared agreeable

at a ball, when she lived happily with a worthy husband, was mistaking mere liking for love, and combating all her life after with a chimera of her own creating (3:399–400).

The fundamental flaw of Mrs. Eggleton’s interpretation of *The Princess of Clèves* (though I believe that Richardson had her purposefully misinterpret it) is that she sees the Princess as a romantic character who would have lived happily with her husband had it not been for her “wandering eye.” Were Henrietta really to take advice from *The Princess of Clèves* she would have recognized that Lafayette’s work was equally against such romantic notions.

In the passage cited above, Henrietta contrasts a potential “kindred soul” with the possibility of marrying someone to whom she is indifferent. As we saw in the previous chapter, the vocabulary of “indifference” is extremely significant in *The Princess of Clèves*, as a goal that replaces virtue as the means to a calm and happy existence. Lucy sees Mrs. Eggleton’s indictment of passionate love as too harsh, and reacts to this story by writing to Harriet: “if no *proper* match ever offers, must we take an *improper* one, to avoid the ridicule of a mere name? An *unsupported state* is better than an *oppressed*, a *miserable* one” (3:401, Richardson’s emphasis). Lucy thus equates “indifference” with an “improper” match. Earlier in the novel, the threat of an improper match almost changes the course of Harriet’s life, when, believing that Sir Charles will marry Clementina, she allows the possibility of marrying Lord D. In fact, his mother writes to her almost exactly the same words as Mrs. Eggleton:

What think you, my dear, is that Love which we vow at the altar? Surely, not adoration: Not a preference of that object *absolutely*, as in excellence

superior to every other imaginable being. No more, surely, in most cases, than such a *preferable choice* . . . as shall make us . . . unite ourselves for life with a man whom we esteem (2.547 emphasis Richardson's).

The Countess of D.'s and Mrs. Eggleton's advice, to marry someone who is a good match, but not necessarily a romantic ideal, mirrors Madame de Chartres's beliefs at the beginning of *The Princess of Clèves*.

Richardson seems to refer to *The Princess of Clèves* in Volume VII of *Grandison*¹⁰¹ as merely a "silly" book that privileges romantic love over marriages of duty and learned mutual affection.¹⁰² However, an anti-romantic interpretation of *The Princess of Clèves*, together with an examination of the analytical mode within which *Grandison* functions elevates the status and significance of the French novel to a level higher than that of a frivolous romance. In Richardson's last novel, the female characters, Harriet, Charlotte, and Clementina, all grapple

¹⁰¹ This reference has not been examined at length, to my knowledge, in about twenty-five years. The majority of studies that comment upon Richardson's use of *La Princesse de Clèves* compare Lafayette's novel to *Clarissa*. See Earnest A. Baker, *The History of the English Novel*. Vol. 4, 1924–39, James S. Munro, "Richardson, Marivaux, and the French Romance Tradition," and most recently, Mildred Sarah E. Greene, "'A Chimera of Her Own Creating': Love and Fantasy in Madame de Lafayette's *Princesse de Clèves* and Richardson's *Clarissa*." Munro, who looks at the "surprise of love" motif that overtakes Harriet Byron among others of Richardson's characters, dismisses the reference to *La Princesse de Clèves* in *Sir Charles Grandison* as "some disparaging" remarks about Madame de Lafayette's work. Eaves and Kimpel also mention the reference once, and also conflate Mrs. Eggleton's interpretation of the novel with Richardson's own, reading the allusion as Richardson's own condemnation of *La Princesse de Clèves*. Greene comments on the reference to make connections between Madame de Lafayette's character and *Clarissa*, and correctly identifies that "Richardson's character . . . seems to be purposefully misreading the Princesse's psyche" (226). Albert J. Rivero's "Representing Clementina: 'Unnatural' Romance and the Ending of *Grandison*" argues that Clementina's lack of marriage is subordinated by Charlotte's "domesticated"—this is Rivero's word—and romantic ending. Rivero mentions the reference to *La Princesse de Clèves* but does not explore it at length.

¹⁰² As Rivero has argued.

with understanding their own hearts, and whether or not what they feel, as Mrs. Selby tells Harriet in the second epigraph to this chapter, is love. The presence of *The Princess of Clèves* helps to reveal an element of the darker side of *Grandison*, which I find does not unequivocally favor the successful love-match and romantic marriage-plot, or promote the newly privatized marriage in England that attempted to abolish clandestine marriages such as the ones that Lovelace and Pollexfen attempt to carry out in Richardson's novels¹⁰³.

For the older generation, the figure of the chimera as an unknown future lover—or even worse, the possibility of remaining single—symbolizes irrationality, romance, and ultimately, destruction, but also a childish game, an illusion. We find another insight into how Richardson felt about the figure of the chimera in his *Moral and Instructive Sentiments*, a collection of “Sentiments, Maxims, and Reflections contained in the histories of Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles Grandison.” Along with a number of other quotations denigrating romantic love from the original seventh volume of *Grandison*, Richardson classifies Mrs. Eggleton's speech under the heading “Fancy. Imagination. Romances.” In this didactic volume, then, Richardson points to an anti-romantic reading of Mrs. Shirley's story. Though Richardson has Mrs. Eggleton mostly misread Lafayette's book, the overall anti-romantic analysis that emerges is correct. The figure of the chimera, I believe, is apt in that it signifies the specter of uncontrollable passion and dangerous and deceptive illusion that both Lafayette's and Richardson's characters must learn to overcome throughout the course of the novels. The Princess is not a silly character, nor, as I have discussed in the previous chapter, a particularly realistic one. But she is certainly not a romantic,

¹⁰³ Recent criticism reads Richardson's novels as having been composed largely in response to the debate surrounding the Hardwicke Marriage Act in England, which Richardson supported for many years before it was enacted in 1753, five years after *Clarissa* was published.

either, as demonstrated by her renunciation of love at the end of *The Princess of Clèves*. The Princess is, in fact, most similar to Clementina.

Clementina asks Sir Charles—almost as if to give voice to a Mlle de Chartres who cannot protest her marriage to Clèves—whether he thinks she ought to allow her parents to marry her off, “against inclination, against justice, against conscience?” (3:341). Nearly the same words had been written before, by Harriet in the third of seven volumes when she first learns about Clementina. Harriet is struck by the romance of Clementina’s situation, but quickly retracts any positive associations with romance:

pity the unhappy Clementina . . . who loves, against the principles of her religion; and, in that respect, against her *inclination*, a man who cannot be hers What a fatality in a Love so circumstanced!—To *love* against *inclination*! What a sound has that! But what an absurdity is this passion called Love? Or, rather, of what absurd things does it make its votaries guilty? (2.134).

Harriet had been worried for a long time that Sir Charles was in love with a foreigner. When she learns the truth, however, it makes her no happier; in fact, it is only a foreign woman who is making him unhappy, and who is made unhappy by her own impossible love.

Since the desire to abstain from love had already been expressed before by both Harriet and Lucy, Clementina’s story and her desire to remain single should not be ignored. All of the seventh volume of *Sir Charles Grandison* is dedicated to Clementina’s cyclical bouts of irresolution regarding marrying Belvedere. After she has agreed to renounce her desire to enter a

convent (the Princesse never becomes a nun either, though she spends half the year in a religious institution and the other half in even greater seclusion and strict spiritual exercise at home), she is slandered by two of her former friends, causing her to consider again taking the veil. Once more, Sir Charles intervenes, and bargains with her to accept her parents' desire for her marriage. She goes back and forth until finally she is convinced to request from her parents a stay of one year to further consider the matter. It is a "good" sign when she parts from the Count who is "on his knees, [as] he pressed with his lips, her not withdrawn hand" (3:454). But rather than providing a definitive conclusion to the story, the novel ends with Clementina still ambivalent about Belvedere.

The indefinite ending of the book, with Clementina taking a year to consider whether or not she should marry, along with Richardson's implicit comparison of Clementina to the Princess of Clèves, keeps the novel's emphasis on the analysis of ambivalence. Mrs. Shirley warns the younger women that they must not "set out with false notions of happiness; gay, fairy-land imaginations; and when these schemes prove unattainable, [young people] sit down in disappointment and dejection" (3:395), exactly the ending the Princess herself comes quite close to having, but which she skirts at the very end. Harriet's fate in the novel functions in some ways as a parallel to Mrs. Shirley's fears—she in fact does marry the man of her dreams and fulfills a romantic ideal. And yet, Harriet had been very careful throughout the novel not to frame her love for Sir Charles in such romantic terms. Moreover, Clementina's story remains unfinished; this loose thread, while it does not threaten Harriet and Sir Charles's happiness, does provide an unresolved re-opening at the end of a novel whose conclusion is otherwise pro-marriage, if not pro-romance.

Chapter 6: The Cruel Gaze of Society: Stendhal's *Armance* and Austen's *Persuasion*

C'est la réaction du passé et de l'avenir sur le présent qui fait le malheur Ce que j'ai souffert n'est plus, ce que je souffrirai n'est pas, et je m'inquiète, je me tourmente, je me crève, pour ces deux néants là! . . . quel sot calcul
quel sot déraisonnement métaphysique, direz-vous?

It is the reaction of the past and of the future on the present that brings unhappiness What I have suffered no longer exists, what I shall suffer does not exist, and I am alarmed, I am tormented, I am destroyed by these two nothingnesses! . . . What stupid reasoning what stupid, metaphysical irrationality, wouldn't you say?

–Benjamin Constant

This chapter takes us to the early part of the nineteenth century, with an examination of Stendhal's first novel, *Armance*, and Austen's last novel, *Persuasion*. The two books have been compared at least once before, by J. F.W. Hemmings (in *Stendhal: A Study of His Novels* [1964]), who notes that *Armance* reads like “a rather darker *Persuasion*, the situation between the lovers being, in a sense, reversed” (73). Stendhal's novel, like Austen's, is a novel of manners, investigating the language, behavior, and unwitting motivations of its characters.

Though one ends tragically and the other happily, *Armance* and *Persuasion* hinge on a troubling and loaded silence that undermines almost every intimate scene involving the main characters in the novel. Particularly evident in these nineteenth-century novels is the role that the representation of setting (be it familial or societal)—always closed, suspicious, and judgmental—plays in understanding analytical fiction. In this chapter, I elaborate the ways in which the gaze of society within the novel can help to fuel the silences that hide and reveal at the same time, as well as the ways in which silence functions alternatively to bring about and hinder intimacy between the central couple in each novel. The refusal to provide the full story also manifests itself as a form of reluctance or inhibition in the narrator. This type of narrator acts as a character in the story who also struggles to gain knowledge about characters' states of mind, beliefs, and motivations. Treating ungovernable passions by hiding them creates even more misprisions and self-delusion in characters, and ultimately underscores the motif of the unattainability of knowledge in analytical fiction.

* * *

Stendhal's first novel is about a fragile, young Parisian aristocrat, Octave, and his improbable romance with the novel's title character, Octave's cousin Armance, an impoverished orphan of Russian descent who is taken in by a wealthy aunt in Paris. No motif is more prominent in *Armance* than silence. The reader observes Octave's determined silence about a mysterious problem, an affliction to which he refers over and over to excuse his inability to speak to his beloved. Armance, too, suffers an almost perpetual inability to speak to Octave about her love. As John Preston has noted:

[t]he narrative of a novel is a way of talking about the world, but its talk is strangely bound up with silence. It habitually goes behind what is and can be spoken, and in thus reflecting on what is *not* said it offers a kind of discourse deeply dependent on silence (261).

But while for Preston this narrative “encourages us to abandon the idea of a recognizable personalized narrator” (262), I argue that the most important and prominent silent “character” in the novel is the narrator himself, who is complicit in keeping silent about the motivations behind Octave and Armance’s enigmas. Again and again, the narrator refuses to reveal the secrets of his characters, replaying the motif of adynaton found in *The Princess of Clèves* and other works of analytical fiction¹⁰⁴. At the same time, this silence highlights the analytical motif of the search for knowledge. As Tzvetan Todorov puts it, “[t]he entire plot of the novel is, in fact, subjugated to the search for knowledge” (*Essentials of the Theory of Fiction* 159).

According to Wallace Fowlie, “the subtlety and finesse of the analyses of *Armance* place it at the head of all the novels of psychological analysis” (231). Yet when writing about *Armance*, most critics tend to focus on Octave’s “problem,” or on the fact that the novel presents

¹⁰⁴ According to Stendhal’s journal, in an entry dated June 6, 1828, the author had *La Fayette*’s text in mind when he wrote *Armance*: “Quoique la mode les empêche de comprendre ce roman [*Armance*], qui n’a de ressemblance qu’avec des ouvrages très anciennement à la mode, tels que *La Princesse de Clèves* [Q]uoi de plus simple que le plan?” (quoted in Hoog’s edition of *Armance* 273) (“Although what is in fashion keeps them from understanding this novel, which resembles only very old works that used to be in style, like *La Princesse de Clèves* [W]hat could be simpler than this idea?”). Later on the same date he wrote that his novel “semble délicat comme *La Princesse de Clèves*” (274) (“is delicate like *La Princesse de Clèves*”).

a mystery without a key.¹⁰⁵ But this “difficulty” should be examined, instead, as a rhetorical problem; the use of verbal withholding should be read as a marker of fear and timidity, of a certain inherent drive to sidestep, to avoid coping with the desire for intimacy. Little has been written about Armance’s inhibitions, and some critics, like Wood, minimize the importance of Armance overall, claiming that “the character of Armance is in a technical sense accessory to that of Octave Her shyness and her doubts, borrowed from *La Princesse de Clèves*, are just there to keep the novel going” (58).¹⁰⁶ Yet, Armance’s silence, and the fear that drives it, is just as striking and just as mysterious as Octave’s.

Another common critical stance is to assert that the lovers merely represent the decaying, degenerate, and anxious Restoration-era society in which they live; but the idea of fear, in fact, works the other way around: this overanxious culture helps to shape the inhibited language and expression of the main personages in the novel. Because they are afraid, Octave and Armance rarely tell the truth. But this tendency to dissimulate has also been informed by the society in which they live, where every speech act is subject to the most acute scrutiny. Charles O’Keefe notes that the milieu in which Armance and Octave live is a society plagued by “gnawing fears and anxieties” and “haunted by bloody memories of the guillotine” (581). We can say that Octave and Armance are caught in a double-bind in which dissimulation and revelation, silence and speech, equally frustrate and cause even greater unease and disunity with their environment and with each other. Octave and Armance’s secrets and lies, unspoken as much to themselves as

¹⁰⁵As Armand Hoog points out in the Folio Classique edition of *Armance*, one of Stendhal’s little jokes in the novel is that Octave has an irrational fear of keys, since his own will not unlock any doors.

