The Sublime Actor and the Poetics of Emotions: Agency, Affect, and the Theatrical Sublime

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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York University
Toronto, Ontario

March 2024

Abstract

This dissertation traces the history of the theatrical sublime from classical, neoclassical, and British eighteenth-century texts and performances to identify the emergence of the *sublime actor*, a figure who demonstrates a crucial tension in affect theory and in understanding the individual subject. To theorize this figure, I develop what I call the *poetics of emotions*—an original approach to understanding affect and its representation, one that borrows from Aristotle's theory of drama to argue that through the power of representation, attempts to delineate emotions necessarily flip into depictions and demonstrations of agency. If affect is the seat of our interiority, it is also universal, objective, and predictable, an effect, apropos Aristotle, of plot. In cognizing, representing, or performing them, our feelings can be summoned, manipulated, and contained. The sublime actor masters this process, turning helplessness into agency, and the emotional labour of this transformation models the ideal subject of emotional capitalism. I render this sublime actor visible by bringing theories from Aristotle, Longinus, Adam Smith, Denis Diderot, and Sir Henry Irving to bear on performances by Marie Champmeslé, Sarah Siddons, and John Kemble, in plays that focus on the myth of Phaedra by Euripides, Jean Racine, Joanna Baillie, and Eugene O'Neill. These plays are of significance not just because of their thematic interest in powerful emotions and their expression, but because they express these themes through a shared formal device, which I call the *scene of inquiry*. These scenes, I argue, create a space in the theatre to stage the sublime drama of the mind such that a poetics of emotions can readily emerge. By following the intertextual history of these scenes, this dissertation observes how the fiscal pressures of the commercial theatre twist the theatrical sublime into becoming an aesthetic of economic success and celebrity, one that culminates in the theatrical innovations of Baillie and the social and theatrical performances of Siddons.

Acknowledgements

For supporting me throughout this entire process, I would first and foremost like to thank my partner, Anna Pham. Years of research and study can be a lonely task, one exacerbated by the isolation of Covid-19. Your love and companionship carried me through it. Just as important are my parents, John and Ellen—to whom I dedicate this dissertation—who I thank for their ongoing care and encouragement in everything that I do.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the considerable generosity and unwavering support of my supervisor, Karen Valihora. I do not express often enough how grateful I am for both your mentorship and your friendship. You more than anyone have made me into the researcher, writer, and teacher that I am today. To my dissertation committee, Ian Balfour and Elizabeth Pentland, thank you for the thoughtful feedback and criticisms that helped bring this project to fruition. And to Julie Carlson, Marlis Schweitzer, and Katarina O'Briain—thank you for the deep engagement with my work. Your contributions will undoubtedly shape what follows.

In addition to the English Department's administrative staff—Rose Crawford, Meaghan McCue, Kimberly Wilson, and Kathy Armstrong—whose daily work keeps the engine of the English Graduate program running, I would also like to thank the Department's many faculty members: Darren Gobert, Thomas Loebel, Lesley Higgins, Vermonja Alston, Natalia Khomenko, Bruce Powe, and James Papoutsis. To you, I owe much for your guidance and for providing me with opportunities for growth during the earlier years of my academic journey. You laid the foundation upon which I built this dissertation. I am similarly thankful for the financial support

provided to me by York University and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council that made working on this dissertation possible.

Finally, to the many friends I met along the way, you have my infinite gratitude for making graduate school such a joyful experience. Of this group, I would specifically like to thank Julianna Will for her vital assistance in my struggle with Greek, Zaynab Ali for supporting me during my defense, as well as Salman Akhtar, Monique Attrux, and Cecilia Evoy, for keeping me grounded and focused on what really matters.

Note on Translations

In general, I have used translations of texts throughout when available. When analyzing classical Greek texts as primary sources, these translations were typically checked to the best of my ability for accuracy against other translated versions as well as the original Greek. Because the subject matter of chapters three and four focuses on how seventeenth-century French Neoclassical drama influences eighteenth-century British theatre and philosophy, understanding the French context is crucial. Subsequently, the translations of all primary French texts in those chapters are my own. While the Introduction similarly examines the relationship between French and British writers, the debate they had over the figure of the sublime actor largely took place in English and through the translation of those French writers. Because the focus of the Introduction is subsequently on nineteenth-century translations, I have used them as the primary source while checking them against the original French to determine if or how the act of translation may have affected the interpretation of the texts.

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Introduction

The Sublime Actor and Emotional Capitalism

[T]he sublime is the happily deluded gesture of resistance to the doom of take-over that proclaims subjection to be autonomy.
—Paul Fry, "The Possession of the Sublime" 187

For inasmuch as it implies a subject absent from itself, without properties or qualities, a subjectless subject, a pure no one, mimesis is by definition (so long as one is not frightened by it in advance) active. Possession, on the contrary, presupposes the supposit itself or the supporting medium, the matrix or malleable matter in which the imprint is stamped [...] *Possession, in other words, presupposes a subject; it is the monstrous dangerous form of a passive mimesis, uncontrolled and unmanageable*.
—Phillip Lacoue Labarthe, "Diderot: Paradox and Mimesis" 264

[O]nce the struggle is over, once [La Clairon] has reached the height she has given to her spectre, she has herself well in hand [se posséde/she is self-possessed]*, she repeats her efforts without emotion*.
—Denis Diderot, *Paradox of Acting* 11

It was agreed he had exhibited something more than a command of the technical resources of his craft. He gave a hint of that masterful and fascinating personality, the possession of which not even his least friendly critics will question.
—Charles Hiatt, *Henry Irving: A Record and Review* 78

The Sublime Actor

At Paddington Green, London, on Monday, 14 June 1897, while unveiling a marble statue of the actress Sarah Siddons, Sir Henry Irving faced the gathered crowd and delivered a short speech: "It was said of her by Hazlitt," he announced, "that 'She was not less than a goddess or a prophetess inspired by the gods. Power was seated on her brow, passion radiated from her breast as from a shrine; she was tragedy personified'" (*Sir Henry Irving* 105).[1] "By the

[1] On Saturday, 9 February 1895, in a *Saturday Review* article titled "Why Not Sir Henry Irving," George Bernard Shaw, a fierce rival and critic of Irving, accused the latter of "*act*[ing] the lecturer" by suggesting his lectures were

acclamation of her contemporaries," continued Irving, "Mrs. Siddons was hailed as the incarnation of the sublime in the expression of dramatic passion" (*Sir Henry Irving* 105). This praise enabled Irving to segue into a problem: "I have lately read that this ideal of the sublime is a mere superstition belonging to a world of art and emotion which has passed away" (105).[2] But the presence of this "monument" before him, sculpted to resemble Joshua Reynolds's famous portrait of the actress as the tragic muse, "has made the name of Siddons imperishable" and demonstrates the error of this position (*Sir Henry Irving* 105). Irving's rejoinder first identifies Shakespeare's sublimity with the Bard's tenacious capacity to continuously "influence the soul of mankind" (*Sir Henry Irving* 105). He then compares Siddons to Shakespeare, reminding his audience that many of Siddons's most memorable performances were as the Bard's characters, "Lady Macbeth and Volumnia" (*Sir Henry Irving* 105). Irving, however, does not quite compare like to like. For him, Shakespeare is a poet whose work persists in time through the production and reproduction of texts; Siddons is an actress whose performances last only until the curtain falls. But Irving undermines this distinction: "The dramatic profession does not forget that Shakespeare was an actor," he points out; likewise, "to some characters […] she gave a tradition which has not been effaced" (*Sir Henry Irving* 105). For Irving, her theatrical sublimity persists not in the reproduction of texts but in memories, in new traditions of acting, and now in this

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written by ghostwriters and therefore not reflective of the actor's ideas or intelligence (182–3, original emphasis). Shaw's accusation has some merit as both firsthand reports and manuscript evidence suggest that Irving's writings were collaborative, involving Irving, his business manager Bram Stoker, and his secretary Louis F. Austin. See Richards, *Sir Henry Irving: Theatre, Culture, and Society,* 24–5. The actress Ellen Terry (who spent the early part of her career playing opposite Irving and, after 1902, switched sides and spent the later part of her career producing and performing in Shaw's plays) commented on this question, writing in her 1908 memoirs that "when Henry was thrown on his debating resources he really spoke better than when he prepared a speech, and his letters prove, if proof were needed, how finely he could write! Those who represent him as dependent in such matters on the help of literary hacks are just ignorant of the facts" (191). Though not every word attributed to Irving may have come directly from his hand, I follow most critics who proceed as if they accurately reflect his opinions.

[2] This comment may be directed towards Shaw who advocated for and created plays with a modernist, realist style in opposition to the grandeur and more romantic aesthetic Irving produced and acted in.

statute, which captures "a great actress whose personal majesty is eloquent even in the silence of stone" (*Sir Henry Irving* 105). Her ability to manifest character makes her, in Irving's view, every bit as sublime as Shakespeare; her unique gestures, intonations, and mannerisms are on par with the Bard's distinctive and imaginative figures, rhymes, and rhythms.

Perhaps in a nod to Longinus's treatise on how to produce the sublime, Irving uses Siddons's example less to recognize her sublimity and more as a model for emulation. Rather than suggest up-and-coming actors imitate her specific performance style, seekers of the sublime, he argues, ought to replicate her discipline:

> To every young man who looks upon this statue, I would say, "This is not only the image of a great actress, it is the image of indomitable energy and perseverance. When she came to London first, she was a conspicuous failure. She went back to the hard school of the provincial theatre and matured her powers by unflagging industry. This is no memorial of casual and irresponsible genius, but a triumphant witness to the merits of those comrades-in-arms of all true endeavour—application and a stout heart." (*Sir Henry Irving* 106)

Irving locates the origin of Siddons's sublimity here not in a natural genius at her craft but in her work ethic, and he would go on to characterize his own life similarly. Ellen Terry, for example, records the following conversation with Irving on his deathbed:

> "What a wonderful life you've had, haven't you?" I exclaimed, thinking of it all in a flash.
>
> "Oh, yes," he said quietly ... "a wonderful life—of work."
>
> "And there's nothing better, after all, is there?"
>
> "Nothing." (337)

His earliest biographers—friends and family that include his manager Bram Stoker, Terry's son Edward Gordon Craig, and his grandson Laurence Irving—all contributed to this legacy by portraying the actor as unwavering in his dedication to his craft and creating the image of a man which a more recent biographer suggests "could have served as a prototype for Samuel Smiles, the author of *Self-Help*," a Victorian-era gospel of liberal ideology: "He had all the necessary qualifications. He was born of humble and poor parents, but, armed with those commended virtues of perseverance, courage in the face of adversity, and the determination to overcome immense physical and social obstacles in the pursuit of a single aim, he succeeded against all the odds" (Bingham 18).[3] Irving's fashioning of both Siddons and himself as sublime actors who achieve their sublimity through hard work contributes to what was then a much larger, lifelong mission to legitimize acting as a profession. For Irving, the sublime actor rises above the historical prejudice against the theatre. He alludes to this fact in his speech when he notes that "this is a monument of enlightened tolerance which would have surprised most people in Sarah Siddons's lifetime" (*Sir Henry Irving* 105). The hard work rather than the grandeur of the performance marks the sublime and justifies his profession. Though it is easy to overstate Irving's role in redeeming theatre from its critics, his arguments and his example had some impact. In 1895, he became the first actor to receive a knighthood.

This dissertation is about what it means for an actor to be sublime. More specifically, this dissertation traces how the sublime actor emerges from a much larger historical negotiation over

[3] For more on Smiles's work as a manifestation of the "Victorian myth of upward social mobility and the self-made man which seduced the working class to middle-class ideals" see R. J. Morris "Samuel Smiles and the Genesis of Self-Help" (Morris 91). See also Jeffrey Richards "Spreading the Gospel of Self-Help: G.A. Henty and Samuel Smiles," Alexander Tyrell "Class Consciousness in Early Victorian Britain: Samuel Smiles, Leeds Politics, and the Self-Help Creed," and Tim Travers *Samuel Smiles and the Victorian Work Ethic*. For further analysis of the use of biography by Irving's followers to contest Modernist critiques of his work, see Michael Punter's "The Magical Body on the Stage: Henry Irving Reconsidered," 19-30.

the production and meaning of the theatrical sublime. By examining the history of the theatrical sublime, this dissertation makes a critical intervention into the history of emotions: it examines how approaches to the theatrical sublime and its eventual crystallization into the sublime actor become decisive moments for understanding twentieth- and twenty-first-century approaches to emotions. By tracing the theatrical sublime as it evolves alongside the increasing commercialization of theatre, from classical, to French neoclassical, to late eighteenth-century British bourgeois theatre, this dissertation argues that the figure of the sublime actor becomes the ideal subject of what Eva Illouz describes as an increasingly global system of emotional capitalism. "In emotional capitalism," Illouz argues, "emotional and economic discourse mutually shape one another so that affect is made an essential aspect of economic behaviour, and emotional life, especially that of the middle classes, follows the logic of economic relations and exchange" (60). According to her, "[b]y a peculiar detour of history, psychologists have articulated a language of selfhood that resuscitates Adam Smith's complex view of the self" (94).[4] Illouz's analysis of the development of emotional capitalism, however, skips over the ideology's eighteenth-century roots. It begins instead with Freudian psychoanalysis to trace how the discourse of therapy was incorporated into and made subservient to economic imperatives by modern workplaces and the practices of management. This dissertation finds in its study of the eighteenth-century theatrical sublime an approach to identifying some of the specific material

[4] See also Dierdre Lynch, who argues that the growing significance of character in eighteenth-century literature helped individuals understand the emergence of emotional capitalism, where "through exchanges of fellow feeling, as well as through exchanges of wealth, particular interests are rendered commensurable with an economy structured by reciprocities and correspondences" (95). With few exceptions, Lynch's approach emphasizes the role of the novel in this development. I address my turn towards the theatre rather than the novel in chapter four, where I consider the importance of theatre to Adam Smith's theory of sympathy—a theory most often today read as prefiguring the narrative developments of the novel—and in chapter six, where I refer to the tradition in eighteenth-century theatre studies and celebrity studies of identifying what Felicity Nussbaum describes as the "interiority effect"—"a combination of public display and personal revelation, and united dramatic character and a private 'self' in a manner that we usually associate with the eighteenth-century novel rather than the drama" (18).

and ideological events and processes before Illouz's focus yet equally vital to the development of emotions under capitalism.

"Apostolic Succession:" Diderot, Coquelin, Irving

In the decade before Irving's speech on Siddons, the figure of the sublime actor—a concept taken from Diderot's initially unpublished *Paradoxe sur le comédien*—had become the center of cross-Atlantic debates about actors, about emotions, and about the business of theatre. Diderot argued that the actor "must have in himself an unmoved and disinterested onlooker [*spectateur froid et tranquille*]" for "[i]f the actor were full, really full, of feeling, how could he play the same part twice running with the same spirit and success?" (7–8).[5] "Extreme sensibility makes middling actors," he continues, "middling sensibility makes the ruck of bad actors; in complete absence of sensibility is the possibility of a sublime actor" (17). British writers took an interest in Diderot's text shortly after the 1880 publication of Benoît-Constant Coquelin's *L'Art et le comédien*, translated into English in 1881 as *The Actor and His Art*. Coquelin repeats Diderot's arguments, claiming he holds the "famous paradox of Diderot"—that the actor must represent emotion while remaining free of it—"to be literal truth" (26). As Marvin Carlson points out, Coquelin's essay "initiated a series of English observations," including a translation of

[5] Pollock's translation draws attention to the suggestive relationship between Diderot's Sublime Actor, Adam Smith's impartial spectator, and the tradition of British aesthetics since Shaftesbury as a disinterested perspective. In his reading of Smith, David Marshall points out that "It is as if Smith were endorsing the two theories of acting that Diderot opposes in his *Paradoxe sur le comedien*: both the position that an actor should merge himself with his role and the position that the actor must be a cool observer who can stand at a distance from his own performance" (600). Smith published his text, had multiple editions translated into French, and had met Diderot all prior to the latter's work on *La paradoxe*. Given the timeline of events, if one were to suggest influence, it would be Smith's impartial spectator informing Diderot's sublime actor rather than the other way around.

Diderot's *Paradoxe* by Irving's friend Walter Pollock (*Theories* 233).[6] To this translation, Irving contributed what one reviewer described as "a singularly capable and well-argued preface," positioning Diderot's theory as one "naturally repulsive to the actor" (Urban 312).[7] Irving claimed instead that the sublime actor must genuinely feel the emotions they perform, and this rebuttal set the stage for a bitter rivalry between the two actors.[8]

Emotionalism, the term that has come to name Irving's position, has antecedents in classical approaches to oration. By the eighteenth century, however, the primary question about emotionalism for actors was not theoretical. but practical. Most were far more concerned in how to summon their feelings and perform realistic emotions rather than whether they should. They were interested in creating theatrical effects rather than the moral or ethical consequences of harnessing that kind of theatrical power. As Earl Wasserman argues, many accounts of actors' methods and treatises on acting solved this problem by promoting early theories of the sympathetic imagination, the idea that one imagines, identifies with, and subsequently feels the

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[6] Disagreement between Irving and Coquelin soon escalated, and their argument became widely known in Europe and America. Coquelin published in 1886 the "L'art du comèdien," translated into English in *Harper's* in 1887—specifically to rebut Irving's critique. Irving replied in "An Actor's Notes" within the month. Others soon joined the debate. Dion Boucicault, for example, published "Coquelin-Irving" (1887) in the *American Review*, which observed that both actors might be right insofar as their positions reflected national and cultural differences rather than absolute principles of acting. Two months later, Coquelin published in *Harper's Weekly* "A Reply to Mr. Henry Irving," where he agreed with Boucicault but maintained the superiority of the French classical style. For theatre practitioners, the issue appears to have terminated in William Archer's publication of a series of articles from January to March in *Longman's Magazine* titled "The Anatomy of Acting," which he then revised and published that same year as a full-length book titled *Masks or Faces?: A Study in the Psychology of Acting*. Archer brought a scientific rigour to the question that the two actors were likely uninterested in matching by relying on both historical testimony and survey data to weigh the pros and cons of the two sides he dubs the emotionalist (Irving) and anti-emotionalist (Diderot/Coquelin) positions. Though Archer sided with the emotionalists by asserting that "a mechanically mimicked utterance of emotion is like a note without its harmonics," he also conceded that the power of the actor to emote on stage regularly and organically was too complex to explain in modern psychological terms: "some day," he hopes, "perhaps, a better-equipped psychologist may thread the maze to its inmost recesses" (209).

[7] The review was published under the name Sylvanus Urban, which was originally the pseudonym of Edward Cave who founded *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1731. The name was adopted by later editors and writers.

[8] This escalation can be explained in part by the practical stakes involved. Irving's fame as England's leading actor began with his incredible success while playing Mathias in Leopold Lewis's *The Bells* in 1871. For this play, Lewis had translated and revised Erckmann-Chatrian's *Le Juif Polonais* (1867), but by the 1880s, Coquelin had made the original version's Mathias a regular role in his repertoire. In 1888, however, this theoretical, professional, and nationalistic rivalry cooled as on 19 April, the two met, and, says Bram Stoker, "at once became friends" (159).

emotional state of another—in this case, the character they play.[9] The immediate context of Diderot's *Paradoxe*—an unnamed book that sparks the dialogue between Diderot's first and second speaker—was a 1769 pamphlet promoting emotionalism titled *Garrick, ou les Acteurs Anglais*, a translation by Antonio Fabio Sticotti of John Hill's *The Actor*, first published in 1755. Hill's text was a revision of a pamphlet he wrote in 1750 with the same title. That version was a restatement of Rémond de Sainte Albine's *Le Comédien* from earlier that year, a text Wasserman considers the first to develop "the theory of the sympathetic imagination in acting […] into a critical principle" (267). However, the anti-emotionalist stance Diderot promoted in the *Paradoxe* was not just a bit of contrarian advice to the actor. It moved beyond the practice of acting and waded into deeper philosophical issues of morality and the place of the theatre in society. But here, too, it was not alone. As Sabine Chaouche demonstrates in *La philosophie de l'Acteur*, Diderot's unpublished dialogue was just one of a series of treatises that emerged after 1750 that refigured actors from seductive illusionists to philosophical sages, from hypocrites and liars to masters of the relationship between subjective interiority and bodily exteriority.

The wider background for these conversations about acting styles appears to have been a resurgent interest in critiques of the theatre. While the history of European antitheatricality is nearly as long as that of European theatre, the 1750s saw the antitheatrical position renewed as a serious, philosophical one with the 1758 publication of Rousseau's *Letter to D'Alembert*; the theoretical stakes surrounding emotionalism appear to have risen alongside it.[10] Rousseau argues against opening a theatre in Geneva, citing the risk posed by the actor's powerful performances.

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[9] Early examples in English include but are not limited to comments on or by Thomas Betterton and Elizabeth Barry recorded in Charles Gildon's *The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton* (1710), a translation of Luigi Riccoboni's *Historical and Critical Account of the Theatre in Europe* (1741); and Aaron Hill's "Essay on the Art of Acting" (1753). See Wasserman, 264–7.

[10] For a comprehensive history, see Jonas Barish's *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*.

He contends that should the actor's imitative talents be employed in civil society by the otherwise sincere orator or preacher, social cohesion risks collapse. This antitheatrical position is rooted in Rousseau's theory of the origin of language, where he describes "Man's first language" as the primitive and "universal […] cry of nature," which progresses by "inflections of the voice" and "gesture" until it is replaced by a civilized system of signs (*Second Discourse* 122–3). Communal life, in this view, relies on communication, which depends on the link between the original cry of nature and the system of gestures and signs that replaces it. Since truth rests on a non-arbitrary relation between the sign and the signified, an actor who can perform the sign (emotional expression) without genuinely feeling the signified (the emotion) undermines that truth. Fake emotional utterances were possible, hence the early eighteenth-century's emphasis on extreme, hyperbolic expression; the intensity of the expression guaranteed its truth. But the actor, says Rousseau, who only imitates the gestures and signs, threatens to break that link. This actor easily dupes community members since their communal life depends on trusting the authenticity of the sign and gesture. If we are to have any actors all, he concludes, then they "must be more virtuous than any other if they are not more corrupt" (Rousseau *Politics* 80).

As Jeffrey Leichman points out, "Rousseau's *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les Spectacles* […] not only announced a public rupture between two perceived leaders of the *philosophe* movement […] but also confronted Diderot with a rhetorically savvy refutation of the moral and esthetic value of theatre for which he had passionately argued in the *Entretiens*" (97). Diderot's *Paradoxe* can be read as his response. In that book, Diderot spares the sublime actor from Rousseau's critique by refiguring them as a poetic creator rather than a hypocritical liar, an artist whose art is regulated by the demands of the theatre such that their power of false expression could not realistically transfer from stage to society as all performances must be "in proportion to

the audience and the space" (81). "The actor says nothing," he continues, "and does nothing in private life in the same way as the stage: it is a different world"; the cry of nature requires extraordinary modification to be observed and heard on stage (81). For Diderot, the sublime actor does not lie by mimicking nature. They modify it like a sculptor modifies marble. They create emotional expressions proper to the artificial conditions of the theatre, producing character types true to form rather than false to reality. The actor performs universal and symbolic emotional expressions rather than natural and realistic ones. Moreover, observes Diderot, the difficult training of both observation and performance required by the actor shapes their character, neutering their potential threat as a mere manipulator.

> In society, unless they are buffoons, I find [actors] polished, caustic, and cold; proud, light of behavior, spendthrifts, self-interested; struck rather by our absurdities than touched by our misfortunes; masters of themselves at the spectacle of an untoward incident or the recital of a pathetic story; isolated, vagabonds, at the command of the great; little conduct, no friends, scarce any of those holy and tender ties which associate us in the pains and pleasures of another, who in turn shares our own. I have often seen an actor laugh off the stage; I do not remember to have ever seen one weep. (63)

Because such an actor strives to achieve an objective view of universal character, they must remain aloof from the emotional binds of a sympathetic society, preventing them from adopting the position of a properly socialized subject. "They are fit to play all characters," explains Diderot, "because they have none" (65).

By figuring the performer as a cool and dispassionate poetic creator rather than one affected, inspired, and possessed by their emotions, Diderot builds into his view of the sublime actor a sense of self-possessed responsibility, one that Lorraine Piroux argues reflects the

economic concerns of society navigating the complexities of proprietary authorship. "[An] author," she says, "is a creating subject conceived almost exclusively in terms of possessive and individualistic notions of selfhood. He is the legitimate owner of his literary work to the extent that he is considered the exclusive source of his creative power and that he exercises full control over the thoughts and actions mobilized for the creation of that work" (354). While Piroux observes that Diderot promoted earlier in his career the idea of the author as submitting to "a form of mystical possession," after the 1750s, he reconceives the author as someone with "the unique ability to domesticate the emotional upheavals triggered by his sensibility and can, therefore, master the production of his own art" (357; 362). Piroux further notes how the "term '*se posséder* [self-possessed], […] recurs like a leitmotif in the *Paradoxe*," indicating that the philosopher's concerns about authorship had bled into his views of the actor. Self-possession, continues Piroux, can in this case "mean both to be in control of oneself and to own oneself in the Lockean sense" (365). The actor treats their body like an empty page, imprinting characters upon it through sound and gesture. Like the author, they demonstrate their mastery of that intellectual property, using the iterability of identical performances to prove their ability to write their own characteristics, which they can then assume both possession of and responsibility for.

Coquelin resurrects Diderot's ideas and refocuses his arguments to more directly counter later accusations that actors are immoral subjects. He observes that while a text can be stale, a performance of it can be sublime: "You come to the passages where you know that Talma was sublime," he argues, "and you puzzle your brains with the question, 'But how the mischief did he do it?' The answer is simple: he turned creator" (15). An actor's creation—their idealized spectre of a character—may live on in memory and in performance traditions, but even if that fragile spectre dies and is lost to history, for Coquelin, it does not matter, as still "creation is one thing;

durability another" (22). "Why should we hesitate to exercise an art because the creations of that art are perishable," asks Coquelin, in a manner reminiscent of Irving's praise of Siddons, "[i]s the actor the only sufferer from a similar cause? What is left to us of Apelles, and all the great painters of antiquity" who we still acknowledge as artists? (22). Whereas some argue that the "renunciation by the actor of his own personality, to assume the character of one, ten, or twenty other people, is apparently a renunciation of his own dignity, and a denial of the dignity of mankind," Coquelin refutes this position by asserting that the creation of the idealized spectre of character reflects the creative force of the actor's "individual *self*": the actor does "not abdicate the throne: he reigns supreme" (53, 55 original emphasis). Diderot's anti-emotionalist position—that an actor ought to be free from the emotion they represent—is not for Coquelin the end goal but rather a means of demonstrating the artistry necessary for the actor to become a self-possessed agent and a reliable member of the state and society.

Irving's intervention in this debate denies Diderot and Coquelin on practical and psychological grounds in ways that reflect his far more Romantic disposition: "Has not," he asks, "the actor who can thus make his own feelings part of his art an advantage over the actor who never feels, but makes his observations solely from the sensibility of others?" ("Preface," xv). True, he continues, "[u]ntrained actors, yielding to the excitement of the stage, have been known to stumble against the wings in impassioned exit. But it is quite possible to feel all the excitement of the situation and yet be perfectly self-possessed. This is art which the actor who loses his head has not mastered" ("Preface," xv). But as with Coquelin, the purpose of this position is to defend a moral view of human behaviour:

> Diderot had the highest opinion of acting as an art. The great actor, he said, was an even more remarkable poet. Yet the actor was in some respects a worthless creature, without

> character or even individuality, and wholly lacking in moral sense […] For Diderot's position is nothing short of this—that though wholly destitute of moral qualities, the accomplished actor must, by sheer force of imitation, absorb into himself for the purposes of his art the moral qualities he sees in others. This is not with him an affair of feeling, but of argument. (xi–xii)

Diderot's sublime actor purifies their soul and clarifies their self-identity by purging themselves of troublesome emotions in favour of rational composition. However, for Irving, this expulsion leaves the actor hollow, as one who merely mimics and modifies the moral sentiments of others rather than displaying any of their own. Diderot began with the assumption that actors were liars, vagabonds, and prostitutes; what sensibility, morality, and individuality they had was necessarily rotten. Whereas the actor-as-vagabond disguises their passionate depravity with feigned moral sentiments and false propriety, Diderot's sublime actor masks inhumane cold heartlessness as impartiality. To save the actor's soul, Irving suggests Diderot's firm distinction between the stage and nature may be nothing more than a peculiarity of French theatre conventions: "Diderot points out that people do not speak on the stage as they do in the street," and he "lays great stress upon the divorce between Nature and the Stage," but "he was thinking of the stage of Racine and not the stage of Shakespeare" (xvii–xviii). British theatre, in contrast, requires natural performance. Othello's laments, Irving argues, though made for the stage, are "none the less human" despite being "couched in splendid diction": "They move the hearer because they are the utterances of a man's agony" (xviii). Irving's sublime actor embraces rather than refrains from the performance of such moral sentiments thereby asserting rather than denying their individuality.

To defend the social, political, and artistic legitimacy of the actor now that both Diderot's and Coquelin's solutions have been dismissed, Irving crafts what Jeffrey Richards refers to as an "apostolic succession of great English actors" by forming a tradition of performers whose sublime inheritance he could claim (*Sir Henry Irving* 51). Three principles connect each member of Irving's canon: emotionalism, individuality, and industry. By combining these elements, Irving portrays the actor as an essential contributor to the social good. First, Irving suggests that the "divine fire" of a truly emotion-filled performance proves superior to the anti-emotionalist practice of rationally crafting the ideal spectre of a character (*Sir Henry Irving* 72). Edmund Kean, claims Irving, "sometimes passed from one part to another with little more external variation than was suggested by a corked mustache; but the poetry, the intensity, the fiery passion of the man, made his acting the most real and vivid impersonation that his contemporaries had seen" (*Sir Henry Irving* 71). Second, admitting one's private emotions into a public performance endorses acting as an art specific to the creation of individuality. William Macready, for example, "after burying his beloved daughter," and after performing the titular character in James Sheridan Knowles *Virginius*, "confessed that his real experience gave a new force to his acting in the most pathetic situations" (*Sir Henry Irving* 42). Macready individualizes a character by imparting an aspect of himself, his history, and his personal experiences into his performance as a grief-stricken father. At the same time, Irving argues, the stage becomes the figure that enables the individual to intentionally give in to their emotions, letting go to secure a sense of self-control. Unlike in the street, on stage "the intention of the actor appears in its greatest force" when emoting: the actor "wishes to do a particular thing, and so far the wish is father to the thought that the brain begins to work in the required direction, and the emotional faculties and the whole nervous muscular system follow suit" (*Sir Henry Irving* 80). Irving's

sublime actor intentionally becomes possessed by fathering their emotions, controlling them, and turning what might otherwise be interpreted as a loss of self into an act of willed self-possession.[11]

In his 1894 address "The Value of Individuality," Irving points out that contrary to the belief that it is the actor's job "to assume identities not our own," the actor's real craft involves the difficult study of their own selves; self-knowledge justifies the actor's labour as "there is hardly any individuality which is not worthy of the closest study" (*Sir Henry Irving* 89). True, the actor studies the mannerisms of others, but the result that arises when studying their differences is knowledge about one's own individuality: "in the struggle of individualities a knowledge of one's own, with its strength and weakness, is of the first importance" (*Sir Henry Irving* 90). To arrive at that understanding is not easy, it may only be attained by the third theme of his defence: "arduous labour, unswerving purpose, and unfailing discipline": "[T]o master the technicalities of his craft, to familiarise his mind with the structure, rhythm, and the soul of poetry, to be constantly cultivating his perceptions of life around him and of all the arts—painting, music, sculpture—for the actor who is devoted to his profession is susceptible to every harmony of color, sound and form—to do this is to labour in a large field of industry" (*Sir Henry Irving* 50; 45). Though Irving's arguments generally assume individuality to be an unchanging essence located somewhere inside the mind and the body, ready to be uncovered, his language of labour and industry, which endures throughout his speeches, suggests that this individuality is shaped by the artist's activity: "to hold the mirror up to nature was one of the worthiest functions in the sphere of labour" (*Sir Henry Irving* 40); to be an actor "requires much study and much

[11] I address this paternal structure of the sublime more fully when I discuss Longinus's reading of Plato's doctrine of organic unity in chapter two.

labour of many kinds" (*Sir Henry Irving* 78); the actor is a "skilled workman" and an "artist-labourer" (*Sir Henry Irving* 93–4).

This relationship between acting and working enables Irving to elevate both: "If our art is worth anything at all, it is worth the honest, conscientious self-devotion of men and women, who, while they may not achieve fame, may have the satisfaction of being workers in a calling which does credit to many degrees of talent" (*Sir Henry Irving* 49). What the actor-worker produces is not only entertainment, which Irving credits as "invaluable to the worker" more generally, insofar as theatre "brightens the faculties, enlarges his vision of the picturesque, and by taking him for a time out of this work-a-day world, braces his sensibilities for the labours of life"; it also produces a domain of knowledge of self as an object and a how-to guide for securing that self-as-possession (*Sir Henry Irving* 47). "You may even find," claims Irving, "that, in the working of your lives, to be able to conceal emotion, or to make your wishes known without the aid of words—in fact, the mastery of expression generally—is no unimportant branch of knowledge" (*Sir Henry Irving* 90–1). To master oneself, one must first know oneself, and this sphere of self-knowledge, a discipline that all workers must enter into, is the art of the actor. And this actor is no vagabond; they are not liars. Their craft rests on the paradoxical logic Neil Hertz describes as the "sublime turn"—a concept I discuss more thoroughly in chapter two—where to partially conceal, modify, or enhance one's emotions and their expression reveals all the honest labour undertaken to produce their emotional character (6).

Theatrum Mundi and Emotional Capitalism

By starting with Henry Irving's attempt to account for Siddons's sublimity through moral notions of perseverance and honest hard work, and by placing that account within the broader debates about the sublime actor, I have begun at what is both the end of the theatre history that this dissertation covers as well as at the beginning of when the figure of the sublime actor moves beyond the disciplinary scope of theatre history and into the fields of psychology and sociology. As Katherine Newey points out, the Irving-Coquelin debate has a "powerful synchronicity" with the publication of William James's essay "What is an Emotion?"—widely considered a foundational document in the disciplinary history of psychology as well as the origin of the influential James-Lange theory of emotion (577). The relationship between and the impact of the Irving-Coquelin debate on the history of psychology has caught the attention of several scholars of theatre history who have sought to demonstrate the link between theatre practice and psychological theories of emotion.[12] At the same time, the moral implications and consequences of the sublime actor's power over emotion and relationship to truth remain underexamined. These issues are suppressed in favour of making the approach appear more scientific. When James revises his essay on emotions, for example, into a chapter for the *Principles of Psychology* (1890), he cites William Archer's *Masks or Faces?: A Study in the Psychology of Acting* (1888)—a study that attempted to solve the Irving-Coquelin debate through scientific methods—to demonstrate his argument that reactive, physiological expressions of emotion pre-empt the subjective feeling of that emotion. In turn, Archer's work was at least partially inspired by Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), a text he refers to several

[12] For more on the influence of this debate on the history of psychology, see Joseph Roach's *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting*, 160–94; Robert Gordon's *The Purpose of Playing: Modern Acting Theories in Perspective*, 12–36; Tiffany Watt-Smith *On Flinching: Theatricality and Scientific Looking from Darwin to Shell Shock*, 39–81.

times to support Irving's description of acting as disciplined self-control. For Darwin, emotional expressions begin as a willed activity. Through habitual use and the evolutionary process, intentional emotional expressions write themselves into the neurological and physiological body becoming purely reactionary and unconscious. While Darwin drew on multiple sources of evidence to support this position, he singled out one of particular importance: the neurological experiments of Guillaume Duchenne. Upon reading Duchenne's work and examining his pictures, Darwin recounts how he was "struck with admiration at the truthfulness of all"—so much so that he included many of the images in his own text (25).

In his experiments, Duchenne had applied an electrical current to a man whose face had lost all feeling, triggering automatic, muscular reflexes to discern what sorts of facial expressions could be willed and which ones were purely reactive. He discovered what has become known as the Duchenne smile, a movement that involves activating the orbicularis oculi muscles to crease skin by the eyes alongside the zygomaticus major muscles to lift to corners of the mouth. Crucially, while the latter could be willed into position, the former could not. When discussing this discovery, Duchenne labels the orbicularis oculi "the muscle of kindness," as its absence or presence "in smiling unmasks a false friend" (Duchenne 72). Duchenne refers to Diderot to explain the significance of this discovery:

> Facial expression is formed in repose in the individual face, which must be the image of our habitual sentiments, the faces of our dominant passions. (This fact is well known and generally admitted). Yet Diderot, a celebrated philosopher, has reservations on this subject. "In a sense we make (he says) our own physiognomy. The visage, accustomed to taking the character of the dominant emotion, retains it; sometimes also, we receive a contribution from nature, and we may retain what we have received. It may have pleased

> him to make us good and give us the face of an evil person, or to make us evil, and to give us the face of kindness" […] Diderot's assertion, happily [*heureusement*], is not accurate. (31)

Duchenne's inclusion of the adverb *heureusement* when demonstrating Diderot's supposed error indicates just how deeply rooted in questions of ethics and morality his research was. His discovery of the Duchenne smile does not just answer academic questions about physiology; it identifies with certainty specific barriers that the actor cannot cross by naming what facial activity distinguishes the honest friend from the false one, a question at the center of some eighteenth-century debates about aesthetics and affective knowledge. Dominique Bouhours, for instance, cites the feeling of friendship as a key example for the kind of affective knowledge he characterizes as the *je ne sais quoi*, while Francis Hutcheson claims that this feeling forges those social bonds that help form a more beautiful and more moral society then one created only by the ethically fraught sensibility of self-interest.[13] As Ann Delahanty has suggested, the desire to map out these affective and aesthetic forms of knowledge emerged during the long eighteenth century out of religious discourses and in reaction to the Enlightenment's rationalization of mind and body. From Blaise Pascal onwards, affective knowledge becomes associated first with divine inspiration and then later secularized as natural reactions of the body that could support a standard of truthfulness immune to malicious falsification.[14] While tears or laughter might be read as authentic signs of sympathy and friendship, other bodily movements—blushing, for instance—could be read as the body betraying a hidden truth. The problem posed by the sublime actor was amplified by these discourses since deception in the realm of affective truth carried a

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[13] As I discuss in chapter four, this question was at the center of some debates about aesthetics and affective knowledge during the seventeenth- and eighteenth- centuries.