¹⁰⁶Nevertheless F. W. J. Hemmings and Emile J. Talbot both identify the analog characteristics in Armance and Octave, and assert that she is as important as he is in the narrative. Hemmings even goes so far as to write that Armance’s “frigidity matches [Octave’s] incapability” (72).

to each other, constantly double back on them and create more frustrations and misunderstandings between them. Moreover, the silence that pervades the narrative not only inhibits the main characters' love, but also reflects a dissimulating, calculating, frightened society.

The narrator of *Armance* constantly alludes to a certain mysterious secret afflicting Octave: this young person is remarkable for having “quelque chose de sombre” (49) (“a certain somber air” [1]) about him, a “profonde mélancolie” (50); he “eût fait sensation s’il eût eu l’habitude de parler” (49) (would have created a sensation had he been in the habit of talking” [1]), but he “semblait misanthrope avant l’âge” (50) (seemed to have turned misanthrope before his time” [2]). The narrator reminds us repeatedly that he “avait des accès d’humeur noire qu’il pouvait à peine dissimuler” (236) (“was given to fits of somber ill-temper which he found difficult in concealing” [224]). Octave has a “fatal secret,” something whose nature is never revealed, but that makes him “un *monstre*” (239). This persistent inability to speak, particularly evoked by the emotionally charged aposiopesis after “mais” in the passage above, dilates the silence (and suffering) of the two lovers. In the same way, the narrator often depicts Armance in possession of a “fatal secret” and in a state in which “[l]es larmes . . . la suffoquaient” (102) (“tears . . . suffocate her”), or that she wishes to “élever une barrière éternelle entre Octave” (102) (“erect an eternal barrier between Octave” [65]) and herself.

At the beginning of the novel, the two characters are described as being very much indifferent to one another, being able to converse with complete frankness. And yet, even at the start, there seems to be some tension, something unspoken between them that threatens the intimacy the narrator claims exists. Armance realizes that she is in love with Octave early in the novel, but she is unable to recognize that he is in love with her too. At some point, Octave grasps

that Armance is in love with him, but he is not able to name this feeling within himself. What keeps these two lovers from admitting their true feelings to each other? Talbot believes that it is their bind to an ethical standard that they have set for themselves, while many theorists, like Shoshana Felman, believe that it is a generalized inability to communicate. However, these interpretations do not seem to fully explain the problem and, in fact, no explanation is satisfactory. In the end, the characters' fears remain impenetrable, and their anxieties frustrate the narrator, the reader, and the critic.

Octave and Armance are, after all, excellent dissimulators. Octave feigns liking his room, chess, horses, and walks with his uncle, just to keep up the appearance of being a good son and nephew. Armance, to make Octave jealous, pretends that she has a fiancé, and in turn, Octave pretends to be indifferent to her, and makes it seem that he is in love with Madame d'Aumale. O'Keefe writes that the very form of *Armance* is constituted of "obstacles to truth"¹⁰⁷ (582) in a way that functions as a cofactor to Octave's secret. But the reasoning behind this dissimulation is complicated: pretending that you are not in love with someone is almost always a ruse to make that person love you more. As in the other works we have seen in this dissertation, Stendhal's narrative continuously puts off the possibility of honest communication between Armance and Octave.

Wood notes that "the best part of love is communion, precisely the 'conspiracy of candour,' in Hemmings' fine phrase, which Octave and Armance enjoy—"that limitless confidence which is perhaps the sweetest charm of love' . . . Octave and Armance have the

¹⁰⁷ "lies are not merely frequent, and lack of mutual understanding does not merely help to move the story along. Rather, they and other obstacles to truth constitute the very bulk and substance of this novel. The extraordinary degree to which such obstacles are present and at work in *Armance* is precisely what suggests the appropriateness of the reader's difficulty in attaining certainty about Octave's secret" (O'Keefe 582).

moments all Stendhal's lovers have, their instants of perfect comprehension, and they have no more and no less of them than the others" (57). Indeed, there are moments of mutual understanding and love. For example, early in the novel, Octave's complaints "intéressaient Armance; les yeux d'Octave exprimaient tant de possibilité d'aimer et quelquefois ils étaient si tendres! Elle, sans se le bien expliquer, sentait qu'Octave était la victime de cette sorte de sensibilité déraisonnable qui fait les hommes malheureux et dignes d'être aimés" (72) ("interested Armance; Octave's eyes expressed such possibilities of love, and were at times so tender! She, without clearly explaining it to herself, felt that Octave was the victim of that sort of unreasoning sensibility which makes men wretched and worthy to be loved" [30]). Certainly it is possible to say that this is an intimate moment between the two young lovers. But these moments of comprehension are always fraught with a kind of melancholy, as the words "victime" and "malheureux" underline. Later, understanding and fear are conjoined when Octave thinks to himself at the end of the novel, "Armance m'a toujours fait peur. Je ne l'ai jamais approchée sans sentir que je paraissais devant le maître de ma destinée¹⁰⁸" (252) ("Armance has always alarmed me. I have never approached her without feeling that I was appearing before the ruler of my destiny" [245]). Thus, Octave hyperbolizes, and fashions the significance of Armance's role in his "fate." Octave is afraid of being found inadequate; only by faking his disinterestedness in her can he hope not to win her love and approval, but to remain just distant enough from her to keep her away from the truth.

The first examples of both dissimulation and rhetorical silence in *Armance* are found not in the novel itself, but rather in the preface, a fictitious paratext in which Stendhal attributes the novel to a "femme d'esprit" (45) ("a woman of character" [ix]) and writes falsely modest words

¹⁰⁸ Hemmings calls Armance "a virgin of terrifying purity" (73).

about the book's inadequacies. With this overture, Stendhal converts what should be an explanatory, and thus, communicative, preface into an incommunicative one. The preface ends in aposiopesis, rather than in an elucidation with "[d]'ailleurs, un tel sujet! . . ." (47) ("And such a subject, too! . . ." [xi]). Though we know from Stendhal's correspondence that the author modeled his work on *Olivier ou le secret*, a novel about a physically impotent man, many critics have shown that it is the very existence of the secret itself—and the fact that the reader is never sure what is being alluded to—which keeps the reader reading. André Gide was perhaps the first to claim that "to make the reader guess this impotence is, we might say, the very subject of the book, and I know of no other that requires a more subtle collaboration of the reader" (264). Other critics, including G. Mouillaud, Felman, and O'Keefe¹⁰⁹, also recognized that "explaining" the novel is a danger: "En transportant l'explication à l'intérieur de l'œuvre, on détruit l'énigme mais du même coup on détruit l'intérêt et le sens du roman" (Mouillaud 526) ("by transporting the explanation within the work, we destroy the mystery, but at the same time we destroy the value and meaning of the novel"). Thus, the "subject" of this novel—impotence—is itself a word Stendhal would never include in the text, and constitutes the greatest act of silence of all. Gide writes:

Stendhal knows perfectly well that we lack the explanation for
which we are waiting during the whole course of the book; he

¹⁰⁹ O'Keefe asserts, Stendhal "wanted to write a story about a young man hiding his impotence but that he had very good artistic reasons for paying more attention to the hiding than to the impotence" (580) and argues that "the elusiveness of truth constitutes one of the major themes of *Armance* and that this subject, emphatically exemplified in several different ways throughout the novel, makes it only appropriate that Octave's secret should ultimately perplex and tease the reader" (580). Felman, for her part, "maintains that this novel requires silence about the secret because the inability to communicate is one of its central themes" (quoted by O'Keefe 580).

knows he ought to give it to us; but, as he confesses in a note (26 May 1828): ‘I can find no way of saying this becomingly in the work; *rather in the preface.*’ (264).

But in his preface, Stendhal only disguises the meaning in a pregnant ellipsis, a cutting-off of language. Thus, from the very beginning, the author introduces an air of mystery, and with it, a (albeit playful) fear of revealing too much. This sort of “lacune,” Gérard Genette writes, “l’interruption du texte, n’est pas une simple absence, un pur non-texte; c’est un manque, actif et sensible comme manque, comme inécriture, comme texte inécrit” (176) (“the interruption in the text is not a simple absence, a pure non-text; there is an active and tangible lack, like *inécriture*, like an unwritten text”). Thus, this type of novel both hides and reveals more implicitly than it communicates explicitly. The style of narration mirrors the refraction of truth presented as a motif, and “encourages us . . . to understand the narration as a form of language whose function is to make palpable the silence which divides us from the scene” (Preston 262).

In *Armance*, the narrator offers a subtle, implicit commentary. He keeps Octave and Armance’s secrets, but at the same time critiques their dissimulations, their silence, and above all, their fears, and presents them both as impotent victims of society’s malice. During the party scenes, the narrator scans the room, analyzing the looks of various characters in the salon and their opinions of Octave and Armance, in a way that cloaks the setting in paranoia. At one gathering, Madame de Bonnavet, the frivolous hostess, alights upon Octave. She announces to him that he is an “*être rebelle*” (93). The vocabulary of seeing and seeming suddenly takes center stage: “[e]n ce moment, son intérêt pour Octave fut évident aux yeux de quelques observateurs malins, car ils étaient observés” (93) (“[a]t this moment, her interest in Octave was

plain to the eyes of several malicious watchers; for they were being watched” [55]). Everyone sees how Madame de Bonnivet’s “yeux jetaient une douce flamme en écoutant ce beau jeune homme et surtout en le plaignant. Les bonnes amies de Madame de Bonnivet, qui la regardaient de loin, se livraient aux jugements les plus téméraires” (93) (“her eyes darted a mild flame as she listened to this handsome young man; still more, when she commiserated with him. Madame de Bonnivet’s good friends, who were watching her from a distance, indulged in the most rash judgments” [55]). Vacillating between the characters, the narrator’s fragmented gaze parallels the movements of Madame de Bonnivet and her guests’ looks. Next, the narrator shifts to Armance, who is watching Octave: “sa conversation . . . eût un charme secret pour Armance; cette conversation n’avait pour but unique que de lui plaire” (96) (“his conversation . . . had a secret charm for Armance; the sole object of that conversation was to give her pleasure” [59]). And yet, they are never far from public scrutiny: “ces deux êtres, les plus remarquables du salon . . . sans s’en douter ils formaient spectacle” (95) (“these two people, the most remarkable in the room, in which, all unconsciously, they were providing a spectacle” [57]).

The restitution of money from the Revolution, and the social status that it can restore as well, is a major source of unease in the novel as well. When Octave’s family receives an indemnity of two million francs, and Octave becomes wealthier than Armance, the money becomes the subject on everyone’s lips at Mme de Bonnivet’s next party. Armance fears that the money has changed Octave, that his soul has suddenly become “base.” It seems as though Armance is not exactly ignoring him, but the change in his fortune makes her fear that they no longer have anything in common. This anxious silence between the two provides the other party guests an irresistible opportunity to gossip, their “aristocratic silliness [serving] as only the skimpiest of masks to hide [their own] gnawing fears” (O’Keefe 581) about money and status:

la duchesse d'Ancre s'approcha du divan sur lequel [Octave] était assis, et dit, non à lui, mais pour lui, et à voix très basse, à madame de la Ronze son amie intime: Voyez cette petite sottise d'Armance, ne s'avise-t-elle pas d'être jalouse de la fortune qui tombe des nues à M. de Malivert? Dieu! que l'envie sied mal à une femme! L'amie devina la duchesse et saisit le regard fixe d'Octave qui, tout en ayant l'air de ne voir . . . avait tout entendu (64).

(the Duchesse d'Ancre came up to the divan upon which [Octave] was seated and said, not to him but for his benefit, and in the lowest of tones, to her dearest friend Madame de la Ronze: 'Look at that little fool Armance, she has actually taken it into her head to be jealous of the fortune that has fallen from the clouds at M. de Malivert's feet. Lord! How ill envy becomes a woman!' Her friend guessed the Duchesse's meaning, and caught the fixed stare of Octave who, while appearing to see nothing . . . had heard all [20]).

In a few overheard words, Octave believes that Armance's silence is explained, and he begins to burn for reconciliation, while at the same time beginning to worry, in a reversal of Armance's fears, that it is she who cares too much about money. Here the narrative, observing what is perceived surreptitiously, what is meant to be heard and by whom, and

what anxieties are the effect of all these indirect speeches and looks, creates a paranoid atmosphere that generates unease—not to mention misreadings—amongst the characters.

The misunderstanding over Octave's newfound wealth drives Octave and Armance apart, and they spend several weeks in mutual silence. Finally, the two find themselves alone in Armance's garden. Octave tries to apologize to her and win back her friendship. Armance's reaction to Octave's attempt at reconciliation is not what either of them expect:

Elle n'interrompit point Octave . . . elle se tut encore pendant longtemps . . . Elle ne répondit pas. J'ai perdu votre estime, s'écria-t-il, et les larmes tremblaient dans ses yeux. Indiquez-moi une action au monde par laquelle je puisse regagner la place que j'avais autrefois dans votre cœur et à l'instant elle est accomplie. (98–9)

(She did not once interrupt Octave . . . she still remained silent for a long time . . . She did not answer. 'I have forfeited your esteem,' he cried, and the tears trembled in his eyelids. 'Tell me of any single action in the world by which I can reconquer the place I once held in your heart, and in such an instant it will be performed' [62]).

Octave does not know what he is asking; the change in Armance stems from the fact that she is now in love with him. Knowing that she is an inappropriate wife for Octave and also because she is too timid and anxious to reveal her love, Armance remains silent.

Ces derniers mots, prononcés avec une énergie contenue et profonde, furent trop forts pour le courage d'Armance; il ne lui fut plus possible de feindre, ses larmes la gagnèrent et elle pleura ouvertement. Elle craignit qu'Octave n'ajoutât quelque mot qui aurait augmenté son trouble et lui aurait fait perdre le peu d'empire qu'elle avait encore sur elle-même. Elle redoutait surtout de parler . . . Vous avez toute mon estime, lui dit-elle (99).