[14] For the history of the secularization of the passions see Thomas Dixon's *From Passion to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category*.

far greater danger than the rational or logical. The emotional manipulator was a betrayer capable of shaking the foundations of affective and aesthetic truth, rebelling against the divine or the natural, and shattering the trust that forms the conditions for the possibility of friendship and a moral society reliant on the truth of these signs. As Ruth Leys observes, in the attempt to make the study of emotions objective and scientific, the moral imperative to root out this dangerous actor remains in contemporary discourses of psychology and neuroscience through methodological debates about "the question of whether there are objectively discernible differences between honest or authentic facial signals versus dishonest or simulated ones,"—a question, she says, which "haunts the entire post-war science of emotions" (55).[15]

While many psychologists' and sociologists' views on emotions and their expressions have, in the last twenty years, moved past the true or false binary that structures Duchenne's distinction between the honest or forced smile, the ethical and moral stakes of the Irving-Coquelin debate remain an ongoing concern in contemporary culture.[16] Irving's recourse to an ethics of honest labour to solve the moral qualms held against the actor and his craft suggests an economic or political unconscious at work throughout the ongoing discourse of the sublime actor. One of the primary claims of this dissertation is that the theatrical sublime and its manifestation by the sublime actor prefigure what Eva Illouz identifies as the ideal moral subject

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[15] As a recent report *Emotion Detection and Recognition Market Size* by Fortune Business Insights suggests, the Emotion Detection and Recognition (*EDR*) market, which includes using emotion detection skills and software to catch falsehoods in detained and suspected individuals, is currently measured in the billions and only expected to grow. Ley's *The Ascent of Affect* provides a history and critique of Basic Emotions Theory (BET)—the premise that emotions are discreet and identifiable body states—as it developed from Darwin into the modern day. Paul Ekman, the leading contemporary figure of BET, is heavily involved in the *EDR* market. His clients include Disney-Pixar, Dreamworks, Harvard University, the NYPD, and the accounting firm KPMG. See www.paulekman.com/ for more details. See also note 26 below.

[16] As Alan Fridlund points out, it is better to think of facial displays as "only probabilistic signals of social intentions that would, in everyday life, be accompanied by the words, vocal prosodies, and gestures congruent with the intent"—context matters, and, in this view, "function trumps feeling" (80–1). If anything, Duchenne's discovery demonstrates that the forced smile does not function to feign happiness or true friendship, specifically because it can be recognized as such. Rather, the intentional smile often functions to communicate different meanings tied to a range of complex social situations: a forced smile can signal anything from deference to contempt.

of what would become emotional capitalism: not *homo economicus* but "*homo communicans*," someone "who reflexively monitors his words and emotions, controls his self-image, and pays tribute to the other's point of view" (Illouz 95, original emphasis). The potential theatrical falsity of the emotions performed by *homo communicans* becomes legitimized, I argue, by appealing to the honest labour that crafts that performance. The difficult work involved in, for example, a customer service representative pretending to sympathize with a trying consumer ideologically cancels out the pretense and solves the ethical qualms surrounding their emotional falsity.

For Illouz, the work of *homo communicans* involves "a cultural process through which new scripts of economic relationships are formulated and intertwined with interactional-emotional scripts"; these scripts, she argues, have "reshaped the ways actors conceptualize horizontal and vertical hierarchies, power, and even, to a limited but definite extent, gender relations" (60–1).[17] Arlie Hochschild's description of the "emotional labour" of flight attendants offers the most well-known demonstration of such a link. For Hochschild, emotional labour defines and is defined by the expectations of social roles: "a social role—such as that of bride, wife, or mother," writes Hochschild, "is partly a way of describing what feelings people think are owed and are owing" (74). Imaginative labour—the work of imagining how another is feeling as well as how one ought to respond—is also closely linked to this emotional labour. As Hochschild observes, to produce the desired emotional labour from its employees, airlines train them to imagine the feelings of others: "In the training of flight attendants, analogies to guest and child

[17] traces the rise of certain therapeutic emotional management techniques to demonstrate how the effective and efficient emotional communication strategies in the boardroom generally mirrored the development of communication styles in the bedroom. She also charts the class stratification that has occurred in this process as middle individuals are enculturated through various therapeutic techniques to "treat their emotions as *capital*—as something to be properly amassed toward the acquisition of a respectable social identity" such that emotions "play an increasingly crucial role in social mobility" (199–200). Failure to develop emotional capital—especially of the type demanded by wealthier emotional communities—locks one out of jobs and career developments just as it assuredly limits one's success in private and intimate relationships.

are used to amplify feelings of empathy and sympathy" (143). This labour enters emotionality into the rational calculus of economy by defining the consumer as someone to whom "some emotional management is owed" (Hochschild 111). The consumer's status as a paying customer, however, exempts them from reciprocity, producing a situation where "the flight attendant's empathy is stretched thin into a commercial offering" and "the passenger's try at empathy is usually pinched into the narrow grooves of public manners" (Hochschild 110). In the economic sphere, debt replaces duty, as emotional labour is exchanged on the market oftentimes in ways that undervalue that labour.

Illouz and Hochschild's use of the Erving Goffman-inspired dramaturgical idioms of scripts and roles to describe social actors and their presentation of self in everyday life suggests that the theatre-as-life metaphor lends itself to the description and interpretation of emotional capitalism, an idea with a long tradition. Jean-Christophe Agnew demonstrates, for example, how once the market became the overarching determinator of worth, it was quickly discovered that commodities could enact an economic value as concrete as the fool's performance as king. The ability for theatre to transform the bare stage into a rich world of the imagination—what Agnew calls "the imaginative liquidity of the theatrical form"—helped seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophers and artists to understand the "practical liquidity of the commodity form" or the instability of a price tied to what might be irrational demands rather than the stability of labour cost and use value (11–2). Individuals soon learned that one's value to society could be measured by the quantity of spectators they could accumulate rather than what they materially contributed to society. The rise of celebrity culture during the eighteenth century becomes a key example of what Agnew calls the development of the "commodity self"—a figure whose "exchange value […] float[s] on the tide of what attention others were disposed to invest"

(13). The *theatrum mundi* metaphor assists in helping such individuals understand how public persona could become the determining factor in private worth.

At the same time, however, many sociologists are wary of using this metaphor as a methodology. On the first page of his *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman notes that the metaphor has "obvious inadequacies" insofar as theatre and ordinary life are not identical (xi). Nonetheless, Goffman continues to work within this metaphor, and many critics have tied criticisms of the general sociological use of the theatre-as-life metaphor to specific critiques of Goffman's approach. Bruce Wiltshire, for instance, suggests Goffman "blurs fundamental distinctions between off and onstage" (280). "I am responsible for my behavior offstage in fundamentally different ways from my behavior onstage," observes Wiltshire, who, like Diderot, maintains a sharp distinction between theatre and stage, and argues the theatre-as-life metaphor papers over the differences in "ethical responsibility" when actions are performed in real life versus in the theatre (280). Another closely related criticism of this metaphor relies on consequences: Judith Butler's account of performative acts, for example, describes how the conventions of theatre can "de-realize the act [of gender performance], make acting into something quite distinct from what is real," whereas "[o]n the street or in the bus, the act becomes dangerous […] precisely because there are no theatrical conventions to delimit the purely imaginary character of the act" (527). Similarly, Hochschild remarks that "[i]n the theatre, the illusion dies when the curtain falls," but "[i]n private life, its consequences are unpredictable and possibly fateful: a love is killed, a suitor rejected, another hospital bed filled" (48).

These claims about theatre's freedom from responsibility and consequence, however, make the mistake of reading trivial differences as firm metaphysical distinctions that transform the theatre into a magical realm of pure representation, an illusory space disconnected from and

in opposition to the materiality of real life. What truly falls with the curtain, however, is just this distinction between stage and life. This illusion of a distinction functions ideologically to produce what Nicolas Ridout describes as the "bourgeois theatre": a space that transcends the material realities of everyday life through the effects produced by "[t]he bourgeois idea of the artist, whose work is supposed to be spontaneous and free from the disciplines of wage labour" (20). It is this illusion that figures theatre to obscure "the disquieting possibility that the activities required of a theatrical performer are […] like those of any other worker (the repetitive development of a skill and its daily exercise for wages)," and so prevents our seeing how the repetitive labour performers engage in might be "construed as work [and] that this work may bear a peculiar dimension to erotic exploitation" (Ridout 20). In the bourgeois theatre, performing these activities poorly or incorrectly means losing one's job and livelihood just as assuredly as failing to perform adequately in any other social or professional space. It is, furthermore, the imperative to perform with consistency that Ridout claims "drove the thinking of both Diderot and Stanislavski"—a list to which we can add Irving as well (20).[18]

The absolute differences supposed to exist between theatre and the world, and between worker and the actor, or the stage and the store, may be overstated. Consider, for example, Julia Lupton's observations about the "extraordinary if disturbing testament to the portability of theater and performance studies into the world of business" when analyzing Joseph Pine and James Gilmore's book *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre and Every Business a Stage* (39). These Harvard business professors describe performance or consumer experience as a

[18] See also Jon McKenzie's *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* traces what he considers the mutually constituting fields of performance studies and performance management such that "performance emerged in the late twentieth century as a dominant practice of cultural resistance *and* as a dominant practice of organizational management" (83). McKenzie subsequently argues that "performance will be to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries what discipline was to the eighteenth and nineteenth, that is, an onto-historical formation of power and knowledge" (18).

fourth economic offering, coming in after and increasing the profitability of (raw) commodities, (processed) goods, and services. "When a person buys a service," claims Pine and Gilmore, "he purchases a set of intangible activities carried out on his behalf. But when he buys an experience, he pays to spend time enjoying a series of memorable events that a company stages—as in a theatrical play—to engage him in an inherently personal way" (2). In one of their examples, consumers perform and experience a contradictorily authentic yet exoticized Italy (rather than the experience of purchasing a stimulant-laced hot drink sourced by what are likely unethical business practices rooted in a history of colonialism) when they request a "Grande" or a "Venti" at Starbucks.[19] The sale of this experience enhances the effects of commodity fetishism, enabling Starbucks to dramatically increase the cost of a cup of coffee. Pine and Gilmore's use of the theatre metaphor goes beyond dramaturgical and sociological analysis; they recommend that prospective business owners would do well to take note of the opportunities for profit presented by actively making life into theatre. Imaginative feeling, in this view, is not just an intervention into ideas about self and society; it is a way to transform that intervention into economic value.

In their analysis of how consumer capital can profit from turning life into theatre, Pine and Gilmore are reinventing the wheel. As William Leach points out, beginning in the 1890s, "merchants, brokers, and manufacturers did everything they could, both ideologically and in reality, to *separate* the world of production from the world of consumption […] 'The selling departments,' one merchant had said, 'is the stage upon which the play is enacted'" (147, original emphasis). Within the theatre of the department store, consumers were encouraged to explore themselves as if this space were "the 'true realm' of freedom and self-expression, the

[19] As Karen Blumenthal suggests Starbucks founder Howard Schultz chose Italian size names and coffees because he was interested in "the romance and history of Italian espresso" and "the traditions of the European coffeehouse […] he wanted to convey a different image, something for more exotic than a simple cup of joe" (42–4).

only refuge of comfort and pleasure, and as a place where all wishes were granted and anything was possible" (Leach 148–9). In an early example of how emotional capitalism genders emotional labour, women were specifically hired as waitresses, ushers, hostesses, or customer service representatives to facilitate this fantasy. These women were tasked with repeating what was perceived to be a specifically gendered performance of hospitality, one tied to their traditionally domestic identities as sisters, wives, and mothers, to facilitate the transformation of customers into treasured guests to whom emotional labour is owed. This sublimely "awesome creation" of a separate, theatrical realm of commercial space, claims Leach, was informed by "the contemporary image-making in nineteenth-century American commercial theatre"—a theatre dominated by "Henry Irving, David Belasco, and Steele Mackaye"—as business owners sought to renovate warehouses into theatrical showrooms, which could be visited merely for the pleasurable experience of transcending the possibilities of their material reality by imagining what could be purchased rather than with any intention to do so (Leach 150, 80).[20]

Ironically, for Ridout, the actual theatre now fails to rival the figurative theatre of the shop or showroom in approaching the sublime; this failure makes the real theatre a privileged space for ideological critiques of subject formation under capitalism. For example, in Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, the narrator Marcel attends his first theatre production, a performance of Racine's *Phédre*, starring the actress Le Berma (a fictional Sarah Bernhardt), who the narrator is told has "touched the sublime"—only to find the whole experience confusing, disappointing, and embarrassing—one he describes upon seeing the play a second time "like a hill that from a distance seems a path of azure sky, but, as we draw nearer, returns to its place in our ordinary

[20] Leach gives the example of New York's "House Palatial"—a furniture store with a "'real' two-story, twenty-four-room dwelling right in the heart of the store's rotunda," a display that "could have been lifted off a Belasco or Mackaye stage," in 1912 there was over one million visitors (80–1).

vision of things" (*In the Shadow* 3, *The Guermantes* 43). The narrator's experience of "the actors [as] people of the same substance as the people [he] knew, trying to speak in the best possible way these lines of *Phèdre*, which themselves no longer formed a sublime and individual essence" pops the illusion of transcendent theatre like a bubble (*The Guermantes* 43). The narrator experiences instead what Ridout describes as the "transcendent possibilities of the world's greatest dramatic poetry appear[ing] to pass by almost unnoticed in a 'deliberate monotone'" (2). This failure epitomizes what Ridout considers the "constitutive" experience of the modern theatre: it is "uncomfortable, compromised, boring, conventional, bourgeois, overpriced and unsatisfactory" (3). The theatre falters in trying to produce that same illusion made possible by the furniture display room. And yet, as Ridout points out, Marcel is conflicted. Like the rest of the audience, he finds himself caught up in the pleasurable frenzy of applause, a contradiction reinforced by his later desire to return to the theatre. For Ridout, the point is not that the disappointment of the stage repulses modern audiences. It is rather *because* of these feelings that many continue to attend. In other words, instead of dismissing these feelings as antitheatrical, Ridout considers their hidden potential as a source of theatre's power. One remains interested in a contemporary "performance of Racine's *Phédre*," claims Ridout, not because of its ongoing "fail[ure] to transport the spectator from the reality of his modern life," but "because it is, of course, part of that modern life, part of capital" (4). If modern life is spectacularly theatrical, then we go to the theatre to experience the limitations and failures of that spectacle. Ridout's example demonstrates that theatre is not a metaphor for life under capitalism but a synecdoche. It both represents while also remaining part of modern, capitalist life. And it is as metonymy rather than metaphor that the dramaturgical analysis continues to function as both an ideological figure and a tool for psychological and sociological research.

Sentimentalism, Romanticism, the Theatrical Sublime, and the History of Emotions

Though tragedy has long been associated with sublimity, for those deeply engaged in the Romantic tradition, the sublime is generally considered antitheatrical, an aesthetic principle that opposes and protects the individual from the falseness of theatricality. In this formulation, the theatrical presents the mimetic, the insincere, the hypocritical, the embodied, and the feminine in society, whereas the sublime is natural, authentic, transcendent, a product of imagination or thought, and decisively masculine—in short, whatever it needs to be to oppose the theatre's corrupting influence.[21] Commentators on Romantic literature and of the sublime have largely dismissed the stage, preferring instead to the sublimity of closet dramas or, to use Byron's term, "mental theatre" (347). What appears to be the earliest instance of the phrase "theatrical sublime" in modern scholarship comes in 1968, when F. T. Prince proposed it to capture how Milton's poem *Paradise Lost* is "shaped and visualised as for a mental stage": it "leaves us with the impression of having witnessed a consciously complete *performance*, on the part of both the poet and his poem" (54–5, original emphasis). This example shows how under the influence of Romantic ideology, the most sublime theatre is a figment of the imagination. But while the field of Romanticism has since moved past this antitheatrical prejudice, and studies on Romantic

[21] Catherine Burroughs offers three explanations for this prevailing Romantic antitheatricality: first, the introduction of the Stage Licensing Act of 1737, which produced a hundred-year-long theatrical monopoly in London, which limited drama to just Covent Garden and Drury Lane and enabled easy censorship and limiting the repertoire to largely conservative set of texts and performances; second, a distrust of the privileged role of the body rather than the mind, of the corporeal rather than the imaginative; and third, that the space of the stage and the theme of theatricality were both topics associated with women. See *Closet Stages*, 9–15.

drama and the stage abound, the Romantic sublime—with its focus on at once the grandeur of nature and interiority—remains primarily an antitheatrical aesthetic.[22]

At the same time, the Romantic sublime continues to be the most well-known and influential version of the sublime. The first scholarly, historical narrative of the sublime given by Samuel Monk in 1935 traced a straight line of development from the original genius of Longinus's classical or rhetorical sublime through to its rediscovery by Nicolas Boileau, its reformulation by Edmund Burke, until it reached its "apotheosis" in the Romantic philosophy of Immanuel Kant and the aesthetic expression of Romantic poets like Coleridge and Wordsworth (147). But just as scholars of Romanticism have abandoned the idea that the period was always antitheatrical, historians of the sublime have now rejected this singular narrative, preferring diverse formulations of the sublime unique to different cultural contexts and attentive to historical developments.[23] The theatrical sublime has, for instance, recently become central to histories of French neoclassical theatre.[24] Neoclassical theatre has gained a reputation—perhaps unfairly—for a rigid formalism based on classical rules from literary models analyzed by ancient theorists like Plato, Aristotle, and Horace. Successfully following the rules means the

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[22] See, for example, Lisa Plummer Crafton *Transgressive Theatricality: Romanticism and Mary Wollstonecraft*; David Worrall *The Politics of Romantic Theatricality*, 1787–1832; Judith Pascoe *Romantic Theatricality: Gender, Poetry, and Spectatorship*; Catherine Burroughs *Closet Stages: Joanna Baillie and the Theater Theory of British Romantic Women Writers*; and Julie Carlson *In the Theatre of Romanticism: Coleridge, Nationalism, Women*.

[23] See James Porter *The Sublime in Antiquity*. Porter argues that Longinus is merely an inheritor (albeit a particularly compelling one) of a long tradition of the sublime that begins with Homeric epics, a tradition riddled with disagreement that does not follow a particular historical trajectory. This tradition was never lost with Longinus (the narrative of whose miraculous rediscovery is already overstated), and ideas about or approaches to the sublime could be available without him. For the sublime without Longinus as well as the somewhat chaotic history of his reception, see Stephen Jaeger, editor, *Magnificence and the Sublime in Medieval Aesthetics: Art, Architecture, Literature, Music*; Éva Madeleine Martin "The 'Prehistory' of the Sublime in Early Modern France *An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, in *The Sublime from Antiquity to the Present*; Caroline A. Van Eck et al, editor, *Translations of the Sublime*.

[24] See, for example, Margaret McGowen "Racine, Menestrier and Sublime Effects"; Emma Gilby *Sublime Worlds: Early Modern French Literature*; Sophie Hache, *La Langue du ciel: le sublime en France au XVIIe siècle*; Nicolas Cronk, *The Classical Sublime: French Neoclassicism and the Language of* Literature; and Ann Delehanty *Literary Knowing in Neoclassical France: From Poetics to Aesthetics*.

achievement of a perfect and therefore beautiful representation of reality. And yet, merely following the rules did not guarantee an artwork's success. There were, it seemed, certain affective or aesthetic effects in art that the rules of representation could not capture. The sublime, argues Margaret McGowan—specifically a sublime that can be traced back to the authority of Longinus—becomes a way for theatre theorists to name and understand the affective dimensions of classical Greek drama and for practitioners "to transport [these effects] into seventeenth-century France" (8). Crucially, debates about the theatrical sublime were not limited to just affect but the moral sincerity of the theatre's effects in ways that prefigure the later, more scientific assumptions and questions about emotions and performance.

This neoclassical theatrical sublime remains understudied by historians of emotions who see only the Romantic sublime as relevant. William Reddy (whose influential theory of the emotive I will discuss below), for example, understands the Romantic sublime as playing a crucial role in what he describes as a shift in "emotional regimes" from sentimentalism to romanticism toward the end of the long eighteenth-century, or the "normative order for emotions" that shapes the meaning of emotional expressions by establishing rules of decorum and tools of management (*The Navigation* 124).[25] Grounded in the moral sense theories of

[25] Reddy's notion of emotional regimes is foundational for scholars working on this history of emotions. Critics, however, find fault with Reddy for attempting to universalize the idea that history can be understood as the rational unfolding of conflicts and contradictions within different emotional regimes, as individuals seek to finetune the balance between maximizing emotional liberty while maintaining an adequate level of propriety for the smooth functioning of society. Such critics have accused Reddy of writing a story of historical progress that culminates with the ideal, present-day Western liberal subject, and while his theory of emotional regimes appears to work for transformations that occurred in and around Western Europe before and after the French Revolution (which result in just such a subject), it is difficult to see how one might apply it elsewhere. Barbara Rosenwein proposes replacing the notion of an emotional regime with the far more flexible and significantly less determined and hierarchical concept of "emotional communities": "groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value," which "may exist […] contemporaneously, and [which] may change over time" (2). For more on this critique of Reddy see Jan Plamper *The History of Emotions*, Rob Boddice *The History of Emotions*, and Barbara Rosenwein's *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*. I have kept with Reddy's notion of an emotional regime here specifically because his approach (which relies on the traditional categories of sentimentalism and romanticism) remains useful for emphasizing the more general way emotions were understood during the long eighteenth century.

Shaftesbury and Hutcheson and related to the rise of the sentimental novel, sentimentalism names how certain emotional expressions—specifically "hyperbolic emotional outpourings" such as "trembling, sighs, falling to one's knees, [and] endlessly repeating claims of extreme feelings" as "the sure exterior signs of inner feeling" and therefore windows into the inner moral self (Reddy *The Navigation* 162). In Reddy's view, the Romantic regime arose in opposition to sentimentalism and gained popularity in response to the terror of the French Revolution as many began to distrust emotional excess as representative of the inner moral goodness of the individual. The problem of hypocrisy—from *hypokritēs*, the Greek word for an actor—becomes, according to Reddy, more pressing as concern grows over the possibility that individuals can successfully mask vice with contrived virtue. The romantic regime replaced the spectacle of moral, emotional performance with a far more introspective management regime, one that linked the aesthetics of the sublime to an ineffable and irrational interiority where the inexpressibility of emotion becomes the guarantee of its truth. This romantic regime, Reddy claims, carries through to today in the "common sense" view of Western emotions, "a constitutive feature of the Western conception of self," where "[e]motions are said to be involuntary because of their sublime origin, emanating from a core of authenticity that is not available to consciousness" (*The Navigation* 316). In the sentimental regime, emotions are understood as clear, conscious, and moral expressions by an individual agent; in the romantic regime, they are involuntary, only partially accessible (and then only subjectively or by a trained specialist), and yet truthful markers of that individual precisely because they originate from somewhere beyond a potentially deceptive conscious agency. The differences between these two regimes underpin the Irving-Coquelin debate about Diderot's sublime actor. As I suggested previously, this was a morally charged debate over the hypocrisy of the actor who feigns emotional expressions; the solutions

offered by each reflect not only national (French versus British) and aesthetic (neoclassical versus romantic) differences but the assumptions about emotions (rational versus irrational) implicit in these two regimes.

The Poetics of Emotions

Given how easily one can align and oppose the sharp distinctions between Irving and Coquelin/Diderot, most commentators have overlooked an underlying unity between the two approaches: that the expression of feeling is bound up with the quality of one's moral character. While Diderot, Coquelin and Irving might disagree on how emotions create moral character, they are all committed to the idea that they do so. Inspired by Aristotle's *Poetics*, I call this agreement—that the representations of emotions flip into representations of moral agency—the *poetics of emotions*. As I have briefly demonstrated, despite attempts to make the study of emotions an empirical science, this philosophical or metaphysical agreement about the poetics of emotions remains central to emotions research.

For Aristotle, poets are makers. What they make are representations. Rather than make the static representations of sculptors or painters, poets—specifically tragic poets—make the representation of action by stringing together events through time in the form of stories. The poetics of emotions transfers this structure from tragedy to feeling. The very word emotion—from the Latin *emoveo*—means *to move outwards* already invites this comparison; the word suggests the body as a kind of stage on which emotions move. The way many cognitive scientists now understand emotions suggests that this image may be more than a mere metaphor. Emotions, it turns out, are caught up in the same kind of universalizing logic of representation that Aristotle uses to define the poet. Many have increasingly become suspicious of what has

been called the "classical" or "fingerprint" hypothesis of emotions—the idea that "different emotion categories have distinct, diagnostic fingerprints" in the neurological body (Siegal et al. 344).[26] Bodily states are, they argue, always unique. Rephrased in the language of Aristotle, bodily states are particular and historical. What, for Aristotle, distinguishes the poet from an historian, who also tells stories (from the Greek *istoria*; historian etymologically means storyteller) is that the historian records "what has happened" (*genomena*) whereas the poet describes the kind of thing that "is likely to happen" or what ought to happen (*genoito*) (Aristotle, *Poetics* 32; 1451a–b, emphasis added).[27] This modal distinction (expressed in Greek with the optative mood) helps explain what Aristotle means when he distinguishes fictional or moral characters (*ēthos*) from historical people, a distinction he illustrates using the example of Alcibiades. An historian might tell us what "Alcibiades did or what happened to him," whereas the poet presents the character Alcibiades as a hypothetical, limited only by what an Alcibiades "kind of person is likely to do or say [...] according to probability and necessity" (Aristotle, *Poetics* 33; 1451b). Representation universalizes the particular and historical Alcibiades into an example of the kind of thing an Alcibiades character might regularly or will do given similar circumstances.

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[26] The fingerprint hypothesis is a rephrasing of BET popularized by Silvan Tomkins and Paul Ekman has antecedents throughout ancient and modern philosophy, it found its earliest scientific expression in the work of Darwin and Duchenne. For early critiques of this paradigm see my comments below about the social or cultural constructionist and the Behaviour Ecological View (BEcV) of emotions. More recently, Lisa Feldman Barrett and James A. Russell have spearheaded a psychological "theory of constructed emotion" or "the population hypothesis," which understands emotions as "conceptual categories constructed as 'populations' of highly variable, situated instances" (Siegal et al. 344). See, for example, L. F. Barrett and J. A. Russell (editors), *The Psychological Construction of Emotion*. A full review of the extensive scientific literature supporting this approach is beyond the scope of this dissertation. For fuller attempts to contextualize the philosophical, methodological, and empirical disagreements between these three paradigms see Ruth Leys *The Ascent of Affect: Genealogy and Critique* and Jan Plamper *A History of Emotion: An Introduction*.

[27] All translations of Aristotle are from Gerald Else's *Aristotle Poetics*. Additional translations consulted include those by Stephen Halliwell, Leon Golden, Malcolm Heath, and Anthony Kenny. I have chosen to follow Anthony Kenny in translating *ēthos* as moral character rather than just character because it better captures the sense of moral agency that Aristotle imbues with the word.

In Aristotle's view, this idea of moral character (*ēthos*) is, after plot (*mythos*), the second most important of his six main elements of tragedy. Aristotle locates moral character in the relationship between two other elements: thought or theme (*dianoia*), and speech or language (*lexis*). Events are ordered according to the plot, and characters give speeches in response to events, most of which occur offstage. These speeches reveal the thought behind a character's actions, and these thoughts create moral character. To explain this process, Aristotle introduces what Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet describe as the "rare term" *prohairesis*, which Aristotle uses to mean choice or an "action taking the form of a decision" (56). Moral character, claims Aristotle, "clearly reveals the bent of a man's moral choice (hence there is no [moral] character in that class of utterances in which there is nothing at all that the speaker is choosing or rejecting)" (*Poetics* 29; 1450b).[28] Evidence increasingly supports the idea that the identification and expression of emotion follows a similarly modal distinction. "[E]motions seem to be 'happening' to you," says Lisa Feldman Barrett—referring to the supposed passivity of the emotions, before then dismissing that passivity, and rethinking emotions through a possessive

[28] *Prohairesis* effectively disappears from classical philosophy until it is taken up again in a modified form as a central tenant of Epictetus's stoic philosophy in what some scholars suggest is an early theorization of the modern concept of the will. See for example, Michael Frede *A Free Will: Origins on the Notion in Ancient Thought*; Robert Dobbin "Προαίρεσις in Epictetus"; and Richard Sorabji "The Concept of the Will from Plato to Maximus the Confessor." In Epictetus, one finds a certain notion of the sublime actor already at work, as he makes use of the *theatrum mundi* metaphor to suggest individuals are actors who, while they may be locked into their roles, must do so from an objective and self-alienated distance: individuals must not be like "actors of tragedy [who] will identify with their masks, their high-heeled boots, and their long robe. Wake up, those are props representing your circumstances and situation" (Epictetus 72; 1.29.41). For an in-depth analysis of Epictetus's use of the *theatrum mundi* metaphor and its relationship to *prohairesis* see Robert Dobbin "The Sense of Self in Epictetus: Prohairesis and Prosopon." Epictetus also makes use of a common trope of the sublime to explain *prohairesis*—self-mastery in the face of the ocean's terror: "[W]henever I'm onboard a ship and gaze into the deep, or look around me and see nothing but ocean, 'm gripped by terror, imagining that if we wreck I will have to swallow all this sea. It doesn't occur to me that around three pints will about do me in. So is it the sea that terrifies me? No, it is my imagination" (Epictetus 2.16.22). Epictetus's works were popular throughout the eighteenth century; his philosophy also directly inspired Albert Ellis's rational emotive behaviour therapy, an early precursor to cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). See, for example, Albert Ellis "Cognitive Restructuring of the Disputing of Irrational Beliefs." For a broader history of stoicism's impact on and relationship to CBT, see Donald Robertson *The Philosophy of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT): Stoic Philosophy as Rational and Cognitive Psychotherapy*.

construction—"when in fact your brain is actively constructing the experience, held in check by the state of the world and your body":

> Suppose you're angry with your boss and lash out impulsively, slamming your fist on his desk and calling him an idiot. Where the classical view might attribute some blame to a hypothetical anger circuit, partially absolving you of responsibility, construction extends the notion of responsibility beyond the moment of harm. Your brain is predictive, not reactive […] You slam the desk because your brain predicted an instance of anger, using your concept of 'Anger,' and your past experience (whether direct, or from movies or books, etc.) includes an action of slamming the desk in a similar situation. (*How Emotions* 121, 154)

The affect—which can be measured by the body's stress levels, heart rate, neurological reactivity, and so on—becomes, in this view, only one aspect of the total situation, and it is the cognitive assessment of that situation alongside the judgment that you are the kind of person who ought to be angry that produces the emotion. The performance of anger—the slamming of the desk—follows a social script of what anger ought to look like. It is therefore not that your body has entered a measurable state of anger; it is rather that your learned cultural concept of anger in coordination with your bodily and your situation produces the idea that you ought to be angry so that is how you understand yourself and how your brain directs your body to behave.

The idea that representations of emotions necessarily flip into expressions of moral character can be readily observed in the basic structure in language—what Leonard Ferry calls "the grammar of emotions" (78). Language, he argues, is "riddled with expressions that suggest both the passivity of agents *before* and the limited nature of their control *over* their emotions":

> We speak of being "overcome" with anger, of lurching "unthinkingly" at another in rage, and of ranting "uncontrollably." Fear "strikes" us suddenly and we freeze. Despair "washes" over and "overwhelms" us. Lovers are said to have 'fallen' into the most happy of states. And when things go awry, they can be "drawn" toward jealousy […] However strange it may sound, such descriptions conceive of the emotions as external forces that act on or through us. They threaten to undermine rather than underwrite those parts of the self that we see as securing our moral identity, such as judgment, belief, and rationality. (78, original emphasis)

The grammatical "passivity of the passions" in descriptions such as these, claims Ferry, "is regularly regarded as a problem for trying to understand agent responsibility," especially in Western legal and political systems philosophically predisposed to treat the individual as an active and culpable agent (106). Similarly, James Averill describes "rules of attribution" as a general, defining feature of cross-cultural discourses on emotion and observes how these rules operate; emotions are at once socially and linguistically "explained or legitimized"; cultural conventions "tie together the appraised object [of emotion], the behaviour and the prognosis, and relate the entirety to the self" (108). Western ways of thinking and speaking about emotion, claims Averill, distinguish emotional acts from rational or deliberative ones, creating a situation in which

> a person cannot be held fully responsible for emotional responses because emotions are supposedly beyond personal control […] We are "gripped," "seized" and "torn" by emotions. Colloquialisms such as these do not describe intrinsic features of emotional

> responses. Rather, they are rule-governed interpretations of behaviour, reflections of our naïve and implicit theories of emotions. (108)[29]

These grammatical rules of attribution view emotions as verbs rather than nouns. They represent feelings as actions that often transform the feeling-person into a passive object. Cultural variations of these rules can also be linked to what the grammatical structure of emotion verbs makes possible. Consider, for example, the claim "I am angry." The English language bars the easy representation of an agent with intentional control of this emotion by making the idea of an angry self sayable only in the passive voice. The language, in other words, forces the representation of an angry self in a manner consistent with what Ferry and Averill observe is a culture that generally treats feelings of anger as a personal failure or character flaw. "I am angry" places me in a state of anger, figuring me as someone who became angry without grammatically crediting me with agency over that state. It rather suggests an emotional force that works through or on me; if *I* had agency, in other words, it would be exercised by reducing that anger. Unlike other emotions, where the active voice does describe a responsible agent (*I love you* versus *I am in love*), anger in the active voice never has the same kind of relationship to the subject. In both its transitive or intransitive version (*I anger* versus *I anger you*), the verb *anger* feels awkward on the tongue since in both cases the agent is never both the one feeling the emotion and the one responsible for creating it. In the former, the event happens outside the subject's control, whereas the latter example gives the subject control but only by making them the cause of emotion in another person.

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[29] See also Reddy "The involuntary character of emotions is the basis of their polyvalent quality, their mystery. From one vantage point, our emotions are that which we most deeply espouse as our own; yet at times they appear to be external forces that rob us of our capacity for reflection or action" ("Against Constructionism" 316)

One of the lasting legacies of classical Greece is a heightened cultural anxiety over intention, action, and how these two relate to culpability. The poetry and philosophy of classical Athens reflect the city's early experiments in democratic institutions, such as voting rights and a jury of one's peers and more unfamiliar systems, such as lottery elections and ostracism. Many of these democratic institutions today presuppose a free-willing, intentional individual who can be held responsible for their actions. But the Greeks did not necessarily share this notion of the self. While scholars tend to agree that Aristotle's concept of *prohairesis* played an essential role in the development of the idea of the free-willing Western subject, Aristotle was embedded in a different worldview altogether, one in which,

> [a]ction does not emanate from the agent as from its source; rather it envelops him and carries him away, swallowing him up in a power that must perforce be beyond him since it extends, both spatially and temporally, far beyond his own person. The agent is caught in the action. He is not its author; he remains included in it. Within such a framework there can clearly be no question of individual will. The distinction between what is intentional and what is enforced in the action of the subject does not even make sense. (Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 63)

This perspective tends to complicate issues of agent responsibility in ways that make a simple active/passive binary untenable. What kind of agency, for example, did Aeschylus have in mind when he wrote of Agamemnon that "he had slipped his neck through the strap of compulsion's yoke, and the wind of his purpose had veered about and blew impious, impure, unholy, from that moment he reversed his mind and turned to utter recklessness" (lines 218–21). The poetry of this passage does all it can to frustrate its description of Agamemnon's agency and responsibility. It presents the image of a man who has no choice but to abandon reasonable choice—an agent

simultaneously active, powerful, and in charge of what he does while also pushed around by the winds of compulsion and fate. Agamemnon is a split subject who is both not at fault but also determines his actions.

The fragility of the agent who must remain responsible for actions that feel beyond their control constitutes, as Martha Nussbaum points out, not only "the material of tragedy, but everyday facts of lived practical reason,"

> That I am an agent, but also a plant; that much that I did not make goes towards making me whatever I shall be praised or blamed for being; that I must constantly choose among competing and apparently incommensurable goods and the circumstances may force me to a position in which I cannot help being false to something or doing some wrong; that it is equally problematic to entrust one's good to friends, lovers, or country and to try to have a good life without them. (*Fragility of Goodness* 5)

Her subsequent work on the philosophy of emotions exemplifies how some contemporary approaches towards emotions synthesize this tragic subject through a grammar of possession. We cannot, argues Nussbaum, treat emotions like "gusts of wind" or "the currents of the sea" that "simply push the person around" because emotions are intentional—they are always about something—and that something "contain[s] an ineliminable reference to *me* […] to *my* scheme of goals and projects" and thus they are always "evaluations from *my* perspective" (*Upheavals of Thought* 25–6, 52, original emphasis). This use of the possessive complicates the traditional framing of emotional acts as either active or passive. Though emotions may express what might feel like a loss of control, they are always *mine* and therefore remain *my* responsibility.