(These last words, uttered with a restrained and deep-rooted energy, were too much for Armance's courage to endure; it was no longer possible for her to pretend, her tears overpowered her, and she wept openly. She was afraid lest Octave might go on and say something that would increase her discomfiture, and make her lose what little self-control she still retained. Above all, she was afraid to speak . . . 'You have all my esteem,' she told him [62]).

She is grateful that a maid enters, and she runs from the garden, as Octave "resta immobile, les yeux remplis de larmes, et ne sachant s'il devait se réjouir ou s'affliger" (100) ("remained motionless, his eyes brimming with tears, and not knowing whether he ought to rejoice or to mourn" [63]). He is puzzled at what he perceives as Armance's coldness. Back in her bedroom, Armance suffers from confusion and trouble; she realizes that her reaction was unwarranted, and yet, she takes comfort in knowing "Je ne suis qu'à demi méprisable, car enfin je n'ai pas avoué

en propres termes mon fatal secret” (102) (“I am only half despicable, for after all I did not confess in so many words my fatal secret” [65]). Here, neither the characters’ speeches nor the narration betray Armance’s secret word, love, or why it is fatal.¹¹⁰ Instead, the narrator presents the reader with another enigma, a frustration parallel to the one we have already been told about Octave. For Stendhal, encouraging the reader’s curiosity about the secret becomes the only type of device that can propel forward a narrative so recursive in its language.

Remarkably, Madame de Malivert, the one person who should be able to mediate between the two lovers, also cannot bring herself to speak to her son about his relationship with Armance. We are told that Octave’s mother often “le regardait bien plus qu’elle n’osait lui parler” (57) (“gazed at him without venturing to address him” [11]). Though she cannot speak to Octave, Madame de Malivert tells Armance that she would like to arrange the marriage. Yet, she cannot help but notice the extreme reticence of both Armance and Octave:

[les] assurances de l’amour d’Octave étaient déchirantes pour Armance. . . . Madame de Malivert . . . observa que la présence de son fils n’ôtait point à mademoiselle de Zohiloff cette sorte de malheur qui vient de la crainte de n’avoir pas eu assez d’orgueil envers ce qu’on aime, et d’avoir peut-être ainsi perdu dans son estime (132).

([The] assurances of Octave’s love were extruciating to Armance.

Madame de Malivert . . . observed that her son’s presence did not at all

¹¹⁰ Later, when Armance is called upon to explain her bizarre behavior, she lies to Octave and tells him that she is engaged to another man. This scene is set at the tomb of Abélard and Héloïse, a location symbolic of Octave and Armance’s ill-fated love.

relieve Mademoiselle de Zohiloff of that sort of misery which springs from the fear of not having shown sufficient pride towards the person whom one loves, and of having perhaps thus lowered herself in his esteem [100]).

Octave's mother becomes "fort inquiète" (132) ("extremely anxious" [100]) when she realizes that Octave has in fact not professed his love for Armance and that he is so timid. But rather than addressing the problem with her son, the Marquise instead chooses to lie to Armance, claiming that Octave had indeed spoken to her about an affection for her, thus putting the onus on the shy and fearful girl to precipitate the relationship.

The reader is not privy to the circumstances under which Armance falls in love with Octave. For Hemmings, "Octave and Armance, both free from entanglements, are so obviously suited to one another from the beginning that the reader finds himself wondering how the author's ingenuity will stretch to deferring the inevitable marriage until the last chapter" (63).¹¹¹ But that does not take into account the fact that the two characters do not wish to admit the truth to themselves.

Hemmings suggests that Octave also falls in love with Armance when he is desperate to recover respect in her eyes: "His colourless life is thus temporarily orientated towards the reconquest of her *esteem*, and, being forced to concentrate his attention on his cousin, unwittingly he falls in love with her" (75). Wishing to get close to Armance, Octave begins spending much of his time with Mme de Bonnavet, Armance's guardian. But "ce sage de vingt

¹¹¹ Hemmings briefly compares *Armance* and *Persuasion*, and this estimation of their freedom could apply equally to Austen's novel, as we will see in the second half of this chapter.

ans était loin de pénétrer la véritable cause du plaisir qu’il trouvait à se laisser convertir” (89) (“this sage of twenty summers was far from penetrating the true cause of the pleasure which he found in letting himself be converted” [51]) by Madame de Bonnivet. Clearly, understanding the machinations of social hierarchy do not lend insight into the heart:

Lui, qui tant de fois s’était fait des serments contre l’amour, que l’on peut dire que la haine de cette passion était la grande affaire de sa vie, il allait avec plaisir à l’hôtel de Bonnivet parce que toujours cette Armance qui le méprisait, qui le haïssait peut-être, était à quelques pas de sa tante (89).

(He, who so many times had taken vows against love, that one might say that hatred of that passion was the main object of his life, went with pleasure to the Hôtel de Bonnivet because invariably that Armance who despised him, who hated him perhaps, was stationed within a few feet of her aunt [51–2]).

For her part, Armance tries to hide her love, but it is all too obvious to anyone else who listens.

However, her loaded words escape Octave’s comprehension:

Elle veillait bien sur ses paroles, et jamais ses paroles n’exprimaient autre chose que l’amitié la plus sainte. Mais le ton dont certains mots

étaient dits! Les regards qui quelquefois les accompagnaient! Tout autre qu'Octave eût su y voir l'expression de la passion la plus vive. Il en jouissait sans les comprendre (138–9).

She kept a careful watch over her speech; and never did her speech convey anything but the most holy friendship. But the tone in which certain words were uttered! The glance that sometimes accompanied them! Any one but Octave would have been able to read in them an expression of the warmest passion. He enjoyed without understanding them [108]).

In this way, Octave's love remains a secret even to himself. He suffers from a lack of "pénétration," or insight, and he has sworn so many times that he will not fall in love that he is incapable of realizing that the very thing he is so afraid of has already happened. La Rochefoucauld writes: "Le plus grand défaut de la pénétration n'est pas de n'aller point jusqu'au but, c'est de le passer" (Maxim 377), but Octave's problem is that he does not go far enough. Despite believing himself a philosopher and a scientist, Octave is blind.

It is perhaps understandable that Armance, as an impoverished young woman, fears that it is inappropriate to pursue Octave, who is much wealthier. She fabricates a number of excuses, none of which is particularly convincing: she fears that if they were married, "chaque jour serait empoisonné par la crainte qu'Octave ne vînt à penser que je l'ai préféré à cause de la différence de nos fortunes" (136) ["every day would be poisoned by the fear that Octave might come to think that I had chosen him because of the difference in our fortunes" [104]), or she invokes the same noncommittal reason that the Princess gives to Nemours: "le mariage est le tombeau de

l'amour, qu'il peut y avoir des mariages agréables, mais qu'il n'en est aucun de délicieux" (135) ("is it not said that marriage is the grave of love; that there may be agreeable marriages but never one that is really delightful?" [103]), and that "Voir l'amour s'éteindre dans le cœur d'un époux qu'on adore, est le plus grand des tous les malheurs" (136) ("to see love perish in the heart of a husband whom she adores is the greatest of all misfortunes for a person" [104]). Clearly, Armance is afraid, for she cites a number of reasons for not marrying Octave that only may or may not manifest themselves. Even after she inherits a fortune of her own, which would make her perfectly matched to Octave, Armance shrinks away because she fears he may love another woman. When Octave becomes ill, she rushes to his side, but she remains silent. She steels herself against a possible rejection: "elle sentit pour la seconde fois de sa vie les atteintes d'un sentiment affreux Je dois veiller sur moi d'une manière sévère" (218) ("she felt for the second time in her life the assault of a sentiment that is terrifying 'I must keep a strict watch over myself' she said to herself" [203]). Armance also attributes her fear of speaking to Octave to a fear of what society would think: "Une extrême timidité qui la saisit, en songeant que tout le monde les observait, la rendit immobile et elle répondit à peine" (219) ("an extreme shyness which seized her, with the thought that everybody was watching them, paralysed her, and she barely answered him" [203]). She becomes extremely jealous of Madame d'Aumale. The more she observes this woman, the more she admires the fact that she possesses all of the self-confidence that Armance lacks.

An extreme jealousy at some point in the novel attacks both Armance and Octave, and in order to combat it, they try to renounce their love:

[Armance] voulait croire qu'Octave n'avait pas d'amour pour elle; chaque jour elle avait besoin de cette certitude pour justifier à ces propres yeux bien des prévenances que se permettait sa tendre amitié, et cependant cette preuve terrible de l'indifférence de son cousin, qui lui arrivait tout à coup, accablait son cœur d'un poids énorme, et lui ôtait jusqu'à la force de parler (129).

([Armance] wished to believe that Octave felt no love for her; every day she had need of this certainty to justify in her own eyes any number of attentions which her tender affection allowed her to pay him, and yet this terrible proof of her cousin's indifference, which came to her thus suddenly, crushed her heart under an enormous weight, and deprived her of the power of speech [96]).

Similarly, Octave mistakes those times Armance is happy—in truth because she is near him—for being engaged to another man. He tells her:

Je crains bien que ma jolie cousine ne change bientôt de nom
JAMAIS, lui dit Armance, je ne cesserai d'avoir pour vous l'amitié la plus dévouée et la plus exclusive. Mais pendant qu'elle prononçait rapidement ces mots, il y avait tant de bonheur dans ses yeux qu'Octave prévenu y vit la confirmation de toutes ses craintes (137).

(‘I am sorely afraid that my fair cousin is soon going to change her name...’ ‘NEVER,’ said Armance, ‘will I cease to feel for you the most devoted and most exclusive friendship.’ But while she was rapidly uttering these words, there was such a look of happiness in her eyes, that Octave, forewarned, saw in the confirmation of all his fears [106]).

Rather than realizing that it is their very closeness that makes Armance happy, Octave misreads her feelings and believes quite the opposite, that the cause of her change could not be but in spite of him. Armance, at the same time, is pretending to be in love with another man, in order to make Octave jealous and to amplify his love for her. Octave’s rejection of any other more nuanced explanation for Armance’s happiness highlights the same weakness that he manifests throughout the novel: he is both obstinate and easily self-deceived. The discrepancy between what Octave allows himself to think and what the narrator divines about his character is significant. The narrator leads the reader to believe that Octave is repressing his anxieties about the future and impeding his own self-discovery by writing off Armance as a bad deal. Octave’s lack of insight allows him to fool himself, as much as he is fooled by Armance’s lie.

Octave puts off recognizing and naming his real feelings for Armance for as long as possible. He “n’eut pas la moindre idée qu’il aimait Armance d’amour. Il s’était fait les serments les plus forts contre cette passion, et comme il manquait de pénétration et non pas le caractère, il eût probablement tenu ses serments” (107) (“had not the slightest idea that he was genuinely in love with Armance. He had bound himself by the strongest vows to resist that passion, and as

what he lacked was penetration rather than character, he would probably have kept his vows” [71]). And yet, at the height of their jealousy, the reader comes across one of the most beautiful and passionate scenes in the novel. Armance and Octave share a moment of perfect harmony and mutual understanding, though the word “love” is never uttered between them. The two young would-be lovers take a walk in the woods together (though Madame d’Aumale and others are walking within earshot of them), at the Malivert’s country house in Andilly. In this scene, their silence takes on a new dimension, actually causing pleasure rather than pain:

elle n’eut pas le courage de résister au bonheur de se voir aimée ainsi. Elle s’appuyait sur le bras d’Octave et l’écoutait comme ravie en extase. Le bruissement léger des feuilles agitées par le vent du soir semblait prêter un nouveau charme à leur silence.

Octave regardait les grands yeux d’Armance qui se fixaient sur les siens. . . . [les] mots si simples, eût appris à tout autre qu’Octave toute la passion qu’on avait pour lui. Mais il était si étonné de ce qui se passait dans son cœur, si troublé par le beau bras d’Armance à peine voilé d’une gaze légère qu’il tenait contre sa poitrine Il était hors de lui, il goûtait les plaisirs de l’amour le plus heureux, et se l’avouait presque Jamais Octave ne s’était trouvé dans une position aussi fatale à ses serments contre l’amour (155).

([Armance] had not the courage to resist the happiness of seeing herself so dearly loved. She leaned upon Octave’s arm, and listened

to him as though in an ecstasy The gentle rustle of the leaves, stirred by the night breeze, seemed to lend a fresh charm to their silence.

Octave gazed into Armance's open eyes which were fastened on his own [Her words] would have enlightened any one but Octave as to the passion that she felt for himself. But he was so astonished by what was going on in his heart, so disturbed by Armance's shapely arm, barely veiled by a light gauze, which he was pressing to his bosom . . . He was beside himself, he was tasting the pleasures of the most blissful love, and almost admitted as much to himselfNever had Octave found himself in a position so fatal to his vows to refrain from love [126-7])¹¹².

Thus, Octave does not realize at this moment that Armance is in love with him, both because she is doing her best to hide that fact and because, ironically, he is so distracted by his own tumultuous heart that he would not have noticed anyway.

But, in truth, all it will take is the speaking of that fatal and impossible word: love. As soon as he realizes his true feelings, Octave plunges into a state of total despair. It is, in fact, Madame d'Aumale who pronounces it unequivocally just after this beautiful and intimate scene:

¹¹² I disagree here slightly with Mouillaud, who writes: "On chercherait en vain dans *Armance* cette attirance-répulsion pour la 'chair' si répandue chez d'autres auteurs du XIX^e siècle. La chair n'y est ni triste ni impure parce que la notion même de chair est absente" (527) ("One searches in vain in *Armance* this attraction-repulsion for the 'flesh' so common in other writers of the nineteenth century. The flesh is neither sad nor impure because the notion of flesh is missing"). Though the references to physical attraction are few and far between, they still exist, and at times Armance's figure or the feeling of her hand clearly attract Octave.