But under this framework, what would it mean to say the anger is *mine*? One possible approach to answering this question follows from Reddy's investigation into some further

peculiar qualities associated with claims like "I am angry." In his essay, "Against Constructionism: The Historical Ethnography of Emotions," Reddy invokes this phrase to exemplify a problem with the cultural constructionist approach towards emotions. Proponents of this theory challenged the fingerprint approach to emotions by claiming that emotions are cultural practices rather than material states of the body. For Catherine Lutz—a leading figure of this theory—the task of the emotion researcher was not to uncover the biological or universal signature for a specific culturally influenced emotional expression but to participate in "the translation of emotions across cultures" (11). This project, however, is easier said than done, and a relativistic notion of emotions as cultural practices threatened to sweep the rug out from under emotion researchers. In this view, the very idea of emotion as a feeling becomes superfluous, a sort of subjective, ideological addendum to what ought to be the objective study of cultural signals. The elimination of emotion from the study of emotion may not be a problem for certain functionalist accounts of emotional behaviour—such as in the Behavioral Ecology View (BECV) developed by Alan Fridlund—where facial displays are treated as cultural signals rather than signs pointing to an empirically unverifiable inner feeling. If emotion does not name something empirical and material that can be pointed to in a lab, then, obviously, the empiricist lab worker will find abandoning it to be no significant loss. If anything, dropping the concept of an emotion frees emotion research from the word's Anglocentric baggage and Eurocentric worldview. And yet, as Anna Wierzbicka, points out, "[e]vidence suggests that all languages have a word for 'feel' (as in 'I felt something good/bad'), as well as for 60 or so other concepts" indicating that even though there may be no empirical or material object to point to, people tend to point anyway (379). The universality of this activity makes dismissing it tricky.

To explain the function of emotion language in the absence of emotional fingerprints, Reddy proposes the idea of an "emotive" as a new category of performative utterance or speech act whose "effect derives from the failure" of that performance rather than its success ("Against Constructionism" 331). In J. L. Austin's theory of speech acts, he distinguishes the constative utterance—which represents or reports something—and the performative utterance—which does something. The utterance "I am married," for example, describes the state of marriage whereas successfully uttering "I do" at the wedding creates the state of marriage. Judith Butler would later derive her notion of the performative subject from the latter. In her view, the subject is not a stable noun-thing that can be named by a constative utterance but is instead caught up in the creative and performative activity of the verb. The subject emerges out of a process of doing linked to the perpetual work of identifying and objectifying itself as it charts a course and weathers the flow of affective intensities. As Butler famously argues, the subject of performative acts requires

> a vocabulary that resists the substance metaphysics of subject-verb formations and relies instead on an ontology of present participles. The 'I' that is its body is, of necessity, a mode of embodying, and the 'what' that it embodies is possibilities. But here again the grammar of the formulation misleads, for the possibilities that are embodied are not fundamentally exterior or antecedent to the process of embodying itself. As an intentionally organized materiality, the body is always an embodying of possibilities both conditioned and circumscribed by historical convention. In other words, the body is a historical situation, as Beauvoir has claimed, and is a manner of doing, dramatizing, and reproducing a historical situation.

For Reddy, the emotive takes on aspects of both the constative and the performative in a manner that produces an equally dynamic subject. Emotives look like constatives insofar as they try to represent some inner state, but they act like performatives because by representing the state they name, they alter it. "If asked the question 'Do you feel angry?'" observes Reddy, in his discussion of therapeutic techniques, "a person may genuinely feel *more* angry by answering yes, *less* angry in answering no […] Many other effects are possible, including the opposite: expressing a feeling can easily result in its dissipation" ("Against Constructionism" 331, original emphasis). This process occurs because "the very failure of representation"—a failure that always happens because the very naming of an emotion involves imposing a culturally informed universality onto the radical particularity of an individual's body state—"is recognized and brings an emotional response itself" (Reddy "Against Constructionism" 332). The perpetual failure of the emotive to adequately represent the particularity of the embodied state, continues Reddy, constitutes "our activity as a person"—an activity whose focus shifts to producing material effects rather than accurate representations ("Against Constructionism" 332).

Emotives, in short, function dynamically. While they fail to fully represent the body, that representation may still succeed in steering the body's affective energies or intensities in what are often predictable ways. While we might not control our emotional winds, the emotive suggests a practice by which we can angle our sails. Interpreted as a form of labour, the emotive transforms the new affective directions of the body into a product. And once this new affective momentum becomes figured as the product of my labour, that emotion can be reframed as *mine*. This activity is central to Barrett's example of anger cited above. There, she shifts from the passive *you* to the possessive *your* when she suggests that while emotions seem to be happening to *you*, it is rather that *your* body and *your* brain are actively engaging in a cognitive process of

universalizing your particular situation and drawing on social scripts to guide your performance and predict its outcome. For Barrett, furthermore, the slide from passive to possessive unlocks "a whole new way of thinking about personal responsibility"—a whole new way that unsurprisingly aligns with the traditional liberal ideological self given that she invokes the genre of self-help literature in her attempts to popularize her academic work with general audiences (*How Emotions* 154).[30]

One of the more important themes of this dissertation is to consider how this idea of self-possession—the idea of an emotion being *mine*—takes on enormous significance in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, during the rise of what C. B. MacPherson describes as the ideology of "possessive individualism" or the idea that

> The individual was seen neither as a moral whole, nor as part of a larger social whole, but as an owner of himself. The relation of ownership, having become for more and more men the critically important relation determining their actual freedom and actual prospect of realizing their full potentialities, was read back into the nature of the individual. The individual, it was thought, is free inasmuch as he is proprietor of his person and capacities. The human essence is freedom from dependence on the wills of others, and freedom is a function of possession. (3)

While MacPherson traces this ideology's philosophical origins to the political theory of John Locke, it found its clearest expression in the philosophical work of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who argues that my "body" is the first object that I own and ownership of that body becomes the "first embodiment of freedom" for my will (43; P47). For Hegel, prior to that

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[30] I have chosen to cite Barrett's general audience book *How Emotions Are Made* specifically to note the close relationship between this view of emotions and the self-help genre. See also Lisa Feldman Barrett *Seven and a Half Lessons about the Brain*. At time of writing, Barrett's TED talk "You aren't at the mercy of your emotions—your brain creates them" has 1.9 million views on YouTube and over 7 million views on the TED.com website.

ownership, the "I" exists only abstractly, grammatically, and immaterially. But by being made "an object to myself in what I possess" I am "thereby" concretized into "an actual will"—a material, moral entity (42; P45). *I* become what *I* am by owning *myself*. The discourse of emotions continues to provide a path by which those claims of ownership can be made.[31]

Setting the Scene of Inquiry

The *and* of this dissertation's title signals how two major concepts I have introduced here—*the sublime actor* and *the poetics of emotions*—mutually clarify each other. Just as the poetics of emotions works as a method to make the lasting impact of the sublime actor on emotional capitalism visible, so too does outlining the history of that sublime actor demonstrate the usefulness of the poetics of emotions as a tool for historical and social analysis. At the same time, however, while the relationship between these two terms helps illuminate each, it does not exhaust either. This limitation is especially true for the poetics of emotions, which more than likely will require multiple studies to detail and explore all of its possibilities and ramifications. To make obvious how the slow development of emotional capitalism relates to the commercialization of the theatre and the ideological figure of the sublime actor, I have decided to cast a wide net. This dissertation subsequently ties together several theoretical discussions about aesthetics, emotions, and performance by cutting across three major historical periods (Ancient Greece, Neoclassical France, and the British eighteenth century) spread over two thousand years and analyzing literature written in three different languages. Given the scope of

[31] Today, antiracist, postcolonial and indigenous theorists such as Aileen Moreton-Robinson recast the ideology of possessive individualism as "white possessiveness," describing how its framework for conceiving of the individual "became embedded in everyday discourse," noting this framework's spread across the globe as colonial practices re-organized global populations into social relations determined by capitalist economics of ownership and production (49).

the material under examination, major paradigm shifts in the construction of the self should be expected. Consequently, the aim of each chapter is not to argue for changes but to analyze and contour the details of those changes. To reduce the scope of this dissertation's archive, the following chapters focus on the specific intertextual history of a single play: Euripides's *Hippolytus* (428 B.C.E.). The afterlife of this play remains a popular subject for comparative studies focused on both mythology and theatre. As one of the most often adapted stories of antiquity, many scholars find it "especially appropriate for negotiating the question of how transformations have been brought about in Western cultural history" under the premise that authors, performers, and audiences from different historical periods and geographical or national places adapt the play to suit their own needs and ideological assumptions (Rippl 167). The illicit love triangle between Phaedra, her husband Theseus, and her stepson Hippolytus tends to focus these studies on the construction of emotions such as desire, love, and sexuality. Malgorzata Budzowska, for instance, has recently documented how the three most well-known historical examples of the Phaedra myth: Euripides's *Hippolytus*, Seneca's *Phaedra*, and Racine's *Phèdre* each reflect historical variations in ethical approaches to emotions and their expressions. The Phaedra myth and its intertextual history, in other words, offer what is generally accepted as a set of texts capable of holding up the kind of historical analysis this dissertation engages in as well as the argument that it makes.

Over two thousand years of a single play's history is, however, still too much material for one dissertation. To further narrow my focus, I concentrate on the intertextual significance of one scene from Euripides's *Hippolytus*, when a distraught Phaedra enters the stage, and her worried Nurse inquires about her suffering; she sees her ward emoting and asks her "what's wrong?" I call this the *scene of inquiry*. As a formal literary and dramatic device, this scene opens a space

on stage for the theatrical performance of a poetics of emotions, and the argument of this dissertation progresses by examining how this scene is re-written and re-performed in different places and at different times to effect different kinds of theatrical sublimes and express different kinds of agency through the representation of emotion.

My analysis of this dramatic form contributes to ongoing theoretical conversations about how developments in narrative techniques have influenced the construction of the subject as an individual with a deep interiority. The relationship between performance, ritual, and drama found in scenes of inquiry, I argue, enables a more nuanced perspective when analyzing these changes to the everyday construction and performance of self than those that have since Ian Watt linked the depth of this subject to narrative forms engendered by the rise of the novel. While the limitations of Watt's thesis have been frequently and successfully articulated such that criticizing Watt will no longer occasion many remarks, I mention it because of how Watt's work figures Illouz's suggestion that emotional capitalism is dependent on what she calls the "ideology of literacy," an ideology that she claims generates a sense of finality or closure and creates the idea of a "pure text" that can be separated from its author and its context (142). Literacy and literary techniques, she argues, "gives rise to the idea of 'pure emotion,' the idea that emotions are definite discrete entities [or concepts], somehow locked and trapped inside the self, that can be manipulated and changed by a work or appropriation" (142). "The medium of literacy," she continues,

> which is abundantly advocated by popular therapeutic discourse, puts into motion a process of objectifying emotions. In this process, emotions are externalized in the sense that they become separate from the subjectivity of the speaker, with the aim of taking control and transforming them. Literacy thus allows an emotion to become an object for

> the purpose of facilitating interpersonal transactions […] 'Exercises' [that involve this process] organize and transform emotional life by 'locking' emotions into the medium of writing, in the sense of creating a distance between the experience of the emotions and the person's awareness of the emotion. (141)

For Illouz, the emotional control produced by this emotional literacy helps facilitate the social arrangements of emotional capitalism in two distinct ways. On the one hand, using literary techniques to narrate one's emotions produces a distancing and possible cooling effect on that emotion. On the other hand, narrating another's emotions increases one's capacity to understand and empathize with them. Empathy, in this case, functions therapeutically and can contribute to emotional control since one now acts to understand another's disruptive emotional behaviour rather than acting to escalate it.

But the hard distinction between literacy and illiteracy that underpins this thesis and Illouz's use of it to define emotional objectivity has been, if not abandoned, at least softened. This thesis, first proposed by Watt and Jack Goody in 1963, argues that the introduction of literacy (via the technology of the Greek alphabet) and the expansion of literacy (via the printing press and the popularity of the novel) profoundly reshaped the way individuals constituted themselves. At its most extreme, the literacy thesis proposes an absolute or metaphysical difference in self-identity between literate and non-literate thought—one can use the literacy thesis to promote offensive, untenable, and highly Eurocentric view that those without literacy constitute an entirely different and presumably lesser type of people. While the scene of inquiry is a literary device insofar as I analyze it as dramatic form, it is also closely allied to social rituals and everyday performances such that the difference between literate and nonliterate humans becomes inessential. Rather than an origin made possible by literacy, the scene of inquiry can be

understood as a record of already present rituals and performances enacted on stage.[32] While I focus on the scene of inquiry as it is recorded by European drama, my view of it as a practice recorded by literature rather than an effect of literacy refuses the racist implications of metaphysical difference. Other peoples and cultures can and do have different poetics of emotions enacted by different inquiry rituals.[33]

To fully detail the historical importance of this literary and dramatic form would require a study with a different focus. As with the *poetics of emotions* and the *sublime actor*, I introduce the concept of the *scene of inquiry* not to exhaust its history and its possibilities, but to help establish and clarify the other key terms that constitute this dissertation's investigation. My analysis of this form might contribute to a future study on the scene of inquiry by linking the development of this form to the construction of the individual in conjunction with the history of the novel. It is, in other words, a literary and dramatic form that, while sometimes present in historical works like the iterations of the Phaedra myth studied here, does not really establish itself as a common trope until much later. The scene of inquiry, for instance, seems to me to be an important if not indispensable formal device for the development of what Ien Ang describes as "emotional realism"—where "what is recognized as real" in a literary text or dramatic performance "is not knowledge of the world, but a subjective experience of the world: a

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[32] In Europe, the scene of inquiry predates the Christian confessional, a ritual that Michel Foucault claims became "one of the West's most highly valued techniques for producing truth" (59). Confession, in Foucault's formulation, operates as a disciplinary technology of the self, one that constitutes both an epistemological and a moral act as it creates the inner life it purports to investigate or explain. For Foucault, ritual and practice precede the literature and artistic representation, expressions which mirror rather than produce the social performance: "we have passed from a pleasure to be recounted and heard, centring on the heroic or marvelous narration of 'trials' of bravery or sainthood, to a literature ordered according to the infinite task of extracting from the depths of oneself, in between the words, a truth which the very form of the confession holds out like a shimmering mirage" (59).

[33] Geoffrey White, for example, describes what he calls the ritual of "disentangling" as an important part of the daily practices for the people of Santa Isabel, one of the five largest of the Solomon Islands (53). Disentangling involves community intervention into emotional conflicts whereby "emotions can be 'talked out' and made public" through a "narrative mode of reporting" with the idea that this process will make the bad feelings—believed to be the "cause [of] illness and misfortune for the self and others"— "lose their potential for causing harm" (53).

'structure of feeling' (45). While Ang identifies this aesthetic in her analysis of *Dallas* and its audience reception, it has since been understood as a crucial aesthetic for modern serialized dramas, soap operas, and sitcoms—all genres where the scene of inquiry is much more prevalent.

My first chapter reads Euripides's *Hippolytus* to theorize the relationship between a poetics of emotions and scenes of inquiry by mapping what kinds of characters the scene makes possible. Traditionally, classicists interpret the play's depiction of Phaedra as either a passive agent, overwhelmed by her feelings, or as a manipulator, as someone who actively represents herself as passive, to garner undeserved sympathy from her audience. By treating both options as possible, this chapter analyzes how the play embeds into the ritual of inquiry the problem of the actor who fakes their emotional passivity by moving that ritual onto the stage. The chapter concludes by speculating about a third possibility of character, one rooted in the religious function of tragedy in ancient Greece and the putatively divine power of the Greek mask to summon the spiritual ancestor or deity to the stage. The presence of the mask solves the problem of the false actor by enabling spectators to imagine the truth of the character's pretenses—that Phaedra's spirit continues to be plagued by the shame and guilt of her feelings and actions. The effect produced on an audience primed to believe in the power of this purely theatrical character, I argue, offers an early precursor to what I describe as the theatrical sublime.

My second chapter introduces my discussion of Hertz's theory of the sublime turn with a reading of Longinus's *Peri hypsous* or *On Sublimity*. Since Hertz, many critics have faulted Longinus for creating an unethical rhetoric of masculine self-mastery and textual appropriation. This chapter responds to these critiques by contrasting the inconsistent way Longinus treats the sublime in Sappho and Plato: the former, a seemingly vulnerable feminine poet who reveals her self-possession through poetic descriptions of emotional passivity; the latter, a masculine and

self-possessed philosopher whose passivity and powerlessness is exposed by his poetic mistakes. The chapter resolves some of these inconsistencies by considering contextual evidence from late antiquity, a period during which Plato was criticized for his poor writing and Sappho's example was referenced by medical practitioners to describe the symptoms of a queer lovesickness in need of treatment. Longinus's otherwise inconsistent approach appears to defend both authors from these abuses in a manner that suggests ethical considerations may be the guiding principle behind at least some of Longinus's examples. The chapter concludes by linking the ethics of the sublime with the theatrical character of Athenian tragedy. Longinus is generally seen as an antitheatrical writer insofar as he dismisses the superficiality of the theatre by juxtaposing the shallowness of the theatrical spectacle with the true depth of character revealed by the rhetoric he identifies as sublime. By once again looking to context, the chapter deconstructs this opposition: Longinus pens his treatise during a period when Athenian tragedy had become divorced from its original, ritualistic performance conditions. A fifth-century B.C.E. Athenian play that celebrates the religion and ancestors of that specific city, one that keeps the spirits of those ancestors and deities alive through the divine presence of sacred mask, will have a significantly different meaning when performed as a classical text spread through imperial conquest in Alexandria during the first century C.E.—the most likely time and place of Longinus's composition. Longinus does not then just dismiss the theatre; he replaces it. His sublime poet substitutes for the theatrical character of the Athenian theatre. His sublime rhetoric takes the place of the divine mask in its ability to reveal that character.

In chapter three, I examine how the sublime returns to the theatre during the French Neoclassical period by analyzing how Racine borrows from Longinian notions of the sublime when he alludes to Sappho's "fragment 31"—whose only source was Longinus's text—to

rewrite *Hippolytus*'s scene of inquiry in his adaptation *Phèdre*. As previously mentioned, the sublime was reintroduced into the discourses of this period to account for the affective properties of art and to help guide artists in reproducing the affective power of classical works. The chapter examines how the different conditions of the theatre during this period made this goal impossible. In the much more commercial Parisian theatre, where playwrights, performers, and their cabals competed in front of the public not just for accolades but oftentimes for their livelihoods, theatrical character becomes expressive of celebrity and politics rather than religious and ritualistic spirituality. Racine's use of the sublime exhibits this difference. I subsequently read the sublime in *Phèdre*'s scene of inquiry metatheatrically, as deeply intertwined with public knowledge about the fracturing relationship between the sublime poet Racine and the sublime actress Marie Champmeslé. It is in this chapter where we first see the impact of emotional capitalism via the development of the commercial theatre as Racine, I argue, uses the rhetoric of *Phèdre*'s speech to retroactively claim ownership over the emotional effects produced by and in the theatre, although, as I demonstrate, it is unclear whether this sublime turn works without Champmeslé's labour and emotional capital.

With Chapter Four, I move across the English Channel to query why Adam Smith claims that Racine's *Phèdre* is "the finest tragedy, perhaps, that is extant in any language" (123). The chapter answers this question by observing how *Phèdre*'s scene of inquiry helps both identify and resolve the problem of theatricality in Smith's theory of sympathy. It is from Smith that I have taken the name *scene of inquiry* as he places the "curiosity to inquire" into the situation of the emotional other at the center of his theory of sympathy (11; I.i.1.9). Theatricality becomes a problem because the spectator who inquires into the situation of the other might be moved to sympathize with a false performance. While critics of Smith have traditionally sought to

overcome the problem of theatricality by centring Smith's theory on the production of narrative rather than the performance of emotions, I suggest that this solution might be inadequate, since Smith aligns narrative with curiosity, a feeling that can sometimes prevent sympathetic feelings: instead of sympathizing with someone's painful feelings, the spectator becomes curious about why they feel that way or what they intend to do about it. I instead examine the kinds of legitimate actors that Smith's theory produces. A version of the sublime actor emerges from Smith's approach as someone who assumes a masculine and stoic sensibility; he suffers but pretends otherwise. Unlike the actor who overshares or falsely emotes to garner unjustified sympathy, the sublime actor's falsity reveals the truth of an admirable character who spares the spectator from an overwrought situation. If theatricality presents a danger to our ability to sympathize with the social actor, theatre offers a cure. I identify how the theatre enables the possibility for a beautiful actor, one whose seductive power of faking emotion is tempered by the conditions of the theatre, where spectators can know the truth of the performance and the narrative of the play ahead of time and so can focus on sympathizing with the performance without being distracted by curiosity or suspicion.

Curiosity and suspicion become central themes for my fifth chapter on Joanna Baillie's *De Monfort*, where I examine how she revises Smith's view of sympathy into her theory of sympathetic curiosity and rewrites *Phèdre*'s scene of inquiry by centring it on a hateful, angry, and suspicious man rather than a licentious and distraught woman. Baillie's work combines neoclassical theatre theory with the romantic scientific advances associated with the work of her uncles and her brother to develop a view of the passions that treats emotions as actions that when represented on stage plot character. She is, in other words, a theorist deeply invested in not just understanding but enacting on stage a poetics of emotions. Baillie's play attempts to generate

sympathy for the angry man De Monfort by portraying his hatred as pathological, as a disease of the nervous system that acts upon De Monfort's perception. For the hateful De Monfort, the social world is a hostile and violent place. The tragedy of the play, however, is that hatred transforms De Monfort into the agent who perpetuates that hostility and violence. Despite Baillie being now often considered the premiere dramatist of the romantic period, *De Monfort*—widely regarded as her greatest play—failed in the theatre. The chapter introduces the idea that politics structures the moral framework of emotions by arguing that the play failed because it violated the more common and retributive view of poetical justice in its attempt to cultivate sympathy for De Monfort the murderer.

My sixth chapter contrasts the actions of De Monfort with those of his sister Jane (played by the sublime actress Sarah Siddons opposite her real-life brother John Kemble), who tried to teach him to control and master his hatred. Not only was the role of Jane written for Siddons, but the great actress also appears to have continued to privately perform and celebrate the part well after the play closed at the theatre. The chapter explores the relationship between the therapeutic techniques that Jane teaches De Monfort, Siddons's approach to the creation and performance of character, and Siddons's strategies for crafting her own commercial self-image to become the epitome of an eighteenth-century celebrity. Both Siddons and Jane are preoccupied with trying to identify, perform, and teach a new universalizable nobility, a sublime of self-command and public persona that cuts across class and gender divides. While Siddons scholars have identified how she crafted her celebrity on her image as a mother, one who made sacrifices to advance her career and support her children, this chapter refocuses these analyses on the figure of Siddons as a worker to establish how much she can be considered the author of Irving's view of her as the hard-working, sublime actor.

In her analysis of this kind of self-production under emotional capitalism, Illouz argues against the tradition of critique that labels the focus on self-control in the modern corporate workplace as expressive of a "typically male attribute, one that discriminates against women in making their emotional style seem hysterical and hence unprofessional" (77). This final chapter on Siddons concludes by returning to how Irving unsexes Siddons as he figures her a sublime actor to think about how Siddons's legacy preempts the anxieties about masculinity in what Illouz argues was an increasingly feminized workplace culture of emotional capitalism. No longer a sister or a mother, Siddons becomes for Irving a silent statue transformed into a model of emotional self-control specifically to be emulated by young men entering their careers. Hard work then becomes not just what legitimizes the performance of otherwise false emotions in the workplace, but also what enables the sublime actor to maintain a masculine subject position despite the increasingly feminized performance of self required of him.

For Illouz, the subject of emotional capitalism can be understood as a strange "alliance" or "hybrid cultural system" between two seemingly disparate models of moral character: the masculine self-help model of linear progress and virtuous industry proposed by Samuel Smiles in 1859 and the feminine model of psychotherapy developed some sixty years later by Freud, one that interpreted the subject as passive, as someone possessed by "childhood trauma, patterns of self-defeating behaviour, and unconscious conflicts" (155). Whereas Illouz sees the dominance of this system emerging out of a process by which the neurotic Freudian subject was modified in popular culture by the American "idea of the perfectibility of the self," I suggest an alternative possibility, one structurally dependent on a discourse of the sublime that had developed alongside the pressure to understand the performance of emotion in an increasingly commercial theatre (155). The sublime is the ideological figure that merges the active and the passive

through a self-reflexive and self-possessive emotional performance, one that embraces and legitimizes the feminine and the theatrical by combining it with the masculine coded honesty of difficult labour.

Chapter 1

Characterizing Phaedra: Euripides's *Hippolytus* and the Scene of Inquiry

We do not arrive at the theatre thinking that we will see the actual Ximene and Rodrigo. We do not bring the expectations of one who, having allowed himself to be persuaded by a magician that he will be made to see a ghost, enters into the cave where the phantom is supposed to appear. This expectation may prepare him well for the illusion, but we bring nothing of the sort to the theatre. The playbill promised us only an imitation, or copies of Ximene and Phaedre.
—Jean Baptiste Dubos *Critical Reflections on Poetry and Painting*, 315

A theory of ghosts might in itself make a good theory of drama.
—Michael Goldman, *The Actor's Freedom*, 28

For since the departure
Of the masks
The land
Has almost
Forgotten
To chant its ancient songs
Ceased to reconnect
The land of Spirits.
—Ben Okri "Lament of the Images," 9

What's Wrong with Phaedra?

In Euripides's *Hippolytus,* Phaedra is carried on stage, acting strangely, crying in pain, and speaking what her onlookers perceive as nonsense. "Child, what's wrong" inquires the Nurse (line 377).[34] Phaedra won't say. The Nurse continues to question her, pleading with her ward to share what ails her. When she mentions the name of Phaedra's stepson Hippolytus, it strikes a nerve. This reaction leads to a confession. Phaedra is secretly, madly in love with him. In a long speech, she describes these feelings and how they explain her actions: when she realized she had

[34] All translations of this play are from Anne Carson's *Grief Lessons: Four Plays by Euripides*. In addition to the original Greek, other translations consulted include Michael Halleran's *Euripides: Hippolytus* and David Kovacs's *Euripides: Children of Heracles; Hippolytus; Andromache; Hecuba*. Since Carson's version takes liberties with the Greek lines, standard line notations will be included in the footnotes; line 340.

fallen in love with Hippolytus she resolved to suppress it and never to speak of it lest she and her children suffer shame in perpetuity. As that desire continued to grow, however, it left her only one choice: suicide. As David Kovacs puts it, Phaedra takes to the stage, explaining that "she intends to do right and how and why" (291). Each step in the speech exhibits Phaedra's *ēthos* or moral character. But exactly what that character means continues to be debated. It is, in fact, one of the play's most contested moments. For well over a century, scholars have not only questioned the kind of character represented by Phaedra's speech but also whether the speech even ought to be analyzed in terms of character in the first place. Unlike most of the debate's participants, I am not interested in trying to settle what Euripides intended by this play or how ancient Athenians interpreted it. Though I claim that my readings are both possible and plausible, I do so only as a prompt to examine the formal means by which this scene of inquiry might contribute to different conceptions of character. I argue specifically for three kinds of character: *narrative*, *pragmatic*, and *theatrical character*. The aim of distinguishing these three types is not to show how they work together to produce a single, authoritative reading of the play. On the contrary, I seek to demonstrate how reading the play by juxtaposing different models of character leads to conflicting interpretations not just about the scene's thematic content but also even basic plot elements.

To scholars of classical literature, character analysis might seem extremely old-fashioned. The major debates about the relative importance of character took place in anglophone classics departments during the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s. As Bernd Seidensticker observes, these debates ended when a "*communis opinio* was reached according to which character and characterization were seen as of little, if any, importance for Greek tragedy" (333).[35] From the

[35] One could speculate that the influence of modern language studies influenced this consensus. At the same time, classicists appear to have put up stiffer resistance to modern theoretical approaches to textual interpretation in part

perspective of someone working in modern literatures, what is so striking is how long it took for classicists to arrive at this consensus. As Toril Moi points out, for nearly a century, the entire discipline of modern language literary studies organized itself against character analysis by invoking the taboo that one ought to not treat characters as though they were real, an injunction she sources to L. C. Knight's famous 1933 essay *How Many Children had Lady Macbeth*.[36] Since then, critics and teachers have become overly fond of cautioning others against treating characters as if real to block the analysis of the effects that characters produce, yet, asks Moi, who is actually confusing characters with real people?—"[e]ven little children know that the characters of fairy tales and myths and cartoons don't exist," so "[w]hat problems are these constant reminders [to not treat characters as if they were real] supposed to solve?" (Moi 29). Her answer: it turns out they have "far more to do with a specific aesthetic and professional agenda than with philosophical arguments" about what literature is (Moi 29). Knight had insisted that Shakespeare's dramas were best understood when read as poems rather than plays, and this bracketing of the theatrical helped Knight limit professional literary criticism to formalism alone. The historicist critique of formalism, however, has opened the door for a return to more aesthetic or affective approaches to literary analysis, ones which had been previously banished by modernists and formalists like Knight for being not just too subjective but also too amateurish,

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because they were interested in how ancient peoples approached literature. For a review of the character debate pre-1970, see Charles Garton "Characterisation in Greek Tragedy" and "The 'Chameleon Trail' in the Criticism of Greek Tragedy." Garton locates the origin of anti-character approaches in Greek tragedy to the early twentieth-century German scholar Tycho Ulrich Von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, who had argued that the primary factor influencing the psychology of Sophocles' characters was the demands of their tragic situations. The post-1970s discussions on character culminated in an Oxford colloquium on 20 March 1987, which led to an edited volume titled *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature*. Though many in the volume advocated for the importance of character—including the editor Christopher Pelling, who wrote in the "Conclusion" that "[c]haracterization cannot simply be detached from the works as a whole: theme and characterization perpetually interact, and character is only one part of the 'total image of human existence' that a literary work presents"—Seidensticker's point is that the anti-character position seems to have become the more popular one with classicists (261).

[36] See Knight 37; see also Moi, 34–5.

too feminine, or even too queer. As part of a return to aesthetic and affective analysis, many scholars have sought to recenter the importance of character and characterization.[37] As I demonstrate in the ensuing chapter, reviving the debate about Greek tragic character brings valuable insights to the now urgent question of character's significance to the construction of emotions, to the cognitive basis of human intelligibility, and to the ethical treatment of others.[38]

Classical Debates; Classical Characters

The combination of appeals to Aristotle's authority and formalist theory collectively supports the position that character did not matter for Greek tragedy, but, as Seidensticker observes, though this conclusion remains generally accepted, the arguments have persistently failed to hold up to scrutiny. For Seidensticker, advocates of the anti-character position too often

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[37] See Anderson, Felski and Moi *Character: Three Inquiries in Literary Studies*. Previous attempts to address the taboo against character analysis include Alex Woloch's *The One vs. the Many* which reads the novel's minor characters through the notion of "character-space" as the intersection between their realistic depth and the amount of surface area they take up in a narrative (12). For Woloch, the novel form typically sacrifices the character space of minor characters to that of the protagonist in a manner that reflects capitalist social relations, transforming minor characters into the "proletariat of the novel" (27). See also John Frow's *Character and Persons* which attempts to show how characters are both "a formal construct, made out of words and images" and "a set of effects which are modelled on the form of the human person" (vi). For Anderson, Felski, and Moi, the return to character analysis heralds the overturning of a bias that structures the hierarchical opposition between the professional and the amateur consumer of cultural texts. This chapter contributes to this conversation by observing a certain twist: that some scholars working in the historically elitist field of classical literature were developing tools for analyzing and respecting amateur responses while others who worked on the more historically progressive fields of modern literature sometimes exclusively approached texts from the elitist model of what Anderson, Felski, and Moi consider a paranoid, critical demystification.

[38] Cognitive cultural theorists have looked to concepts like Theory of Mind (TOM) to explain the process by which an individual comes to understand fictional narratives. Not only do they propose that people employ the same psychological processes when engaging with real people as they do when imagining fictional characters, but they have also sought to use this principle to support the notion that the process of imagining fictional characters improves our ability to understand and empathize with those around us. See for example Lisa Zunshine's *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel*; Paula Leverage, Howard Mancing, Richard Scheickert, and Jennifer Marston (eds.) *Theory of Mind and Literature*. At the same time, historians have turned to the process of character analysis to grapple with the limits of the historical archive. Saidiya Hartman's practice of "critical fabulation," for example, which involves "exploiting the capacities of the subjunctive"—"to imagine what might have happened or might have been said or might have been done"—enables historians of the Black Atlantic Slave trade to characterize and therefore recenter black agency and thought in an otherwise hostile archive (11).

seek to determine the significance of character as a universal principle rather than in relation to the particularity of any given play. But in practice, he argues, the "extent, form, and function of characterization are not predicated on the outer conditions of production, but rather on the specific thematic intentions of the dramatist. Simple generalizations are therefore dangerous" (344). If, however, as Seidensticker suggests, the significance of character does rely on the intentions of a given dramatist, then scholars are confronted by a two-sided hermeneutical problem. First, the material one wants to study—the live performance of a given play—is, by the very definition of its liveness, lost but for traces of that performance in textual sources. Second, the general untranslatability of Greek texts, as well as the lack of guiding elements like stage directions, compounds the thorny task of reconstructing any given historical performance, as does the unverifiability of the paratextual sources often used in support of such reconstructions. Though these two problems are in principle insurmountable, in practice it remains the job of the classicist to use the evidence available to overcome the first to the best of their ability and the theatre historian to do the same for the second. While the evidence available may be at best circumspect, what it can do is help evaluate the possibility and the plausibility of any hypothesis. When it comes to ancient texts and ancient performances, possibility and plausibility are as good as it gets.

The authority of Aristotle's *Poetics* has, in the past, helped to circumvent these issues. Though interpretations of Aristotle's work also often suffer from problems of an untranslatable historical and cultural distance, by treating him as a primary source, scholars could gain a better understanding of how ancient Greeks related to and understood ancient theatre. This use of Aristotle is particularly beneficial since it gives permission to not have to worry too much about a play's performance, and thus it overcomes the problem of theatre's liveness as well. Aristotle

defines tragedy as the representation of action and it follows from this definition that what is represented—the *plot* (*mythos*)*, character* (*ēthos*)*,* and *thought* (*dianoia*)—is more important than the means of representation—*speech* (*lexis*), *spectacle* (*opsis*) and *music* or *sound* (*melos*). Plot is the most essential since without plot there would be no play. Characters emerge in response to plot once the audience is made aware of their thoughts—specifically, the choices that the character made and why. Thought is disclosed through speech, which explains why speech is ranked the highest in terms of the means of representation. Aristotle thinks little of the last two: spectacle and music. Actually staging a play, he argues, "can have a strong emotional effect but is the least artistic element, the least connected with the poetic art" since "the force of tragedy can be felt even without the benefit of public performance and actors, while for the production of the visual effect, the property man's art is even more decisive than that of the poets" (*Poetics* 29; 1450b1). If the only means of representation that matters is speech, and if speeches can be written down, then the problem of transient liveness is circumvented. What Aristotle has to say is fortuitous for modern researchers studying what remains of the play: the text, and its formal and structural elements.

Today, however, many are wary of subscribing to Aristotle's authority. The issue with accepting Aristotle's views uncritically is that his opinions on tragedy were already anachronistic. Born some twenty years after the death of Euripides and roughly forty years after Sophocles' Oedipus, one of his favourite examples of tragedy, was originally performed, Aristotle lived in a very different Athens than the one that produced these tragic plays—one that had long lost the Peloponnesian war and had its democratic institutions shattered by the collapse into oligarchy in 404 BCE. By the time Aristotle was in his mid-thirties, Athens had been reduced to just another city-state paying tribute to the Macedonians. His views, claims Page

duBois, are subsequently "not the attitude of a democratic citizen of Athens towards tragedy as a ritual and political institution of democracy"; they rather represent "the antidemocractic attitudes [that] are typical of elite thinkers of antiquity" ("Toppling the Hero" 67). His emphasis on the relationship between character and the production of *katharsis* as some sort of ritual or medical form of purification, cleansing, or purging, focuses the function of tragedy on "the management of a population" rather than the "fervent participation of citizens in the tragic celebrations of Dionysus that were the ancient drama festivals" (duBois, "Toppling the Hero" 67).[39] Tragedy's origin for Aristotle may be related to the festival performance, but that performance is not vital. One ought to be skeptical that this view was held by all those Athenians who actively participated in that religious festival and took pleasure in those performances.

The Surface/Depth Model of Character

In conjunction with this appeal to Aristotle's authority, a second major critique against character analysis in Greek tragedy drew upon a surface/depth model of character and argued that Greek tragedy only contained the former type and not the latter. This surface/depth model had uses beyond the limited confines of the character debate because it could be used to help establish an absolute difference between historical periods and national boundaries thereby contributing to the project of specializing the field of literary studies. Consider, for example,

[39] See Augustus Boal's notion of Aristotle's "coercive system of tragedy" in *Theatre of the Oppressed* (36). For Boal, Aristotle reads tragedy as portraying characters at odds with the community regulating social *ethos*. Through pity, audiences empathize and identify with that character's antisocial position, but when they see the terrible consequence that character suffers—their "falling from those heights" achieved by their *hamartia* or ambition—the audience learns to fear that position and become "purified of that antisocial characteristic which he sees in himself" (Boal 36). See also Thomas Twining, a 1789 translator of the *Poetics*, who, upon reading Aristotle, hypothesized that exposing the colonial "savages" to the *katharsis* produced by viewing Athenian tragedy would develop their "sympathetic emotions," enabling them to "come to have more feeling, and less perturbation," making them "more moderately agreeably felt, more easily governed, and more gentle and polished in their expressions" (240–1).

Bruno Snell's controversial thesis that the Greeks "discovered the human mind" (v).[40] His argument follows from the observation that while archaic Greek literature had little modern Europeans might recognize as psychological interiority, the classical Athenians did. From this evidence, he concluded that the classical Greeks forged the philosophical and literary tools used to discover the advanced European understanding of the mind. But, as Dubois points out, what Snell's thesis demonstrates is not the discovery of a universal human mind that is simply there, and whose discovery could retroactively be used to chart a course of history that leads to the political-cultural entity known as Europe, but rather "we are witnessing the *construction* of that self, that interiority, that individualism" as it emerges in an ancient city as its population experimented with specific democratic institutions, some of them familiar—such as trial by jury—some of them unfamiliar—such as lottery elections for public office or ostracism. ("Toppling the Hero" 76, original emphasis). Certainly, some Athenian institutions and ideas serve as historical antecedents to some modern ones. But antecedents are not necessarily origins, and the mere fact of an antecedent does not demonstrate linear progress.

Furthermore, one cannot reasonably draw the conclusion that just because Athenians had recognizable ideas about modern interiority then this means archaic Greeks (or anyone else for that matter) had no sense of interiority and thus no mind. The opposite appears to be true. Cognitive scientists have proposed that the capacity to imagine the inner, psychological states of other people is a requirement for the basic ability to engage with literature.[41] Without the

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[40] Snell's thesis has racist implications insofar as it relies on the presumed superiority of the Greek people to explain their capacity to discover the mind. The literacy thesis was developed in the 1960s in part to rebut such an explanation. The advantage of the literacy thesis is that it attributes the spread of Greek literature to technological developments like their writing system rather than some "special mental endowments of the Greek people" (Goody and Watts 320). The literacy thesis, however, "implo[ded]" in the 1990s, largely on the grounds that it helped to maintain an arbitrary and empirical unverifiable absolute difference between literate people capable of certain modes of abstract thought and non-literate people who were not (Halverson 316).

[41] See Keith Oatley's discussion of the "requirement hypothesis" in "Theory of Mind and Theory of Minds in Literature," 15.

capacity to conceive of such inner states (motivations, intentions, emotions), it becomes difficult, if not outright impossible, to follow what is happening in a story and why.[42] While there can be differences in the importance a culture gives to understanding interiority, and while some individuals rely on understanding interiority more than others for reasons pertaining both to cultural practice and neurodiversity, these differences are not so absolute that one can separate people into the haves and have-nots.[43]

In the debate about literary character and classical literature, John Gould spearheaded the surface/depth model approach to the classics when he compared classical Greek tragedy to modern bourgeois theatre, noting how the latter "invites us to extend into the theatre our everyday skills in assembling the fragments of experience into three-dimensional models of 'human intelligibility', so as to gain access to the closely guarded depths of personality," while in the former, character existed only at the level of surface, as a function of language and form (45). Whereas modern plays present readers and audiences with outward "clues to personality" that signify the hidden, private depths of that character, the latter simply does not (Gould 50). For Gould, the mask best exemplifies this contrast. He argues that masking "[i]mplies an understanding of human intelligibility altogether different […] from the penetration of surface and the exploration of inner complexity. In masking, we lose the flickering procession of ambiguous clues to inaccessible privacy; in its place, personality is presented in the changeless,

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[42] Theory of Mind has been proposed as a solution to the character debate in Greek tragedy as it allows scholars to sidestep the difficult if not impossible problem of translating the idea of character from an ancient Greek context to a contemporary one. See Felix Budelmann and Pat Easterling "Reading Minds in Greek Tragedy."

[43] See, for example, Lisa Zunshine's discussion on "the important issue of *degree*" when considering neurological impairments to Theory of Mind and its relationship to literature (8, original emphasis). Some anthropologists have similarly moved in the direction of thinking in terms of degree when considering cultural differences and mind-reading abilities. Alessandro Duranti, for example, posits what he calls an "intentional continuum" to consider how there are "variations in levels and degrees of intentional awareness and engagement" rather than any absolute difference across cultural practices of communication (2).

public continuity of the mask" (49). The fallacy here occurs when Gould defines depth, interiority, or personality through modernist aesthetic theatre devices, and then observes that these elements are not present in Greek tragedies. From this observation, he concludes the Greeks had no conception of or at least no desire to represent depth, interiority, or personality. But this conclusion does not necessarily follow because it depends on the premise that only modern, Western assumptions about interiority are legitimate and that they can only be represented by these modern theatrical elements. Certainly, there are big differences between modern and classical drama. But the presence of difference does not merit the absolute claim that the plays and the people who made them are "altogether different." It just means that ancient Greek tragedy does not have interiority or depth of character recognizable by the standards of modernist assumptions and as expressed by modernist approaches towards surface expression. Ancient Greek tragedy may simply make use of its own assumptions and approaches. If the ability to imagine interiority is necessary to comprehend narrative, then the question should not be whether the Greeks had interiority but what assumptions they made about that interiority and what techniques they used to express it.

Christopher Gill's response to Gould tackles this issue directly and, in the process, offers one of the more useful outcomes in this debate for the purposes of a poetics of emotions. He shifts from this surface/depth model to a distinction between what he calls "character-viewpoint" and "personality-viewpoint" ("The Question" 253). He defines character-viewpoint along largely Aristotelian lines, arguing that it typically involves "placing or locating the person in an evaluative schema or framework," expressed by "giving descriptive accounts, in which the person concerned appears as the proper noun to whom we attach evaluative adjectives" or

> in adverbial statements […] [where] the person normally appears as the subject of active verbs and formulation is not accidental. For activity, or, more precisely agency—that is, being the source of intentional actions—is central to this kind of account of the person. In this viewpoint, the person is, typically, treated as a 'moral agent,' responsible for his actions and their consequences, and also responsible, at some level, for his feelings, and, at some other level, for the qualities or character-traits expressed in those actions and feelings. ("The Question" 252)

Personality-viewpoint, in contrast, tends to involve statements that "invite us to share the person's own point of view (or to try and understand it), and to recognize with some exactness a particular, transient psychological state" (Gill, "The Question" 253). Crucially, "it is not assumed, in this viewpoint, that a person's behaviour necessarily reflects conscious choice and intention and hence 'characterizes' him as an agent. It is accepted that people are often to be seen as passive rather than active, as far as the origination of their behaviour goes; and so it is sometimes appropriate to ask 'what's got into him?' or 'what's making him react like this'" (Gill, "The Question" 253). In the former, Gill argues, "[W]e should expect statements concerning the motivation and assessment of deliberate actions"; whereas in the latter, the "statements will be better conceived as expressions of feeling (emotional reactions or demands) than of purposive choice" ("The Question" 256). Modern, Western assumptions and approaches towards inner or depth of character can be understood as merely a subset within this broader category of personality-viewpoint. Other periods and places may construct this type of character differently, meaning there may be more than one way in literature to prompt the question: "What's got into him?"

Though Gill admits that much of the clarity of these distinctions is undoubtedly informed and derived by contemporary Western notions of self and psychology—the motivation to make such a distinction is, for example, culturally situated in contemporary debates about character—at the same time, that clarity rests on universal criteria, such as grammar (active versus passive verbs) or cognitive outcomes (evaluation versus identification) rather than culturally situated artistic forms and practices. The criteria subsequently say nothing about how, for example, different viewpoints might signify in relation to each other. Nor do they insist on the absolute maintenance of the distinction. In fact, one way to view differences in literary and cultural practices might be to examine how the distinctions between the two viewpoints are either maintained or collapsed.

To give an example: in a separate essay titled "The *Ēthos/Pathos* Distinction," Gill tentatively maps these abstract, grammatical viewpoints and their related cognitive processes onto the ancient cultural rhetorical styles of *ēthos* and *pathos*. The former typically involves establishing one's good character (or an opponent's bad character); the latter, an appeal to the emotions of the audience. While ancient authors generally kept these elements distinct, there is some relation between the two, so the distinction is difficult to maintain. Aristotle, for example, "associates *ēthos* with the presentation, or self-presentation, of the speaker, and *pathos* with the production of the appropriate reactions in the audience" (Gill, "The *Ēthos/Pathos* Distinction" 153). For Gill, Aristotle's distinction represents how in antiquity

> [i]t is natural that the speaker should want to present himself as a person of good character; and, indeed, such a presentation is crucial to winning the audience's goodwill and so influencing their feelings. But the speaker will not generally want to present himself as in the grip of passion either during the speech, or in the events described in the

> speech. It will not normally be useful to him to present himself as having acted from *pathos* instead of from his usual, good *ēthos*. ("The *Ēthos/Pathos* Distinction," 153)

But if the point of establishing *ēthos* is to affect the audience and win them over, then *ēthos* can sometimes seem like *pathos*, an observation indicative of how two styles can be distinct in theory but less so in practice. Gill reinforces this point by showing how later classical rhetoricians struggled with this separation, sometimes treating both *ēthos* and *pathos* "as emotional effects, of different types," or alternatively sometimes approaching them as "alternative types of emotional modes for the orator to use" ("The *Ēthos/Pathos* Distinction" 158–9).

My own concepts of *narrative character* and *pragmatic character* are drawn largely along these lines established by this contrast between *ēthos* and *pathos*, or between the character- and personality-viewpoints in the play. *Narrative character* involves the representation of an agent, though and that representation can either be active or passive. *Pragmatic character*, however, centers the act of representation by focusing on the choices informing that act. From the perspective of *pragmatic character*, it's the passivity of the passions that becomes difficult to explain since every representation of passivity becomes characterized as an active choice. I then conclude by juxtaposing these two types of characters with a third: *theatrical character*, or the haunting affective presence tethered to the Greek tragic mask as an entity whose manifestation calls for an ethical response.

Narrative Character **and Aristotle's** ***Ēthos***

While *Hippolytus* is reported to have won first place at the City Dionysia in 428 B.C.E., scholars generally agree that an earlier version by Euripides, titled *Hippolytus Veiled* and now lost but for a few lines, was not well received by the Athenians. It is unusual for Greek

tragedians to tackle the same plot twice; that Euripides did so calls for some explanation. The prevailing theory is that Phaedra was presented in this original play as an irredeemable villain—an example of the Potiphar's wife archetype—but that this presentation failed to win him a prize at the festival and Euripides rewrote it.[44] Though this explanation can best be described as a guess, it remains a good one.[45] It also helps draw attention to some peculiar textual moments. Towards the end of Aphrodite's prologue, for example, the goddess lets the audience know that Phaedra "will save her honor [*eukleēs*] but die all the same," as if comparing this new play to the last one, letting audience members know they ought to expect a different tone and a different outcome (line 64).[46] Scholars have debated at length, however, about what this prediction means exactly since Aphrodite's claim is not obviously true about the play's conclusion. Phaedra seems to die ashamed, with her secret exposed, leaving behind an accusation of rape that leads Theseus to condemn his son Hippolytus to death.[47]

What remains of the ancient Greek mythological universe is incomplete and inconsistent. Much has been lost, much was presumably never written down, and there are often competing accounts of the same story. At the same time, certain basic facts often remain the same across variations. Though it is entirely possible that Euripides presented a very different story in his

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[44] The archetype typically involves the licentious spouse of an authority figure who attempts to seduce the hero and after being rejected, seeks revenge by denouncing him to her husband. Hebrew and Egyptian examples of this archetype can be found in Genesis 39 and the 12th-century B.C.E. short story "The Tale of Two Brothers."

[45] Though this view is often cited throughout the critical literature on *Hippolytus*, it rests on shaky ground. Its origin lay in commentary by Aristophanes of Byzantium, who suggested that the extant play was the correction of an earlier version. In her review of scholarship on this issue, Melissa Mueller concludes that Aristophanes' hypothesis was "most likely" true—it is both possible and plausible given the evidence available (121).

[46] lines 47–48.

[47] As this is a key question about the play, most critical scholarship addresses it in some way, making a full literature review beyond the scope of this chapter. See D. Gilula's "A Consideration of Phaedra's EUKLEIA," which is often cited as the most generous position, arguing that Phaedra may have died with a good name given the values of the Greeks. To give an opposing example, Hazel Barnes suggests that the line requires an alternative translation ("though her honor is yet unblemished, still must die") because, she argues, the more traditional translation is simply wrong—"Phaedra does not die honorably. She has been scorned by Hippolytus and her illicit passion is about to be made common knowledge" (73; 73 n.1).

other, mostly lost play, it is also plausible that important plot elements remained the same. One would not be wrong to presume that the same author, writing in the same place, during roughly the same period, would repeat key mythical elements: Phaedra falls in love with her stepson, gets rejected, and commits suicide. If one works with this assumption—as many scholars are apt to do—then the practicalities of the theory that Euripides was trying to portray Phaedra in a better light must be explained. One solution gives Phaedra the opportunity to demonstrate her moral character and just such an opportunity presents itself during the scene of inquiry.[48] In this speech, Phaedra establishes her character by invoking the theoretical, hypothetical logic of Aristotle's concept of *ēthos*. She explains how she chose not to attempt to seduce Hippolytus and so is not a Potiphar's wife. To distance herself even further, she curses "that one / who first shamed her bed with another man" (lines 456–7).[49] By creating hypothetical possibilities and demonstrating how she chooses otherwise, Phaedra can stake out a claim to a moral position. Choice is the operative word in this example. As previously discussed, moral character is the product of a moral choice, so by outlining the thought or reason that guided her decision to act, Phaedra demonstrates her moral character. In this case, the chorus then judges that choice and that character to be agreeable, indicating her speech was a success: "Oh yes purity is a fine thing always / and brings a good name" (lines 480–1).[50]

Though Phaedra's words may be easy to gloss, especially in Aristotelian terms, their precise meaning has been notoriously difficult to analyze. One of the biggest points of contention has been Phaedra's opening remarks on the two different types of shame or *aidos*: "one is

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[48] As Jasper Griffin points out, the "two big moments" of the Potiphar myth are first, the seduction scene and second, the denunciation scene, yet Euripides stages neither (132). Griffin uses this observation to suggest that Euripides may have written the second *Hippolytus* as an experiment in how to tell this story without staging these moments, in the process, Euripides emphasizes different types of scenes, the confession scene being one of them.
[49] lines 407–9.
[50] lines 431–2.

harmless"—or even pleasurable, she says—while "the other kills a house" (434).[51] Attempts at theorizing how either Euripides or Athenian audiences imagined Phaedra's character can often end up stuck here, as her decisions are intricately related to how she perceives these two types of shame. Clarifying nothing for modern audiences, Phaedra claims "If right action were ever clear," then "these two things wouldn't have the same name" (lines 435–6).[52] But while speculation abounds, there is no real consensus on what exactly these two shames could be—the very question has been described as a "battered subject" (Furley, "Phaidra's Pleasurable Aidos" 84).[53] From this topic's persistence, however, one can draw the conclusion that many find it necessary to understand how Phaedra understands her feelings of shame as they attempt to provide interpretations of her character.

Gould's formal analysis offers an alternative approach to understanding Phaedra's character, one that tries to bypass some of this untranslatability by turning attention away from what she says to where she says it relative to the traditional structure of a Greek tragedy. The episode starts with an *amoibaion* or dialogue between the singing chorus and the Nurse. Phaedra then enters, making strange outbursts that distress her Nurse. The Nurse then speaks with the Chorus about her inability to communicate with her ward, and this section concludes with a long speech or *rhesis* delivered by the Nurse. At the conclusion of this speech, Phaedra and the Nurse engage in a *stichomythia* or a quick series of one-line back-and-forth dialogues. The *stichomythia* ends with a short choral interlude, which prompts Phaedra and her Nurse to exchange a pair of long, contrasting speeches. Typically, the name for such a pairing of speeches in a tragedy is an *agon*. *Agons* in Euripides often take the form of an argument in ways that structurally resemble

[51] lines 385–6.
[52] lines 386–7.
[53] For a review of this debate up until the early 1990s, see E. M. Craik "ΑΙΔΩΣ in Euripides' *Hippolytus* 373–430: Review and Reinterpretation."

what one might find in the law courts.[54] Phaedra's famous speech, for example, begins by stating the facts of the case—her desire for Hippolytus, the shame she has about that desire, and the concern she has for her reputation—and moves to consider what she has done and will do about it. The Nurse restates the facts from a different perspective —"[i]t's nothing extraordinary, nothing inexplicable happening to you"—and then argues that Phaedra ought to seek alternative, less drastic actions, such as simply treating her desire with "[s]pells and magic words" (lines 487–8; line 533).[55]

Though this moment may share some formal elements with an *agon*, it does not quite feel like one. As Gould points out, "This is not quite what we commonly call an *agon*: the forensic tone is not allowed to establish itself, but the manner is nevertheless rhetorical, controlled and analytical" (55). The speeches, in short, do not share the accusatory and defensive qualities that traditionally shape *agons*. One need only look to the play's more universally recognized instance of an *agon*, which occurs in the third episode when Theseus accuses his son of raping Phaedra and Hippolytus responds by denying the charges, for an example of this more forensic approach. For Michael Lloyd, a scene that is formally equivalent to an *agon*, yet different in content and tone, can usually be considered a "supplication scene," and both Phaedra's plea that her reputation be preserved, and the Nurse's pleading that Phaedra's life be spared, indicates that this is what the scene is (8). Despite acknowledging this problem, Gould decides to compare this scene to an *agon* anyway. He does so because he needs to account for a puzzling moment in the play: the disjunction between how Phaedra is represented throughout the *stichomythia* and how

[54] "In Euripides […] no agon has a setting that remotely resembles an actual court, but the content of his agones is much more like an actual trial, with set speeches used to state the case in a formal way. What Euripides wants, then, is the formal statement of conflicting cases, for which the courts offered a compelling parallel, rather than any impression of due legal process" (Lloyd 14).
[55] line 437; line 479

she is later characterized in her *agon*-like speech. In the former, Phaedra speaks in riddles, making emotional outbursts, strange requests, and evasive responses. She refuses to tell anyone what is wrong. Her behaviour in this part of the episode represents her as lost in mad thoughts by juxtaposing the wandering madness of her mind against the immobility of her body, which had to be carried on stage: while remaining perfectly still, for example, she asks herself, "Where have I gone from my own good mind?" (line 276).[56]

The first half of this episode presents Phaedra primarily through personality-viewpoint. Her actions establish *pathos*—the point is to get the chorus, the Nurse, and the audience to ask, "*what's got into her?*" And, indeed, this is what they do. But when it is time for her speech, the play switches to character-viewpoint, as Phaedra "presumably left her bed and advanced towards the Chorus" to describe to them the kind of deliberative action that led to her decisions (W.S. Barrett 227n373). As Gould observes, this transformation "is antithetical and inferential, with scarcely a flicker of the emotional distraction and the restless, defensive evasion which she displayed in the earlier part of the scene" (56). Gould dismisses this sudden change from passive madness to active rationality as a problem for modern audiences only. It appears contradictory because modern readers are conditioned to overly psychologize character. He proposes the following solution: that character in Greek tragedy ought to be seen as a function of form rather than content or character. Since the two speeches form an *agon* (or an *agon*-like supplication scene), then to keep pace with the formal requirements of this scene, the emotions that Phaedra represents must be "arrested and illuminated by rational analysis" rather than the kind of passive insanity that prevailed during the *stichomythia* (56). In Gould's view, the contradiction

[56] line 240.

evaporates once we realize that the formal requirements of the scene necessitate that Phaedra speak cohesively and deliberately.

Gould's analysis subordinates character to form and demonstrates that character changes because the form requires it, but the opposite could also be true. The former assumes that because character is or ought to be static, changes to character must be explained by changes to form. But it could alternatively be that by insisting she explain herself, the inquiries of the chorus and the Nurse prompt a change in Phaedra's character, and the proper expression of this change requires an accommodating change in form.[57] Though his argument may not be definitive, Gould's work is useful for drawing attention to the structural gap emphasized by the play between passive and active character. Euripides accentuates the gap by exploring how it is constituted by changes in space and time—the *stichomythia* is separated from the supplication scene temporally by a choral interlude and spatially by Phaedra's likely rise, her movement, and her shift in language. The *stichomythia* ends with the Nurse naming Hippolytus as the object of Phaedra's desire, and this clarification of her feelings by language seems to break the spell that those feelings had over her, enabling her to assume the active agency represented by her speech and in her movement. Once her mental state is clarified and represented in language, once she can explain the choices she made given her circumstances by considering the hypothetical choices that she did not make, it is no longer that she is gripped by madness. It is instead that she has reasonably determined suicide is the correct path to achieve her goals.

[57] See also Simon Goldhill's critique of Gould in *Reading Greek Tragedy*: "It is from a critical point of view just as wrong totally to suppress character as it is to take a character off the page and turn him into a full psychological personality endowed with possible motives, emotions, a subconscious […] Whatever is meant by 'character' with regard to Attic drama, it must have different boundaries and alignment. But these necessary cautions do not mean that there is in Greek drama no interest in any internal life of its personae" (174).

I would suggest then that the scene's formal construction represents the process of producing what I call narrative character. Narrative character encompasses slightly more than Aristotelian *ēthos*, attending not just to what a speaker reveals to have been their choice, but also what they reveal to have been beyond their choice—what has been forced upon them or what they are caught up within. Here I follow Gill, who reads Phaedra's speech as an example of what he calls an "articulation of self"—a formal device he argues the Greeks sometimes used to produce character in tragedy ("The Articulation" 77). In Gill's view, Phaedra

> consistently identifies "herself" (through first-personal verb-forms, for instance) with the virtuous woman who resists the passion, or at least who makes decisions in the consciousness that she cannot resist it. The passion itself, by contrast, is not presented as being "her," or even "hers," but as an external force, an "other": it is something that "wounds" her, a "sickness," "folly," or "the goddess of love" (*Kupris*). There is an inherent instability in this stance, in that Phaedra defines herself in a way that completely excludes something (her passion) that is clearly, in some sense, part of her; and later in the play, this instability becomes explicit. ("The Articulation" 90)

The play's scene of inquiry makes this articulation of self, or the production of narrative character possible by using time and space to create distance between when and where Phaedra is not herself ("where have I gone from my own good mind"), to when and where she can be herself again. Or at least the self that she wants to be.

Pragmatic Character **and Self-Representation**

> Lift my body, raise my head.
>
> I've gone loose in the joints of my limbs.

Take my hands, servants [*propoloi*].

This headbinder [*kephalē*] is heavy,

take it away, let down my hair on my shoulders. (Euripides, *Hippolytus*, lines 228–32)[58]

These are the first words Phaedra speaks when carried onstage by her servants. Phaedra's emotional state has reduced her to a marionette. Her body is propped up and her head manipulated by her attendants in an unnerving and eerie moment of theatre. As Michael Halleran points out, the verb tenses used in the Greek are not only in the imperative but also in the imperfect aspect, suggesting the "continuation of activity—the servants may have to assist [Phaedra] in keeping her desired position" (168). But the passive and immobilized character established by this language is undermined shortly after that entrance when during the choral interlude Phaedra likely rose and moved towards the center of the stage to make her great speech.

As discussed previously, some of this discrepancy can be chalked up to the formal requirements of the episode. For many, Phaedra needs to be at the front when giving her *agon*-like speech to the chorus, so that is where she likely went. Indeed, this prevailing belief that she does move is rooted in the idea that she must move because the form requires it. For critics like Gould, this move is otherwise insignificant. But as Hanna Roisman points out, "the visual dimension of [Greek tragedies] as stage plays is often neglected by literary scholars," and despite having Aristotle's permission to do so, these scholars continue at their own peril (xii). For Roisman, this possible visual change may have been far more jarring than just the change in speech patterns or styles analyzed by Gill. In her estimation, a clear disjunction exists between how Phaedra represents herself and how others might perceive that act of representation:

[58] lines 198–202

"Euripides *shows* Phaedra for who she is, without *telling* it," claims Roisman (63, original emphasis). And in this episode specifically, she argues that the "sudden restoration of physical strength should warn us not to take Phaedra's words at face value" (77). Roisman's argument relies on what she describes as the "implicit style" of Phaedra's speech (xii). She presents Phaedra as "a masterful rhetorician […] a powerful woman who, through the manipulation of language, tricks the Nurse into trying to help her seduce the youth she desires" (xiii). In this view, Phaedra "uses numerous ploys to win over her audience," of which her creation of a narrative character during the scene of inquiry—what Roisman terms the "device of revelation"—is but one (Roisman 81). In the previous section, I, following Gould, drew a line between the *pathos*-inducing early part of the episode and the *ēthos*-crafting, *agon*-like supplication speech to emphasize the gap between the two presentations of character. Roisman's analysis, however, stresses the continuity between these two forms by treating Phaedra as a rhetorician who makes use of two very different modes of address in pursuit of a singular goal. It is this continuity of character across different styles established by a unifying objective that constitutes what I describe as *pragmatic character*.

My description of *pragmatic character* expands Aristotle's concept of *prohairesis* by locating it in the act of representing rather than in the representation. From the perspective of *narrative character*, a speech represents a past when a speaker did or did not have a choice; from the perspective of *pragmatic character*, a speech reveals the moral choices of a character based on what that speaker chooses to represent about their past. In her account of this play, Roisman directs attention to the incongruities between what Phaedra says and what she does, inviting skepticism over Phaedra's identification with virtue by considering whether the act of representing herself as such is what a character who is content with her vice likely would or

should do. Phaedra, in this view, chooses to narrate herself as having little to no choice because this representation will elicit the maximum amount of sympathy from her spectators and subsequently manipulate their judgments, convincing them to undertake certain desirable and beneficial actions. From the perspective of *pragmatic character*, Phaedra is identified with and thus made fully responsible for the *pathos*-inducing representation of madness found in the early part of the episode. This shift moves the focus of analysis from questions about what kind of character Phaedra's speech represents to what kind of character would represent themselves this way and why. Roisman prefaces the plausibility of her analysis on the possibility that Euripides wrote this play for an "outer audience" who found his earlier depiction of a politically manipulative and sexually devious Phaedra appalling, all while hiding clues for an "inner audience," whose education would have prepared them to recognize that this Phaedra was only more eloquent rather than more virtuous than the last one (xiii).

That Phaedra may be more in control of her performance than many suspect is demonstrated early with the paradoxical use of the imperative form. Phaedra commands her *propoloi* to move her body and her head to represent to the chorus and Nurse her madness and her passivity. But these commands emphasize rather than undermine her control over the entire situation. Consider too how both Phaedra's actions and words work together by appealing to the chorus's shared gender experience, creating what could be perceived as a premeditated, coordinated rhetorical strategy rather than the spontaneous movement from passivity to activity. Ruth Padel, for example, connects Phaedra's love sickness to her prone entrance in a deeply gendered way. "She suffers from 'diseased *koita*,'" says Padel:

> An ambiguous word, *koita* means "lying down" in sex or sickness. The chorus consider divine cause in a spread of divinities specializing in possession. Or is this sexual

> jealousy? Has a woman got Phaedra's husband in secret *koita*? That word, image for her disease, turns up in diagnosis of its cause. Has "hidden *koita*" caused "diseased *koita*"? Is this some specifically female sickness? They compare their own experience of childbed when they asked Artemis for help in pain (Padel 162–3).

The performance of a gendered madness rouses the curiosity of the women around her, inviting them to inquire into and then empathize with her situation. It also creates the opportunity for Phaedra to detail her choices and by doing so rhetorically establish her moral character, a process that demonstrates continuity by maintaining this appeal to a shared gender experience.

In her speech, Phaedra continues this appeal, acknowledging how her shameful desire is only truly shameful because while men are permitted infidelity, "as a woman / I would be hated" (lines 455–6).[59] This rhetorical move further establishes the sympathetic relationship with the women of the chorus and helps set the conditions by which Phaedra can then attempt to overcome the class distinction that would normally separate her from those around her. As previously described, Phaedra contrasts her good *ēthos* with a bad *ēthos*, and it just so happens that she figures bad *ēthos* as a licentious upper-class woman:

> It began in highclass houses.
> When corruption hits the rich
> the poor soon join in.
> I hate these women who talk self-control
> but get hot inside. (lines 458–62)[60]

Despite being a woman born into a rich and corrupt house, Phaedra does not share the values of such women. She will not let her corruption spread to the poor women of Troezen who make up

[59] lines 406–7.
[60] lines 407–14.

the chorus because she shares with them what Roisman describes as the values of "discretion, moderation, and honor even at the price of death" (82). Though the appeal succeeds at convincing the chorus, its logic is shaky. Phaedra explains her past behaviour—the decision to keep silent about her feelings—as informed by the intent to preserve her honour and keep the corruption contained. Yet, her explanation of that intent serves more than the purpose of elucidating moral character. It leads the chorus to identify with her plight. And once they identify with her decisions, they start to become complicit in her actions. In short, by saying she does not want to spread corruption, she spreads that corruption. Furthermore, from the perspective of *pragmatic character*, Phaedra chooses her representations and is therefore responsible for their effects.

If Phaedra controls and manipulates her image to gain an advantage, then this strategy of gendering her madness appears to work as intended. The choral interlude, for example, which marks the break between the *stichomythia* and the two speeches, confirms that the chorus has become sympathetic towards Phaedra's plight:

Did you hear O
Did you listen O
to the queen cry aloud
her pain,
    her sad sorrow?
Dear lady, may I die before
I reach your state of mind.
    O poor lady in these pains.

O sorrows that have mortals in their grip. (lines 405–13)[61]

It is only after this confirmation of sympathy by the chorus that Phaedra switches styles from *pathos* to *ēthos*, and so it is during this song that she supposedly rises and walks toward the center of the stage. From this perspective, the disjunction between the two parts of the episode is less a problem to be solved than a clue to Phaedra's *pragmatic character*.

For Roisman, this speech also suggests an incongruity between Phaedra's stated intentions and the speech's effects. Phaedra's conclusion that she ought to commit suicide prompts her Nurse's concerned response and encourages her Nurse to propose an alternative solution: to give into Aphrodite's power and to let her seduce Hippolytus on behalf of her ward with spells, magic words, and love-charms. So instead of committing suicide and taking her secret to her grave, Phaedra only says that this is what she will do, and then she does not do it. Furthermore, by stating that she intends to take her secret to the grave, she goads the Nurse into ensuring she does not ever make good on that intention. When the Nurse springs into action and pursues Hippolytus on her ward's behalf, she does the exact thing for Phaedra that Phaedra said she intended to never do. For Roisman, the question is whether this outcome is what Phaedra implicitly intended when she explicitly stated that she intended for this outcome to never happen. Certainly, from the perspective of Phaedra, the Nurse's pursuit of Hippolytus may seem initially fortuitous: with the Nurse acting on her behalf, and the chorus on her side, Phaedra is now able to pursue an affair with Hippolytus while simultaneously divesting herself of responsibility for that pursuit in the minds of the chorus members by once again representing herself as passive, as if the Nurse were a bully, and as if this were all happening to her and beyond her control.

[61] lines 362–7.

Roisman finds support for her interpretation towards the end of the first episode. After listening to the two speeches by Phaedra and the Nurse, the chorus finds Phaedra's plan to take her own life rather than enact the Nurse's scheme the superior one: "Her advice is helpful, Phaidra, / but it's you I praise." (lines 537–8).[62] But Phaedra responds to her victory in this pseudo-*agon* supplication scene as if this triumph were not the case. "In a master stroke," says Roisman, "Phaedra disregards the Chorus's comments and turns against the Nurse," accusing her of leading her down the wrong, immoral path (Roisman 91). It is not clear why Phaedra is so easily convinced by the Nurse when the chorus was not. But as the Nurse continues to press her case, Phaedra gives her explanation:

> No for gods' sake! your words so seductive—
>
> don't go further! My soul is all worked down
>
> by desire—if you say these beautiful obscene things
>
> I'll be caught! Lost! (lines 559–62)[63]

The language here, as Roisman points out, is ambivalent. "The statement," she says, is "on par with the best of Phaedra's double talk"; it "actually relays two very different messages: one to the Nurse and one to the Chorus" (92). She pins much of this double message on the word for the verb "worked down"—"*hypergazomai*"—which, claims Roisman, "is a farmer's word for turning the soil in preparation for sowing" (92–3). The word not only highlights this moment as a literal turning point, but it also can be read as a metaphor for Phaedra's receptiveness to the Nurse's continued argument as well as a sexual innuendo. The protest then, on the one hand, "tells the Chorus that whatever is going to happen is the Nurse's doing and against Phaedra's wishes," yet, on the other hand, it can also be interpreted as a statement to "the Nurse that

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[62] lines 482–3.
[63] lines 503–6.

Phaedra is ready to act on her desire," and an invitation for the Nurse to move forward with her words and her plans (Roisman 93).

By alternating between these passive and active representations of her emotional self, by selecting and coding the language she uses to encourage others to act on her behalf, Phaedra reveals her pragmatic character. And, had Hippolytus not eventually spurned her advances—all this would have worked to Phaedra's advantage. This view of pragmatic character permits no passivity. The shift from character produced in representation to the production of character by the act of representation always flips any portrayal of passivity into an activity. But the expansion of agency that this shift enables is as much a blessing as it is a curse, since alongside it comes an equally expansive sense of responsibility and culpability. As Roisman's analysis demonstrates, the more one imagines Phaedra in control of her own self-image, the more one finds her at fault; the more one finds in her character a likeness to the manipulative and licentious stereotype of a Potiphar's wife, which ultimately worsens one's opinion of her and undermines her attempts to portray herself as virtuous. Confronted by a Phaedra saying one thing and doing another, "[t]he audience," says Roisman, "must balance and weigh contrasting, indeed conflicting, indications of her character and decide for themselves what kind of woman she really is" (18). While I am agnostic as to which is the correct answer, I suspect that if the Greek tragic theatre was a place to experiment with different ideas about agency within the context of developing democratic institutions, then perhaps this need to balance and weigh her ambiguous character to make sense of her actions is precisely the point.

Theatrical Character and the Greek Tragic Mask

One of the most persistent objections to the idea of character depth and interiority in Greek tragedy relies on the fixed surface expression of the Greek tragic mask. Often attributed to John Jones, this argument states that there is no depth of character because the character's expressions remain frozen throughout the play; the mask's "being," claims Jones, "is exhausted in its features" (Jones 45). Though no classical tragic masks survive, we can safely assume that they did not smile when happy or grimace when angered, but there is also no reason to believe that Greek audiences experienced them this way. The features of the mask, in other words, may not be so easily exhausted. As Pat Easterling proposes, "Masks in performance may create the illusion of facial movement and fluidity of expression" (51).[64] Experiments with modern and replicated masks have generally confirmed this thesis. In a demonstration of replica New Comedy masks, Chris Vervain observes how when

> [w]orn in performance, the range of emotions expressed by the mask somehow becomes extended, and we see subtle gradations of feelings apparently pass across the face of the mask. We see characters thinking, and if they are given to reverie, we can sense an inner life of memory and dreams. Something more is being conveyed then, than just the expressions built into the mask. There is also the body of the performer, their energy, their imagination. Somehow all are working together to produce a different order of experience. ("Clip 5" 00:00:05–40)

A mask's ambiguous, lifelike movement can be accounted for in two different ways. Asymmetries in the mask can allow an actor to tilt and turn, emphasizing different facial lines to

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[64] For a comprehensive review of the evidence from cognitive science supporting the idea that masks could be perceived as in motion and expressive of multiple emotions see Peter Meineck *Theatrocracy: Greek Drama, Cognition, and the Imperative for Theatre*, 79–119.

give the frozen face the illusion of expressive movement. At the same time, masks likely participated in something approaching the Kuleshov effect, whereby the surface expression appears to magically fluctuate based on the context of its appearance. A quick tilt of the head perfectly timed with the revelation of new, narrative information could reasonably produce the perception of a significant change in facial expression. For example: it is often believed that Phaedra remains onstage to hear Hippolytus deliver his misogynistic diatribe against women after he finds out about her desire for him—an expressive flick of the Phaedra mask that changes the angle of the eyes and mouth could easily create the perception of change as she becomes increasingly appalled and ashamed listening in the shadows as her stepson aired his repulsion towards her.

The idea that the mask might be more than the sum of its parts has been thoroughly examined by David Wiles, who takes what he describes as a "post-secular" and "post-dramatic" approach by situating the mask within the context of religion and mysticism (*Mask* 12). For Wiles, there is a general failure in modern scholarship to acknowledge the spiritual, metaphysical aspect of ancient Greek theatre, a failure organized around what he describes as a persistent "drive to 'demystify' Greek tragedy [that] stems from a liberal, secular value-system that declines to engage with religion as a driver of human conduct" (*Mask* 12). In his study of tragic masks of classical Athens, Wiles begins with the observation that they were decidedly religious objects: they "were *agalmata* [a statue/a gift] to Dionysus" (*Mask* 44). The god's power could be observed in the "theatrical energy of the masks"—these inert objects could alter the identity of the wearer, an actor who made the mask seem alive by performing in a manner that emphasized the mask's magical capacity to change expression (Wiles, *Mask* 52). Since Dionysius was the

god of transformation, the mask, which could seemingly change expressions and transform the actor into their character, became a suitable statue/gift for him.

The ancient Athenians, Wiles argues, took this religion seriously, and any analysis of what Greek tragedy meant in an ancient Greek context must attend to the phenomenology of religious experience and the function of religion as motivation:

> In Homer, the *psychē* is a form of *eidōlon*, a ghost comparable to a shadow, dream or puff of smoke, appearing after death, and assuming the appearance of the dead person, but without material reality. If death is an emptying out of substance, but the image remains, it follows that humans can best help the dead by perpetuating that image, either by keeping it in the memory through epic performance, or by carving indestructible replicas in stone […] Tragic performances preserved the memory of long-dead heroes by animating masks which were neither free products of the creative imagination, nor an attempt to reincarnate the living flesh of the dead hero, but correspond to the *psychē* that lingers forever. Greek spectators did not expect to see Ajax brought back to life, for such could never happen, but they could conceptualise the figure before them as a kind of *psychē*, *and* know that the Dionysia contributed to the well-being of Ajax through conserving his double in the public memory. (Wiles, *Mask* 265–6)

Taking my cue from Wiles's analysis, I argue in this final section that the mask produces *theatrical character* through the metaphysical and spiritual process of possession. By donning the mask of Phaedra, an actor did not just represent her—they became her in an act of theatrical creation, in the process both possessing and being possessed by that character's *psychē*.