“Vous êtes amoureux de cette belle cousine, ne vous en défendez pas, je m’y connais” (156) (“You are in love with that pretty cousin, do not attempt to deny it; I know” [128]). Unlike Octave or Armance, Madame d’Aumale is not afraid to say it, and in fact, she utters the last part, that “Je m’y connais” in a voice loud enough for Armance to hear. Though perhaps Madame d’Aumale does not realize the extent to which this observation will cause Octave harm, it falls into the category of those speech acts from which Octave had trained himself to stay far away, the one that rings with truth and which can serve to destroy all his self-protective dissimulation:

Le mot . . . fut un coup de foudre pour lui, car il portait sa preuve avec lui, il se sentit frappé. Cette voix frivole lui sembla comme un arrêt du destin qui tombait d’en haut. Il lui trouva un son extraordinaire. Ce mot imprévu, en découvrant à Octave la véritable situation de son cœur, la précipita du comble de la félicité dans un malheur affreux et sans espoir (156).

(Madame d’Aumale’s speech fell on him like a thunderbolt That frivolous voice seemed to him a pronouncement of fate, falling on him from the clouds. The sound of it seemed to him extraordinary. This startling speech, by revealing to Octave the true state of his heart, dashed him from a pinnacle of bliss into a frightful, hopeless misery [128]).

At this moment, there is nothing more terrifying for Octave than having suddenly been forced to take cognizance of and face his own shortcomings. Becoming aware of his love for Armance suddenly feels like a failure to his sense of duty.¹¹³ Here, the narrator hyperbolizes and mocks Octave when he claims “les expressions me manquent pour donner quelque idée de la douleur qui s’empara de ce malheureux” (159) (“words fail me if I am to give any idea of the grief that overpowered the poor wretch” [131]). Octave admits his love in two words: “J’aime!” . . . moi aimer! Grand Dieu! et le cœur serré, la gorge contractée, les yeux fixes et levés au ciel, il resta immobile comme frappé d’horreurIncapable de se soutenir, il se laissa tomber sur le tronc d’un vieux arbre” (159) (‘I am in love,’ Great God!’ and with throbbing heart, parched throat, staring eyes raised to heaven, he stood motionless, as though horror-stricken Unable to hold himself erect, he let himself fall against the trunk of an old tree that barred his way” [131]). Having uttered the two fateful words, Octave also loses control over his body; it contracts and completely fails to enact the motions—or the emotions—that his words require. Next, he loses control of his ability to speak, almost negating the “j’aime!” which he had announced earlier: “L’aveu de son amour qu’il se faisait bien nettement et sans trouver aucun moyen de le nier, fut suivi de transports de rage et de cris de fureur inarticulés” (159) (“The confession of his love which he made in the plainest terms and without finding any way of denying it was followed by transports of rage and inarticulate cries of fury” [131]). Even more upsetting than having admitted the truth and betraying his vow to never love, Octave now realizes that he had been

¹¹³ Emile J. Talbot’s chapter on *Armance* in *Stendhal Revisited* provides a thorough analysis of Octave and Armance’s sense of duty. Though I disagree with some of his ideas in this analysis, one of Talbot’s theses resonates: “In lying to each other, each believes he/she is being faithful to the code of honor. The lie becomes necessary in order to maintain the code. As Armance puts it, ‘This lie constitutes all my strength against him.’ . . . The pleasure of a sustained human relationship is prevented because it is outside the confines of an ethic that, forcibly turned in on itself, must have recourse to deception” (39).

deceiving himself for a long time. He laments that he had ever thought himself a philosopher, when he was merely a hypocrite; he berates himself for his ignobility; he feels grief, torment, despair; “il éprouvait cette affreuses douleur qui comble la torture des plus grands criminels: il se méprisait parfaitement lui-même” (159) (“he felt that fearful anguish which completes the torment of the greatest criminals: an utter contempt for himself” [132]). Octave, in short, is destroyed by the fear of self-knowledge. Thus, Stendhal reveals a paralyzed world, in which both truth and lies cause irrevocable damage, but also in which silence and speech are equally scrutinized. It would have been better, perhaps, to remain deceived.

The only thing Octave can muster, after regaining consciousness, is to flee Andilly, go back to Paris, and plan a trip to Greece, where he plans to commit suicide after proving his courage and fulfilling the duty that he owes to his ancestors. Before he does so, however, Octave encounters Armance by chance. He is cruel to her. She tries to speak, but merely collapses. Octave is struck by her figure for a moment, and whispers that he loves her (though she does not hear him), before taking his leave for Paris. At Andilly, Armance tries to understand Octave’s actions. She locks herself in the attic and she imagines that Octave’s sense of duty disallows him from revealing his plans to her. In Paris, everything reminds Octave of Armance. The silence of his room amplifies his own apprehensions about her. The narrator jumps back and forth between Paris and Andilly, engaging Armance and Octave in a silent, long-distance dialog of which, of course, the characters are unaware.

As luck would have it, Octave is given the chance to reenact his ancestral prowess sooner than he expected, though the heroic scene becomes a caricature due to Stendhal’s ironic descriptions. While in Paris, Octave is challenged to a duel by a fop, the marquis de Crêveroche, a comic character who becomes desperately jealous of Octave when they meet in Madame

d'Aumale's box at the Théâtre-Italien. Octave's spirits instantly brighten at the thought of this challenge, and although Crêveroche cuts the figure of a less-than-worthy rival (he invites Octave and his second over for tea before the duel, and at the fight appears even "plus affecté et plus *dandy* qu'à l'ordinaire"), the prospect of pistols at dawn revives Octave from his depression. Ironically, Octave had been ready to commit suicide just a few hours before, but now, brought back to reality, he is ready to fight. Octave kills Crêveroche, but is wounded in the arm and in the thigh. He is taken to the house of a peasant, where, on what he believes is his deathbed, he wishes to write a letter to Armance.

The letter, which one should think would be a love letter, is a failure. Though it confesses nothing of his love, Octave even consoles himself with the idea that he could always burn the letter if he feels better later. Felman notes that Octave must believe that he is going to die in order to say the words that he had tried to hide all his life, and Martine Reid explains, "writing, and in it the portrayal of feelings, is experienced as an eminently dangerous act. Speaking is 'frightful,' but writing is even more so" (189). During this pathetic scene, it seems that the narrator cannot stop himself from mocking Octave, and simultaneously refers back to the theme of silence in the process, when he asks "Oserons-nous l'avouer? Octave eut l'enfantillage d'écrire avec son sang qui coulait encore un peu à travers le bandage de son bras droit¹¹⁴" (186) ("Dare we confess it? Octave was so childish as to write with his own blood, which continued to ooze from the bandage on his right arm" [164]). The narrator's posture here is almost as cruel as

¹¹⁴ According to Emanuel J. Mickel, Jr., not all critics see *Armance*'s narrator as ironic, or not nearly as ironic as in other of Stendhal's novels. According to Mickel, "Grahame Jones points out that Octave is not submitted to the same ironic treatment as the novelist's other young protagonists, because of the delicate nature of his infirmity and because of the possibility that direct allusions to it would make him appear ridiculous" (11). But Mickel himself disagrees, and writes, instead, that irony "does play an important role in the novel's development and in the development of the reader's attitude toward the principal character" (11).

that of the ladies in Madame de Bonnavet's drawing room. By redirecting the reader's attention from Octave and his love of Armance to the narrator's question and judgment of Octave's childishness, Stendhal is perhaps hiding that no one knows what to make of the character at this moment. Though Octave does not see the melodramatic nature of his writing in his own blood, the narrator does not wish for the reader to miss out. Ultimately, Stendhal is only obfuscating the meaning in this scene.

Octave and Armance are only able to speak openly about their love as soon as Octave's life is in danger. As Felman explains, Octave's brush with death resurrects him and allows the two young people to speak directly to one another for the first time. Armance admits that there was never another man in her life, and Octave explains what had happened to him in the woods before he disappeared. Armance also admits to some of her fears, particularly that she wishes never to be abandoned again. This fear of being left alone mirrors Octave's from earlier in the novel. This new spirit of openness has a condition, however. Armance makes Octave promise that they will never marry, so that they can, she believes, remain as good friends as ever. This condition being agreed upon, the narrator tells us that "[l]'amour-propre d'Octave n'avait plus de secrets pour Armance, et ces deux jeunes cœurs étaient arrivés à cette confiance sans bornes qui fait peut-être le plus doux charme de l'amour" (206) ("Octave's self-esteem had nothing now to keep secret from Armance, and these two young hearts had arrived at that unbounded confidence which is perhaps the most charming thing about love" [187]). They cannot but notice how willing they are to confide in each other now, whereas in the months before they had imposed such restraint on themselves.

But at the same time, they cannot admit that this mutually agreed-upon self-deception—particularly when Octave recovers from his injuries—reopens the possibility of jealousy and

more deceit, returning them to the state of anxiety that had governed them throughout the novel. They are blind to the fact that this vow of friendship, which precludes any romantic relationship, is a lie. Sooner, rather than later:

Octave alla jusqu'a penser que ce chevalier de Bonnavet, qui
affichait pour elle une estime et un respect sans bornes, pourrait bien
être cet époux mystérieux Armance sentait qu'elle laissait
Octave auprès de madame d'Aumale, mais elle ne crut pas pouvoir
se permettre de lui écrire" (215)

(Octave even began to think that this Chevalier de Bonnavet, who
boasted an esteem and a respect for her that were unbounded, might
well be that mysterious suitor Armance felt that she was leaving
Octave with Madame d'Aumale; but she did not think that she could
allow herself to write to him [198]).

And soon, "Armance et son cousin étaient tous les deux tourmentés par de sombres soupçons"
(215). ("Armance and her cousin were alike tormented by dark suspicions" [198]). Moreover, the
narrator returns to the usual descriptions of their fears and their silences: "Armance n'eut pas le
courage de lui faire la moindre question" (221) ("Armance had not the courage to put to him any
question" [206]), and "[l]es demi-mots qu'Octave hasardait quelquefois n'obtenaient pas de
réponse" (222) ("[t]he hints which Octave threw out now and again met with no response"

[207]). Having been injured already by Octave's disappearance after the scene in the woods, Armance recoils the next time he tries to kiss her cheek.

Yet, silence and fear do not only discourage action in *Armance*, they also sometimes, though by pure machination of plot device, motivate it. At the height of Armance and Octave's suspicions about each other's fidelities, Armance creates a situation in which her reputation is compromised. Octave's malicious uncle, M de Soubriane, who vehemently dislikes the girl, discovers Armance hiding in a closet in Octave's room as *she* tries to learn whether her beloved is entertaining Mme d'Aumale there. Desperate because she perceives that Octave has made a sign to someone outside—presumably to this other lady, but actually to one of his servants—Armance does not realize that M de Soubriane is in the hallway when she emerges from the closet. He sees her leaving Octave's room and is ecstatic to find a way to discredit her. Armance runs to Madame de Malivert and confesses what has happened. In turn, Octave's mother explains the situation to her son, who, completely out of character, declares that the only remedy to this ill, which will compromise both young people, is to marry Armance immediately.

Octave's decisive move, which makes his mother so very happy, is undercut by Armance's misgivings, however. When he proposes, she tells him: "Vous ne m'aimez pas dans ce moment Est-il sûr que ce soit l'amour qui parle . . . peut-être n'est-ce que la générosité . . . Vous abhorriez le mariage, cette conversion subite m'est suspecte" (228) ('You are not in love with me just now,' 'Are you sure that it is love that is speaking,' . . . 'perhaps it is only your generosity' 'You used to have a horror of marriage'" [214]). Octave insists that he loves her and wishes to marry her, but if he seems distracted it is the fault of his uncle's vile suspicions. But in fact, Armance has a point. The narrator confirms that Octave only spoke the words of love because "[i]l était si persuade de ce qu'il disait qu'il finit par persuader à son tour" (228) ("[h]e

was so far convinced of the truth of what he was saying that he ended by convincing her also” [214]), and not long afterwards, “Octave ne trouva rien à lui dire. Il ne put même la regarder avec amour, le calme l’avait mis hors de lui” (228) (“Octave could think of nothing to say to her. He could not even looking lovingly at her, this calm after the storm left him powerless” [215]).

As soon as the prospect of marriage is again upon Octave, he begins to feel melancholy and troubled. Understandably, this causes Armance “inquiétude” (237). They attempt to talk about it, but he suddenly breaks off mid-sentence: “je pourrai vous voir et vous parler à tout heure, *mais*, ajouta-t-il . . . et il tomba dans un de ces moments de silence sombre qui faisaient le désespoir d’Armance” (238) (‘I shall be able to see you and to talk to you at every hour of the day, *but*,’ he went on . . . and fell into one of those moods of gloomy silence which filled Armance with despair” [226]). She urges him to speak, but he will not. He alludes only to a secret, something that makes him “un *monstre*” (239). He flees again to Paris. The next day, she receives a letter from him explaining that his secret is too shameful to admit to her, that he cannot name the “parole fatale” (241).

The bulk of criticism on *Armance* contends with this ineffable word. For Gide, the impotence is “revealed in his gestures, his actions; but we could remain in doubt because the novel skillfully maintains the secret” (262), and Felman writes:

L’absence de la clé est elle-même fonctionnelle, nécessaire et signifiante: le silence fait partie intégrante du texte. Ce n’est pas, en effet, la clé qui manque, mais un manque qui en est la clé . . . l’ellipse qui est essentielle (170).

(The absence of the key itself is functional, necessary and meaningful: silence is part of the text. It is not, in fact, the missing key, but an absence that is the key . . . the ellipse, that is essential.)

The tension between Octave and Armance after the announcement of their engagement and before they are married changes the linguistic stakes of the novel. The forbidden linguistic territory transitions from “love” to a new unknown realm. Armance’s imagination again wanders off in a number of directions. She fears that Octave may be a murderer. But even this, she says, she will forgive him. Armance is willing to give Octave a year to reflect on his secret, but asks him to reveal it to her eventually. Octave allows Armance to believe he is a criminal, enacting another dissimulation that only pulls them farther apart. Octave is also incapable of confessing to his friend, M Dolier, who, despite the fact that he is not informed of the nature of this “fatal secret,” insists that it is Octave’s duty to be honest, “[v]ous ne pouvez vous dispenser de parler” (243) (“[y]ou can have no excuse for not speaking” [233]), he says. Octave resolves to write “la lettre fatale” (243) to Armance, and in the first café he finds, he writes her a short letter, the content of which remains unknown.