As a spiritual and religious object, the mask initiated the feeling of possession through a mixture of ritual belief and sensory deprivation.[65] While wearing a mask, the actor suffers as the mask partially covers up eyes and ears, muffling sound and blocking natural sight lines. The voice too is affected. "Every mask," declares Dario Fo, "is a musical instrument with its own particular echo chamber," and, as Wiles speculates, "The rigid helmet masks of antiquity inevitably created a more powerful resonance than leather half-masks," ensuring that the voice emanating from the mask did not sound like the actor's—not even to himself (25; Mask 153). The transformation of an actor's senses and voice meant that the mask may have had a hypnotic, "intoxicating effect" (another Dionysian characteristic) "on those who wore it" (Wiles, *Mask* 42). "The entire construction of the mask," agrees Thanos Vovolis and Giorgos Zamboulakis, "leads the actor towards a state of increased energy and presence, during which the actor senses the experience of a bodily and vocal expansion" that "leads the actor towards a metamorphosis" (1; 5). When this "fusion occurs between the actor and the mask," they continue, "a new reality, a new organism, comes into existence" (5). And just as the effect of wearing the mask intoxicates the actor, so too does its uncanny and eerie life-like gaze and expression "intoxicate the onlooker," captivating their attention (Wiles, *Mask* 42). In performance, the "power of the mask's gaze" seizes upon the onlooker, who cannot help but meet its uncanny stare, producing what Wiles describes as the "double force of the mask that is looked upon but also looks" (*Mask* 215). Because of this power Wiles suggests that "[v]iewing those masks was neither an illusion nor delusion, but a creative act"—the effects of the mask during the theatrical ritual created

[65] As Eric Csapo puts it, ancient masked actors "are not only possessed by Dionysus; they share the god's power to take possession" (257). For more on the metaphysical power of masks see also Paul Monaghan, "Mask, Word, Body and Metaphysics in the Performance of Greek Tragedy."

theatrical character, the too real eerie presence of a spiritual agent acting upon and through the actor and the audience (*Mask* 220).

Consider again Phaedra's entrance in *Hippolytus*. What happens when we read this scene in terms of a religious phenomenology as if the mask itself had an agency expressed by this tentative language of energy, power, force, and so on? "Heavy is her head," says Phaedra as she enters. So heavy, in fact, that her body cannot move. "Take it off," she commands her attendants. Does she mean the mask? There is no known separate fifth-century word for mask. The Greeks used the word *prosopon*, which also just means face. The word used in this passage is *kaphelē*, translated by Carson as "headbinder," but it can also just mean "head."[66] In *Masters, Servants and Orders*, David Bain cites this request to remove the *kaphelē* as an example of masters ordering servants to do the unthinkable—or at least the unstageable. He suggests that there is "no need to assume stage movement on the part of the extras here" and dismisses the idea that the servants manipulated the actor's body (21). This might be true, though I have suggested otherwise. It is hard to say for sure. But it is curious that the word commonly translated as servants—*propoloi*—does not only mean the kind of palace servants that a Queen of Trozen would have had; it can also refer to religious ministers or attendants. If the theatre is a religious festival, and the mask a ceremonial object imbued with energy and agency, then the choice of word is a striking one as it introduces an ambiguity between Phaedra's fictional servants and the possibility of real followers who recognize her spirit as acting through the play.

The entire episode can be plausibly read as the rise and fall of the mask's power; its structure indicates that Phaedra may be a vampiric figure, feeding on and gaining strength from

[66] Elsewhere Carson notes that "The most common Greek word for female headgear is *kredemnon*—a word which also means the "battlements of a city" and the "stopper of a bottle"—the symbolism of the headbinder is thus of keeping lid on female purity ("Putting Her in Her Place," 161).

the power of sympathy offered by the audience, the chorus, and the nurse. The play begins with the actor's body made passive and pronated, and his masculine voice made feminine through the mask's physical and metaphysical modifications. The hybrid voice of the character and actor speaks, issuing commands, and if the *propoloi* are responsible for the early movements of the scene, the effect of those movements is to make the mask look alive. The more sympathy Phaedra garners throughout the scene, the more powerful she becomes. As the mask pulls the gaze of its audience towards it, Phaedra possesses that audience, drawing in and from their pity. With the community on her side, she also appears to gain mental stability, linguistic prowess, and physical strength. As previously mentioned, it is at the very moment when the chorus—acting as a surrogate audience—identifies totally with Phaedra's plight that she, now fully in control of her cognitive and linguistic abilities, rises and moves to the center to pronounce her narrative character.

And just as that power waxes relative to the sympathy the mask reaps, so too does it wane, as if her continued existence depends entirely on the care she receives from others. The Nurse's response initiates this reverse, denying Phaedra further sympathy:

> Lady, your condition
>
> gave me a shock.
>
> But now I realize I was silly.
>
> Second thoughts are better, aren't they? (lines 483–6)[67]

The Nurse continues, agreeing that Phaedra is possessed by Aphrodite, but for the Nurse, there is nothing that is mystifying about it. It happens to everyone: "It's nothing extraordinary, nothing inexplicable / happening to you" (lines 487–8).[68] And Phaedra needs to get over herself. Her

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[67] lines434–7
[68] line 439.

resistance to her desire is "arrogant" and "wrongheadedness" (528–9).[69] A "god made it happen," belittles the Nurse: to resist a god is the height of hubris (531).[70] Then, at the conclusion of the Nurse's speech, Phaedra's responses start to become again the outcries that characterized her madness in the *stichomythia*. Her first one is measured and philosophical:

> Here is something that ruins cities and house of men—
>
> words too beautifully said.
>
> Words aren't for pleasure.
>
> They should lead to a virtuous reputation. (540–3)[71]

But when the Nurse snaps "Oh stop moralizing. Words aren't the issue. / You need a man," Phaedra slides back into outbursts: "You terrify me. Close your mouth! / No more obscenity, no more!" (544–5, 554–5).[72] With the Nurse's sympathy withdrawn, Phaedra loses her strength and her composure. Her spirit withers. One can easily imagine in performance the character taking a few steps back at this point as her time in the spotlight is now over. She spends the rest of her time during the play creeping about the corridors of the palace, crying out in sorrow, and plotting Hippolytus's downfall. At her lowest point, she can be found off to the side of the stage, shrinking back from Hippolytus's verbal assault. Her last line is at 731, just about halfway through the 1465-line play. From that point on, she disappears for good.

One way to treat Phaedra as if she were real could be to approach the play as some Athenians may have as if her character were truly a manifestation of a spirit or *psychē* that continues to persist agonizing in an afterlife over her *klēos*, her honour, or her reputation. It would mean to read or perform or watch the play as if that *psychē* could be temporarily affected

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[69] lines 473–4.
[70] line 476.
[71] lines 486–9.
[72] lines 90–1, lines 498–9.

or even comforted by keeping her in living memory through that act of reading, performing, or watching. In such an approach, some of the unresolved or unresolvable issues that continue to perplex scholars (how does Phaedra retain her honour or good name, or what does she mean by shame?) become more than just theoretical problems, but real and pressing problems about agency that Phaedra might be haunted by to this day as she suffers in the underworld.

When it comes to the question of "free will and determination," writes Anne Carson in her preface to this play, "Euripides seems inclined to lead us into the middle of this question and leave us there," trapped within a system she compares to the labyrinthine city of Venice (168). It is, she says, "A system of reflections distorted reflections, reflections that go awry," as each character scrambles to properly represent and then act according to values of shame and honour, in what ultimately only produces "[a] system of corridors where people follow one another but never meet, never find the way out. There is no way out, all corridors lead back into the system" ("Preface" 163). And this system is not just. It not only limits what kinds of representation are possible, but it also compels certain other representations, reproducing itself through those representations. Both Phaedra and Hippolytus are trapped in the classical Greek economy of shame and desire. As such they can only express themselves and each other within that system—both as victims of it and as actors who perpetuate it.

In that same introduction, Carson places as an epigraph a citation from Emmanuel Levinas's "Peace and Proximity": "the face is the extreme precariousness of the other" (qtd in Carson "Preface" 163).[73] The essay functions within Levinas's oeuvre to link his vision of the ethical to the political. There, he connects the Hellenistic tradition of philosophic autonomy and individuality to the modern European politics of imperialism and colonialism and pleads that his

[73] Levinas, "Peace" 167.

readers revise this philosophical disposition and assume instead an ethics of absolute responsibility, "as if the invisible death which the face of the other faces were my affair" (167). Carson channels Levinas in her analysis of the play when she observes that

> Phaidra wants to be like Hippolytos, but she has not a single conversation with him in the course of the play. What might such a conversation have changed? What does the face matter? Both Hippolytus and Phaidra systemically avoid certain kinds of precariousness. If you asked Hippolytus to name his system he would say 'shame.' Oddly, if you asked Phaidra to name her system she would also say 'shame.' They do not mean the same thing by this word. Or perhaps they do. Too bad they never talk. ("Preface" 163)

Carson's reference to Levinas suggests that both Phaedra and Hippolytus are too caught up in what the latter describes as the "face in some way de-faced as the simple individuation of an individual" ("Peace" 168). The characters' constant need to characterize and individuate themselves is what enters them into that system of shame, that system which enables the expression of individuality by plotting their embodied particularity through universal notions of autonomy, of agency, and of activity and passivity. That they feel the same need to characterize each other, and that their conceptions of each other's character never align with how they characterize themselves—this is the core of the tragedy.

The presence of the mask as a religious object that manifests her *psychē* by presenting to an audience her face emphasizes the urgency of Carson's question about whether the face matters. As a lifeless text, the play is ostensibly about characters who struggle to assert their agency, their individuality, and their autonomy when divine circumstances would make it otherwise. But is that what the play was about in the now-lost performance, where the face of Phaedra was potentially made manifest through the sacred mask? Or, under these conditions,

would the play have demonstrated a more ethical relationship between audience and character, something akin to what Levinas refers to as “the proximity of the neighbour,” or “the responsibility of the ego for an other, the impossibility of letting the other alone faced with the mystery of death” (“Peace” 167)?

Chapter 2

Sappho's Sublime Seizure: Longinus and the Subject of the Sublime

I think you equal to the gods in kindliness:
For you've never taken advantage of me though I'm in trouble.
It's great fortune for people to find a kind physician
Of suffering, which I have found in finding you
—Euripides, *Electra*, lines 67–70

Philosophy's Inferno

"The figure of Sappho," insists Paige duBois, "disrupt[s] various paradigms of Western Civilization": her "Asiatic Greekness" not only challenges the myth of Europe's Greco origin, but she also "represents the feminine that philosophy silences" (*Sappho* 25).[74] And, as the story goes, her "heated words" served as kindling in the forging of a European identity; her books were supposedly torched "by the fanatical hands of the early Christians"—leaving behind only fragments and traces (Reynolds 81). Though this legend probably started without factual basis in sixteenth-century Italy, it does dramatize what was a gradual change in Sappho's reputation during and after antiquity: as commentators of her work increasingly invoked a biography "derived from interpretations by ancient scholars (all male) of her poetry, some also from caricatures of her in comedy," such that, according to Mary Lefkowitz, "a portrait emerges of an emotional deviant: deprived because of her ugliness of male attention" (116). While some may have set Sappho's texts on fire, the purging inferno is better understood metaphorically—for the waning interest by those ancient scribes and scholastics in an aristocratic woman who wrote in

[74] One can supplement considerations of Sappho's foreignness and its challenge to the Greek origins of European identity by speculating about the role and influence of Egypt—which had a tradition of love poetry that predated Sappho by a millennium. For an analysis of the thematic similarities between Egyptian love poetry and Sappho's lyrics, see Justin Miller, "A Comparison of Themes in Sappho and Egyptian Love Lyric: A Preliminary Investigation."

an archaic script, who enjoyed the luxurious fruits of Egyptian, Asian, and Greek trade, and who wrote poetry expressing a queer, feminine desire; or, at least, their lack of interest in her as anything other than a figure of deviance in need of diagnosis.[75]

This perspective continued until as recently as 1970 when psychoanalyst and ethnographer George Devereux decided he "must now diagnose Sappho's seizure" (18). To do so, he construes her poem "fragment 31" as a collection of somatic symptoms (elevated heart rate, trembling, sweating, speechlessness) that—in conjunction with her grief, her jealousy, and her homoeroticism—serve as an example of the "*abnormal* nature of her 'love'" (Devereux 17, original emphasis). In that poem, Sappho sings:

> He seems to me [*phainetai moi*] equal to gods [*isos theoisin*] that man
> whoever he is who opposite you
> sits and listens close
> to your sweet speaking
> and lovely laughing—oh it
> puts the heart in my chest on wings
> for when I look at you, even a moment, no speaking
> is left in me
> no: tongue breaks and thin
> fire is racing under skin
> and in eyes no sight and drumming
> fills ears

[75] Except for her poetry, we lack any real, tangible evidence for her existence. It is entirely possible that Sappho—like Homer—is just a name that a collection of poems over time was attributed to. Ancient writers, however, believed her to have existed, and this chapter engages with their approaches by proceeding under this assumption.

and cold sweat holds me and shaking

grips me all [*paisan*], greener than grass [*chlōrotera de poias*]

I am [*emmi*] and dead—or almost

I seem to me [*phainom' em' autai*].

But all is to be dared, because even a person of poverty […]. (63)[76]

This poem, Devereux asserts, "describes a severe disturbance of the autonomous nervous system and the cardiovascular system which it governs"; it "describes a perfect, 'text-book case,' anxiety attack," which Devereux seems to believe an actual Sappho must have suffered (19).[77] "Her objectivity" in describing her symptoms, continues Devereux, "is revealing, and, indeed, almost symptomatic […] Her head is clear, and her self-perception undimmed, because whatever might blur them is ejected from the *psyche* and relegated to the level of somatic function" (18, original emphasis). What her objectivity demonstrates is a certain masculine quality that Devereux reads in contrast to the expression of anxious love by Euripides's Phaedra: "Where Sappho *observes* and *describes* objectively, Phaidra *confesses*, reluctantly and in confused torment, the symptoms she experiences. The simple fact is that, though both Sappho and Phaidra experience extreme anxiety, the *mascula Sappho* […] somatizes hers, while the hyper-feminine Phaidra does not" (29, original emphasis). This objective, masculine disposition, concludes Devereux, in a crass application of psychoanalysis, is proof of the poet's sexual preferences: it is, he suggests, "prima facie evidence of her authentic lesbianism" (31).

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[76] I have taken this translation from Anne Carson's *If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho*.

[77] For a more recent example see also Giampaolo Papi et al., "The Ancient Greek Poet Sappho and the First Case Report of the Fight-or-Flight Response": "From the medical point of view, these verses represent, to our knowledge, the first analytical description of the acute stress response – the so-called "fight-or-flight" response – (ASR) in human history" (819–20).

Devereux's naïve Freudian reading of Sappho's verses exemplifies a modern iteration in the customary practice of interpreting Sappho's poetry. Devereux validates his project—what Lefkowitz describes as "biographical criticism"—by looking to authors in this tradition, none of whom, he says, "viewed Sappho's state as an ordinary […] reaction to love," and none of whom compared [Sappho's lovesickness] to "Plato's (allegedly normal) divine madness of love" (122; 18). "All ancient authors view it," he professes, "as a seizure, in the clinical sense of that term" and "[t]his alone suffices to justify a clinical scrutiny of Sappho's state" (18). Despite Socratic love boasting a comparable amount of mania and homoeroticism (and despite some counterexamples from antiquity, like Maximus of Tyre, who asked, "But is not the love of the Lesbian poetess […] in fact not identical with Socrates's amatory art?") for Devereux, the judgment of history is clear: something is *wrong* with Sappho (167).

Though Sappho's reception has undoubtedly been influenced by this tradition of an overly medicalized biographical criticism that remains blind to the dazzling formal elements of Sappho's poetry thereby robbing her of the dignity of authorial creativity, it is curious that the commentary found in the sole surviving source of her poem—Longinus's treatise on the sublime—takes a wholly different approach. Joan DeJean, for example, notes that, unlike other ancient authors, "Longinus presents Sappho not as a woman whose craft has been sacrificed to her passion but as an author whose control is revealed in her ability to present the sundering effects of passion as though she were herself in the process of being torn apart" (*Fictions of Sappho* 84). Longinus, according to DeJean, reads Sappho's poetry by attending to her formal techniques, crediting rather than denying her poetic agency in a manner that marks him as "arguably the most 'feminist' theoretician of antiquity" (*Fictions of Sappho* 84, original emphasis). From the perspective of the new critics William Wimsatt and Cleanth Brooks,

however, Longinus's formalism is not up to par—they accuse him of performing "a certain duplicity and invalidity" in the way he conflates the natural genius of an author to their use and abuse of formal techniques:

> As if a theoretical rhetorician on being pushed to the wall about the extravagance of conceits or figures in his favorite author were to answer: "Well, I excuse them on the grounds of the author's genius, the high seriousness of his message, and his intense emotion. Lesser persons, you and I, couldn't get away with them. But he obviously can. It is because he has the ideas and passions of a great soul. He uses his figures sincerely." (101)

The problem is Longinus's backwards methodology. He offers no objective criteria to justify why someone might be a preferred author and instead appears to pick his favourites randomly, rationalizing their sublimity retroactively. Some classicists, however, have attempted to resolve the puzzle of Longinus's selection of examples by locating his work within the context of ancient literary criticism and concerns rather than by identifying internal, formal criteria. Longinus, they claim, was not writing in isolation, and his selection of examples responds to ongoing debates about the merits of the poets and philosophers of antiquity.[78] This chapter uses this solution to prompt a question: what if Longinus's opposition to the tradition of biographical approaches toward Sappho's poetry was more than just coincidence? What if he intended to challenge these reductive, biographical readings?

This possibility offers a fresh approach to what Anne Carson describes as the "documentary technique" of the Longinian sublime or his process of citation followed by an

[78] See David Russell "Longinus Revisited" and D. C. Innes "Longinus and Caecilius: Models of the Sublime" for two accounts that demonstrate how Longinus's use of Plato as an example of sublimity ought to be read within the context of Hellenistic and Roman debates about Plato's merit as a writer.

analysis that often employs the formal figures it identifies in the example ("Foam" 96). The consensus is that this process is not ethically neutral; that "the Longinian sublime appears in a climate of antagonism, as a rivalry between authors most memorably exhibited in the shrewd recognition that Plato competes 'for the prize against Homer'—exhibiting a kind of socially beneficial strife or "healthy competition enshrined by modern Capitalism" (Fry 188). In this view, Longinus's citation of Sappho—which echoes some of her style—could be read as an attempt to imitate and compete with the poet; his analysis could similarly be understood as the declaration of mastery over the feminine desire her poetry represents. While I do not deny that Longinus's work inspired this masculine and antagonistic sublime—in fact, my next chapter examines how Racine invokes Longinus and the sublime to claim ownership and mastery over the passionate performances of the actress Marie Champmesle—this chapter presents Longinus's technique as an ethical one, which can be read as resisting rather than supporting this kind of competition.

A Touch of Sappho

Much of the work to compile Sappho's influence on the medical history that Devereux cites was done seemingly by accident by the early modern French doctor Jacques Ferrand who published two vernacular books on lovesickness or erotic melancholy: the 1610 *Traicté de l'essence et guerison de l'Amour ou de la melancholie erotique*—burned by the Inquisition in 1620—and a 1623 expanded and reworked version entitled *De la maladie d'amour ou mélancholie erotique*.[79] Like Devereux, Ferrand diagnosed Sappho, specifically in the second

[79] The second book was first translated into English in 1640 as *Erotomania or a Treatise Discoursing of the Essence, Causes, Symptomes, Prognosticks, and Cure of Love or Erotique Melancholy* by Edmund Chilmead. All citations from this second book are from *A Treatise on Lovesickness* translated by Donald A. Beecher and Massimo

book, where her figure appears in an initial chapter on the symptoms of lovesickness. For Ferrand this disease presents as "a pale and wan complexion, joined by a slow fever" as well as in "palpitations of the heart, swelling of the face, depraved appetite, a sense of grief, sighing, causeless tears, insatiable hunger, raging thirst, fainting, oppressions, suffocations, insomnia, headaches, melancholy, epilepsy, madness, uterine fury, satyriasis, and other pernicious symptoms" (229).[80] This list concludes with what Carol Neely surmises is a short consideration of female homoerotic practices alongside one of Sappho's many appearances. There, observes Neely, Ferrand breaks with an earlier view of female sexuality—"that sexually frustrated woman may produce penises when, in the heat of passion, their genitals reverse themselves"—when he recognizes the clitoris as the primary sexual organ desire and argues that "[w]omen need not become men to desire aggressively" (110–1). But he only does so to diagnose those "women who unhappily abuse that part […] among whom Suidas and Muret place the learned Sappho" (231). From this doctor's perspective, feminine pleasure and desire must be better known so that it can be better controlled.

Ferrand's reliance on traditional Greek, Latin, and Arabic authorities constitutes a significant portion of his methodological approach as he gathers evidence to support his opinions about lovesickness's symptoms and remedies. His book demonstrates an encyclopedic range of ancient examples to confirm the disease's validity and the necessity of medical intervention. But as he uncovers the same descriptions throughout antiquity, he fails to account for the possibility that he is merely dusting for Sappho's fingerprints. In that same chapter on symptoms, for

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Ciavolella. For an account of why the Inquisition may have banned his first book see Beecher "Erotic Love and the Inquisition."

[80] While Ferrand attributes this biographical detail to Strabo and Suidas, Beecher and Ciavolella point out that "[t]he story is a common one and can be found in any dictionary of the era," see Ferrand 376n14. Joan DeJean sources the influence of this legend in France to the "exceptional status accorded Ovid's portrait of Sappho" in his *Heroides 15* (*Fictions of Sappho* 38).

example, he cites as evidence for a pale complexion the Hellenistic poet Theocritus—specifically lines 55–6 of *Idyll 2*: "Cruel love, why do you, like some leech from the marshes, / Cling to my body and suck out all of its dark blood?"[81] Coincidentally—and it is unclear whether Ferrand realizes this—*Idyll 2* similarly and specifically engages in the task of diagnosing and curing Sappho's seizure. The poem is in the form of a magic love spell performed by Simaetha, who had been recently spurned by a former lover. The spell begins with her drawing on the authority of various witches and deities of witchcraft (Hecate, Circe, Medea, Perimede) to imbue her potion with magical powers. As she chants the magical phrase—"*Magic wheel draw my lover home*"—she also describes the process of creating a love potion: "First, barely grains must smoulder on the fire" (lines 17–8, original emphasis). Later in the spell, Simaetha must tell the story of her first encounter with her lover:

> As soon as I saw him
> Stepping lightly across the threshold at my door…
> *Learn, lady Moon, how my love came about*.
> From head to foot, I became colder than snow,
> And sweat like watery dew dripped from my brow.
> I couldn't utter a sound, not so much as the whimper
> That babies make, calling in sleep to their mothers.
> My whole fair body went rigid, stiff as a doll's. (lines 103–10, original emphasis)

Scholars have since identified these lines as an imitation of the seizure described in Sappho's "fragment 31."[82] This allusion is not surprising. Theocritus—who wrote during the Hellenistic

[81] See Ferrand 230. For consistency, I quote from Anthony Verity's translation in Theocritus *Idylls* throughout.
[82] Devereux gives Theocritus as an example of one of the ancient sources who take up Sappho's poem. For an etymological comparison of the two poems see Robert L. Fowler "Sappho fr.31.9," 436.

period, in the earlier half of the third century B.C.E.—tends to fuse the canonical styles of classical poetry with folk traditions, in this case, Sapphic lyric and magical spells.[83]

At some point, Theocritus's poem was given the title *pharmakeutriai* or "the Sorceress." The title suggests that both the magical spell and the magic potion (*pharmaka*) might be caught up in the scapegoating logic of the *pharmakon*—a practice where "[b]y means of rites the community manages to cajole and somewhat subdue the forces of destruction," focusing those ailments on a single victim who can then be purged (Girard 99).[84] This logic operates in the poem through the two major adjustments Theocritus makes to Sappho's original. First, he places the narrative of Simaetha's lovesick seizure firmly in the past rather than a subjunctive present. By telling her story to Lady Moon, Simaetha separates the person she is now from the person she was and invests in that past-self all the naivete and helplessness provoked by the desire that she no longer wants to feel. Theocritus emphasizes this process of self-objectification using the metaphor of a doll. By othering and objectifying a doll-like past-self without agency, by creating a version of a passive, narrative character and then sacrificing it, Simaethia crafts a present, active self capable of transcending that condition. It is the creation of this self-object that provides the real source of magic. As Hugh Parry remarks, while the enchantment fails, "the mere performance of the spell makes the singer feel better in the end"—the spell acts as "a form of *poiesis* and therefore as therapy" (43, original emphasis). But the gender of the poem's speaker subverts the poetic success. The feminine association with dark magic leaves the poem unresolved.[85] While she does feel a little better—"I shall patiently bear my longing, as I have

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[83] Kathyrn Gutzwiller describes his poetry as using various "extraliterary forms (herdsmen's songs, incantations, cult songs, workers' songs) and literary forms of low status or nonpoetic character (mime, epistole, prose encomium)" to effect a "transformation" or "deformation" of classical genres like epic (10).
[84] For more on the logic of the *pharmakon* see also Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy," 130–5.
[85] Parry, for example, compares this poem to Theocritus's *Idyll 11*, where the Cyclops invokes the muses as a "painless drug" or a *pharmakon* (11.3). After singing about his love for Galatea, Theocritus describes the Cyclops as "by singing" having "shepherded his love, / And more relief it bought him than paying a large fee" to a doctor

until now"—she also threatens her lover should her desire for him continue to torment her: "I swear by the Fates it's Hades' doors he'll beat upon (line 164, line 159). The poem ends ambivalently. It is not clear if she will move on having used narrative to calm her unruly feelings, or if she will succumb to her sadness, her jealousy, her anger, and eventually administer to her ex-lover this love potion (or poison) in Phaedra-like revenge. Theocritus leaves it open-ended whether Simaetha's burning passion has been diminished by the sacrifice of her past-self, or if it is the present-day Sorceress that needs to be burned to restore order.

This undecidability (perhaps not by coincidence) reflects the two approaches towards Sappho's poetry identified by Joan DeJean in her *Fictions of Sappho, 1546–1937*, a text that ignited a fervour of interest in Sappho's reception, defining the field.[86] DeJean divides Sappho's interpreters, translators, and imitators into two categories: "Those who try to undermine Sappho's importance as an origin [by] dismiss[ing] her poetic intensity as a lack of control bordering on madness. And those who praise her artistry, most prominently 'Longinus,'" who "see the mark of control in her ability to convey the effects of passions so intense that they threaten the desiring subject's self-mastery" (*Fictions of Sappho* 75). DeJean's general theory of Sappho's reception—a theory I will address more fully in chapter three—is that the former group appropriates Sappho's poetry to demonstrate that they rather than she control these intense and destructive passions. Her book—which takes up a theme she developed over a series of earlier essays—meticulously traces a remarkably similar intertextual pattern whereby "a cluster of

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(11.80–1). As Parry points out, the word for "shepherded" is *poimainein*, a word one ought to read as punning on the word *poeisis* insofar as the Cyclops shepherds his emotions by channelling them through poetry (Parry 44).

[86] For a sample of texts that demonstrate DeJean's influence on the field of Sappho studies see: Page duBois *Sappho is Burning*, Ellen Green's two edited collections *Re-Reading Sappho: Reception and Transmission* and *Reading Sappho: Contemporary Approaches*, Yopie Prins *Victorian Sappho*, Margaret Reynolds *The Sappho Companion*, Dimitrios Yatromanoiakis *Sappho in the Making: The Early Reception*, Thea S. Thorsen and Stephen Harrison *Roman Receptions of Sappho*, and P. J. Finglass and Adrien Kelly *The Cambridge Companion to Sappho*, where the section on reception "is the biggest, containing over 40 per cent of the book" (Finglass and Kelly 4). Prior to DeJean, the most definitive work on Sappho's reception was David M. Robinson *Sappho and Her Influence*.

closely connected, aspiring men of letters collectively makes its claim to literary maturity by updating either the vision of Sappho's poetry […] or the story of Sappho's life" (*Fictions of Sappho* 6). In this process, Sappho merely supplements male anxiety over prior artistic influences as Sappho is transformed through a homosocial act of poetic bonding in a transhistorical struggle for male authority over the expression of feminine desire.[87] The recognition and respect for Sappho's creativity is, in DeJean's view, sacrificed to pacify the otherwise antagonistic bond between male poets.

For DeJean, it is the description of Sappho in *Heroides 15* that sets the intertextual game in motion.[88] That poem—attributed to Ovid and cited by Ferrand—portrays Sappho as dark-skinned and ugly, destitute, and mad with grief over rejection by her lover Phaon. Because of this madness, she loses control of her poetic gifts and resolves to take a suicidal leap from the Luecadian cliffs. This loss transforms Sappho from a "woman torn by passion but still in control of it" into a disruptive "woman betrayed and humiliated by her passion as much as by the lover who rejects her" (*Fictions of Sappho* 86). It establishes an archetype of "woman's writing" somewhere "on the borderline between art and uncontrolled personal outpouring," which then solidifies that border through sacrificial logic (*Fictions of Sappho* 75). As DeJean observes, "Ovid's Sappho functions as a scapegoat," the threat of her passionate excess is blunted by her suicide, and her controlled sacrifice "guaranteed the continuing orderly functioning of life inside

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[87] DeJean suggests that this model replaces Harold Bloom's model of anxious influence, whereby a "fledgling writer demonstrates his hostile attraction on the precursor poet whose authority he hopes to inherit" by enabling the new author to "display only admiration for the male predecessor while displacing their hostility onto Sappho in her role as the original woman writer" (*Fictions of Sappho* 6). In "Sappho, c'est moi," DeJean refers to Sedgwick and Rubin for a closer analysis of this structure of female subordination to male bonding. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Between Men* and Gayle Rubin's "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex."

[88] DeJean appears to have missed Theocritus's contribution to this intertextual history. Although, because Theocritus concludes his poem ambivalently, insofar as we are unsure whether Simaetha has gained control over her passion, or if driven into madness by them, she will administer her love potion, it is unclear where Theocritus might sit in her division.

the literary city" (*Fictions of Sappho* 70). She becomes emblematic of an objectified, doll-like, and passive, narrative past-self whose sacrifice serves to stabilize the active and rational agency of the present, male poet.

The inclusion of citations like those from Ovid and Theocritus, as well as other sources either directly or tangentially inspired by Sappho, continues throughout the entirety of Ferrand's treatise. Other poets—Catullus, Virgil, Lucretius—are selected by Ferrand to testify on behalf of this affliction's symptoms, but each of these authors is, like Theocritus, touched by Sappho.[89] Ostensibly a medical document, the text often performs a cultural history of Sappho's reception, which suggests that Ferrand also participates in this same poetic game—transferring its structure into the rational objectivity of medical sciences. He too considers the sacrificial logic of Ovid's poem: he evaluates the story of Sappho's suicidal leap into the sea as "the most famous remedy […] whose virtues Sappho was the first to try" (347). But given that a virtuous death is not an excellent medical outcome, Ferrand reviews the efficacy of a number of other possible therapies which include magic charms, changes in scenery, changes in diet, hunting (Hippolytus is his example), "scourging" or being whipped (he is ambivalent about this cure, noting the example of the "courtesan who aroused and excited her mate by beating him"), various pharmaceuticals (the recipes for which are included in the text), and some surgical interventions, primarily bloodletting and female circumcision—a final sacrificial solution to the problem of unruly feminine pleasure and desire (354).

Though few believe that either Longinus or Sappho's "fragment 31" influenced much prior to the popularization of both by Boileau in 1674, both "fragment 31" and Longinus appear

[89] For a comprehensive analysis of Sappho's influence on these Latin authors, see Thea S. Thorsen and Stephen Harrison *Roman Receptions of Sappho*.

in Ferrand's book.[90] After citing the poem whose only known source is Longinus's treatise, Ferrand suggests that Sappho is "as experienced in this art [of describing lovesickness] as our Greek, Latin, and Arabic physicians in light of the fact that they mentioned no indisputable signs that this lady did not already know" (272). To emphasize her capabilities, he compares her poem to a passage in Plutarch's *Life of Demetrius*, where Plutarch portrays Erasistratus's diagnosis of Antiochus as lovesickness based on similar symptoms: "his face was inflamed, the sweat bitter, the pulse excited and beating unsteadily" and then "his heart became feeble and he turned pale, confused and baffled" (Ferrand 271). But Ferrand's backward methodology belies that in that passage Plutarch attributes Erasistratus's diagnosis to "the full range of symptoms described by Sappho"—and Ferrand's further use of ancient physicians (such as Galen and Avicenna) who apparently never surpassed Sappho's insight ignores that they all seem to have read Plutarch's text and followed Erasistratus's (and therefore Sappho's) example (Plutarch 195; 38).[91]

While Longinus does mention Theocritus in passing (with the possibly ironic allegation that, but for a few exceptions, Theocritus is too flawless a writer to be considered sublime), it is possible that he never encountered many of those authors who treat Sappho in this manner.[92] We do not know who Longinus was, and we do not know when he wrote. His citations place him either in or after the first century C.E., which means while he may be contemporaneous or even a generation or two before Plutarch, so he is writing after the tradition of invoking Sappho in

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[90] The first known translation of Longinus's *On the Sublime* was Francesco Robertello's 1554 *De grandi sive sublimi orationis genere*. For a bibliography of translations and commentaries prior to 1660, see Bernard Weinberg "Translations and Commentaries" and Éva Madeleine Martin "The 'Prehistory' of the Sublime in Early Modern France: An Interdisciplinary Perspective." In *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, Ferrand includes a French translation by Remy Belleau—which first began to circulate in 1556—"for those who hate Greek and like Latin no better" (271).
[91] For a discussion on the influence of Plutarch's account of Erasistratus on Galen and Avicenna see Marek-Marsel Mesulam and John Perry "The Diagnosis of Love-sickness: Experimental Psychophysiology Without the Polygraph," Peter Toohey's "Love, Lovesickness, and Melancholia," and Jane Schmidt *Diagnosing the Will to Suffer: Lovesickness in the Medical and Literary Traditions*, 51–87.
[92] Longinus 176; 33.4.

medical diagnosis had been established. We do know for certain that Longinus was extraordinarily well-read: Haun Saussy, for example, cites his treatise as one of the first works in comparative literature, since his method for identifying the sublime proceeds by comparing passages not just in Greek but in Latin and Hebrew.[93] Although Saussy's claim may be a bit overstated—as the Greeks have a long history going back to at least until Herodotus of comparing their cultural practices, myths, and literary works to others—his praise speaks to the wide range of texts that Longinus had access and referred to and that breadth has led some to speculate that Longinus conducted his research in or around the Alexandrian library in Egypt.[94]

Given his substantial range of sources, it would be a mistake to assume that Longinus was not familiar with at least some of these medical authors and their ideas, if not directly then at least indirectly. It is likely a certain "circulation of social energy" had manifested during the earliest centuries of the Julian calendar that contributed to equating Sappho with diseased lovesickness, and one cannot discount the possibility that Longinus's citation of Sappho's poem participates in or responds to this "general enterprise" (Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* 5). Consider his analysis of the poem: "Are you not amazed," he asks,

> at how she researches all at once the soul the body the ears the tongue the eyes the skin all as if they had departed from her and belong to someone else? And contradictorily in one instant she chills, she burns, is crazy and sensible, for she is in terror or almost dead. So that no single passion is apparent in her but a confluence of passions. And her

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[93] See Saussy "Exquisite Cadavers Stitched from Fresh Nightmares," 5.

[94] Longinus's treatise is written in Greek and dedicated to the Roman Terentianus. That Longinus was not cited in antiquity, that his style and approach towards literary criticism has few identifiable Hellenistic antecedents, and that he is an early example of a Greek writer citing the bible (Longinus famously gives the *fiat lux* as an instance of the sublime) have all led to speculation that Longinus was a Hellenized Jew. Attempts to associate his theory of the sublime with the syncretism of Philo of Alexandrian have linked him to that ancient city. See W. Rhys Roberts "Longinus on the Sublime: Some Historical and Literary Problems." For a relatively recent review of the debate about Longinus's identity see Malcolm Heath's "Longinus *On Sublimity*."

> selection [*lēpsis* or seizure] (as I said) of the most important elements and her combination of these into a whole achieves excellence (Carson, *If Not, Winter* 364)[95]

As Catherine Maxwell points out, Longinus appears to identify Sappho with her representation of emotion in a manner that aligns him with rather than against the medicalized, biographical tradition. She observes a "slippage as he moves from considering the fluency of her language (which presents an artful combination of opposites) to the emotions themselves" (92). "Reading Sappho into her poem," she argues, Longinus "is fascinated by the way in which she displays the authentic passion of the lover" (92). He expresses this fascination by repeating her style to incorporate her passions into his own feelings, "doing what Plato expressly forbids; that is, identifying with a woman" (Maxwell 92). And, as Maxwell observes by pointing to Addison's *The Spectator* no. 229, this identification creates a further slippage by becoming naturalized: "Longinus," says Addison in that issue, "has observed, that this description of love in Sappho is an exact Copy of Nature"—to suggest that this identification is Longinus's eighteenth-century legacy when it comes to Sappho's reception (393). He moreover "wonder[s] that not one of the Criticks or Editors, through whose Hands this Ode has passed, has taken occasion from it to mention a circumstance related by *Plutarch*," where "*Erasistratus*, the Physician, found out the nature of [Antiochus's] Distemper by those Symptoms of Love which he had learnt from *Sappho's* writing"—circumstances which Addison suggests confirm Sappho's incredible ability to imitate the natural "Phrenzies of Love" (393).

Carson's translation (cited above) excises the clause from Longinus that provides the best evidence for this position: *panta men toiauta gínetai perì tous erōntas*, which says something

[95] Longinus 10.4. For the purpose of close reading the grammar of this passage, I have used Anne Carson's translation of Longinus's analysis from *If Not Winter*s. In all other instances, I have used D. A. Russell's translation from *Classical Literary Criticism*, though I have in all cases consulted with translations by W. Rhys Roberts and G. M. A. Grube.

like "[l]overs experience all this"—although translators cannot quite agree (154; 10.3).[96] By not including these words, Carson may be trying to sever Sappho from this tradition of reception, of equating Sappho's poetry with the nature of love. But, if this is the reason, her decision may have been unnecessary. Longinus frequently insists on the interchangeability of nature and art: "Art is perfect when it looks like nature," he submits, while "nature is felicitous when it embraces concealed art," and one wonders in this instance whether Sappho's poem looks like nature or whether nature has embraced art by concealing as natural the figures found in Sappho's poem (167; 22.1). That the verb *gínetai* contains a sense of becoming only further emphasizes the need to consider these words as possibly another of Longinus's tricky phrases: is it that Sappho describes what all lovers naturally feel because that is how she felt or is it that lovers become this way because they have been touched by Sappho and now cannot but express their feelings by indirectly citing those figures that demonstrate her artistic excellence?

Figuring the Sublime

Scholars have long understood the Longinian sublime in relation to the unspeakable experience of the figurability of rhetorical figures, where figures figure only when or because one is unaware of them. To bring them into focus is to lose sight of them; to speak about them is to silence their effect. But, as Neil Hertz reckons, Longinus's insistence that figures be concealed is "the traditional one" (16). To give an example: while discussing metaphor, Aristotle maintains that "[w]riters should go unnoticed and be held to be speaking, not artificially, but naturally […] He conceals [*kleptetai*] something well, whoever composes by selecting from the customary

[96] Roberts gives the line "All such things occur in the case of lovers" (*Longinus on the Sublime* 71); Grube as "Lovers do have all those feelings" (18). The clause appears after Longinus notes that love is a confluence of passions but before Longinus switches back to formalist analysis "And her selections (as I said) […]."

language of conversation" (*Rhetoric* 160–1; 1404b). But then, hidden in this passage is a puzzle: as Jack Kirby points out, Aristotle's description of concealed metaphors "is seen, metaphorically enough, in terms of 'theft'"—the verb *kleptein* means *to steal* as if the use of artistic figures is to be done out of sight, in disguise, or behind one's back (541).[97] Stolen within this description of concealed metaphors, however, is that the word for conceal is already metaphorical; one cannot just wave away this dilemma by claiming the metaphor is concealed by natural language in service of an idea because the "concealed" or "stolen" metaphor is the idea.

Longinus departs from Aristotle by bringing this strange observation to the fore. He suggests that figures are best concealed in plain sight, and he agrees with traditional, classical advice: "Playing tricks by means of figures is a peculiarly suspect procedure […] A figure is therefore generally thought to be best when the fact that it is a figure is concealed" (164; 17.2). But then instead of hiding figures, he joyfully shines a light on them. In his own discussion of metaphor, for example, he argues that they are ungainly, the mark of an unsophisticated writer; that one ought to follow the common classical advice of "not more than two or at most three may be used of the same subject" lest one draw too much negative attention by becoming a bit of a boor (173; 32.1). Negative attention means suspicion; suspicion makes the figure's figurability difficult to hide. But while Aristotle recommends concealing metaphors in natural language, Longinus counters by obscuring them with the honest force of expression:

> The right occasions are when emotions come flooding in and bring the multiplication of metaphors with them as a necessary accompaniment [...] Strong and appropriate emotion and genuine sublimity are a palliative for multiplied or daring metaphors, because their

[97] Earlier in the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle divides the meaning of this word in two based on the intention of the act: "it is not always the case that, if someone took something in stealth, he thereby committed theft [*eklepsen*], but only if he did so with harm in mind and for his own use and advantage" (62; 1374a).

> nature is to sweep and drive all these other things along with the surging tide of their movement […] They never allow the hearer leisure to count the metaphors, because he too shares the speaker's enthusiasm" (173–4; 32.1–4).

There is no sneaking around here. The passage's honesty rests on its ability to reveal and revel in its own effect. In this case, when excited by the prospective "flooding" and "sweeping" and "driving" feelings produced by the "surging tide" of rhetoric, readers become flooded, swept, and driven along by the surging tide of Longinus's exciting words and thoughts.[98]

For Hertz, the Longinian sublime relates to this double process of a concealed figurative language whose scattering force overwhelms the hearer in a manner that "may sustain the truthful, the natural, the masterful, and so on," alongside the vigorous revelation of that figurability, which is "always revealed as false," yet, this falsity turns around into illuminating the truth of language's force (18). "It is when a literary text provides us with a powerful apprehension of this phenomenon," he argues, "that we are drawn to characterize it as 'sublime'" (19). But if the initial truth-sustaining force scattered the subject by overwhelming them with enthusiasm, then the question becomes whether that subject can be reconstituted by the revelation of that force in the examination of language's figurability, and if they are to be restored, then what kind of subject are they?

Longinus cites Sappho's poem as he discusses how to produce the sublime effect through the appropriate organization of material. He begins this section feigning innocence, offering what seems to be only a bland iteration of the doctrine of organic unity as it had been expressed since at least Plato: "Every topic," he argues, "naturally includes certain elements which are inherent

[98] While Longinus uses the image of a surging tide to describe the passion required to make the metaphors palatable, Russell's translation amplifies the metaphor in a manner that reinforces Longinus's famous metaphorical description of the sublime as an "echo of a noble mind" (150; 9.2).

in its raw material. It follows that sublimity will be achieved if we consistently select the most important of those inherent features and learn to organize them as a unity by combining one with another" (154; 10.1). Sappho's poem, he points out, exemplifies this doctrine. Her sublimity rests on her "skill in selecting the outstanding details and making a unity of them" to portray the "treatment of the feelings involved in the madness of being in love" (154; 10.1). Except this is not the Platonic version of organic unity found in the *Phaedrus*, where the unity of the text is configured by comparison to the unity of the living body, whose head, arms, and legs are securely attached to all the right places.[99] "Rarely," muses Hertz, as he considers how Sappho's poem describes the disorganized experience of her body, "has the doctrine of organic unity been presented with fewer wistful overtones" (5). The poem and Longinus's subsequent analysis of it present Sappho's body as broken and fragmented. The Greek *lēpsis* used in Longinus's analysis means to take hold or to seize, and Longinus gives a revised conception of Sappho seized by a jealous desire, asking us to be amazed at how the force of Sappho's expression seizes all these disparate elements together into a single poem. As a figurative body, Sappho appears to be experiencing a seizure, but—in a move reminiscent of that between *narrative character* and *pragmatic character* discussed in the previous chapter—through her capacity to employ the body as a figure—Sappho seizes and unifies that experience. At the same time, however, despite announcing earlier that his treatise is meant to be a sort of instruction manual, Longinus never explicitly tells us how she does this. He instead repeats the activity of bringing the elements together, modifying Sappho's rhetorical performance, showing rather than telling. But this repetition involves alteration, and one longstanding question put to Longinus has been: how do we read these changes?

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[99] Plato's description of this doctrine can be found at 264c, also cited below. All translations from Plato are from *Plato: Complete Works*, edited by John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson.

In "fragment 31," the primary technique used by Sappho to organize her poem is polysyndeton, which operates through the extensive use of the conjunctive particle *de*—a word that joins ideas together indeterminately, leaving context to establish a likeness, a contrast, or a causal connection (as the context here is poetic, *de* could signify multiple relationships at once). Following Anne Carson, who translates *de* with a sort of Deleuzian *and* that seems to make "language itself stammer," Yopie Prins exhibits how this "conjunction emphasizes the increasing disjunction of the Sapphic Body": "'*and* under my skin runs fire *and* I do not see with my eyes *and* ears roar *and* sweat drips down *and* trembling takes hold of me *and* greener than grass I am *and* dead'" (Deleuze and Guattari 98; qtd in Prins 39, original emphasis). Overwhelmed by the force of all these *ands*, the *I* struggles to hold the body together. In fact, the first-person only

> appears obliquely in fragment 31, first as indirect object (the dative *moi* in lines 1, 5, 13), and then as a direct object (the accusative *me* in line 7) and finally as a reflexive (*em' autai* in line 16), but never in the position of grammatical subject (the nominative *egō*). Not until line 14 is the first-person singular marked by gender (in the adjectives *paisan* and *chlōrotera*), followed by the verb 'I am' in line 15 (*emmi*) but immediately qualified by the verb 'I seem' in line 16 (*phainomai*). (Prins 30)

The seeming-self or "*phainomai*" in line 16 produces a double-consciousness that blurs the distinction between a speaker with an active sense of agency and the phantasy of that agency revealed by the disjunctive body. The subject returns in that final line into the oblique position of the dative case, not as an active agent, but "suspended in what one grammar book calls, 'the case of the thing *touched*'" (Buxton 347, original emphasis).

Anne Carson excels at capturing the poem's use of syntax to describe a self coming undone. According to Prins, while Carson's translation "centers on 'I am'" in the final lines, it

also "demonstrates how the Greek text proceeds to decenter this self-assertion […] rendering the status of 'I' increasingly ambiguous: 'I am' is juxtaposed with 'and dead' and followed by '—or almost' and qualified by 'I seem,'" rendering the action of the poem opaque rather than clear and objective (31). In her own analysis of the poem, Carson likens it to a moment of avant-garde theatre:

> The poem floats toward us on a stage set. But we have no program. The actors go in and out of focus anonymously. The action has no location. We don't know why the girl is laughing nor what she feels about this man. He looms beyond the footlights, somewhat more than mortal in line 1 *(isos theoisin*), and dissolves at line 2 into a pronoun (*ottis*) so indefinite that scholars cannot agree on what it means. The poet who is staging the mis-en-scène steps mysteriously from the wings of a relative clause at line 5 (*to*) and takes over the action. (*Eros the Bittersweet* 13)

In the phantasmic theatre of Sappho's mind, Sappho *seems* to compete against this god-like man for the affection of another woman. With all this *seeming* going on it becomes difficult to make sense of any kind of plot. The poem describes only a series of relations, and it is never clear when or where these relations are occurring. The "first stanza bears the freshness of a *single* happening" as the speaker encounters the woman sitting next to this god-like man, yet, by line 7, the poem transitions into a subjunctive, "*iterative* action"; the line "for when I look at you" makes both the man's disappearance and the shift into the subjunctive mood that distorts the whole second half of the poem by a haze of unreality (Marcovich 21, original emphasis, 23). According to Carson, this divine-like, disappearing man "plays a paradoxical role" in the scene by blocking Sappho's desire and creating a phantasy situation where "[c]onjoined [the two women] are held apart" (16). At the same time, the phantasy of the man's divinity ("he seems to

me") is identified in the poem with the phantasy of Sappho's self ("I seem to me"), a link that Sappho explores as she crosses the border between *seeing* and *seeming* when she substitutes the man with the *de,* which takes over his "paradoxical role [of] both connect[ing] and separate[ing], marking that two are not one" (16).

The poem brings to the fore a series of contrasting themes—passion, imagination, desire, jealousy, rejection, competition, identification, dissolution, integration, objectification, subjectification, triangulation—that will come into play throughout Longinus's treatise, themes which he already starts to explore as he cites, analyzes, and paraphrases Sappho's verse. Caught in the enthusiasm for Sappho's ability to bring unlike things together, Longinus tries his hand at reproducing her sublimity in his own writing. At first, he imitates her by citing her. Then he innovates. In a later discussion of polysyndeton, Longinus worries that "the urgent and harsh character of the emotion loses its sting and becomes a spent fire as soon as you level it down to smoothness by the conjunctions" (166; 21.1). Asyndeton is better: it acts on the reader or hearer like a series of disordered blows, but in a paradoxical way, where "order becomes disorderly" while "disorder in turn acquires a certain order" (166; 20.3). To exemplify this process with his paraphrase, polysyndeton becomes asyndeton (a rhetorical move captured by Carson's translation of Longinus cited above). Prins describes the effect of this change as an "autopsy" of Sappho's writing, as Longinus "leav[es] out the conjunctions in order to cut the 'body' of the poem into even smaller pieces," driving the elements both physically closer together yet farther apart (Prins 39). But it is not just the conjunctions that are absent in Longinus's prose—so too is the man. Both have been replaced by Longinus's notion of the sublime, which acts in the passage to both connect and separate his prose from her poetry.

For Hertz, these rhetorical maneuvers produce what he calls a sublime turn by reconstituting the intentional, authorial subject in the formal techniques that produce the force of expression. He makes his argument by comparing Sappho's poem to Longinus's other example of sublime organization, a passage from Homer's *Iliad*, which compares Hector's assault on the Greeks to the near-death experience of sailors caught in a storm:

> He fell upon them as upon a swift ship falls a wave,
>
> huge, wind-reared by the clouds. The ship
>
> is curtained in foam, a hideous blast of wind
>
> roars in the sail. The sailors shudder in terror:
>
> they are carried away from under death, but only just. (qtd in Longinus 155; 10.5)

Both passages are meant to exemplify the sublimity of making a unity of natural elements—but the connection is muddy. There are some thematic similarities. They both have elements of wetness, of proximity to death. But these links initially seem superficial. To clarify the comparison, Longinus merely says that these authors have "taken only the very best pieces, polished them up and fitted them together. They have inserted nothing inflated, undignified, or pedantic. Such things ruin the whole effect, because they produce, as it were, gaps or crevices, and so spoil the impressive thoughts which have been built into a structure whose cohesion depends on their mutual relation" (155; 10.7). Longinus subsequently offers no undignified or pedantic explanation to connect these examples because that would introduce gaps and crevices into the sublimity of his own work, ruining the asyndeton-like effect. The passage takes its own advice and proceeds with its connective tissue absent. First the man, then the conjunctions, and now the expressions of authorial intention have all disappeared and been replaced by the sublime. But then this idea as it has been figured by Longinus presents a paradoxical reversal:

the presence of authorial explanation is figured as a gap or crevice or absence while the absence of authorial explanation is figured as the author's unifying presence.

For Hertz, unification after this reversal requires interpretative effort on the part of the reader, work that he claims can begin by attending to Longinus's peculiar analysis of this Homeric passage, specifically Homer's use of the preposition *hupek*, the 'from under' (Longinus 155; 10.6). Normally two discreet or "naturally uncompoundable prepositions," Homer has smooshed them together in a manner that captures "the emotion of the moment"; the passage encapsulates the force of Hector's charge against the Greeks, which causes a crushing panic and fear as if it were the ocean's waves crashing against and nearly capsizing a ship by letting that emotion bleed over from poem to poet (155; 10.6). It is as if overcome by this much urgent emotion, there is just no time for Homer to step in and properly separate the words. But then, as he proceeds into a discussion on the natural elements inherent to a subject, the natural emotions they produce, and their representation by the unnatural combination of things—a move that links the natural to the unnatural and further alerts us to Longinus's suspicions about the opposition between nature and art—Longinus attributes this *as if* to Homer's poetic prowess rather than overwhelming emotion. Homer deploys a disorganized, unnatural expression *hupek*, *as if* he were feeling the same emotion expressed by the poem—*as if* his tongue breaks—because Homer has the gift of sublime expression. This move also serves to establish authorial unity in the face of the paradox described above. The force of authorial presence is felt most powerfully in the absence of explanatory "gaps or crevices" because these gaps affect the reader who responds to them by filling them in with what they imagine the author meant. The hypothetical *as if* enables the reader to attribute the absence of the gaps or crevices—figures for expressions of authorial intention—to controlled expression of authorial intention, and this recognition constitutes what

Hertz refers to as the sublime turn. It is because of this intentionally deployed skill that the author escapes out from under the disintegration of that emotion. It is what enables—in Hertz's formulation—a shift from "Sappho-as-victimized-body" to "Sappho-as-poetic-force" (7). To read Sappho's poem as exemplifying this turn means realizing that the more her poetic body is represented as broken in the poem, the more one detects a unified, possessive agent lurking behind and controlling that representation.

In her criticism of Hertz's reading, Barbara Freeman points to a crucial difference between the two examples:

> While Homer writes about escaping death, Sappho describes the process of going toward it. And whereas the Homeric hero either wins or loses, lives or dies, Sappho's protagonist can only 'win' by losing and 'death' becomes one name for a moment of *hypsous* whose articulation eludes any literal description. Sappho, unlike Homer, is not concerned with strife or combat, nor does her poem support the notion that the sublime entails the defeat of death. Moreover, the kinds of power relations about which she writes do not involve dominance, in which one identity subjugates another, but a merger in which usually separate identities conjoin. Such a junction displaces the ordinary meaning of 'possession' wherein one either owns or is owned, and instead suggests that the poet/lover can possess that by which she is also possessed. (19)

For Freeman, Sappho's poem does not describe a movement from disintegration into reconstitution, from objectification to possession, or from victimization to control, but "an excess that cannot exist within Hertz's (or Longinus') conceptual framework"—a "potentially unrecuperable excess that, in Jacques Derrida's famous phrase, cannot 'be brought back home to the father'" (21–2). She argues that the poem "articulates a version of sublimity that differs

radically from the Longinian sublime of power and rivalry," one that "foregrounds what Longinus and subsequent theorists ignore: the deployment of agency to intensify and underscore the wish for dispossession, and to recognize in the scene of self-dispersal a site of self-empowerment" (19). The sublime from Longinus onwards, in her view, reflects a process of separation, confrontation, and sublimation, whereby a rational, masculine agent asserts his authority over an overwhelming, threatening "feminine figure" (22). Sappho's poem, she continues, expresses a distinctly feminine agency, one that embraces rather than opposes the feminine figure, identifying with it rather than objectifying and possessing it.

This feminine agency, she observes, has been occluded by a series of Oedipal gestures made by past critics. As her analysis moves from Longinus to Hertz, and then to Thomas Weiskel's *The Romantic Sublime*, Freeman points out how feminine excess is perpetually figured as water, as chaos, as desire in a pattern that reflects the "(maternal) pre-Oedipal phase, in which the infant is still bound in symbiotic union with its mother (24). For these theorists, she argues, the sublime turn and the autonomous self it engenders reflects the "transfer of libidinal energy from the mother to the father, as if the mother were herself the threatening agent that, without paternal intervention, would interfere with the formation of the child's separate identity" (24). But Sappho's poetry, she argues, never moves towards reconstitution through identification with the father and possession of the mother. Her temporary identification with the man leads not to a triumphant self-unification but an out-of-focus dissolution. Furthermore, nothing in the poem necessitates treating this conclusion as a threat to be overcome rather than an experience willed by Sappho herself. "One must ask," she then concludes, "not simply what authorizes Hertz's characterization of Sappho's body as 'victimized,' but why he fails to see that her text resists and critiques such a theorization of sublimity?" (21–2).

Reconfiguring the *Agon*

To cement the distinction between Longinus and Sappho, Freeman invokes the well-established relationship between the Longinian sublime and the figure of the *agon*, or the competition between rivals that Longinus employs to describe the relationship between Plato and Homer.[100] She locates the "almost Darwinian contest in which the strong flourish and the weak are overcome" at the center of the Longinian sublime, a figure she claims implicates "creativity as bound up with the quest for mastery and ownership" (17). Certainly, Longinus's analysis, repetition, and revision of Sappho's poem can and has been read as the theorist one-upping the poet, reproducing her technique to demonstrate his possessive mastery over her text.[101] Such a response, however, suffers from a problem: Freeman neglects to account for the fact that Sappho is similarly involved in citational and revisional textual practices. As Lefkowitz points out, Sappho repeatedly repurposes the Homeric epic by placing his language and poetic techniques

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[100] The importance of a critique of the *agon* to debates about Longinus's concept of the sublime ought to be placed within the context of Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* and that work's totalizing logic, which "exemplifies the naturalization of authority and cultural hegemony" insofar as Bloom reifies the process of canon formation as an ongoing struggle while prohibiting the possibility for an outside or otherwise than that canon by rooting all instances of the new into an at best unconscious struggle against and therefore ultimately circumscribed by that tradition (Varadharajan 470). See also John Drabinkski "Anxieties of Influence and Origin in the Black Atlantic." For Bloom's self-purported debt to Longinus see *The Anatomy of Influence*, 16–20. In that book, Bloom reflects how his "emphasis on agon as a central feature of literary relationships," inspired as it was by Longinus, upset many for whom "much seemed to depend on the idea of literary influence as a seamless and friendly mode of transmission, a gift graciously bestowed and gratefully received" (7). He continues by crediting his notion of the *agon* for anticipating what he describes as "New Cynicism" or the Foucauldian and Bordieuan critics of literary production (8). The kind of Longinian sublime I articulate here involves, on the one hand describing an ethical relationship, while, on the other hand, demonstrating how Longinus outlines the sublime's possibilities as not only under threat but close to impossible given the social antagonisms that are produced under the competitive material conditions of mercantilism and empire.

[101] Freeman is working to move the notion of the sublime past a certain critique of the sublime possessive, self-sustaining aesthetic associated with critics like Neil Hertz, Thomas Weiskel, Susan Guerlac, Francis Ferguson, and Paul Fry. For other attempts at articulating a feminine sublime see Patricia Yaeger "Toward a Feminine Sublime," Joanna Zylinska "the Feminine Sublime: Between Aesthetics and Ethics," and Christine Battersby *The Sublime Terror, and Human Difference,* 114–8.

into the register of the lyric. Sappho's description of herself as *chlōrotera de poias* or "'greener' than grass," argues Lefkowitz, cannot, for example, be read as anything other than a citation and revision of Homer's "green fear"—an instance of which can be found in Book 11 of *The Odyssey*, as the titular character finds himself swarmed by the souls of the dead (121). While Sappho incorporates Homeric phrases into the body of her poetry, Longinus engages in a process of citing (or imitating) by separating rather than integrating the quote from the body of his own text. Sappho's citational practice certainly looks much more like a merger of identity in language, while Longinus's practice of citation, analysis, and revision appears to use language to set up a confrontation not just between two authors but between poetry and prose. At the same time, however, one ought to be suspicious whenever a single rhetorical figure is used to figure the entirety of the Longinian sublime. While the figure of the *agon* might sustain the separation between a feminine poetry of integration and identification from the masculine prose of confrontation and mastery, the revelation of that figure's figurability potentially suspends that distinction by riddling it with irony. As the figure oscillates towards the pole of revelation, it, for example, flips Longinus's analysis of Plato as a masculine writer engaged in competition with Homer, undermining rather than reconstituting the philosopher as an author who overthrows his master and has, in turn, mastered his intentions, his passions, and his poetic inclinations.

"Plato," says Longinus, "if we read him with attention [*endeiknutai*], illustrates yet another road to sublimity, besides those we have discussed. This is the way of imitation [*mimēsis*] and emulation [*zēlōsis*] of great writers of the past" (158; 13.2). This subversive thesis recollects how Plato dismisses the poets as good-for-nothing imitators in the *Republic* in its suggestion that Plato's excellence was a result of what he learned from and how he imitated the poets of the past. Longinus continues:

> Plato could not have put such a brilliant finish on his philosophical doctrines or so often risen to the poetical subjects and poetical language, if he had not tried, and tried wholeheartedly, to compete for the prize against Homer, like a young aspirant challenging an admired master. To break a lance in this way may well have been a brash and contentious thing to do, but the competition proved anything but valueless. As Hesiod says, "this strife is good for men." Truly it is a noble contest and prize of honour, and one well worth winning, in which to be defeated by one's elders is itself no disgrace. (158; 13.4)

In her assertion that the *agon* figures Longinus's view of the sublime, Barbara Freeman cites this passage to draw the conclusion that in Longinus's view, "Poets struggle amongst themselves to best one another: even Plato would not have attained greatness without the need to show his superiority to his rival Homer" (17). But a series of problems emerge when one reads this passage "with attention." First, Longinus slides from imitation to emulation to competition as though they were synonymous. This movement generates a peculiar effect: the word translated as emulation [*zēlōsis* or zeal] can relate to either a sense of admiration or jealousy depending on context, so as Longinus moves from the context of imitating an admired poet to the competition of a rival over their prize, the meaning of that word seems to change as well.[102] This shift transforms Plato before our eyes from a dedicated fanboy to an overwhelmed and jealous rival, a metamorphosis that hints towards his possible identification with the figure of Sappho-as-victim tormented by the fantasy of the god-like man.

[102] As W. D. Furley observes, the question of whether Sappho is "moved to such convulsions of emotion by jealousy at seeing her beloved girlfriend in intimate colloquy with a man" or whether she simply admires the god-like man is "a major source of dissent among modern interpreters" of her poem ("Fearless" 7). Longinus could be riffing on this ambivalence in his description of Plato.

Perhaps this effect illustrates that what starts off as imitation becomes over time or eventually leads to zealous or jealous competition, as the student outgrows the teacher—a view consistent not only with Longinus's process of imitation through citation and then innovation but also with the ancient record of Plato's life, exemplified by his rephrasing of Sappho's poetry using the supposedly superior technique of asyndeton. As Diogenes Laërtius recounts in his *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, Plato's career as a writer began with poetry, writing dithyrambs, lyrics, and tragedies—some epigrams attributed to him have even survived: "It was only later when he was about to compete for the prize with a tragedy, [that] he listened to Socrates in front of the theatre of Dionysus, and then consigned his poems to the flames, with the words: 'Come hither, O fire-god, Plato now has need of thee'" (281; 3.5). If we trust that Diogenes's anecdotes represent the consensus of antiquity, then this example is a jarring one. Plato burns poetry and turns to philosophy by refusing to compete for the prize. Philosophy represents for him an exit from the *agon*. Longinus, however, reframes this turning away as a net positive, one that manifests as a far grander competition between philosophy: "As Hesiod says, 'this strife is good for men'" (158; 13.4). But which strife is this? "It was never true that there was only one kind of strife," sings Hesiod in *The Works and Days*, "There have always been two on earth" (lines 11–12). There is a destructive strife that "builds up evil war and slaughter" and a productive strife that occurs when "neighbor envies the neighbor who presses on toward wealth" (line 14; lines 23–24). If we press the quote further, Longinus appears to be generating an analogy: just as, in Hesiod's words, this productive strife creates a situation where

> potter is potter's enemy, and
>
> craftsman is craftsman's
>
> rival; tramp is jealous of tramp,

and singer of singer

—so too, for this quote to work, must philosopher be foe of poet (lines 25–6). But, since for Hesiod, like is only antagonist to like, if philosophers compete with the poets in an *agon*, then that means they must identify with them. The purpose then of the *agon* between philosopher and poet is to transform philosopher into poet or vice versa, a metamorphosis that becomes a problem with respect to Plato's rebellious conflict against Homer and the poets in no small part because Plato figures this conflict as that other kind of violent, destructive strife.

In *Republic X*, Plato specifically puts poetry on trial. This decision is not presented as a contest between neighbours over gathering the greatest riches nor between playwrights competing for the prize in the theatre, but a trial backed by the threat of violence (a problem Longinus alerts us to with his militaristic metaphor of the lance). A victory by Plato and his philosophy at this trial does not just mean that they win the prize, it also means that Homer and his poetry must be destroyed, banished, or cast into the fire, and Plato claims victory from the outset. Poetry is not allowed at its own trial: "[W]e'll allow [poetry's] defenders, who aren't poets themselves but lovers of poetry, to speak in prose on its behalf and to show that it not only gives pleasure but is beneficial both to constitutions and to human life" (1212; Plato *Republic* 607d). But by misreading Plato's attack on poetry as this other kind of strife, by refiguring the relationship between philosophy and poetry as a neighbourly *agon*, Longinus pushes Plato back into the festival or into the theatre where he claims Plato loses. But failing to achieve the top prize at the Greek festival does not make one's entry a failure.[103] After all, Plato's loss could not possibly be a complete one, as here is Longinus defending poetry in prose. At the same time,

[103] Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*—favoured by Aristotle and considered by many the greatest of the classical tragedies—reportedly took second place when it was first performed (most likely) at the City Dionysia sometime after 430 B.C.E.

Longinus keeps the figure of the court rather than just the theatre or festival in play. In Plato's *Laws*, while discussing the matter of political subversion, the Athenian describes the obligations of the citizenry when they discover a plot against the state: "Every man who is any good at all must denounce [*endeiknutō*] the plotter to the authorities and take him to court in a charge of violently and illicitly overthrowing the constitution" (856c). To read Plato "with attention [*endeiknutai*]" can therefore, within a legal or political context, mean to denounce him or to reveal what he has kept concealed. Here is the passage Longinus suggests we attend to:

> Men without experience of wisdom and virtue but always occupied with feasting and that kind of thing naturally go downhill and wander through life on a low plane of existence. They never look upwards to the truth and never rise, they never taste certain or pure pleasure. Like cattle, they always look down, bowed earthwards and tablewards; they feed and they breed, and their greediness in these directions make them kick and butt till they kill one another with iron horns and hooves, because they can never be satisfied. (qtd in Longinus 157; 13.1)

This passage is from *Republic IX*. There Plato develops his analogy between the ideal city and the tripartite soul by considering why the masses or bodily desires and the soldiers or spiritual virtues should not oversee the city/body. The trouble is that both will lead it to war. The masses will fight over base pleasures like those fools at Troy fought over "the phantom of Helen" (Plato *Republic* 1194; 586c). "And what about the spirited part?" Socrates asks rhetorically, "Mustn't similar things happen to someone who satisfies it? Doesn't his love of honor make him envious and his love of victory make him violent?" (*Republic* 1194; 586c). One must instead look upwards, Socrates argues, to rise above the violence and satisfy the pure, peaceful, uncompetitive pleasures of philosophical truth. What Longinus denounces is how the figurative,

poetical heights of philosophy that one looks up to and rises towards—a figure of elevation Longinus surely emulates in his metaphorical conception of the sublime as heights—conceals the violent, revolutionary act that philosophical prose then commits against poetry. Longinus informs on Plato to the court precisely where Plato borrows from poetry to conceal as peaceful his revolutionary violence.

Though this idea of Longinus-as-informant hinges on what could be argued as weakly contextualized usage of a single word, it is peculiar that the next part of this section, which purports to advise how to practice emulation correctly, veers into a discussion about trials and judgements. Longinus teaches that not only is it "good to imagine how Homer would have said the same thing, or how Plato or Demosthenes or (in history) Thucydides would have invested it with sublimity," but also one should consider

> [h]ow would Homer or Demosthenes have reacted to what I am saying, if he had been here? What would his feelings have been?" It makes it a great occasion if you imagine such a jury or audience [*dikastērion kai theatron* or court and theatre] for your own speech, and pretend that you are answering for what you write before judges and witnesses of such heroic stature. (159; 14.2)

Has Longinus taken his own advice here? If he is emulating Plato, and by emulating Plato he becomes jealous or zealous and denounces him to the court (now court *and* theatre), then this strange and final twist suggests that the magistrate set to adjudicate the case may be Plato himself, or at least how Longinus imagines Plato to be. If we follow this move to its conclusion, then it seems Longinus is now denouncing Plato to an imagined version of himself, revealing to that imagined Plato what had been concealed by himself from himself since the beginning—that he had betrayed his own revolution; that he was a poet all along.

Plato unsurprisingly then becomes Longinus's premiere example of the sublimity of mistakes. Longinus later cites Plato again, this time from his *Timaeus*, by stitching together a series of quotations meant to secure the boundaries of the unified, intentional subject, but which only depict Plato as a kind of kleptomaniac getting carried away by the "continuous use of tropes": "Thus Plato calls the head the 'citadel' of the body; the neck is an 'isthmus' constructed between the head and the chest; the vertebrae, he says, are fixed underneath 'like pivots,'" and so on (174; 32.5). Though closely related defensive military terms, the metaphors are mixed; the body represented, monstrous. And immediately following this description, we now find Plato rather than poetry on trial, as Longinus launches into a long digression defending Plato from Caecillius, who, after noting similar examples of crude poetic devices in Plato's writing, "had the audacity to declare Lysias in all respects superior to Plato" (175; 32.8). Lysias is evidently (like Theocritus) a faultless writer, but faultlessness, argues Longinus, is not the mark of sublimity; "erratic excellence" is (179; 36.4). Frequent mistakes—like mixed metaphors—broken up by moments of sublime thought and expression reflect an author seemingly caught up in the emotional power of profound ideas, who, in the fury of composition, slips his neck through the strap of compulsion's yoke only to be driven towards grand expressions by a force he later claims as his own. Plato's unintentional (and for Longinus passionate) lapses into poetry become the evidence Longinus needs to defend rather than prosecute Plato in the court of sublimity.

Already a certain ethical conception of the sublime becomes visible in Longinus's demonstration of the flexibility of the *agon*-figure to escape out from under the cycle of violence that marks the relationship between poetry and philosophy. Consider, by way of analogy, the cycle of real violence endured by the real Plato whom we fortunately do know something about. He was born sometime during the initial phases of the Peloponnesian war's outbreak in 431

B.C.E., a conflict stirred up by competition over the Greek peninsula between the two leading Greek city-states: Athens and Sparta. He lived through the various battles and the catastrophic plague that swept through the city during a Spartan siege—a disease that culminated in what some historians suspect was the death of a third or more of the city's population.[104] Athens's eventual defeat resulted in the establishment of the Thirty Tyrants, a regime friendly to the Spartans and partially composed of members of Plato's aristocratic family. Critias, one of Socrates's students, and a cousin to Plato's mother, was not just one of the primary leaders of this new oligarchy, but, as one historian puts it, he "was the Pol Pot of his day" (Tritle 223). He helped institute a new reign of terror, executing thousands more. Rebellion broke out; death followed. The ensuing rebel victors slew those members of Plato's family involved with this government—and then went for more. Plato's teacher Socrates was one of this new administration's most famous victims when he was put on trial and forced to drink hemlock. Under such conditions, one can hardly blame Plato's decision to declare reality insufficient, and to withdraw into his mind, his philosophy, his Academy and to publish texts that revolted against Greek cultural values as they were expressed by the poets and taken up by the orators who had led Athens to violence and ruin. When Longinus informs on this revolution by pointing out that when Plato uses poetry just as violently, he stifles this rebellion. But then he also simultaneously defends Plato by reconfiguring these uses as unintentional mistakes, that such mistakes are symptoms of the grandeur and importance of Plato's suspicions of poetry, and that Plato should be honoured for his honesty rather than prosecuted for his deceptions. Such a defence fully identifies philosophy with poetry but in a way that seeks to end the cycle of violence between the

[104] See Lawerence Tritle, *A New History of the Peloponnesian War*.

two perpetuated by the figure of the *agon* rather than simply identifying the loser with the victor. This is a far more productive kind of strife.

The consequences of this digression on mistakes have been thoroughly considered in the well-known exchange between Susan Guerlac and Francis Ferguson. For Guerlac, the sublime mistake notifies the reader of what she calls the "sincerity-effect"—not the sincerity of the truth, which would be tied to authorial intention, but to the force of expression, a force that "threatens the very notion of the subjective, or the unified self-identity of the subject" (Guerlac 275). Ferguson's response monitors how Guerlac's reading of Longinus constitutes rather than dismantles subjectivity, "recuperat[ing] the notion of the subject as a product of affect," of a reader's response rather than authorial intention (293). In Longinus, she claims, the mistake initially undermines intention and individuates the reader through a contest: the reader "pits his interpretation of the text against that of the author or speaker," but then this conflict is resolved, she argues, by recourse to the "*strategic* mistakenness," a feigned vulnerability that both elevates the reader who now imagines the author in need of their aid, while also shielding that author from criticism, as every weakness reverses into a strength (294, original emphasis). "At that point," she continues, "Longinus becomes invulnerable," and so too does the reader who by attributing the author with intentionally erring now identifies their consciousness with that of the author's (294). According to this paradoxical logic of the sublime, a mistaken quote—say, for example, citing Hesiod's concept of constructive strife in the context of violence—becomes not an error in judgment on the part of the author, but a grand clue that reveals to a loyal reader an author's true intention.

What this analysis demonstrates—especially by contrasting Longinus's analysis of Sappho with that of Plato—is a dialectical movement put into motion by the contradiction

between what is said and the act of saying it. Sappho describes a shattered, poetic subject, overwhelmed by emotion, but this act only establishes her as a unified, and in full possession of her rational faculties; Plato describes a unified, possessive, rational or philosophical subject but in practice succeeds only in presenting his fragmented consciousness, overcome by passion, and unintentionally reliant on poetry for self-expression. The Longinian strategic mistake moves beyond this contradiction between what is said and the act of saying it by centring the production of meaning, of affect, and of identification on the interval between the two positions, a space whose only articulation is paradox. Viewed in this manner, the *agon* then is not the definitive figure that structures the sublime as a contest between the weak and the strong, but a paradox that oscillates between competition and identification, where competition flips into identification, where the drive for possession results in dispossession—and vice versa. The paradoxical figurability of the *agon* enables exploration of these phenomena but it cannot entirely substitute them. And yet, Longinus is usually read as offering an exit strategy by way of one last victory for the reader in their contest against the author: the strategic mistake, claims Ferguson, does not result in "identification between author and reader (for the author speaks only through the reader's version of the text) but rather one that identifies the text as the reader's" (295). By coming to the aid of the author, by resolving their mistake, the reader functionally kills them by ascribing to and replacing "the author with his own consciousness," in what Ferguson describes as the "unthreatening […] position of imagining (purely hypothetically) that there might be some perception other than his own" (296). Through an imaginary identification with the author, the reader unifies the text's contradictions, and through that act of unification, seizes control of the text, makes it *his*, and secures his *ego* to the unassailable certainty of the possessive claim.

Ferguson concludes: "the aesthetic tradition that appropriates Longinus culminates in a dissolution of the subject in the person of the author and in an inscription of the subject in the person of the reader, hearer, or viewer" (297). Her phrasing is fortuitous. It both gestures to one final concluding paradox as well as a possible path forward. Everything hinges on her use of the word *appropriate*. As a verb, it means, like *lēpsis*, to seize or take possession of. But this idea of a tradition seizing control of Longinus's text creates a problem insofar as Longinus's treatise appears to theorize how readers must seize possession of texts and read them irrespective of authorial intention. If the tradition then claims Longinus's text in support of this activity, then is the tradition not doing precisely what Longinus intended it to do? Would it not then be the case that Longinus meant to have his own text seized: a sacrifice that paradoxically saves the notion of intention by intending to have one's authorial intentions be sacrificed by the Oedipal reader. And if Longinus intended to be a martyr, then it would appear he has a notion of the sublime that does not ignore but is identical to the one Freeman finds in Sappho's "fragment 31"—a sense of agency cultivated by "the wish for dispossession," which recognizes "in the scene of self-dispersal a site of self-empowerment" (19). If true, then to reach for the Longinian sublime appears from the perspective of the writer to be a deeply ethical act of giving. Yet, what the author gifts to the reader—if the tradition is to be believed—is from the perspective of the reader an unethical stance of possession and mastery towards that author and the text.