The repetition of the word “fatal”—and Armance too, when she was secretly in love with Octave, called her affection her “fatal secret”—clearly evokes not only ill luck and unfortunate circumstances, but also destruction and death. Armance also calls their marriage “cette fatale idée” (237), implying, at worst, that it will destroy them both if it is carried through.

Nevertheless, in other instances, the narrator tells us that Armance is blissfully happy at the idea of marrying Octave, and claims she would be happier married than only loving in secret. It is possible, then, that Armance is deceiving herself when she calls their marriage a “fatal idea.”

Whether or not Stendhal himself believed that two characters who waver between the most passionate professions of love and dissimulations of indifference constitute “la passion la plus folle . . . et profonde” remains unclear. “Stendhal seems to have wanted to show us that the strongest love rises up from the deepest frustration: of all the lovers in Stendhal, here is perhaps the most fervent one” (265), Gide writes. Wood, who does not particularly admire *Armance*, notes, “In Stendhal, love is always fragile and doomed—if other people don’t break it, the lovers themselves will” (58). Another way to interpret the fact that their love seems so fatal is the influence of society; the narrator warns the reader not to fall under the spell of beauty and romance during a particularly happy moment in Octave and Armance’s relationship when the lovers “avaient l’air de fort peu songer à la société. Elle devait se venger” (208) (“had an air of caring singularly little what society might think. It was bound to have its revenge” [190]).

What is ultimately fatal to Octave and Armance’s love—though it seems that it could have self-destructed eventually on its own—is Stendhal’s device of the forged letter—reminiscent of Madame de Thémis’s letter in *The Princess of Clèves*, or perhaps of Lovelace’s adulterated letters, since this one is actually written by Octave’s uncle—claiming that Armance is suddenly indifferent to Octave’s love. His immediate reaction is entirely self-centered; rather than despairing at the idea of Armance no longer loving him, Octave claims “J’avais besoin . . . de la passion la plus folle et la plus profonde pour qu’on pût me pardonner mon fatal secret” (249) (“I needed . . . the wildest and profoundest passion if I was to be pardoned for my fatal secret” [241]). Obviously, Octave has been tricked, and he is mistaken to doubt Armance’s love. Yet, the forged letter reminds the reader of what kind of love they had felt throughout the novel, namely the kind that is thwarted at every turn, denied, held secret, and when it is finally pronounced, despaired of to the utmost degree. Perhaps there is some hidden truth in the

Commander's note. Octave finds the letter in the same place, in the pot of an orange tree at Andilly, where the lovers were used to exchanging letters (apparently, that was no secret at all to the rest of the household). He is also about to place there his own letter, which reveals his fatal flaw. He rips up his own letter as soon as he finds the forged one, destroying any evidence of the secret. The Commander's letter is a false avowal swapped, as it were, for a real one that never comes to be. These confessions—one forged and the other destroyed—are ultimately two destructive forces that inhibit Armance's and Octave's love once again.

Moreover, while the love letters that Armance and Octave had exchanged in the orange tree may be tender and meaningful, they are ultimately rendered inconsequential by the false and torn up ones. The only consequential letter in the novel is the forged one, about which Armance never knows, as it destroys forever Octave's resolve to tell his lover about his secret. The letter expresses feelings of inconstancy on Armance's part and, as if holding up a distorted mirror to what she had previously feared about marriage in general, a loss of love equal to that which Armance had feared in Octave. In some ways, the letter reiterates the fears that Armance had already expressed herself throughout the novel. It contains some truths as well. Nevertheless, the letter is a complete misrepresentation of Armance, who, inexplicably, loves Octave still more constantly even as he begins to behave in stranger and stranger ways. Indeed, as Octave's life becomes more shrouded in mystery, Armance's life, on the contrary, becomes blissfully happy. The accusations of somberness in the letter exacerbate that condition in Octave, and make him truly feel his anxieties. Once again, Octave doubles back to his earlier melancholic state, one which punctuated his behavior throughout the novel, just as Armance becomes more honest and tender.

And even more ironically, there is in fact a wedding. But after the marriage is celebrated, Octave still believes that Armance is playing a part, and even if her sincere happiness almost persuades him to feel the same. The lie Octave believes has infected his love forever. Octave resolves again to kill himself. This time, however, it is not entirely because of his “fatal secret,” but rather because of his belief that Armance is hiding something from him. Armance’s former secret—now disavowed and legitimized—that she loved Octave, suddenly brings her the greatest happiness. The false secret, in which is embedded all of the dissimulation and unhappiness that the characters had felt throughout the novel, remains just that—a secret—to Armance. Octave departs for Greece, leaving Armance in Marseille, where they had celebrated their honeymoon. The romance of the act of suicide, and the name of Greece stir Octave to action:

Le nom de la Grèce réveilla le courage d’Octave . . . et à minuit, le 3 de mars, comme la lune se levait derrière le mont Kalos, un mélange d’opium et de digitale préparé par lui délivra doucement Octave de cette vie qui avait été pour lui si agitée (257).

(The name of Greece revived Octave’s courage . . . And at midnight, on the third of March, as the moon was rising behind Mount Kalos, a mixture of opium and digitalis prepared by himself delivered Octave peacefully from a life which had been so agitated” [251])

This ultimate and eternal silence, enacted in a Byronic (not to mention ironic) vision, born of all the words that they could never express to each other, represents for Octave not a final destruction, but rather a *repos*. Here again, is a near-reenactment of the Princess's death in *The Princess of Clèves*. It recreates the thwarted flights and the near-death he recovered from earlier, in real terms this time, and completes the process that he had been planning from the start of the novel: in short, to escape from his anxieties and fears and to flee the world in which he believes he cannot fully participate.

In *Armance*, the secondary characters speak freely, and many of the intrigues and plot twists of the novel are brought about by these secondary personages. Conversely, every intimate scene in the novel is stalled by silence. Octave, Armance, and Madame de Malivert almost never speak openly or directly to each other, and they all lie and dissimulate to hide their real feelings. Stendhal surely presents, as O'Keefe observes, a milieu—that of the aristocracy in Restoration France that still fears the revolution—in which to betray too much of oneself can be dangerous, but a finely wrought malicious and untruthful phrase can work to one's benefit. However, the silence that overwhelms the characters of *Armance* surpasses this public fear, and becomes internalized in the characters. In turn, whatever this inhibition is becomes externalized through the narrative. Armance, in addition to Octave, suffers from a form of impotence, whether it be physical, psychological, or metaphorical, and it is rendered rhetorical through the narrator's complicity in writing an inhibited text.

* * *

Persuasion begins where most other works of analytical fiction end: with a renunciation of love. Put another way, *Persuasion* is a work of analytical fiction told in reverse, or, it is at once the ultimate perversion of analytical fiction and the apotheosis of analytical fiction: it begins with the denial of love and ends with the mixture of pain and pleasure love bestows. The novel tells the story of Anne Elliot, an unmarried twenty-seven-year-old woman who lives unhappily with her father and sister. Sir Walter and Elizabeth Elliot are exceedingly proud of their aristocratic origins, and their speeches are always peppered with self-aggrandizement and slights to those who they feel are beneath them. Years before, Anne had been in love with Frederick Wentworth, whose poverty and social status her family disdained. She had renounced their love because her godmother, Lady Russell, acting *in loco maternis* to Anne, disapproved not only of Wentworth's profession, i.e., the Navy, but also of his wit and impetuous tendencies. Soon after she parts with Wentworth, Anne laments her decision, and she does not follow Lady Russell's advice again. She refuses another marriage proposal at age twenty-two, from Charles Musgrove, the man who is to become her brother-in-law when her younger sister consents to what Anne would not. Eight years later, Captain Wentworth returns, wealthy and triumphant from the Napoleonic Wars. By a coincidence, Wentworth's sister is renting Kellynch-hall, the estate of Sir Walter, while Anne stays with her sister and brother-in-law, and her father and sister settle in Bath for the winter. Suddenly thrown together with Wentworth, whose entanglement with Anne and former poverty everyone else seems to have forgotten, Anne struggles simultaneously to cope with and hide her rekindled feelings. Though she believes that she reads Wentworth's mind perfectly, she becomes convinced that he is attached to Charles Musgrove's sister Louisa. At the same time, Wentworth becomes increasingly jealous of Anne's supposed engagement to her cousin and heir to the Elliot title, William Elliot, with whom everyone in the

family except Anne is very much obsessed. Nevertheless, Anne and Frederick engage throughout the novel in an idyllic, almost accidental, and silent courtship that, while not totally unthreatened by jealousy and social and familial strain, is the closest we have come—in this examination of analytical fiction—to intimacy.

Like *Armance*, which takes place during the Restoration of the monarchy in France, *Persuasion* is set in a fragile social milieu, with Anne's family desperately holding to an archaic and degenerating idea of aristocracy, while the middle classes (especially Naval) flourish around them. In fact, the impetus for the drama is that Anne Elliot's father, Sir Walter, who is obsessed with his lineage and who reads nothing but his "Baronetage," can no longer afford the lifestyle to which he is accustomed. Sir Walter is persuaded to rent out his manor house, Kellynch-hall, to Admiral Croft, a much wealthier naval officer (though, as Sir Walter laments, not a gentleman), who is married to the sister of Captain Wentworth, and to move with his daughters to Bath for the winter. Ann Elizabeth Gaylin describes Anne's situation as "'in between homes, social circles, and marital status" (43). This interstitial position underlines that "[t]he narrative is set at a transitional moment, when the values of the landed aristocracy are giving way to those of the commercially based middle class" (Gaylin 43). As in other works of analytical fiction, characters in *Persuasion* are wrapped up in a tightly closed society. But, like the Restoration-era aristocracy of *Armance*, the world of Sir Walter Elliot is self-consciously self-selected; its deliberate exclusivity and contempt for those of a lower social and economic class are open secrets.

Persuasion belongs to Austen's later period, which is distinguished by its less-comedic tone, greater dependence on historical backdrop, and increasing reliance on inner thoughts and

analysis for plot. One is tempted to say that it is Austen's darkest courtship novel.¹¹⁵ Austen's last novel is ambiguous, straddling romance and realism, at once mediating the harshness of the Napoleonic Wars and depicting a quietly blossoming intimacy between two characters who had already given up on love.¹¹⁶ The bleak social, economic, and political forces weighing heavily on the characters, whether explicitly or implicitly, contrasted with the small personal triumphs and excitements that punctuate the text, create a tension that pulsates throughout the novel. The novel opposes, to use the narrator's words from the end of the novel, "moments, marked by returning hope or increasing despondence, [which are] . . . dwelt on with energy" (162).

The members of Anne's family are crueler than perhaps any of Austen's other characters. Her sisters perpetrate a kind of motiveless malignancy against her; Elizabeth and Mary have no reason to be jealous of Anne, since her first bloom has faded and they consider her quite useless. After she discovers that Wentworth's sister will be renting the Elliot family house, Anne's thoughts immediately turn to Captain Wentworth and the eight years that have passed since she rejected him. The latent pain of this memory is revived, and yet, to pretend that she is little affected by it, "[s]he was assisted . . . by that perfect indifference and apparent unconsciousness, among the only three of her own friends in the secret of the past, which seemed almost to deny any recollection of it" (21). And later, "perfectly unsuspecting of being inflicting any peculiar wound" (41), Mary reports to Anne that: "Captain Wentworth is not very gallant by you, Anne, though he was so attentive to me [H]e said, you were so altered he should not have known

¹¹⁵ Harold Bloom writes of his experience reading this book: "each time I finish a rereading of this perfect novel, I feel very sad It is not [Anne's] sadness we feel as we conclude the book: it is the novel's somberness that impresses us" (*The Western Canon* 237).

¹¹⁶ Jocelyn Harris's book *A Revolution Almost Beyond Expression* points out the ambivalence of Austen's subject, which recounts both a world haunted by war and "a tale of a woman who regains her lost bloom in a second spring" (20).

you again” (41). The Elliots’ denial of Anne’s feelings, their indifference, amounts to malice. As in all of analytical fiction, indifference is never really naïve. Rather, it is a studied dissimulation of passivity and calm. Whether or not the Elliots are consciously aware of their cruelty toward Anne, the result is a poorly disguised contempt for her feelings and for her status in the family. Their indifference to Anne’s feelings eventually reaches a point where it can be nothing but conscious affectation when, in Bath, Elizabeth and Anne meet Wentworth accidentally in the street:

[i]t did not surprise, but it grieved Anne to observe that Elizabeth would not know him. She saw that he saw Elizabeth, that Elizabeth saw him, that there was complete internal recognition on each side; she was convinced that he was ready to be acknowledged as an acquaintance, expecting it, and she had the pain of seeing her sister turn away with unalterable coldness (117).

The passage above contains a number of references to seeing and looking, as well as Anne’s “conviction” about what Wentworth expects from her sister. In light of all of these glances and expectations, the recognition of the desire to be acknowledged, the resulting silence is overwhelming. In another example, toward the end of the book, when Anne and Frederick are speaking to each other at the White Hart Inn, they are suddenly interrupted by her family:

the door was thrown open for Sir Walter and Miss Elliot, whose entrance seemed to give a general chill. Anne felt an instant

oppression, and, wherever she looked, saw symptoms of the same.

The comfort, the freedom, the gaiety of the room was over, hushed into cold composure, determined silence, or insipid talk, to meet the heartless elegance of her father and sister (150).

The room falls silent as Elizabeth and Sir Walter enter in the almost comically dramatic passage above. The general chill, the oppression, the cold composure: all of these words contrast with the previous warmth, comfort, freedom, and gaiety of the scene that the Elliots interrupt. There is a vividness to the sudden change of air in this scene. One can hear the silence and feel the stifling chill flood the room as the door is thrown open.

Eight years before the action of the novel begins, Anne “was persuaded to believe the engagement [to Wentworth] a wrong thing—indiscreet, improper, hardly capable of success, and not deserving it” (19). As Tony Tanner puts it:

[t]he story of [Anne’s] life consists precisely in having had her own way blocked, refused, negated. One might almost think of the book as being about dissuasion, for she is urged or forced not into doing something which she does not want to do, but into *not* doing something which her whole emotional self tells her is the right thing” (*Persuasion* 233).

Never having regained a happy place in her family, Anne becomes the foremost observer in the novel, who, because she remains mostly silent and fades into the background, is in a position to

comment on and criticize those around her. Anne is often relegated to the role of witness, left out of conversations, and forgotten by her family. She sits in on discussions but does not participate in them, rendering her outside of the scene, yet still trapped inside it. “Anne is, precisely, in between, and she lives in in-betweenness. She is a speaker who is unheard; she is a body who is a ‘nobody’” (Tanner 232). Through Anne’s voice, which mingles frequently with the narrator’s, we see how characters in *Persuasion* hover between romance and realism, wealth and relative poverty, having to negotiate between aristocracy and the middle classes, and between different houses and social groups, as well as “‘in-betweenness’ of society on a linguistic level” (Gaylin 43). As John Wiltshire points out, “Anne is without power in her family circle as she is at first without dramatic prominence in the text” (*Cambridge Companion* 76). And later, the critic writes: “within the text, Anne is usually eloquent only by indirection or implication . . . what Anne herself says is often omitted. In dialogue, her responses tend to be absorbed into the meditative commentary of the text” (*Cambridge Companion* 79). She is introduced slowly into the novel, and she does not emerge as the heroine until the fourth chapter, when the narrator recounts, by weaving in and out of Anne’s thoughts, her history with Captain Wentworth.

As in *The Princess of Clèves* and *Armance*, silence is the norm, and looking is the main occupation. As April Alliston puts it, “. . .as in Lafayette . . . [there is an] interplay and competition among observers who are also constantly observed” (241). For example, at one of the Musgroves’ parties:

The evening ended with dancing. On its being proposed, Anne offered her services, as usual, and though her eyes would sometimes fill with tears as she sat at the [piano], she was extremely

glad to be employed, and desired nothing in return but to be unobserved *Once* she felt that he was looking at herself—observing her altered features, perhaps, trying to trace in them the ruins of the face which had once charmed him; and *once* she knew that he must have spoken of her (48).

Anne is troubled by Wentworth's surreptitious glance. Having heard from her unfeeling sister that he considers her "altered beyond his knowledge," Anne does not want to know that she is being looked at with the judging and demoralizing gaze of a man who not only still blames her for abandoning him but who also finds her aged and no longer attractive. Later in the story, his looks take on a different dimension, as he watches an amorous William Elliot watching Anne:

as they passed, Anne's face caught his eye, and he looked at her with a degree of earnest admiration, which she could not be insensible of. She was looking remarkably well; her very regular, very pretty features, having the bloom and freshness of youth restored by the fine wind which had been blowing on her complexion, and by the animation of eye which it had also produced. It was evident that the gentleman, (completely a gentleman in manner) admired her exceedingly. Captain Wentworth looked round at her instantly in a way which shewed his noticing of it. He gave her a momentary glance,—a glance of brightness, which

seemed to say, 'That man is struck with you,—and even I, at this moment, see something like Anne Elliot again.' (70)

This game of observing the observer is indeed reminiscent of *The Princess of Clèves*. In the passage above, as in scenes of spying and being spied in Lafayette's novel, the vocabulary of seeing and seeming indicates knowledge and learning. Since the voice of the narrator is really combined with Anne's, there is seeing—that is, understanding—to a third degree. She perceives that the man (she does not know it is Mr. Elliot, nor does she know that he knows who she is) sees a beautiful woman in the road. But Anne is looking at Wentworth when William is looking at her, because she is looking for his reaction, which she does see in his momentary glance, that "glance of brightness." While at first one might think that Anne is rather passive in the passage above, she is really an active participant in this game of watching and discovering. She is even more active in another scene, which takes place in Bath. Anne is walking with Lady Russell, but she is actually looking for Wentworth:

The following morning Anne was out with her friend, and for the first hour, in an incessant and fearful sort of watch for him in vain; but at last, in returning down Pulteney-street, she distinguished him on the right hand pavement at such a distance as to have him in view the greater part of the street She looked instinctively at Lady Russell; but not from any mad idea of her recognising him so soon as she did herself. No, it was not to be supposed that Lady Russell would perceive him till they were nearly opposite. She

looked at her however, from time to time, anxiously; and when the moment approached which must point him out, though not daring to look again (for her own countenance she knew was unfit to be seen), she was yet perfectly conscious of Lady Russell's eyes being turned exactly in the direction for him, of her being in short intently observing him. She could thoroughly comprehend the sort of fascination he must possess over Lady Russell's mind, the difficulty it must be for her to withdraw her eyes, the astonishment she must be feeling that eight or nine years should have passed over him (118–119).

This dizzying description of Anne's nervous double watching—at once for Wentworth and for Lady Russell's reaction to a Wentworth who, in fact, she never actually sees—signifies the culmination of the desire for knowledge and certainty in the novel. Anne is not only looking for Wentworth. In the passage above, she seeks confirmation of her suspicions that he may be in Bath for her sake, and also to hasten the reunion between him and Lady Russell. She would like to act, to speak to him, to at least tell Lady Russell that she sees him, but for characters in analytical fiction, action becomes a game of chance, and it is almost always forestalled. This scene ultimately fails to produce any such knowledge. Anne cannot believe that Lady Russell does not see as she sees. It turns completely the other way around, in fact, mocking Anne's

seriousness and steadfast desire for Lady Russell to see Captain Wentworth when the incident turns comical, and even bawdy.¹¹⁷

* * *

What is the significance of the term “persuasion”? According to Kenneth Moler, “a parental attempt to influence a child’s choice of a matrimonial partner was frequently described as ‘persuasion’” (193)¹¹⁸. Once in the novel, the word “persuasion” is used to signify Wentworth’s jealousy of Mr. Elliot. During their encounter at The White Hart Inn, Anne’s voice, melding with the narrator’s, reflects, “their last meeting had been most important in opening his feelings; she had derived from it a delightful conviction; but she feared from his looks, that the same unfortunate persuasion, which had hastened him away from the concert room, still governed” (147). In this case *persuasion* means “belief” or “conviction.” In fact, it is also a false impression that Wentworth has convinced himself is true, in other words, a misreading that links the novel’s title with what I am calling analytical fiction. More often than not, though, the “persuasion” in question is a reference to Anne’s rejection of Wentworth before the beginning of the novel. The past is embedded in “persuasion,” but it also means a confrontation in the present

¹¹⁷ Lady Russell notices Anne watching her and explains: “‘You will wonder,’ said she, ‘what has been fixing my eye so long; but I was looking after some window-curtains, which Lady Alicia and Mrs. Frankland were telling me of last night. They described the drawing-room window-curtains of one of the houses on this side of the way, and this part of the street, as being the handsomest and best hung of any in Bath, but could not recollect the exact number, and I have been trying to find out which it could be; but I confess I can see no curtains hereabouts that answer their description’” (119). One has to wonder whether this is a jab at Wentworth; Lady Russell does not find the “handsomest and the best hung” “curtains” in the street.

¹¹⁸ Moler points out that “In *Sir Charles Grandison*, for instance, the term is often used in connection with the matrimonial controversy between Lady Clementina and her parents” (193).

with decisions made, with interpretation and insight made, in one's former impressionistic youth. It also connotes, both in the case of Wentworth's jealousy, above, and in the following examples, a kind of self-deception that one must learn to normalize against one's wishes. It is connected to analytical fiction because of the self-doubt and revision inherent in coping with "persuasion." "Persuasion" as a noun is very much linked to the idea of acting in a certain way because of a certain influence or interpretation. Wentworth usually uses the term "persuasion" in the most negative sense: for example, he reflects that "[s]he had given him up to oblige others. It had been the effect of *over*-persuasion" (41 emphasis added). We can interpret "over-persuasion", on another level, as over-thinking or over-reading. Similarly, it is Wentworth again who recollects at the end of the novel, when he is explaining the jealousy he felt at seeing Anne and William Elliot, with Lady Russell, too, together at a concert: "How could I look on without agony? Was not the very sight of the friend who sat behind you, was not the recollection of what had been, the knowledge of her influence, the indelible, immoveable impression of what persuasion had once done?" (163). And Anne responds: "If I was wrong in yielding to persuasion once, remember that it was to persuasion exerted on the side of safety, not of risk" (163). Anne's cautious decisions earlier in her youth, however, had clearly been misreadings.

It is actually Wentworth who finds that Anne was weak-willed in her decision; it is he who is "totally unconvinced and unbending . . . feeling himself ill-used by so forced a relinquishment" (19). Anne, on the other hand, convinces herself that "it was not a merely selfish caution, under which she acted, in putting an end to it. Had she not imagined herself consulting his good, even more than her own, she could hardly have given him up.—The belief of being prudent, and self-denying principally for *his* advantage, was her chief consolation, under the misery of a parting" (19). Anne, at the end of the novel, points out to Wentworth that she does

not entirely regret what had happened—had she not heeded Lady Russell’s advice eight years earlier, she would have felt too guilty to be happy. It does not mirror *Clarissa* exactly: “[t]he duties to which Anne submits herself belong to the scheme of things outlined in the Baronetage her father loves to read—the preservation and perpetuation of the landed gentry through marriage. Anne submits, however, under no terrors, no parental threats and prohibitions. She gives in under the gentler ministrations of a friend . . . who compensates for her family’s indifference to her” (Pinch 139). Anne’s nature makes it so that she is “glad to have any thing marked out as a duty” (23), so on first reading it may seem perfectly correct that Anne is thwarted by obligation to her family. She claims as much several times, that breaking her engagement to Wentworth was what she *thought* she *ought* to do: “[w]hen I yielded, I thought it was to duty” (163), and “I have now, as far as such a sentiment is allowable in human nature, nothing to reproach myself with; and if I mistake not, a strong sense of duty is no bad part of a woman’s portion” (164).

Austen’s novels tend to play with the motif of women’s education, and a woman’s learning to “read” to greater effect as the novel progresses. But *Persuasion* is different. Anne, who had been “forced into prudence in her youth . . . learned romance as she grew older—the natural sequel of an unnatural beginning” (21). In fact, Anne must unlearn what she had been persuaded to do in the past, and learn to embrace what should be natural, or what once was natural. The oxymoronic “learned romance,” however, is a concession to the anti-romantic mode of analytical fiction. In other words, *Persuasion* will never become a romance, per se, just as Austen’s female characters never stop analyzing and doubting their thoughts and the actions of others. Like in *The Princess of Clèves*, *Clarissa*, and *Sir Charles Grandison*, the intrusion of family on a young woman’s choice of whom to marry has negative consequences, and each set

of parents is officious to varying degrees. But there is also always something else, some other kind of inhibition that causes these female characters to renounce love. Being torn between duty and passion is merely an excuse; similarly, Wentworth's conviction that Anne's character is weak is untrue as well. Rather, it is something internal that drives analytical characters' choices, an inhibition within their own hearts, an inherent need to analyze, to look around, to consider, and revise, which impedes action. Anne's obsession with the vocabulary of seeing and seeming and her relegation to the background as constant observer (as well as a persistent interpreter) underscore the idea that she abandons Wentworth because the barrier is within herself; given the support of Lady Russell, painful as the decision was, it was ultimately easier for Anne to choose not to act, and to let him go.

As is evidenced in the passages above, Anne tries out a number of explanations for her persuasion by Lady Russell when she was nineteen. In part she felt that it was her duty to obey the woman who acted like a mother to her, in part she felt that she was doing what was best for Wentworth. Wentworth, on the other hand, having made the decision to love and to marry Anne, sees no barriers in his way. As Moler points out, he is a romantic. Anne and Wentworth's initial engagement is described as a short "period of exquisite felicity" (18):

[Captain Wentworth] was, at that time, a remarkably fine young man, with a great deal of intelligence, spirit and brilliancy; and Anne an extremely pretty girl, with gentleness, modesty, taste, and feeling.—Half the sum of attraction, on either side, might have been enough, for he had nothing to do, and she had hardly any body to love; but the encounter of such lavish recommendations

could not fail. They were gradually acquainted, and when acquainted, rapidly and deeply in love. It would be difficult to say which had seen highest perfection in the other, or which had been the happiest; she, in receiving his declarations and proposals, or he in having them accepted (18).

Thus, as Tanner points out, there is a mini-romance, as if a “first novel” is embedded in *Persuasion*. But this story, “told in telescopic brevity” (Tanner 234), is a tragedy. It ends in Anne’s refusal of Wentworth, and in his leaving the region. After the disappointing break, Frederick’s steadfastness, which is a facet of his romanticism, is evident when the narration folds into his thoughts:

He had not forgiven Anne Elliot. She had used him ill; deserted and disappointed him; and worse, she had shewn a feebleness of character in doing so, which his own decided, confident temper could not endure He had been most warmly attached to her, and had never seen a woman since whom he thought her equal; but, except from some natural sensation of curiosity, he had no desire of meeting her again. Her power with him was gone forever (41).

In analytical fiction, the presumption of knowing one’s own motivations, rather than bringing about self-knowledge, leads characters astray and into self-deception. The same applies to knowledge about others. Rather than discovering truth, then, characters merely deceive

themselves into believing that they are on the right track. Wentworth believes he fully understands Anne, but he is mired in his own inability to forgive her. Anne, on the other hand, is more aware of her self-doubt; she questions her own and other characters' motivations, and she maintains an anti-romantic belief in, if not the *inevitability* of the end of love, then its *possible* negative consequences: "Such opposition, as these feelings produced, was more than Anne could combat" (19), and so she gives in to Lady Russell. Throughout the novel, she continues to feel the asphyxiating weight of that first tragic story. As the story moves from one episode to the next, in which she comes into closer and closer contact with Wentworth, Anne must contend with the memory of the past. But she must also learn romance in order to relegate the past to a distant memory and accept Wentworth's constant love.

So far in this dissertation I have examined a number of stories that attack romance and, while not condemning marriage outright or in some cases at all, demonstrate how passionate love is a dangerous and inconvenient matter. *Persuasion*, however, follows a slightly different pattern. It begins with romance, dispels it, and then recreates, from the ashes of an extinguished youthful desire, a warm, knowing intimacy that lies halfway between romance and reason. Anne and Wentworth's love for each other, which is evidenced throughout the novel, is a more mature passion, preternaturally aware of the other's psyche and folded into the other's feelings and consciousness. Even the Crofts, who perhaps are modeled on Lord and Lady L. in *Grandison*, are shown as still being very much in love fifteen years after their marriage. Like *Grandison*, Austen's last novel also represents characters profiting from second loves, though with the distinction of having loved and lost each other in the first place. Thinking about what might have been with Wentworth, were she given a second chance, Anne tries to make herself into a romantic too:

[h]ow eloquent could Anne Elliot have been,—how eloquent, at least, were her wishes on the side of early warm attachment, and a cheerful confidence in futurity, against that over-anxious caution which seems to insult exertion and distrust Providence!” (21).