What happens, however, if one reads the Longinian sublime not just as appropriation but as the practice of reading appropriately, as an act of caretaking or stewardship rather than annexation? I have thus far explored the ramifications of this question in my analysis of both Sappho and Plato above by placing as much as possible the work of both within the double context of its original production (or what was believed to be its original production) and its

reception during the first to the third centuries, or roughly the time Longinus is believed to have been active. Though I recognize how such guesswork creates limits to this approach, I have demonstrated how it might show the appropriateness of elevating Sappho's intentional agency to credit her as a poet rather than a physician's example, while examining how undermining Plato's was appropriate insofar as it revealed the *agon's* paradoxical figurability impeding the scope of its figurative violence and saving Plato's project of philosophical prose from both himself and his future critics in the process. I would suggest both examples constitute ethical acts directed towards these authors rather than demonstrations of egotistical mastery, or as moments of and a responsiveness to supplication rather than overt competition. Longinus receives the gifts of love and philosophy from these writers and does his best to give back. They are not, in short, just his favourite writers arbitrarily defended; they are writers for whom it is appropriate to do right by. Though I concede that these arguments can only ever be speculative, that they can only explore the possibilities made available by this fragmented work whose author whose real name we do not even know, such compromises would also be required when saying just about anything about this tattered text. It remains unclear to me why critics who try to unify Longinus's thought and account for the missing gaps and crevices in Longinus's treatise generally do so only so long as those inquiries are limited to formal analysis. But with this new possibility now demonstrated by way of example, I turn to my concluding section, where I consider how Longinus might be theorizing this idea of ethical appropriateness.

The Longinian Theatre

Longinus's concern for appropriateness is frequently linked in the text to fears not that dissimilar to the ones expressed by Plato in his description of people as acting like overbred

cattle who feed at the trough of greed and pleasure, and who, driven by strife, go to war over material values. His entire final section is dedicated to condemning these vices, which Longinus worries will deliver a death blow to sublimity:

> I wonder whether what destroys great minds is not the peace of the world, but the unlimited war which lays hold of our desires, and all the passions which beset and ravage our modern life […] When wealth is measureless and uncontrolled, extravagance comes with it, sticking close beside it, and, as they say, keeping step. The moment wealth opens the way into cities and houses, extravagance also enters and dwells therein. These evils then become chronic in people's lives, and, as the philosophers say, nest and breed. They are soon producing offspring: greed, pride, and luxury are their all-too-legitimate children. If these offspring of wealth are allowed to mature, they breed in turn those inexorable tyrants of the soul, insolence, lawlessness, and shamelessness. It is an inevitable process. Men will no longer open their eyes or give thought to their reputation with posterity. (186–7; 44.7–8)

In an antitheatrical turn, Longinus links these vices to the spectacle of theatre: "In ordinary life, nothing is truly great which it is great to despise; wealth, honour, reputation, absolute power—anything in short which has a lot of external trappings [*prostragōdoumenon* or 'exaggeration in the tragic style']" (148; 7.1). What is unacceptable about the tragic style is its superficiality, a point he clarifies earlier after citing a few broken lines from a lost play by Aeschylus, the details of which, he argues, "sink from the terrifying to the contemptible" when examined, or, presumably and especially, when performed (145; 3.1). As such these lines are not tragic but *paratragic*, or to use Grube's expression "theatrical" (6). They may initially produce a trivial emotional response, but the words themselves have no depth, so the emotion does not last.

Words such as these exemplify what Longinus describes as a "pseudo-bacchanalian" superficial enthusiasm [*parenthursos*], a getting carried away by emotion disconnected from the subject or from the intensity of thought as if one were merely drunk (146; 3.5).

These remarks about the theatre invite two observations. First, Plato's critique of theatre won the day as Athenian drama spread across the Mediterranean seeding and cultivating the corruption Plato feared. Second, Longinus's condemnation of the theatre as a superficial practice is, at the same time, far removed from the original, religious experience of that theatre. If the experience of what I have called *theatrical character* or the ethical relationships made possible by this spiritual tradition are lost, then the cultural space for a similar practice becomes open for new potentialities. For Longinus, the sublime figure shares a similar spiritual energy as the classical theatrical mask both in terms of production of depth (shifts in perspective produce depth of character) and identification (repeating the figure is like wearing the mask as one speaks partially with another's voice). In this way, he can be read as doing for the library what the Athenians did with the stage in terms of treating these institutions as enabling a practice of ancestor worship.

Modern critics, however, typically shy away from Longinus's insistence that sublimity involves any sort of spiritual process, where texts preserve the soul or *psychē* of their authors. One can, of course, read divinity as a mere figure that when uncovered exposes the falsity of this spirituality. The problem, however, is that in Longinus the divine figures the affective force of revelation:

> Many are possessed by a spirit not their own. It is like what we are told of the Pythia at Delphi: she is in contact with the tripod near the cleft in the ground which (so they say) exhales a divine vapour, and she is thereupon made pregnant by the supernatural power

> and forthwith prophesies as one inspired. Similarly, the genius of the ancients acts as a kind of oracular cavern and effluences flow from it into the minds of their imitators. (158; 13.2)

This situation produces a final question: if the revelation of falsity paradoxically generates the truth of an affective or divine force, then does the revelation of *revelation* as a metaphor figuring that force then undercut that that divine feeling or is it like the metaphor of a concealed theft that still works despite us witnessing it? My claim in this chapter is that Longinus's supposedly duplicitous or invalid slide from author to form is really an admission that the sublime is felt even if it can't be properly figured; that its force cannot be fully exhausted by its features. I have linked this view of the sublime figure to the divine power of the Athenian mask because while there may not be decisive formal criteria that justify the production of this feeling, there may be spiritual or ethical considerations. To suggest how Longinus theorizes the possibility of an ethical relationship to the sublime figure, however, requires going back to the beginning, to his revision of the doctrine of organic unity, and to the reassessment of the principle of authorial control.

Longinus's treatise starts by breaking the rules of classical composition. He criticizes a past author Caecilius (who was Plato's critic), as one who "tries at immense length to explain to us what sort of thing 'the sublime' is, as though we did not know; but he has somehow passed over as unnecessary the question how we can develop our nature to some degree of greatness" (143; 1.1). Longinus won't make the same mistake. "Sublimity," he says, "is a kind of eminence or excellence of discourse" before moving into his examples and his advice (143; 1.3). But what could that possibly mean? In Greek, the words are grossly tautological. The word for sublimity *hypsus* translates as *heights*; the ones he uses for what is translated by D. A. Russell as eminence

and excellence—*exoche* and *akrotēs*—also relate metaphorically to the idea of height. They can mean something like *elevated* and *pinnacle* respectively. As any close, suspicious reader may note, these are all not just figures but quasi-synonyms, which means that Longinus just defines the sublime figuratively with three similar orders of magnitude: "The high style is the height and height of discourse," he announces, confusing the issue. Not to worry, however, since he suggests you already know what the sublime is. "Your education dispenses me from any long preliminary definition," and so he only gives this tentative, tautological one (143; 1.3). Who is this *you* that the text addresses? It appears to be dedicated to an acquaintance of Longinus, Terentianus, and so one wonders what Terentianus's education is such that he needs no definition. He was probably a Roman educated in Greek.[105] But does it really matter? The public circulation of private correspondence was common in antiquity; hence why many survive. Since we have this text, one can assume that it too at some point circulated publicly. In fact, the private address is probably a bit of a ruse since Longinus's proofs for an author's sublimity are predicated on a notion of universality achieved through public dissemination. As Longinus elsewhere remarks, sublimity depends not on any one specific education, but all possible educations: "When people of different trainings, ways of life, tastes, ages, and manners all agree about something, the judgement and assent of so many distinct voices lends strength and irrefutability to the conviction that their admiration is rightly directed" (148; 7.4). So instead of ever saying what the sublime is, Longinus only ever gestures *here it is*¸ and he leaves it up to you to agree. The more of you who do, the more certain we can be of an example's sublimity.

Contrast Longinus's introduction with how Plato argues one ought to organize a text. In the *Phaedrus*, he compares writing to a body to develop what is now described as the theory of

[105] See Walter Allen Jr. "The Terentianus of the Peri Uyous" and F. R. B. Godolphin "The Author of the Peri Uyous."

organic unity: "Every speech must be put together like a living creature," says Plato's Socrates, "with a body of its own; it must be neither without head nor without legs; and it must have a middle and extremities that are fitting both to one another and to the whole work" (*Phaedrus* 542, 264c). The aim of this structure is to see "things together that are scattered about everywhere and collec[t] them into one kind, so that by defining each thing we can make clear the subject of any instruction we wish to give" (Plato, *Phaedrus* 542; 265d). Just as a body starts with a head, so too should a text start with a clear and concise definition. Furthermore, just as a body has a left side and a right side, written speeches ought to proceed through the contrast and comparison of pairs: on the one hand *this*, on the other hand, *that*. To explain why this organic structure is necessary, Plato draws the process of writing into an Oedipal relationship, noting that once "written down, every discourse roams about everywhere, reaching indiscriminately those with understanding no less than those who have no business with it"; to prevent that writing from being misunderstood "it always needs its father's support" (*Phaedrus* 552; 275e). Left to wander on its own, writing threatens the sanctity of the fatherly author: "[I]t doesn't know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not," and should it wind up in the hands of those that might misread the author's meaning, causing shame and embarrassment, potentially killing the author's reputation in posterity (*Phaedrus* 552; 275e). Plato's theory of organic unity solves this problem by securing the fatherly author's power over a text through a set of formal compositional rules that clarify a writer's intended meaning.

In a quick succession of images, Longinus responds to this Oedipal archetype of textual transmission by linking the oracle at Delphi impregnated by the cavern's divine fumes, to the echoes of the ancients who inspire imitators, to Plato's *agon* with the elder Homer. The pace of this transition obfuscates any kind of easy one-to-one identification in these examples, as the

position of the author switches in each from father (the ancient poets) to mother (the oracle) to son (Plato). These examples then transition into the section that advises one to imagine the author one imitates as present and as responding to or judging one's work (a clue that he may have Plato in mind here), and that same section concludes with the following remark: "Even more stimulating is the further thought: 'How will posterity take what I am writing?' If a man is afraid of saying anything which will outlast his own life and age, the conceptions of his mind are bound to be incomplete and abortive; they will miscarry and never be brought to birth whole and perfect for the day of posthumous fame (159; 14.3). In his advice against a paranoid desire to control every aspect of a text's meaning for fear of its future interpretations, Longinus keeps alive the figure of organic reproduction through images of birth and pregnancy, but the clarity that enabled the easy link to the Oedipal family struggle has been stripped away. Instead of a father controlling the son, the child is given absolute independence. One ought to write for a future that one has no control over, to people whom one does not know, who are brought up with a different education, in a different tradition, and who have different values and different experiences. This model implies that a writer must then not only direct their work towards an incalculable otherness but also place their confidence in that otherness, trusting that if it is gifted posthumous consideration, then it will be received appropriately rather than be appropriated.

One could, of course, characterize this position as arrogantly attempting to imagine all possible future subject positions and argue that this moment reflects the sublime at its most egotistical. But the point seems to me to be that this is unimaginable. The imagination—to use another of Hertz's formulations for the sublime turn—encounters in considering all possible future readers a fear-inducing "moment of blockage," which in Hertz's analysis of the sublime is typically turned round to confirm the status of the unitary self by identifying with that blockage

now reconfigured as a product of one's imagination and by releasing that reconstituted self "into another order of discourse" (44). Longinus, however, does not fear the future as something to be avoided. Fear may drive a writer to Plato's paranoid doctrine of organic unity, but the sublime writer need not be afraid. They should trust rather than dread the unimaginable reader. And just as the *theatrical character* relied on the Athenian community to preserve their *psychē* responsibly, so too does the author rely on a community of responsible readers. This practice of community may be exactly what Longinus demonstrates in what I have suggested are his ethical selections rather than appropriations of sources.

If there is a moment of blockage for Longinus, however, then it occurs in the passage cited earlier, when he confronts the Malthusian reproduction of vice aroused by the expansion of commercialism made possible through the massive seizure of territory by the grand post-Alexandrian empires of antiquity. As he tries to promote the study of literature he runs into that terrible and unimaginable barrier that is the abysmal material conditions engendered by this imperial, mercantile world, and, as he attempts to conceptualize the enormity that this problem poses relative to the study of rhetoric, of literature, of sublimity, in a period where literacy was a luxury of the financial and political elite, he can only pivot away from its blockage, reconstituting himself as one of the few, remaining good guys who, by intellectualizing and objectifying the problem, rise above it. "Nowadays," he says,

> bribery is the arbiter of the life and fortunes of every one of us—not to mention the chasing after other people's deaths and conspiring about wills. We are all so enslaved by avarice that we buy the power of making profit out of everything at the price of our souls. Amid such a pestilential corruption of human life, how can we expect that there should be left to us any free, uncorrupt judge of great things of permanent value?" (187; 44.9)

But then he concludes: "Best to let these things be," (quoting from a speech by Orestes on a similar theme taken from Euripides's *Electra*), let us "proceed to our next subject. This was emotion" (187; 44.12).[106] Certainly, as an instance of the masculine sublime's structure of blockage and reconstitution, Longinus's turn from the impossible difficulties of the material world and into the easier to manage difficulties of the mind displays a profound moment of impotence masked as agency, one that echoes Plato's own withdrawal from the material world and into the academy, philosophy, and the world of forms. But, if we read it with attention, this moment seems to hint at the possibility of an otherwise. In *Electra,* the "let these things be " does not refer to a feigned strength when confronted by powerlessness and injustice. It instead stems rather from Orestes confronting his own error in judgment. He had mistakenly assumed that the peasant his sister had been forced to marry was an ignoble, cattle-like lout, beholden to naught but his desires to feed and to breed. As it turned out, despite his poverty, the man treated Electra with the appropriate dignity and respect—he was god-like in his generosity. What Orestes "lets be" then is not the injustice he finds in the world, but his capacity to contribute to that injustice by imagining he can fully imagine the other, by believing that some external, purely objective, universal "test" can be used to let "man distinguish man," to decide who is better and who is worse in advance of meeting them (Euripides *Electra* line 373). Longinus lets things be because perhaps he too has erred in his judgment, and you, his future reader, will upon meeting him, turn out to be just as generous.

[106] Euripides *Electra* line 379

Chapter 3:

Phèdre's Sapphic Speech: Marie Champmeslé and the Racinian Sublime

Real sublimity contains much food for reflection, is difficult or rather impossible to resist, and makes a strong and ineffaceable impression on the memory
—Longinus *On Sublimity*, 148; 6.3

For although it [*the art of tone*] *speaks by means of mere sensations without concepts, and so does not, like poetry, leave anything over for reflection, it yet moves the mind in a greater verity of ways and more intensely, although only transitorily*.
—Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, § 53; 217

[I]l ya des gestes sublimes que toute l'eloquence Oratoire ne rendra jamais. [*There are sublime gestures that no oratorical eloquence will ever render*].
—Diderot, *Lettre sur les sourds et muets* 16

Sappho: Found in Translation

Campbell Allen's London production of Racine's *Phèdre* opened at Studio Theatre on 10 Sun 1957 to critical acclaim. In a review for *The Stage*, the critic P.H. singled out the performance of actress Margaret Rawlings (revealed afterwards to also have been the play's translator): "'Phèdre' is great tragedy and from the moment Miss Rawlings, as the queen, enters declaring her passion for her stepson Hippolytus, until her death by self-administered poison, her grip on play and audience alike, never falters" (11). Rawlings later explains in the preface to the publication of her script, that her role as translator occurred out of necessity: while the "[t]he least horrible" translation they could find was Robert Boswell's 1890 version, it proved hopeless (Rawlings 10). Boswell's attempt to transpose the French meaning into a stylistically elevated English verse made the play unspeakable. The awkward *bathos*, for instance, produced by the accidental pun when reading aloud the lines "Phaedra reaps little glory from a lover / So lavish

of his sighs*"* necessitated emendations, and, as problems continually arose, changes kept coming until Rawlings rewrote the script (Boswell 224).

To solve the problem of Racine's untranslatability, Rawlings proposed a simple principle: to always remember that "Racine was writing for actors" (9). As John Campbell observes, Racine's plays—especially *Phèdre*—dazzle their readers with "some of the most sublime words ever written in French" (208). Astonished by this poetry, critics, scholars, and translators are all too often seduced into treating his text as "more poem than play" (J. Campbell 208). Rawlings rejects this convention by translating for performers rather than scholars and aiming to deliver pleasing sounds rather than the poetic nuances tucked into Racine's verse. Her success was later attested to by another critic, who praised her for "restoring some of Racine's theatrical dialogue which had been lost in a translation intended more for study than stage" ("Racine Play" 7). Though Rawlings's insistence that one read Racine as a playwright rather than a poet has become increasingly accepted by scholars, one of her secondary observations remains underexplored.[107] As Rawlings observes, unlike Shakespeare, who was "writing for men and boys […] Racine was writing for women" (9). For the 1677 production of *Phèdre et Hippolyte*, he appears to have been writing for a particular woman. On the play's opening night, it was the star actress Marie Champmeslé who took to the stage and translated Racine's sublime words into sublime speech and sublime actions.

By likening performance to translation, I question how some seventeenth-century neoclassical Parisians understood the relationship between author and performer. On the one hand, translation could be seen as a powerful tool for asserting authorial presence and originality.

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107 For the first systematic study on the theatricality of Racine's plays see David Maskell's *Racine: A Theatrical Reading*. For more on Racine's theatricality see also Michael Hawcroft's *Word as Action: Racine, Rhetoric, and Theatrical Language*, Nicolas Cronk and Alain Viala (editors) *La Réception de racine à l'age classique: de la scène au monument*, and R. Darren Gobert *The Mind-Body Stage: Passion and Interaction in the Cartesian Theatre*.

While contrasting two of Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux's major works the *Art poétique* and his translation Longinus's *Traité du Sublime* Nicolas Cronk, for instance, observes how the former, although technically an original, mostly just repeats established Horatian doctrines while the translation updates, revises, and insists on the relevance of this text. For this reason, Cronk concludes, "[T]here is a sense in which contemporaries might have looked upon the *Traité du Sublime* as the truly original work and seen the *Art poétique* as a mere reworking of Horace" (*The Classical Sublime* 99). On the other hand, in the theatre, the performer who translated an author's words into actions and expressions was often denied this same potency and originality. While the center of theatre practice, the material body—its gestures and its voice—is constrained in neoclassical theory by a logic of representation that subordinates that body to the author's rather than the actress's mind. David Wiles describes this model as repeating the cartesian split "of body and soul" insofar as "truth lies hidden in the verbal structure created by the playwright, and the actor's job is to make this truth knowable, pleasurable, and touching" (Wiles, *The Player's Advice* 111). The seventeenth-century French writer Samuel Chappuzeau, for example, asserts that "[l]e Poëte est la forme substantielle, et la plus noble partie," whereas "le Comedien est la mattiere" ("The poet is the substantive form and the noblest part [whereas] the actor is the material"; 86). As the noblest part of the French theatre, authors become for Chappuzeau "les Dieux Tutelaires du Theâtre" ("the guardian gods of the theatre"), guiding the actors, who are merely "les Interpretes de leurs volontez" ("the interpreters of their will"; 84). But theory is one thing, practice another. From this perspective, when trying to stage a play, the question becomes firstly how does one make the playwright's words touching, and secondly, is there a sense of agency or moral character to be found in that process?

I ask these questions to initiate a departure from Joan DeJean's interpretation of Racine's translation of Sappho's "fragment 31" in *Phèdre*, an intertextual moment that occurs during the play's scene of inquiry when Phaedra launches into her great confession speech. For DeJean, that Racine "deci[des] to have his Sapphic heroine pronounce herself love's victim" by translating her verse into his play, and that future competitors (his "poetic heirs") similarly play this game of "citing Sappho via Racine by repeating this image," reveals not only Racine's participation in a contest to control representations of feminine desire but also his stature as a major contestant (Sappho, c'est moi 6). DeJean's subsequent thesis—that "French men of letters conspire[d] to make Phaedra and Sappho over into their preferred image of female abandonment"—remains today "seminal"; her analysis of Racine's Sappho, authoritative (*Fictions of Sappho* 89; Gillespie 342).[108] But then, by analyzing this translation only in terms of poetical rather than theatrical history, DeJean appears to approach Racinian tragedy solely as poem rather than play. What this view misses is that while this sapphic speech may have been written by Racine, it was spoken by Champmeslé. That these words were intended for performance, I argue, matters. What this distinction reveals, however, is not the absence of a contest, but a far more localized and personal one, the stakes of which involve identifying responsibility for or over the emotional effects of the theatre. By close reading the metatheatrical elements of this speech, this chapter argues that Racine appropriates "fragment 31" as an attempt to demonstrate mastery of and seize authority over the sublime performance of La Champmeslé.

[108] See also Georges Forestier (editor) *Racine: Oeuvres complètes* 1:1647-8n1 for more on Racine's translation of Sappho in a potential rivalry with Boileau. Alternatively, Nicolas Cronk suggests that Racine's invocation of the sublime is an "exemplum of Boileau's theory […] with Boileau as theorist and Racine as practitioner," 121.

"With the Aid of an Actress"

Act 1 Scene 3 of *Phèdre* begins with the titular character entering the stage alongside her Nurse, crying out in expressions of grief and vulnerability:

N'allons point plus avant. Demeurons, chère Oenone.

Je ne me soutiens plus. Ma force m'abandonne.

Mes yeux sont éblouis du jour que je revoise,

Et mes genoux tremblants se dérobent sous moi.

Hélas!

No further, Let us stay, dear Oenone!

I can no longer support myself. My strength abandons me.

My eyes are dazzled by the daylight I again see.

And my trembling knees give out from under me.

Ah! (1.3.153–157)

She then performs this helplessness by collapsing into a chair. We know she does this because this passage contains the play's only stage direction: "*elle s'assied*" ("*she sits*" 1.3.157sd). This entrance introduces a scene of inquiry: a series of back-and-forth dialogue, where the Nurse continuously tries to sympathize with her ward while persistently asking exactly what it is she ought to be sympathizing about. Meanwhile, the latter only answers the inquiries with more distressed cries:

Je l'ai perdu. Les Dieux m'en ont ravi l'usage.

Oenone, la rougeur me covre le visage,

Je te laisse trop voir mes honteuses douleurs,

Et mes yeux malgré moi se remplissent de pleurs.

I've lost it. The Gods have robbed me of my bearings,

Oenone, redness covers my face,

I let you see too much of my shameful pains;

And my eyes, in spite of me, fill up with tears. (1.3.181–4)

The Nurse replies "S'il vous faut rougir" ("Blush if you must") before launching into a series of questions:

Voulez-vous sans pitié laisser finir vos jours?

Quelle fureur les borne au milieu de leur course?

Quel charme on quel poison en a tari la source?

Will you let your life flow away without pity?

What madness shortens its course?

What spell or poison dries up its source? (1.3.185–190).

This emotionally charged dialogue runs a staggering 116 lines before Phaedra eventually launches into her Sapphic confession.

The length of this scene is notable, and I will return to consider criticisms of its duration in my next chapter, which analyzes how Adam Smith's reading of the play differs from how it was received by seventeenth-century Parisians. For now, however, it is enough to simply ask what such a drawn-out scene may have meant for Racine or what effect may have been intended by it. A simple place to begin to answer this question could be just with the stage direction "*she*

sits" (literally translated as "*she sits herself"*). Embedded in this phrase is an ambiguity that reflects the central problem I intend to unravel in this play. Despite being in the indicative mood, in practice, "*she sits,*" because it is a direction, implies a command rather than description. Contrast these words with what Phaedra announces a few lines earlier: "I can no longer support myself." Built from a negative verb, this sentence signifies her character as sapped of physical strength, and on the verge of collapse. But "*she sits*"—this statement (more so in its original reflexive form) necessitates an agent or subject willing her body-as-object into action. While the description is of a character's legs giving out on their own accord, staging them properly requires a performer who directs those legs to wobble. But since this is also a stage direction, the command is not just internal to and from the actress, it is also something she was given by the author. The implications of this command within the context of the Neoclassical division between author and actor introduce the problem of agency—specifically, the question of how much a character ought to be read as the enactment of an author or a performer's will.

Consider another related example, when just a few lines later Phaedra voices how she blushes, and declaims how her "eyes, in spite of me, fill up with tears." Read as poetry, this leaky image follows a common trope employed by both male and female poets to describe overwhelming feminine emotion referred to by Isobel Armstrong as "the gush of the feminine" (15). Whereas men historically used this trope to depict women as helpless, women often appropriated the figure to explore "a way of thinking through their relationship to knowledge," specifically "the question of how far the affective *is* knowledge" (16, original emphasis). In the performance of *Phèdre*, the image works one way as poetry and another as theatre. The dramatic irony produced by the actress's weeping body, for example, challenges any straightforward reading of Phaedra as a woman humiliated by her passions: as an actress describes the shameful

collapse of Phaedra's agency, she establishes hers. She confidently seizes control of her body and wills tears into her eyes.[109] Her material presence flips the script. While the poetic picture of Phaedra may be one of humiliation and helplessness, to stage it requires a performer with extraordinary emotional control over her body. But then the presence of authorial intention muddles this demonstration of agency: does this affective knowledge and embodied control indicate an agent expressing her bodily autonomy, or is it just an imperative that the actress be able to meet the conditions laid out in advance by the author?

Of course, these two positions are not mutually exclusive. Their disjunction could be overcome by thinking in terms of collaboration. But that is not how this problem was historically posed. Jean Racine's son and biographer Louis Racine, for example, not only insisted on articulating this uncertainty as an opposition, but he also expressed a deep anxiety over the stakes of this conflict. For him, defending his father's posthumous reputation as France's most sublime playwright involved depreciating the role of Marie Champmeslé, the leading female performer in several of Racine's most famous plays. He complains that "[c]ette femme n'étoit point née Actrice. La nature ne lui avoit donné que la beauté, la voix et la mémoire: du reste, elle avoit si peu d'esprit, qu'il falloit lui faire entendre les vers qu'elle avoit à dire, et lui en donner le ton. Tout le monde sait le talent que mon Père avoit pour la déclamation, dont il donna le vrai goût aux Comédiens capables de le prendre" ("That woman was not a born actress. Nature had only given her beauty, a voice, and a memory: for the rest, she had so little aptitude, that he had to make her understand the verses she had to say and teach her the proper tone. Everyone knows

[109] The ability to produce tears at will would have been standard fare for an actress with Champmeslé's stature. For the significance of tears in Seventeenth-century French literature see Sheila Page Bayne's *Tears and Weeping: An Aspect of Emotional Climate Reflected in Seventeenth-Century French Literature.* As Bayne points out, "the quality of an actor's talent was judged in large measure by his possession of the 'don des larmes,' i.e. the ability to weep and induce the audience to weep with him" (17).

my father's talent for declamation, the taste for which he gave actors capable of apprehending it"; 110–1). Louis Racine's insistence that his father was a master of declamation and that Champmeslé was otherwise inept reeks of biased insecurity. For one thing, Louis Racine could not have possibly known either about her performances or his father's tutelage first-hand, since she died while he was only five. For another, Racine was rumoured to be in love with his actress, if not openly engaged in an affair (as he had been with his previous star Mlle Du Parc). Louis Racine was, as Virginia Scott observes, an "excessively pious and a convinced Jansenist [and] extremely touching on the subject of his father's relationship to women" (188). The idea of his father engaging in a love affair with an actress—a profession linked since antiquity to promiscuity and prostitution—likely rankled him. His portrayal of "his father as a kind of Professor Higgins, teaching Mlle Champmeslé, his Eliza Doolittle" seems to be inspired not by personal experience, but instead by a desire to "believe that his father 'never was the slave of love,' never was in love with Mlle Champmeslé, [and] never wrote his tragedies 'conforming to the style of declamation of his actress'" (Scott 225, 188).

Louis Racine sources what he treats as nasty rumours about his father to the letters of Mme de Sévigné, who, unlike Louis, attended Champmeslé's performances. Her insidious lies, Louis claims, have had such a reach that he finds their blasphemy repeated in the introduction of his father's complete works. "C'est à moi à les détruire," he vows ("It is up to me to destroy them"; 110). What Sévigné records of these performances threatens not just the purity of Racine's sexual inclinations but the sanctity of authorial dominance over the actress. Sévigné merges these two concerns when she asserts that "Racine fait des comédies pour la Champmeslé: ce n'est pas pour les siècles à venir. Si jamais il n'est pas plus jeune, et qu'il cesse d'être amoureux, ce ne sera plus la même chose" ("Racine writes plays for la Champmeslé: it is not for

the centuries to come: if he is ever no longer young, and he ceases to be in love, it will not be the same thing"; 77). By locating the emotional power of a theatrical performance in the seductive, material presence of the actress, Sévigné inverts the Cartesian model of authorial and authoritative mind controlling the acting body. It is, for Sévigné, the actress rather than the playwright who demonstrates a god-like nobility: She recounts that "la Champmeslé est quelque chose de si extraordinaire, qu'en votre vie vous n'avez rien vu de pareil; c'est la comédienne que l'on cherche et non pas la comédie; j'ai vu Ariane pour elle seule: cette comédie est fade; les comédiens sont maudits; mais quand la Champmeslé arrive, on entend un murmure; tout le monde est ravi; et l'on pleure de son désespoir" ("La Champmeslé is something so extraordinary that you have never seen anything like her in your life; one goes to see the actress and not the play. I saw *Ariane* for her alone. The play is bland; the actors are cursed; but when La Champmeslé arrives, a murmur is heard; everyone is delighted; and we cry of despair"; 88). Sévigné is not alone in this opinion. Other commentators paint a picture of a woman who enacts something like the sublime turn discussed in the previous chapter. As the author of *Entretiens galans* records of her voice: "[E]lle la sçait conduire avec beaucoup d'art, et elle y donne à propos des inflexions si naturelles, qu'il semble, qu'elle ait veritablement dans le cœur une passion, qui n'est que dans sa bouche" ("she knows how to play it with a great deal of art, and she aptly gives it inflections so natural that it seems she truly has in her heart an emotion that is only in her mouth" (90). This description repeats the logic found in Longinus's treatise, where the paradoxical willing of passivity is overcome by shifting away from the paradox to focus instead on the force of its enunciation, a force that Longinus frequently invokes while suspending the distinction between nature and artifice. Champmeslé's example is the Longinian

sublime but for one exception: the rhetorical figure has been replaced by the tone of voice and the motions of the body—a theatrical rather than rhetorical sublime.

We do not know exactly how Champmeslé performed her roles, as one can only find the record of such events in anecdotes. Worse still, seventeenth-century French actors and actresses did not write method books, making the subject difficult to even conjecture about. Our only insight relies on the long tradition of oratory training that had developed since antiquity, which, because of its consistent application in theatre criticism, likely had some influence on this acting style, though we cannot say exactly what that influence was or how far it extended. In *The Art of Poetry*, for example, Horace argued that an actor or orator cannot just recite emotional lines; they must recite them emotionally: "It is not enough for poetry to be beautiful; it must also be pleasing and lead the hearer's mind wherever it will. The human face smiles in sympathy with smilers and comes to the help of those that weep. If you want me to cry, mourn first yourself; *then* your misfortunes will hurt me" (100, original emphasis). The actor needs, for Horace, to first feel the emotion to express it with "the medium of the tongue" (110). Quintilian concurred. He advised actors and orators employ the technique conjuring "certain experiences which the Greeks call *phantasiai*, and the Romans *visions*, whereby things absent are presented to our imagination with such extreme vividness that they seem actually to be before our eyes" (433–4; 6.2.29). For Quintilian, by harnessing the power of the imagination to create fictitious emotional visions, one could will oneself into feeling and authentically expressing an overwhelming emotion.

This method, if it were employed, would have had the side effect of turning the actor or actress into a rival of the poet. Since now the body is an expression of the performer's will rather than the author's, this practice throws a wrench into the machinery of the author as a regulatory

mind and the actress or actor as a regulated body. While Quintilian waves the problem away by claiming that it is the author's words rather than the performance that "set our souls on fire with fictitious emotions," this move fails to account for the *je ne sais quoi* that enables some performers to be better than others while reciting the same text (437; 6.2.35). And whatever *it* was, Champmeslé's had *it,* especially insofar as this *it* manifested in her vocal expression. As H. Noel Williams, summarizes: "The flexibility of her voice appears to have been quite extraordinary. Melodious, soft, and caressing in rôles like Iphigénie or Monime, it became so powerful and sonorous in such parts as Phèdre, Roxane, and Hermione that, it is said, when the door of the box at the end of the *salle* happened to be open, it could be heard at the Café Procope, over the way" (95). Even though Louis Racine may have wanted to blame Champmeslé's figurative rivalry with Racine on the sinister writings of Mme de Sévigné, some of Racine's own literary allies appear to have disagreed. In the first six lines of *Épître VII*, for example, Boileau, mixing what Georges Forestier describes as "éloge de l'actrice et éloge du sublime racinien" ("praise for the actress and praise for the Racinian sublime") contrasts the art of Racine with the art of Champmeslé, noting that the former owed a debt to the latter:

> Que tu sais bien, Racine, à l'aide d'un acteur,
> Émouvoir, étonner, ravir un spectateur!
> Jamais Iphigénie, en Aulide immolée,
> N'a coûté tant de pleurs à la Grèce assemblée,
> Que dans l'heureux spectacle à nos yeux étalé
> En a fait sous son nom verser la Champmêlé.
>
> How well you know, Racine, with the aide of an actor,

To move, astonish, delight a Spectator!

Never did Iphigenia sacrificed in Aulis,

Cause as many tears to the assembled Greece,

That in the happy spectacle unfolded to our eyes

Flowed tears caused by La Champmeslé. (Forestier 501; Boileau 2.209–10)

Anecdotes such as these record a perplexing relationship: a romantic pairing between two major figures of the Parisian theatre, but when that pairing is triangulated and includes this third term, the theatre, then the two are reconfigured as rivals, struggling for ownership over or responsibility for its power. Shortly after the production of *Phèdre*, however, both their professional collaboration and their romantic affair ends—Champmeslé finds a new romantic partner while Racine retires from the theatre and marries later that year.

I began this section by considering how the play's text can invite general questions about agency relative to the relationship between characters, performers, and authors before outlining the actual relationship between Racine and Champmeslé. But, for my hypothesis that this play is written for Champmeslé to hold, then it needs to be shown that the scene does not just invite these questions generally, but specifically with respect to their relationship and this figurative—or perhaps even real—rivalry they had over the stage. And one finds just this kind of evidence when close reading the metatheatrical elements in one of the play's most well-known speeches.

Bloody Metaphors; Pathetic Spectacles

While tracing the semiotics of blood and the body in the language of Racine's *Phèdre,* several critics have identified the work of Jacques Ferrand (and through Ferrand the larger Galenic tradition) as an example of the kind of pre-Cartesian medical discourse operating in

Racine's plays. By 1677, the medical field was in flux: William Harvey's discovery of the cardiovascular system in 1628 delivered a blow to the confidence in the authority of the ancients comparable to the shock of Copernicus's discovery of the heliocentric model. Galenic medicine treats the organs as producers of humours (blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile) and understands the veins as a distribution network, transporting these substances for consumption throughout the body. Within this model, diagnosis involves identifying imbalances in humoral production and/or obstructions in their proper flow. When Jacque Ferrand proposed the kinds of treatments for lovesickness considered in the previous chapter—changes in diet, imbibing of potions, bloodletting, and female circumcision—they were all within this system designed to correct either disparities in humoral production or reorient their movements. Harvey's argument that the veins carried only blood and that blood was conserved as it circulated (as opposed to being produced and consumed) forced medical science back to the drawing board.

But since signs can signify in multiple ways, one must take care not to restrict Racine's blood imagery to any one medical discourse. Pierre Giuliani, for example, gives as equal footing to the Harvey-inspired theory of the passions found in Descartes's *Les Passions de l'âme* as he does to the earlier paradigm when reading this play, closely considering how Racine seems to balance the two.[110] However, one scene in the play stands out for Giuliani as clearly integrated within the antiquated model: "[O]n pense spontanément en parcourant l'ouvrage de Ferrand" (one thinks spontaneously while browsing Ferrand's work"), he claims, "[L]'aveu de Phèdre à Œnone, et le saisissement de la reine lors de la scène de première vue" (about Phaedra's confession to Œnone, and her seizure during the scene of first sight"; 296). He quotes as an

[110] Racine's debt to Descartes can be traced both directly to Descartes's works as well as to the artist Charles Le Brun who created the frontispiece for the 1677 publication of Racine's play, and whose *Conférence sur l'expression générale et particulière* made extensive use of Cartesian theory. See Jennifer Montagu's *The Expression of the Passions*, 156–62.

example a long passage from Ferrand's *Traicté* that describes how the initial appearance of a beautiful object can deceive the eyes, disturb the soul, tickle the imagination, hasten the blood, agitate the seed, and cause the person to imprint upon the object a desire that impairs judgement and speech. And Giuliani is not the only one to draw this connection. Quoting this exact same "laborieuses explications techniques" ("laborious technical explanations") from Ferrand, Jean-Michel Pelous argues that one can apply this "diagnostic inattendue" to Phaedra's plight ("surprising diagnosis; 77).

Throughout the play, Racine repeatedly employs the language of the vision and of blood, stressing "the interrelationship between the perceptual and circulatory apparatuses" in a way that addresses "cultural anxieties about intersubjective contamination that Cartesianism exacerbated" (Gobert 122). Both Pelous and Giuliani draw specific attention to the same passage when considering this relationship: Phaedra's speech during the scene of inquiry (Pelous cites lines 273–4, while Giuliani gives line 273 as the epigraph to his chapter):

> Je le vis, je rougis, je pâlis à sa vue.
> Un trouble s'éleva dans mon âme éperdue.
> Mes yeux ne voyaient plus, je ne pouvais parler,
> Je sentis tout mon corps et transir, et brûler.
> Je reconnus Vénus, et ses feux redoutables,
> D'un sang qu'elle poursuit tourments inévitables.

> I saw him, I blushed, I paled at his sight.
> A disturbance arose in my distraught soul.
> My eyes no longer saw, I couldn't speak.

I felt my whole body both freeze and burn.