And yet, as Moler points out, *Persuasion* is not “Jane Austen’s capitulation to ‘romance’ but . . . a reconciliation of ‘art’ and ‘nature’ very much in the Austen tradition” (191). “Art” is represented by the Bath set—Sir Walter, Lady Russell, Lady Dalrymple, and Colonel Wallis—because both their behavior and self-image are artfully constructed. On the other hand there is the group associated with “Nature,” the Uppercross and Lyme sets, the sailors and middle-class Musgroves, as well as Captain Wentworth. Anne, who moves fluidly between these two sets, is, for Moler, the symbol of their reconciliation at the end of the novel. Interestingly, however, Wentworth is also an in-between character. As Claudia L. Johnson points out,

Wentworth’s determination is generally considered to mark him as a ‘new man,’ temperamentally as well as ideologically opposed to the way of life Sir Walter represents. But like his gallantry towards women, his steadfastness to the point of inflexibility actually aligns him with Sir Walter, and he must mitigate his self-will before reconciliation is possible (*Persuasion* 298).

Thus, just as Anne has “learned romance” from her loss of Captain Wentworth, Wentworth must learn, over the course of the novel, to be less rigid and romantic, to allow himself to be persuaded by Anne that not all hope is lost.

Persuasion does not make any political or social claim in favor of love matches or allowing children to make their own decisions. Instead, the novel is a meditation on reading and rereading the self, and particularly on rereading the memories of our past selves. For example, we can look at one of many parties hosted by the Musgroves, where Anne and Frederick are even sitting on the same sofa, thinking of the same past stories, but not speaking to each other: “former times must undoubtedly be brought to the recollection of each; *they* could not but be named by him, in the little narratives or descriptions which conversation called forth” (42). For Pinch the “nature of Anne’s and Wentworth’s courtship is a result of its taking place within a context heavy with memory and repetition. Anne is always ‘resuming an agitation’ . . . experiencing a ‘revival of former pain’” (150). This past is dualistic, however. Anne maintains throughout the novel that her decision was the prudent one at the time. The former pain that Anne remembers, then, is mostly Wentworth’s, the anguish that she caused him, since he did not agree that breaking off the engagement was the wise thing to do.

Early in the novel, Anne wonders what it will be like to meet Captain Wentworth again after so many years: “[s]he would have liked to know how he felt as to a meeting. Perhaps indifferent, if indifference could exist under such circumstances. He must be either indifferent or unwilling” (39). When Frederick does not come into the Musgroves’ cottage, she feels that she knows his mind, that he must not want to see her. In fact, Anne is wrong; he is not indifferent at all. Wentworth has not yet forgiven her. He cannot detach himself from the painful past; he in fact has not changed in the same way that Anne has.

Persuasion can be read as a celebration of rekindled love—or of love that was never truly lost—but it is simultaneously loaded with references to a painful beginning. The past and the present not only remain inseparable, particularly in the first part of the novel, but when they meld, they create silence. When Anne is introduced properly in the fourth chapter, the reader learns that “[h]er attachment and regrets had, for a long time, clouded every enjoyment of youth; and an early loss of bloom and spirits had been their lasting effect” (19–20). This deadening effect, highlighted by the novel’s taking place in autumn and winter, metaphorically silences Anne in her adulthood. Her first meeting with Captain Wentworth is a non-meeting, and the language is strangely fragmented and scattered, mirroring Anne’s own disconnected impressions:

[h]er eye half met Captain Wentworth’s; a bow, a curtsy passed;
she heard his voice—he talked to Mary, said all that was right
[T]he room seemed full—full of persons and voices—but a few
minutes ended it ‘It is over! It is over!’ she repeated to herself
. . . in nervous gratitude (40).

Thus, it is over before it even happens. And a few pages later, when Anne and Frederick are again thrown into a room together, they:

had no conversation . . . no intercourse but what the commonest
civility required. Once so much to each other! Now nothing! There
had been a time, when of all the large party now filling the drawing-
room at Uppercross, they would have found it most difficult to cease

to speak to one another . . . there could have been no two hearts so open, no tastes so similar, no feelings so in unison . . . Now they were as strangers; nay, worse than strangers, for they could never become acquainted. It was a perpetual estrangement (42–3).

There is, however another way, a more positive one, in which Austen shows the inseparability of the past and the present in *Persuasion*. Though there are no interpolated tales in the novel, at times Austen hides references to Anne and Wentworth's enduring love in a seemingly unrelated part of the story. The scene in which Anne plays the piano for the Musgroves is one of at least three key scenes in which Wentworth and Anne's love is redirected through another conduit. Toward the beginning of the novel, when Anne is living with the Musgroves, it is explained that she often plays the piano for the family while they dance:

[s]he knew that when she played she was giving pleasure only to herself; but this was no new sensation: *excepting one short period of her life*, she had never, *since the age of fourteen*, never since the loss of her dear mother, known the happiness of being listened to, or encouraged by any just appreciation or real taste. In music she had been always used to feel alone in the world" (32, emphasis added).

On first reading, the emphasis seems to be placed on Anne's brief relationship with her mother. Lady Elliot, we learn, spoke to and listened to Anne, she had "just appreciation and real taste," both of music and conversation. It is easy to overlook, then, the phrase in the middle of the

quotation: “excepting one short period of her life . . . *since* the age of fourteen,” is a reminder of her engagement to Wentworth. Though he is not named in the passage above, it is implied that he is the only other person in the world who took Anne’s opinions seriously, and who found her to be interesting and talented. Mediated through the memory of her mother, Anne is thus allowed to think fondly of Wentworth, without any overt allusions to their painful separation.

Something similar happens in each of the eavesdropping scenes, one of which takes place on the long walk from Uppercross to Winthrop. Anne happens to overhear a conversation between Wentworth and Louisa Musgrove, who is in love with him. Frederick says to Louisa:

yours is the character of decision and firmness, I see It is the worst evil of too yielding and indecisive a character, that no influence over it can be depended on.— . . . let those who would be happy be firm My first wish for all, whom I am interested in, is that they should be firm (58–9).

It seems dubious that Wentworth is really speaking of Louisa. Rather, it seems more likely that he is referring to himself, and to his own philosophy of love. We are reminded in his speech of his own feelings after Anne breaks off their engagement. He considers her irresolute and himself decisive. Unlike Louisa, who is flattered by Frederick’s compliments, Anne can read him correctly:

The listener’s proverbial fate was not absolutely hers; she had heard no evil of herself,—but she had heard a great deal of very painful

import. She saw how her own character was considered by Captain Wentworth; and there had been just that degree of feeling and curiosity about her in his manner, which must give her extreme agitation (59–60).

The most famous scene of listening in is found in the penultimate chapter, as Anne and Captain Harville are discussing whether women or men are more constant in love, which Frederick overhears while he is writing a letter. The scene is also important because it is the first in which Anne is the central figure, being able to present her opinions. Anne claims that men love “as long as [they] have an object, . . . while the woman [they] love lives, and lives for [them] . . . All the privilege I claim for my own sex . . . is that of loving longest, when existence or when hope is gone” (157). While Anne is speaking, however, she is distracted by a noise; it is Wentworth dropping his pen. He is listening to her, and he has lost his train of thought while writing.

As Brownstein has noted, Anne’s argument “shows she is not thinking of Benwick [the inconstant man in question] at all, but of Wentworth, who has been an adventurer at sea during the years Anne has remained at home and missed him” (87). When Wentworth drops his pen, it is a sign that he has understood Anne’s unintentional coded message. He also begins to write a new letter, this one to her, a beautiful and touching love letter that reveals and offers to her his entire heart. The symmetry of the scene—or, as Brownstein calls it, the irony—is striking and “elegant” (Brownstein 88). He explains to her that though he feared her lost, he could never give up loving her beyond all others. Like Madame de Thémis’s letter in *The Princess of Clèves*, Wentworth wishes to reopen what he had long considered closed, just as in her speech, Anne implies that she

is still in love with him. With this letter, Wentworth intends to break their silence, to invite her to speak to him (directly) again, and to acknowledge what they have both known for quite a while in the novel, that they are still in love with each other.

Persuasion is an ambiguous novel when it comes to the balance between romance and reason. Yet, we cannot ignore that there are some very beautiful passages that demonstrate a kind of intimacy between characters that is unprecedented in this study of analytical fiction. Silence is an oppressive and unpleasant experience for Anne throughout most of novel, when she is in the presence of her family. As I mentioned above, Anne has been forced into silence throughout her life. Yet, silence becomes quite another thing in the presence of Captain Wentworth. As we will see, Anne's silence, in Wentworth's presence, transforms into something positive just as we saw in *Armance* when Octave and Armance walk together in the woods. Here, there is a mutual tacit communication and understanding.

Several times in the text, we learn that Anne has uncommon insight into Wentworth's mind: "Anne felt the utter impossibility, from her knowledge of his mind, that he could be unvisited by remembrance any more than herself. There must be the same immediate association of thought" (42). In the scene of the long walk, in which Anne comprehends a reference to herself that Louisa misses, and in the scene at the inn, in which Wentworth recognizes a reference to himself in Anne's speech to Harville, we see an intimate connection between the characters that illustrates quite another side of analytical fiction, a side that marries analysis and sensibility. It is precisely this sensibility that Harold Bloom focuses on in his essay on *Persuasion* in *The Western Canon*. This sensibility allows Anne and Frederick to understand each other in ways no other characters in the novel can. Similarly, the passage in which Sir Walter and Elizabeth burst into the inn to invite all the Uppercross and Lyme connections to an

evening party demonstrates how Anne and Wentworth are capable of reading each other when no one else can:

She could think only of the invitation she had with such astonishment witnessed; and of the manner in which it had been received, a manner of doubtful meaning, of surprise rather than gratification, of polite acknowledgment rather than acceptance. *She knew him*; she saw disdain in his eye, and could not venture to believe that he had determined to accept such an offering, as atonement for all the insolence of the past. Her spirits sank. He held the card in his hand after they were gone, as if deeply considering it.

“Only think of Elizabeth’s including every body!” whispered Mary very audibly. “I do not wonder Captain Wentworth is delighted! You see he cannot put the card out of his hand.”

Anne caught his eye, saw his cheeks glow, and his mouth form itself into a momentary expression of contempt, and turned away, that she might neither see nor hear more to vex her (151).

Here the narrator contrasts Mary’s misreading with Anne’s knowledge of Wentworth’s every expression. It is significant that at the beginning of the novel Anne’s eye “half met Captain Wentworth’s” (40), or else, “she had no reason to suppose his eye wandering towards her while he spoke” (42), whereas now, having gotten used to each other’s presence again in the several

months that they have been reacquainted, they exchange a look so meaningful that no explanations are necessary.

At the beginning of the novel, according to Pinch, “[b]ecause of the way in which Austen represents Anne’s consciousness, the presence of her lover is apprehended as invasive, much as the presence of others is” (154). But by the end of the book, Anne has embraced the fact that she knows this man’s mind because they have never stopped loving each other. Wentworth comprehends that Anne also understands him better than anyone else at the end of the novel. He writes in his letter:

For you alone I think and plan.—Have you not seen this? Can you fail to have understood my wishes?—I had not waited even these ten days, could I have read your feelings, as I think you must have penetrated mine. I can hardly write. I am every instant hearing something which overpowers me. You sink your voice, but I can distinguish the tones of that voice, when they would be lost on others (158).

In this way, Wentworth identifies that he and Anne are linked by their knowledge of each other’s minds and hearts. He tells her that though she may try to fade into the background, he will always see and hear her. As Stuart Tave notes, even “[i]f nobody is much aware of her, [Anne] is very much aware of everyone else and she perceives what is happening to them when they are ignorant of themselves” (quoted in Bloom 238). This is true for most of the novel, but at the end,

it is Wentworth who has the power of silently knowing the thoughts of the person of whom, usually, “nobody is much aware.”

Persuasion is often interpreted as sad and melancholy; and indeed, reading *Persuasion* seems to deliberately conjure what Bloom describes as a “Wordsworthian sense of deferred hope” (239). Pinch notes that “[t]he concept of the ‘lyric’ can usefully describe certain aspects of the novel—its emphasis on loss, its emphasis on temporality and repetition instead of plot, and its interest in voice and in noise” (145). Yet, there are also a number of references to joy, happiness, and affection in *Persuasion* that balance this melancholy and dilatory strain. There is no unadulterated happiness in Austen’s last novel, but there is a legible, almost palpable, battle between warm affection and inhibiting analysis present. For example, when Anne learns that Wentworth is not going to marry Louisa Musgrove after all, “it was not regret which made Anne’s heart beat in spite of herself, and brought the colour into her cheeks when she thought of Captain Wentworth unshackled and free. She had some feelings, which she was ashamed to investigate. They were too much like joy, senseless joy!” (158). The elements of the sentence do battle with the hint of self-doubt in the penultimate sentence: Anne’s heart beating in spite of itself, her blush, the idea of Wentworth “unshackled and free.” The last two sentences are rather paradoxical: Anne, as always, is aware of her feelings, even the ones she is ashamed to analyze; but the second sentence tells us that her feeling is, in fact, senseless. She cannot help but to feel it, as the exclamation point at the end of the second “joy” highlights. As readers who are also “learning romance” from Austen’s last novel, we wish to interpret that this senseless joy belies the fact that Anne initially was “ashamed to investigate” her feelings.

The few intimate scenes between Anne and Wentworth—almost all of which take place in silence—are actually, as Harris points out, imbued with an “impressionistic, erotic charge

[that] enters the narrative when their bodies almost touch” (25). Such a scene occurs when Mary’s son, a hearty boy of two, begins to climb on her back and refuses to desist.

In another moment, however, she found herself in the state of being released from him; some one was taking him from her, though he had bent down her head so much, that his little sturdy hands were unfastened from around her neck, and he was resolutely borne away, before she knew that Captain Wentworth had done it. [] Her sensations on the discovery made her perfectly speechless. She could not even thank him (54).

Wiltshire finds that the little boy’s “unruliness is a metonym for the pressures that are present in the room” (79). Indeed, none of the adults in the room are willing to speak to each other. Charles Haytner, who is sitting on the sofa, picks up the newspaper when Wentworth goes over to him, and as this scene takes place fairly early in the novel, he is still refusing to speak to Anne. Yet, intimate moments between Anne and Wentworth penetrate through the silence.

Something similar happens when Wentworth helps Anne into the carriage at Lyme, when they are returning to Uppercross after Louisa is injured. Here again, the sentences are more fragmented and impressionistic, and Wentworth’s act is accomplished in silence:

Captain Wentworth, without saying a word, turned to her, and quietly obliged her to be assisted into the carriage.

Yes,—he had done it. She was in the carriage, and felt that he had placed her there, that his will and his hands had done it, that she owed it to his perception of her fatigue, and his resolution to give her rest. She was very much affected by the view of his disposition towards her which all these things made apparent. This little circumstance seemed the completion of all that had gone before. She understood him. He could not forgive her,—but he could not be unfeeling. Though condemning her for the past, and considering it with high and unjust resentment, though perfectly careless of her, and though becoming attached to another, still he could not see her suffer, without the desire of giving her relief. It was a remainder of former sentiment; it was an impulse of pure, though unacknowledged friendship; it was a proof of his own warm and amiable heart, which she could not contemplate without emotions so compounded of pleasure and pain, that she knew not which prevailed (61).

Here the references to understanding, desire to give relief, sentiment, friendship, warmth, amiability, and pleasure (feelings that amplify and intensify as the passage goes on) are contrasted with lack of forgiveness, condemnation, and pain. François, when interpreting this passage, focuses on the first sentence: “Yes,—he had done it.” The critic notes the

suspensive dash at once lengthening and completing the pause of breathlessness produced by the perfectly executed . . . act. The end-stopped sentence—itsself taking note of a fully achieved action—can exemplify the exhilaratingly disarticulative effects of free indirect style, even if the sentences immediately following this one both thicken and trouble the basis of Anne’s psychological contentment with Wentworth (15).

As in the paradoxically shameful, yet unquantifiable, un-analyzed “senseless joy” quoted earlier, the “pure” friendship in the passage above is slightly mitigated by the qualifier “though unacknowledged” that hovers dangerously in between.

The ending of *Persuasion* is no more protected from this sort of ambivalence than any other passage in the novel. Anne’s total happiness is tainted by the same kinds of gnawing fears that we witnessed already. François’s analysis of the end of *Mansfield Park*¹¹⁹ applies equally to *Persuasion*: “whatever Fanny’s final satisfaction with such enclosure, there is a sideways glance to the world at large here, which, were it her own, would betray a cynicism in her prudence” (221). At the conclusion of *Persuasion* Anne and Wentworth are married, and, as the narrator tells us, Anne

¹¹⁹ “On that event they removed to Mansfield, and the parsonage there, which under each of its two former owners, Fanny had never been able to approach but with some painful sensation of restraint or alarm, soon grew as dear to her heart, and as thoroughly perfect in her eyes, as everything else, within the view and patronage of Mansfield Park, had long been” (quoted in François 221).

had no other alloy to the happiness of her prospects than what arose from the consciousness of having no relations to bestow on him which a man of sense could value. There she felt her own inferiority keenly. The disproportion in their fortune was nothing; it did not give her a moment's regret; but to have no family to receive and estimate him properly; nothing of respectability, of harmony, of good-will to offer in return for all the worth and all the prompt welcome which met her in his brothers and sisters, was a source of as lively pain as her mind could well be sensible of, under circumstances of otherwise strong felicity (167).

And again, in the last paragraph of the novel:

Anne was tenderness itself, and she had the full worth of it in Captain Wentworth's affection. His profession was all that could ever make her friends wish that tenderness less; the dread of a future war all that could dim her sunshine. She gloried in being a sailor's wife, but she must pay the tax of quick alarm for belonging to that profession which is, if possible, more distinguished in its domestic virtues than in its national importance.

By contrasting the navy's "domestic virtues" and its importance on a national scale, Austen provides a split-paned view of what earlier in the novel was characterized by Wood as the

spheres of “Art” and “Nature.” Throughout the novel, the two synthesize in Anne and Wentworth, but part of what haunts the narrative is their occasional re-splitting. Moreover, when they split apart again, the reader is witness to the most dangerous and unpleasant properties of each, namely the Elliots’ malevolence and the naval captain’s perpetual likelihood of being called to war. Like Stendhal’s warning that in moments of intimate happiness, society “devait se venger,” in the passages above, each happiness is also undermined by a stipulation or contingency, a “sideways glance at the world at large.” Whether it is characterized by Anne’s lack of a proper family (Art) or her fear of Wentworth’s profession (Nature), this vacillation between the comforts of an intimate world of two and the larger world outside creates feelings of “inferiority,” “lively pain,” “dread,” and “quick alarm.” And whereas the danger comes largely from outside in *Armance*, Anne’s fears about her and Wentworth’s situation in the world are largely internalized. Thus, the anxiety in *Persuasion*, which throughout the novel had emanated from the past, is now projected onto the future, such that, as the epigraph to this chapter notes, “[c]’est la réaction du passé et de l’avenir sur le présent qui fait le malheur.”

Conclusion

The *first sight* is situated outside of time, in an instantaneousness which is an absolute beginning: a moment when something *is* which before was not and which then would have been neither intelligible nor foreseeable.

–Georges Poulet, *Studies in Human Time* 132.

In *The Princess of Clèves*, the Princess falls in love with Nemours at first sight. She has no idea what love is supposed to feel like, but it instantly strikes her, bringing together pain and pleasure in unprecedented ways. Clarissa, Harriet, and Clementina in Richardson's novels, as well as Armance and Octave in Stendhal's first novel, fall in love for the first time without even realizing it. In all of these works, love takes its hold over them slowly, creepingly, so that they wonder what it is they are even feeling. On the contrary, in *Persuasion*, Anne has felt passion not only before, but continuously for eight anguished years. Her long-term desire for affection, both sexual and psychological, haunts the silences of Austen's last novel. But when we do see love, are the moments of Anne's and Wentworth's affection narrated much differently from those of

the Princess and Nemours, or Clementina and Sir Charles? Do not the truly intimate moments shared by Anne and Wentworth happen, as if *at first sight*, in *uncounted* moments?

One of the most striking literary references in *Persuasion* is an allusion to Scheherazade, which comes when Anne is eager to tell Lady Russell the truth about William Elliot's character, but never gets a chance to do so. Ultimately, the matter is forgotten as Mr. Elliot runs off with Sir Walter's improbable companion, the freckled and snaggletoothed Mrs. Clay (thus resolving another unpleasant problem in the narrative), and Anne's and Wentworth's love is soon after acknowledged. Despite this wrapping-up of the story at the end, however, *Persuasion* still follows the narrative patterns we see in the rest of the works examined in this study; the reference to *The Arabian Nights* highlights the cyclicity and frequent inconsequentialism of the episodes of Austen's last novel, as well as the dilation of narrative, which are both features of analytical fiction. In matters of love, that Scheherazade-esque delaying of finality can only serve to frustrate.

Time is an important factor in *Persuasion*, more so than in any other of Austen's novels as well as in works of analytical fiction that I have investigated in this dissertation. Even though the letters of Richardson's novels are dated, and we know that *Clarissa* takes place over about a year's time and *Grandison* perhaps over two, time functions in non-linear ways in both of these works. But in *Persuasion*, Anne and Wentworth both mark time by the number of years that they have been estranged; the setting of the novel moves from autumn to winter and then to early spring with the seasons clearly delineated in scenery and weather, as well as paralleled in the slow rekindling of the romance. But time is also that which creates anxiety in *Persuasion*. For Anne and Elizabeth Elliot, the passing of time means the closer they get to becoming old maids (and in their late twenties, it is a significant threat!); for Sir Walter, time passing means

becoming increasingly alienated from the genteel past (and his own beauty) that he imagines himself to be a part of; for Wentworth, each year of estrangement from Anne adds more bitterness. And yet, when their eyes meet, or when Frederick lifts her into a carriage, these moments exist as if, as in Poulet's schema, outside of time. While the minutes, months, and years of Anne's and Wentworth's "lived duration" (Poulet 132) are embroiled with past pains, their moments of happiness warrant an exclamation of joy or of friendship, before the troubling weight of time returns to their consciousness.

As I discussed in the introduction, analytical fiction is neither romantic nor realist, but, like *Persuasion*, a middle ground between the two. As we have seen, narrators in analytical fiction are not omniscient: they are sometimes even one step behind the characters in their journey—not toward, but, perhaps, around knowledge. This is because, as I have suggested several times, characters are simply not "knowable" in the works examined in this dissertation. Even when their stories end with a marriage, characters in analytical fiction do not really change, they do not grow into knowledge in the same way as characters in "realistic" works do. Their hearts and minds are fickle, suspicious, and dissimulating, so that striving to know falls by the wayside of analysis.

This sub-genre of psychological fiction also inhabits the in-between spaces of time, between cause and effect, between action and reaction. Characters in analytical fiction are always returning, rather than moving forward in time. In Lafayette's novel, after the Princess reads Madame de Thémis's letter, she suspects the worst of Nemours, and castigates herself for loving him. The vocabulary used by the Princess underscores the cyclical pattern I have been discussing: "Quels retours ne fit-elle point sur elle-même! Quelles réflexions sur les conseils que sa mère lui avait données! Combien se repentit-elle de ne s'être pas opiniâtrée à se séparer du

commerce du monde” (213) (“How often she thought of herself; how often of her mother’s counsels! How bitterly she regretted that she had not withdrawn from the world” [51]). The Princess’s *réflexions* and *retours* form the basic plot of analytical fiction. Moreover, the word *retour* happens to be one that La Rochefoucauld uses in the first suppressed maxim on self-love when he claims:

L’amour-propre est l’amour de soi-même, et de toutes choses pour soi . . . Rien n’est si impétueux que ses désirs, rien de si caché que ses desseins, rien de si habile que ses conduites . . . ses transformations passent celles des métamorphoses, et ses raffinements ceux de la chimie . . . Là il est à couvert des yeux les plus pénétrants; il y fait mille insensibles tours et retours (91).

(Self-love is the love of self, and of all things for self . . . Nothing is so headstrong as its desires, nothing so well concealed as its designs, nothing so skilful as its management . . . , its changes surpass those of the metamorphoses, its refinements those of chemistry

Therein it is hidden from the most far-seeing eyes, therein it takes a thousand imperceptible folds [J. W. Willis Bund, M.A. LL.B and J. Hain Friswell, trans.]).

As Odette de Mourgues notes: “[t]he main point about the behavior of *amour-propre* is that it is unpredictable and essentially mysterious The basic restlessness of self-love is . . . forced upon the reader who is never lulled into passivity or compliance by the recurrence of a dominant rhythm” (89). Hence, as I wrote earlier in this dissertation, the psyche is unmappable, unchartable, and bizarre. In *The Princess of Clèves*, we do not see quite as many as La Rochefoucauld’s “mille insensibles tours et retours,” but we see quite a lot. The redoubling, cyclical turns and returns of characters’ psyches remind us that, in analytical fiction, “the all-pervading presence of self-love is not a theory, but a biological fact” (de Mourgues 91). The seemingly endless frustrations and anguish of love, the pessimism inherent in its renunciation, these are the mainsprings of analytical fiction.

And yet, as readers, we always hope to find true love, love at first sight, the kind of love that exists outside of time in the works we read. Though we know that it will end in pain later, we too wish to put off that moment of knowing, and to ruminate in the “first sight.” Even in *The Princess of Clèves*, there are beautiful and intimate moments. The same day as the Princess feels torn apart by her agonizing belief that Nemours has another lover, she is abused of this terrible assumption. She learns the truth about the letter, and for a short time, is able to forget the emotions and machinations revealed in its contents. When she must forge the letter to save her uncle the Vidame from the Queen’s anger, the Princess and Nemours agree to work together to recreate the letter from memory. They lock themselves together to work, and though Monsieur de Clèves is present, they send away all the servants. We learn that the Princess “ne sentait que le plaisir de voir M. de Nemours, elle en avait une joie pure et sans mélange qu’elle n’avait jamais sentie: cette joie lui donnait une liberté et un enjouement dans l’esprit que M. de Nemours ne lui avait jamais vus et qui redoublaient son amour” (234) (“felt only the pleasure of seeing Monsieur

de Nemours; it was a fuller and purer joy than she had ever felt, and it inspired her with a liveliness and ease that Monsieur de Nemours had never seen in her, and his love for her was only deepened” [62]). Though the Princess and Nemours have already been in love for a long time, this moment is not unlike the first time falling in love. Suffice to say that they do a substandard job of recreating the letter, and the narrator reports that much later, there are terrible consequences both for Mary Stuart and the Vidame. And yet. . .

It is not only characters in analytical fiction who are stuck in their cyclical repetitions. As readers, we too can only repeat those words, “and yet . . .” as we momentarily glide on the gentle waters of intimacy only to be thrown into the breaking waves of doubt, jealousy, renunciation, or society’s vengeance. Let us consider again the passage in *Persuasion* in which Wentworth hands Anne into his sister’s carriage, the declarative “he had done it,” or the “fully achieved action,” as François calls it. The action takes place in just a fleeting moment between suspension and analysis (which serves to create more suspension), and it is barely noticeable. But the traces that such finitude leaves are profound, at least for the reader. Within the course of the work, such beautiful moments of intimacy as we see in *The Princess of Clèves* and in *Persuasion* are ultimately inconsequential to the characters. Characters in analytical fiction are always returning, and never moving forward. They intuit, guess, deliberate, and obsess over what their lovers think and feel. And yet, those small, warm, usually silent moments of togetherness, which pulsate with intimacy *because* of their silence and because of the stark contrast with their analytical context, constitute exactly the kind of knowledge that we as readers are searching for. But in the course of reading analytical fiction, the privilege of knowing rests with us; we are allowed not only to seek, but also to find.

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