I recognized Venus and her fearsome fires,

In a blood with which she pursues inevitable torments. (1.3.273–8)

Though both critics find this passage an allusion to Ferrand's medical perspective, "Racine's contemporaries," claims DeJean, took "note almost immediately that what are perhaps the best-known lines of his masterpiece […] are an adaption of Sappho's ode" (*Fictions* 86). In his 1684 translation of Sappho's "fragment 31," Longepierre, for instance, included a note observing of these lines that "Racine pourroit bien s'en être souvenu, lorsqu'il a fait dire si pathetiquement à la Phèdre" (Racine might have remembered them when he had his Phaedra say them pathetically [*pathétiquement*]"; *Anacreon et de Sapho* 383). Of course, that these different intertextual approaches converge on this same passage is not a coincidence, since, as I argued in my last chapter, Ferrand's medical discourse owes a great debt to the poetry of Sappho.

In her analysis of this remark, DeJean focuses on how the adverb "pathetically," used to characterize how "Racine had his Phaedra speak," becomes the "unintentional key revelation of Longepierre's formulation" (DeJean *Fictons* 86). In DeJean's view, Longepierre's observation testifies to how Racine uses Sappho's lyrics to make his heroine come across as pathetic—as helpless and as hapless—to demonstrate his mastery of her. But this anachronistic reading of the word *pathetic* obfuscates how as a rhetorical category the pathetic—from the Greek word *pathos*—named the power to generate an emotional response in an audience rather than a more modern, colloquial idea of something "miserably inadequate" or "of such a low standard as to be ridiculous or contemptible"—a meaning to the word that the OED records as originating in the twenty-first century. Boileau, for example, uses "pathetic" to translate Longinus's *pathos*—one of the five sources of sublimity, which for Boileau translates Longinus as meaning an

"enthousiasme, et cette véhémence naturelle qui touche et qui émeut" ("enthusiasm, and that natural vehemence that touches and moves"; 3.462–3)." The pathetic is further characterized in Boileau's Longinus by its violence; Boileau, for example, translates what Longinus describes as the *maniais pathēmata* in Sappho's poem as "l'excès et la violence de l'amour" ("the excess and the violence of love"; (3.475).[111] To speak pathetically then means to speak movingly, powerfully, excessively—even violently.

Undoing this anachronistic reading of the word *pathetically* creates a problem for DeJean's analysis, which relies on her idea that Racine demonstrates his mastery over Phaedra, over Sappho, and over feminine pleasure and desire in general, by portraying her victimization and her vulnerability. True, that is how Racine depicts her in the first 116 lines of this scene of inquiry, but this famous speech, as Longepierre notes, reverses that representation, since Phaedra now speaks powerfully and movingly. Because of her power, Racine cannot be straightforwardly analyzed as exemplifying that archetype discussed in chapter two, where Sappho is positioned as uncontrollably mad and then sacrificed for the sake of demonstrating male, authorial mastery. In other words, in performance, Racine's citation of Sappho does not fit neatly into DeJean's transhistorical framework of male poets competing against one another over who can translate and by translating represent Sappho's weakness better. At the same time, the imagery of the passage sets up a different sort of conflict: between spectacle and rhetoric or between poetry and play. By connecting the figures of blood and vision to configure the power of spectacle Racine initiates a sublime turn that marks a possessive claim over the emotional effects of the theatre. It is through this sublime turn that Racine can borrow from Sappho while at the same time—to use Longepierre's formulation—asserting that this Phaedra is "his."

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[111] The 1694 *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* confirms these translations, defining the word pathetic as movements excited by an orator.

There is no question that Racine would have been familiar with "fragment 31" and its source as an example of the Longinian sublime at the time of composition. In his 1670 preface to *Britannicus*, Racine cites Longinus, referring to the obscure author only obliquely as "un Ancien" ("an ancient"; 375). After 1674, however, the name Longinus was celebrated; his treatise, as previously motioned, was translated by none other than Racine's close friend Boileau—the two authors would afterwards become closely linked to the concept.[112] A few years later, Longepierre seems to have in turn remembered Racine's verse in his 1688 translation of Theocritus's *Idyll 2*. There, Longepierre has Simaetha say: "Je le vis, je brûlay, je ne me connus pas / Je pâlis; ma beauté perdit ses plus doux charmes" ("I saw him, I burned, I didn't know myself / I paled; my beauty lost its sweetest charms"; 79). Longepierre's use of Racine's sapphic verse to translate Theocritus's idyll demonstrates how closely knit these poems and ideas were to one another. It also emphasizes some key differences: both Racine and Longepierre follow Longinus in their use of asyndeton to join a series of first-person actions rather than the polysyndeton preferred by both Sappho and Theocritus.

In this use of asyndeton, observes Leo Spitzer, Racine seems to echo an even more famous use of the rhetorical figure: Julius Cæsar's "*veni, vidi, vici* ('I came, I saw, I conquered')," where, in addition to creating a pleasing parallelism, the use of this figure to pile up similar statements around a first-person, singular, nominative subject creates the feeling of rapid accumulation around that subject ("Racine's Classical Piano" 73). The first verb lends to this movement an increase in tension—its intransitivity prevents it from taking an object, so the force of its action has nowhere to go. But then Cæsar sees: his vision bursts outwards like a beam of light laying claim to all it shines upon. This idea has precedent in the ancient emission theory

[112] Boileau and Racine, alongside other closely allied Parisian literati, were mockingly referred to as the "cabal of the sublime." See Georges Forestier's *Jean Racine*, 520–9.

of vision—Plato, for example, describes the eyes as projecting a spirit or fire that strikes an object, reporting the encounter back to the soul.[113] Here, however, the object touched by Cæsar's vision is missing. Both the second and third verbs are transitive. Though they can take an object, none are given. This omission serves two purposes: first, it ensures that the *I* in this saying remains uncontaminated as the force of its vision moves only outwards; second, it suggests that no object could possibly contain that force. No grammatical noun is sufficient; Cæsar conquers all of them.

Unlike what Spitzer describes as the "unreflecting youthful flamboyance" expressed by the "*veni, vidi, vici*," Phaedra's "confession is downcast, overcome […] more a progressive centripetal collapse than a rhetorical self-aggrandisement" (Spitzer, "Racine's Classical Piano" 73–4). This centripetal motion also inverts the process of seeing in a manner consistent with Descartes' theory of refraction, where the eyes are touched by the object and not the other way around. For Descartes, vision is a passive activity. Light bounces off the object and passes through the lens of the eye. The lens projects an image from that light onto the back of the eyes, and that image is transmitted through vibrations in the nerves and into the brain to be observed by the soul. This theory of vision creates problems for the agency of the soul since the soul cannot control how the looking happens. Racine's verse mirrors this passivity by flipping the order of verbs—one transitive verb followed by two intransitive ones. Phaedra sees Hippolytus—and then a series of actions occur whose force remains limited to internal motions circumscribed by the *I*: she blushes as the erotic sight of the beautiful man prompts a rush of blood to the head; she pales as the recognition of that erotic response elicits shame and the flow of blood comes to a stop.

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[113] *Timaeus* 1248; 45b–46a

When read alongside Ferrand's theory of lovesickness—as both Guiliani and Pelous propose—these lines seem to produce the kind of narrative structure captured by Rawlings's translation of these lines in the play: "I saw him. First I blushed and then grew pale" (51). But Racine's original grammar frustrates that narrative. He invokes asyndeton to slam together three rhyming verbs. Unlike the smooth flow of *veni, vidi, vici,* the repetition of the breathy pronoun *je* (a voiced postalveolar fricative phoneme) separated from each preceding verb by a comma or breath mark, produces the effect of hyperventilation: *je, je, je*.[114] The two non-volitional, intransitive verbs (pale and blush) subsequently block the energy accumulated by the asyndeton from dispersing onto an object while simultaneously diminishing the subject's ability to maintain control of the action. As things accelerate, what Paul Hammond describes as the "emphatically reiterated 'je'" starts to break apart (193). Phaedra becomes increasingly disconnected as her "unavailing struggle to understand her own self spatially, to map the physiology and psychology of desire,"—until the *I* ruptures as the disturbance in the soul usurps the position of grammatical subject (Hammond 193). The poetic strategy then switches to the possessive: *her eyes*, *her body*. But this effort to objectify and possess her body and to maintain control fails. Polysyndeton replaces asyndeton as Racine employs the double conjunction *et* (echoing Sappho's use of *de*) to emphasize the spiralling simultaneity of Phaedra's feeling of hotness and coldness—a description of the blood paradoxically rushing to the cheeks while simultaneously stopping dead. Then the *I* reappears as Phaedra links that blood to the historic blood of cursed ancestors; its motions to the action of celestial will. Her language now invokes images of gods and divine

[114] Stress typically falls on the final rhyming syllable of the French Alexandrine line. However, a *caesura* can also occur after the sixth syllable. Scholars also argue that in the seventeenth century, grammatical marks functioned as stage directions, breaking up the sentence according to a logic of emphasis and breath rather than the sentence's grammatical elements. For a review of this argument, see Jeanne Bovet, "Pointless Clues? Reviving Declamation through the Punctuation of Jean Racine's *Phèdre et Hippolyte*."

fires, a language that produces what George Poulet describes as a sense of grandeur by recognizing "[a]u spectacle horrible, instantané, de l'expérience sensible, se superpose la conscience d'une réalité éternelle, continue, suprasensible." ("[i]n the horrible, instantaneous spectacle of sensible experience, the consciousness of an eternal, continuous, suprasensible reality superimposing itself"; Poulet 116). In the end, the body no longer belongs to anyone, except perhaps to Venus's curse. Racine often uses indefinite articles and demonstratives to de-individualize or disassociate the speaker from their body or emotion; this effect is on full display as Phaedra describes Venus's fires as of or in *a* [*d'un*] blood rather than *her* blood.[115]

Though poetic, this language of blood, of sight, of possession, and of subjectivity that Racine weaves together is not just poetry. It is dialogue crafted for performance on a very specific stage: the Hôtel de Bourgogne. In this theatre, a converted tennis court, there would have been no proscenium arch to sharply divide a lighted stage space for the performers and a darkened seating area for the audience to sit and watch and contemplate, and where decorum develops rigid limitations on the possibility of interaction, save for the concluding applause transforming participation into interruption like that of the odd cough. This more modern architectural space accentuates the power of the ocular to separate subject and object, giving the former control over their view of the latter. But in the Hôtel de Bourgogne, with its obstructed sightlines, and where audience members milled about, moving from the balcony, to the pit or *parterre*, to the back to purchase refreshments, or even onto the stage itself, and where in that *parterre* one finds a boisterous group engaged in eating, drinking, shouting, shoving, whistling, fighting, and even sometimes urinating and defecating—within this space bodies perform what

[115] For Racine's use of indefinite articles and demonstratives, see Spitzer, 4–17. The ambivalence of the French preposition "*de*" flickers between the dual meanings of "*sang*"—as either blood or family. Phaedra complains that Venus has cursed her family ("of a blood") and that curse is felt inside her body ("in a blood").

R. Darren Gobert describes as "seepages [...] between self and other, inner and outer, individual and collective," exactly the kinds of seepages "that the play's characters understand as passionate, bloody contaminations" (13). Under such conditions, he continues, one must wonder "how this blood imagery would have signified in a closed space where the arteries through which actors and audiences circulated were shared instead of discrete, as they are in modern theater architecture" (135–6). In this speech (where Phaedra describes how first seeing Hippolytus affected the flow of her blood), in this particular scene, (Phaedra's entrance, or the first time she is seen or heard in the play), such imagery correlates to the experience of the theatre itself. Or, more accurately—to contextualize this moment in its original 1677 production—just as the sight of Hippolytus silenced Phaedra's voice by both heating and cooling her blood, so too when Champmeslé emerges onstage, her presence produces a hush over any rowdy audience, by heating their blood, freezing their feet, and moving them to tears.

In the previous section, I described Champmeslé's tears as indicative of a sublime turn and of a theatrical sublime, where the leaky image when staged produces a willful agent endowed with specialized affective knowledge rather than a lack of control. This speech enacts another turn—one that works on and through the tears of the audience. Consider again how the scene begins with that long, drawn-out, 116-line passage filled with declarations of suffering, sympathetic inquiries, weak knees, and pooling tears. If the anecdotes are to be believed, then one should expect the audience to have in some way or to some extent mirrored these performances—especially when performed by the magnificent La Champmeslé. Phaedra's famous speech, when it finally arrives, describes the experience she had when she saw Hippolytus, but, as I have argued, this description is also of the audience's experience of seeing Champmeslé, their experience of having their individual subjectivity break apart in the presence

of the great actress, as they forcefully, physically, tearfully, dissolve from individual spectators and into a captivated audience. But then the passage suggests that these audience members do not shed *their* tears because the tears are pure reaction—they do not express an active sense of moral agency. Instead, Racine employs the retroactivity of the speech like a divine intervention, to take ownership over the whole situation. It all happens just as he planned. The audience cries because Racine wills it. And, if the intended effect is produced, then this sublime turn gives Racine a divine Venus-like entitlement over the power of this theatrical moment: the audience does not shed tears, they shed *Racine's* tears.

An Epic Scene of Inquiry

If Racine uses this speech to make a claim over the affective presence of the theatrical spectacle, the question becomes how well does that assertion hold up? Ironically, the way Racine draws on the convention—specifically of epic—to construct the scene's retroactivity and to enable his sublime turn simultaneously makes evident his complete dependence on the labour of the actress, on the skill of her performance. At the time of composition, Racine would have had several models for how to create Phaedra's scene of inquiry. One way could have been to simply remove it altogether. Seneca does something like this in his version, which eliminates the moment when the Nurse inquires about Phaedra's condition. This change gives the scene a more forensic and defensive tone, one that Malgorzata Budzowska describes as transforming the Euripidian supplication scene into "a kind of *controversia*, in the form of an *agon*" (124, original emphasis). In Seneca's *agon*, Phaedra enters confessing, blaming the gods for her predicament; the Nurse follows chastising, refusing to accept this position, interpreting Phaedra's representation of herself at the mercy of the gods pragmatically. For the Nurse, Phaedra's self-

representation is a choice like any other—and this one reflects the choice to shirk her responsibility over her feelings and her actions. That Phaedra made this choice reveals the weakness of her character (a weakness Oenone attributes to excessive luxury):

> I know that vile lust, which is fond of human fault,
>
> pretends that love's a god, and in order to enjoy more liberty
>
> has bestowed on this passion the false name of divinity.
>
> [...]
>
> Love-mad minds have taken up these empty claims
>
> and invented Venus' power and the weapons of her son. (Seneca 194–7, 202–3)

Budzowska compares this scene in the play to its precedent in Euripides's version by invoking the Aristotelian concept of *prohairesis*. In her view, Euripides offers a vision of human nature that defies Aristotle's idea of moral character, a view of people as "not completely in charge of themselves," and the precarious condition of his characters produces the "image of a human being who makes the audience feel mercy and compassion" (Budzowska 145). In contrast, Seneca "creates the image of his heroine as a warning, a negative exemplum" (Budzowska 145). One learns from Seneca to become responsible for their choices by witnessing the tragedy of someone who did not.

Racine not only repeats the structure of a supplication scene from Euripides's *Hippolytus*; he innovates on that structure. Racine's extensive use of the *passé simple* throughout Phaedra's speech, introduces elements of a traditional messenger scene, transforming Phaedra into a messenger who now narrates to the Nurse—and thus to the audience—her story of first seeing Hippolytus. Since antiquity, messenger scenes were a tool used by playwrights to arouse the feeling of *thaumaston* (wonder/astonishment/marvellous) in the theatre. While Aristotle asserted

that "[o]ne should indeed try to incorporate the astonishing in tragedies," he also thought that, given the limitations of Greek theatre practices, it would be difficult to achieve:

> [T]he irrational, which is the largest single source of astonishment, is more easily achieved in the epic, on account of one's not actually seeing the person who is performing the act. Thus the circumstances of the pursuit of Hector would appear absurd on a stage—the Achaeans standing there, not joining in the chase, and Achilles motioning to them to stay back—whereas in the epic one does not notice it. (*Poetics* 65; 1460a).

To solve this problem, Greek dramatists resorted to staging epic narratives using messengers. Instead of performing an epic moment of action, actors recited a short epic. In a typical messenger scene, the messenger begins by divesting himself of his *dramatis personae* by adopting the style of an epic-singing rhapsode as he recounts a long, astonishing narrative.

As James Barrett argues, both the rhapsode and the messenger are often culturally "marked as a 'transparent' medium offering virtual immediacy: in his voice one hears that of the source of the 'message,' whether king, Muse, or poet" (69).[116] They both, claims Barrett, share the "tendency within [the] narrative toward self-effacement that appears [as] a virtual disembodiment […] the messenger, in sharp distinction [to the tragic actor], offers a narrative that in general is conspicuously disassociated from any particular point of view" (xvii). Homer begins the *Odyssey*, for example, with the lines "Sing to me of the man, Muse, the man of twists and turns," and by uttering these words, the rhapsode positions himself not as an individual storyteller, but as a conduit for the Muse's voice—he sings it as he hears it (77; 1.1). The messenger makes a similar move, situating himself as a transparent medium by declaring his position as a witness, as someone who simply tells it as he sees it. Given his structural position, it

[116] In the *Ion*, Plato, for example, describes the rhapsode as a transparent medium like the "prophets and godly diviners" of a god who "gives voice through them to us" (943; 535c–d).

is difficult to even describe the messenger as a character in the Aristotelian sense of the word, since he typically performs no action nor makes any choices—except of course to witness an event so that he may recount it later. By convention, he fades into his own narrative.[117] The transparency of the speaker furthermore enables what William Grubner describes as an expansion of the scenic play space into the space of the imagination: "even though such spaces are not shown, they are nevertheless imagined as physically locatable somewhere offstage" (Gruber 8). The messenger who brings these imaginary spaces onto the stage does so by invoking the cultural authority of the rhapsode, as they perform "a kind of autopsy on an unseen event, presenting that analysis for the audience" (Gruber 56). This appeal to the imagination attempts to circumvent the limitations imposed by the principle of verisimilitude on the possibility of creating the effect of astonishment in tragedy.

In his analysis of the playwright's use of epic, Aristotle emphasizes the lessons they learned from Homer—specifically, how to lie correctly by affirming the consequent: "[I]f a certain thing B is true or happens when another thing A is true or happens, then if B obtains people assume that A also obtains or is happening; but that is a false inference. Hence if A is false but B necessarily follows if is true, one should explicitly state B, because knowing that this is true our mind makes the false inference that the antecedent is true also" (*Poetics* 65–6, 1460a). Euripides, for instance, makes use of this type of scene in a conventional way to describe the death of Hippolytus. A messenger arrives claiming to have witnessed Hippolytus's death and then elaborates on how Hippolytus was attacked by a sea monster as he fled the city in his chariot. Beset by the horrible sight and sound of the creature, his horses bolted, claims the

[117]James Barrett's book is premised on the idea that deviations from this convention are *remarkable*; that they signify an author offering metatheatrical commentary on the convention, the practice of witnessing, or the nature of storytelling.

messenger, flinging him to his death.[118] The audience then believes the messenger's astonishing story of Hippolytus's death because shortly after the story is told, Hippolytus's body is carted on stage.

But the fallacious logic of a narrative or poetic A dependent on the theatrical presence of a B forces onto the poetry a reliance on the theatre that Racine tries to circumvent. In his version of the play, he follows neither Eurpides's example nor Aristotle's theory when he does not return Hippolytus's dead or dying body to the stage. He turns instead to the passage's poetry to do the work of the theatre, and some of his contemporaries subsequently jumped on this move by criticizing this scene for being unrealistic. Theramanes should have been too distraught to wax poetic about the sea monster, argues François Fénelon: "Un tel homme, saisi, éperdu, sans haleine, peut-il s'amuser à faire la description la plus pompeuse et la plus fleurie de la figure du dragon?" (Can such a man, seized, gripped, distraught, without breath amuse himself by making the most pompous and flowery description of the figure of the dragon?"; 634). It would have been more believable if he had instead used only "deux mots" ("two words"; 634). For Fénelon, the B, or the theatricality of the scene, did not sufficiently justify the A, its content. Boileau later came to Racine's defence by drawing on the Longinian sublime to argue that astonished by the speech's brilliance, its unrealistic aspects should for most go undetected since "par l'émotion qu'il leur cause, il ne les laisse pas en état de songer à le chicaner sur l'audace de sa figure" ("through the emotion he causes in them, he does not leave them in a position to even dream of quibbling about the audacity of his figure" 2.209–10). In Boileau's view, the astonishment produced by the poetic or rhetorical sublime hides its own contrivances so that there is no need

[118] Euripides, *Hippolytus* 1254–1339.

for theatrical tricks.[119] Racine's decision to have Theramanes's embodied character get out of the way of his amazing poetry is the whole point.

That some may have been dazzled by Racine's language in this scene is probably true. But Racine's use of a similar technique for Phaedra's description of first seeing Hippolytus, which also recounts some astonishing offstage happening, creates for the playwright some complications for his claim to poetic mastery. The problem occurs because Phaedra's speech draws on Sapphic lyric rather than Homeric epic. Of course, Sappho invites this use by fusing epic conventions into her lyric poetry, but neoclassical French writers appear to have had some difficulty accepting this mixing of genres. In my previous chapter, I, for example, following Lefkowitz, suggested the phrase *chlōrotera de poias* exemplified the Homeric expression of "green fear." Though this example is not an isolated one, it seems to have troubled French translators.[120] As DeJean argues, language like *chlōrotera de poias* expressed a threatening femininity, and so it had to be excised. Boileau, for example, in his *Traité du sublime* simply translated it as "pale," excusing this move by noting the more epic phrasing *greener than grass* "is not said in French" (qtd in DeJean 86). While DeJean's explanation rings true, and though Racine does follow Boileau in removing this phrase in favour of "pale," he also, perhaps accidentally, restores the poem's relationship to epic by staging it through a messenger scene.

The use of lyric conventions rather than epic ones in this scene generates a distinctive effect as the internal and subjective self-reflection interferes with what would otherwise be the process of creating an external and objective messenger. Phaedra begins her speech traditionally, by situating herself in the offstage moment when she first sees Hippolytus. But then the action

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[119] For more critiques of this speech by Racine's contemporaries see Leo Spitzer, "The Recit de Theramene."
[120]. For more examples of Sappho's use of epic language see Josephine Balmer's *Piecing Together the Fragments: Translating Classical Verse, Creating Contemporary Poetry*, 73–99.

moves inwards, into her body, her thoughts, and her feelings—and unlike the messenger or the rhapsode, she cannot seem to get out of the way. While it was not until the Romantic period that a definition of lyric as "subjectivity coming to consciousness of itself through experience and reflection" would emerge, enough examples exist in antiquity from Sappho onwards that critics such as Johnathan Culler can argue that "[t]he production of first-person speakers has been central to the lyric tradition" (Culler 2, 19). Subsequently, the tension between the speaker's dissolution into epic and that same speaker's constitution in lyric results in the presentation of a speaker entirely beside herself—she produces an offstage image of a body that cannot easily be assimilated into the one onstage. And yet, unlike the example of Theocritus's *Idyll* discussed in the previous chapter, where the sacrifice of a past-self for the sake of a present-self offered the potential to alleviate emotional strain, here the past-self must be understood as continuous and integrated with the present one for the scene to succeed. To believe her astonishing story, the audience needs to accept that this past-Phaedra generated in the imaginary space of narrative speech is the same Phaedra that now stands and speaks in the real space of the stage.

In the more traditionally epic-oriented and objective messenger scene, evidence of the messenger's narrative could be proven by bringing an object onstage as evidence. When the messenger scene borrows from lyric, however, one must stage a subject rather than an object. In other words, to believe the poet's words, the audience needs to believe the actress who performs them. For the scene to create a powerful moment of theatre for Racine to claim ownership over subsequently requires a Champmeslé and her labour to produce it in the first place. This point, however, is generally obscured by the historical reception of the Racinian sublime, a reception that tends to invert this relationship. This inversion serves to condition theatre audiences to demand an actress for the role who can live up to the expectations set by the play's reputation

rather than considering how the play was likely written in response to the anticipatory expectations set by an awe-inspiring, sublime actress.

Remembering the Racinian Sublime

In his *Réponse a la letter de Mme Riccoboni*, Diderot crafted what has now become one of the most frequently cited anecdotes used to describe the experience of the neoclassical Parisian theatre:

> On s'agitait, on se remuait, on se poussait, l'âme était mise hors d'elle-même. Or, je ne connais pas de disposition plus favorable au poète. La pièce commençait avec peine, était souvent interrompue; mais survenait-il un bel endroit? c'était un fracas incroyable, les bis se redemandaient sans fin, on s'enthousiasmait de l'acteur et de l'actrice. L'engouement passait du parterre à l'amphithéâtre, et de l'amphithéâtre aux loges. On était arrivé avec chaleur, on s'en retournait dans l'ivresse; les uns allaient chez des filles, les autres se répandaient dans le monde; c'était comme un orage qui allait se dissiper au loin, et dont le murmure durait longtemps après qu'il était écarté. Voilà le plaisir.
>
> One stirred, one shifted, one shoved, the soul was beside itself. Now, I know of no mood more favourable to the playwright. The play began with difficulty and many interruptions but reach a beautiful passage and there was an incredible roar, encores demanded without end; we enthused over the actor and the actress. The craze spread from *parterre* to *amphithèâtre,* and from *amphithèâtre* to the loges. We arrived warmly; returned drunk. Some went off with women, others scattered throughout the world; it was like a

> thunderstorm, moving off into the distance, and its murmur lasted long after it had passed. Voila, the pleasure. (*Oeuvres* 401)

To give just one example: Wiles refers to this passage to justify his claim that "[s]qualor and overcrowding" in the *parterre* was "a necessary condition for the theatre of Racine and Corneille, a theatre in which the constraints of the body were transcended by language that expressed the soul"—is from Diderot's (*A Short History* 226). Interestingly, what one finds when reviewing instances of this passage's citation is an editorial error that appears to have been introduced by the 1875 edition of Diderot's complete works. That inaccuracy—which I have repeated in my quotation above—can fortuitously be read as symptomatic of the problem I have thus far been describing. The line should read: "we enthused over *the author*, the actor, and the actress"—indicating that, for Diderot at least, the author is credited first amongst equals for the sublime effects of the theatre.[121] Though likely just a simple, clerical mistake, it is appealing—for me, at least—to think of this omission as the unconscious slip reflecting a more modern editor's bias, of their inability to even register this attribution of the affective power of the theatre to an absent author rather than the presence of the actor and actress. If this mistake can be considered as meaningful, then what that meaning reflects is precisely how subjective and contentious the question of who to credit for the theatre's effects can be.

But then, this passage contains a second, even more fascinating element. Diderot, it should be noted, composed this description of the theatrical experience because that experience was no longer available. He is, in this passage, reminiscing about what going to the theatre used

[121] The original letter is purported to have been destroyed by Mme Riccoboni, although three manuscript copies appear to have been made. Though the copies have some discrepancies, all three credit the author, actor, and actress for the effects of the theatre. See Hans Dieckmann and Jean Varloot (ed.) *Diderot: Oeuvres Complètes,* vol. 10, 432–3.

to be like before the pacification of the *parterre*.[122] For Diderot, the affective presence of the theatre is now absent. Today, he claims, "On arrive froids, on écoute froids, on sort froids, et je ne sais où l'on va" ("one arrives coldly, one listens coldly, one leaves coldly, and I don't know where one goes"; 401). To capture the memory of this now lost experience, he turns to the sublime, but not just any notion of the sublime—he invokes the Racinian sublime by repeating the structure of Phaedra's great speech: it begins with the three clauses punctuated by asyndeton and an ambiguous pronoun, it contains the depiction of a body/crowd shattered and a soul splitting from itself, it then concludes with a simile—a thunderstorm rather than a raging fire. By echoing Racine, Diderot attempts to capture and possess in language his past theatrical experiences. This repetition of the Racinian sublime reflects that while Racine may not have demonstrated absolute mastery over the affective presence of the theatre, which cannot be divorced from the ongoing labour of the performer, on the effort of the now mostly forgotten presence of La Champmeslé, he does seem to have successfully made a claim over the way one remembers that presence, over the way it gets registered in the archive. The frequent recitations of Diderot's passage to capture the experience of the neoclassical theatre serves primarily to reproduce the Racinian sublime rather than the actual theatrical experience. And yet, Diderot appears to have anticipated this problem. The interjection "Voila" suggests, despite his best efforts, something about the theatre's presence—namely, its real affective pleasure—appears to have escaped his grasp.

[122] For the history of this pacification, see Jeffrey Ravel *The Contested Parterre*.

Chapter 4

Adam Smith's Curious Theatre: *Phèdre* and Neoclassical Theories of Affect

He longs for that relief which nothing can afford him but the entire concord of the affections of the spectators with his own. To see the emotions of their hearts, in every respect, beat time to his own, in the violent and disagreeable passions, constitutes his sole consolation [...] *What they feel, will, indeed, always be, in some respects, different from what he feels, and compassion can never be exactly the same with original sorrow; because the secret consciousness that the change of situations, from which the sympathetic sentiment arises, is but imaginary, not only lowers it in degree, but, in some measure, varies it in kind, and gives it a quite different modification. These two sentiments, however, may, it is evident, have such a correspondence with one another, as is sufficient for the harmony of society. Though they will never be unisons, they may be concords, and this is all that is wanted or required.*

—Adam Smith *TMS* 22; I.i.4.7

The unnarratable other loses his face as a neighbour in narration

—Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being* 166

Your emotion concerning the play is always either behind or ahead of the play at which you are looking and to which you are listening. So your emotion as a member of the audience is never going on at the same time as the action of the play. This thing the fact that your emotional time as an audience is not the same as the emotional time of the play is what makes one endlessly troubled about a play, because not only is there a thing to know as to why this is so but also there is a thing to know why perhaps it does not need to be so.

—Gertrude Stein, *Plays* xxix

The Finest Tragedy of Any Language

Racine's withdrawal from the theatre continues to be a topic of biographical interest. Readers can find famous writers on both sides of the English Channel weighing in on the possible reasons.[123] In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (*TMS*), Adam Smith joins in on this

[123] See for example Alexandre Dumas *Souvenirs dramatiques* 1: 345–49 or Mary Shelley *Lives of the Most Eminent French Writers*, 1: 317.

conversation when he offers the following explanation: "Racine was so disgusted by the indifferent success of his Phaedra, the finest tragedy perhaps, that is extant in any language, that, though in the vigour of his life, and at the height of his abilities, he resolved to write no more for the stage" (*TMS* 123; III.2.19). While Smith's explanation for Racine's retirement is commonplace, his praise strikes many as unusual.[124] Eighteenth-century British writers tended to favour Edmund Smith's 1707 version of the play.[125] That Smith celebrates Racine's play as the greatest *of any language* suggests an enigmatic deviation from this national consensus, one that has proven difficult to resolve since many find Smith's preference inconsistent with his views on the moral sentiments, the production of sympathy, and the admirableness of stoic self-command.[126] In a passage that seems to offer a ready-made description of Phaedra's emotional outpourings, Smith writes: "We are disgusted with that clamorous grief, which without any delicacy, calls upon our compassion with sighs and tears and importunate lamentations" (24; I.i.5.2). By contrast, the cool reserve displayed by those who "exert that recollection and self-command which constitute the dignity of every passion, and which bring it down to what others can enter into" is far more worthy of our sympathies (Smith, *TMS* 24; I.i.5.2). Given Smith consistently disparages the emotional outpourings at the center of this play, "we should be," argues Gloria Vivenza, "a little wary of Smith's definition of Racine's *Phèdre* (169).

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[124] Common justifications include a reconciliation with his Jansenist past causing Racine to renounce the public theatre; his rumoured break up with the actress Marie Champmeslé and subsequent marriage to Catherine de Romanent on 1 June 1677 for whom a husband playwright would be below her station; and, finally, a commission from the King received by both Racine and Boileau to become the official court historiographers that likely left him little time to author plays.

[125] Katherine Wheatley finds that for many British commentators if they "mention Racine at all, they do so only in order to proclaim the superiority of [Edmund] Smith's *Phaedra* to Racine's" (95).

[126] Charles Griswold, for example, considers Smith's moral theory, to suggest that "moral education" generally inspires Smith's praise—"[p]resumably," argues Griswold, Smith venerates Racine's play "because it depicts so movingly the phenomenon of remorse, thus showing us how the voice of the internalized impartial spectator cannot be entirely extirpated" (216). If moral instruction were the defining feature of great tragedy, however, then the more moral *Mahomet*—which Smith describes as "one of the most interesting and perhaps the most instructive spectacles that was ever introduced upon any theatre"—rather than *Phèdre* would be superior play (*TMS* 177; III.6.13).

Under the guise of determining why *Phèdre* might be Smith's favourite play, this chapter reconsiders the importance of theatre to Smith's philosophy. My claim is in part that an antitheatricality pervades much of Smith criticism on this topic, obscuring the reasoning behind Smith's theatrical taste. By antitheatricality, I, following Barish's seminal work *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, mean the view that theatre is a representation of reality and therefore not only independent of but also inferior to that reality. Smith fortunately does not treat theatre this way. In his discussion of Smith's implicit theory of tragedy, Arby Siraki points out that Smith's approach to theatre is difficult to parse because he "dissolves the distinction between art and reality" (214). Siraki treats this observation as a problem to overcome since it means "his theory is better equipped to explain more immediate 'tragedies,' such as executions" rather than plays (214). I argue, however, that the conflation between theatre and reality is key to interpreting Smith's admiration of *Phèdre*. It is as part of reality rather than its representation that theatre offers the spectator the possibility to experience sympathy with a fullness that is impossible in social situations that lack theatre's contrivances. In this view, theatre offers a solution to the problems posed by theatricality as false representation; as an example of controlled and repeatable theatre, *Phèdre*—specifically, the play's famous confession scene—creates an experience of beautiful sympathy that might otherwise be unreachable.

As Laura Rosenthal suggests, Smith's views of theatre and emotions ought to be understood as "historically evolving": the discrepancies that appear in problems such as his praise for Racine are less exaggerations or inexplicable weaknesses in an otherwise seamless philosophical system and more windows into how the theory and practice of theatre changes as it moves from France to England, and from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century ("Adam Smith" 132). Detached from its initial theatrical conditions, Phaedra's speech—its performance

by Champmeslé or the intertextual poetic resonances of the Racinian sublime—must be reimagined by Smith as he reconsiders the potential affective resonances this seventeenth-century French play might produce for the British of the eighteenth century. Here, I show how a theatre focused on repetition (a classical play, for example, repeatedly performed in an increasingly modern world) becomes a solution to a larger problem in Smith's theory: namely, how to create a perfect correspondence between sufferer and sympathizer. In real life, this is, for Smith, impossible. Curiosity, or the ongoing need to know the plot of another's passions, and the inability to ever fulfill that curiosity and know that situation perfectly prevents this concord. But in the theatre, where one can watch the same play again and again, one comes much closer to achieving this ideal. If moral character is, as Aristotle says, an outcome of plot—specifically plot as interpreted by thought or *dianoia*—then by knowing the beginning and end of the play in advance (which is to say knowing the entire truth of the narrative) the spectator can better understand and appreciate the *ēthos* of a character as it appears in the middle. To restate this point in terms better suited to Smith: seeing a play again enables a spectator to take up a truly impartial and objective view free from curiosity and thus free to feel the fullness of the sympathetic spectacle.

Theatre and Narrative

The growing consensus in Smith criticism is that narrative fiction rather than theatre best demonstrates the principles of Smith's moral theory.[127] Smith's text is so riddled with theatrical instances of spectators and spectacles, claims David Marshall, that one must conclude sympathy

[127] For a review of scholarship that asserts a narrative model over the theatrical one, see Karen Valihora "Adam Smith's Narrative Line."

relies on an "inherently *theatrical* situation," and yet, despite Smith's dependence on these ideas, theatrics alone cannot elicit sympathy in its fullness (593, original emphasis). He rather, continues Marshall, "illustrates a discussion of how we enter into the sentiments and actions of others with a description of reading: whether we are confronted with a person or a text, we must face a fiction" (595). In his sole description of *Phèdre*'s appeal, for example, Smith draws a distinction between what he calls *primary passions* and *secondary passions*:

> We are charmed with the love of Phaedra, as it is expressed in the French tragedy of that name, notwithstanding all the extravagance and guilt which attend it. That very extravagance and guilt may be said, in some measure, to recommend it to us. Her fear, her shame, her remorse, her horror, her despair, become thereby more natural and interesting. All the secondary passions, if I may be allowed to call them so, which arise from the situation of love, become necessarily more furious and violent; and it is with these secondary passions only that we can properly be said to sympathize. (*TMS* 33; I.ii.2.4)

The spectacle of primary passions, which Smith clarifies arising "from a certain situation or disposition of the body"—examples of which include love, hunger, and pain—are, he says, "indecent to express [in] any strong degree" because, while spectators may sympathize with the person who feels them, the actual feeling is inaccessible (*TMS* 27; I.ii.1). The secondary passions, however, which arise from the primary passion's situation, can be in some degree shared but only when the spectator puts themselves in the other's shoes and imagines what it would be like to experience that initial passion. While they do not share Phaedra's love, by imagining themselves in her situation, the spectator can "enter into all the anxiety, and concern, and distress of the lover" (Smith *TMS* 32; I.ii.2.2).

Despite Smith's use of a neoclassical tragedy to illustrate this move from the spectacle of primary passions to sympathy with secondary passions, scholars often support Marshall's argument by switching genres. That sympathy is limited to these secondary passions, which arise from the imagined situation rather than the spectacle of a primary passion suggests a model of sympathy rooted in narrative fiction rather than theatricality and the theatre. Rae Greiner, for example, argues it is a "mistaken assumption that [*TMS*] offers a primarily theatrical account of sympathy production"—the book is instead "a work of narrative theory," one that anticipates the narrative structure of the nineteenth-century realist novel (294). Theatre scholars, however, resist this move. Laura Rosenthal, for instance, counters that while many follow Marshall by "observ[ing] the profound *theatricality* of Smith's vision of human experience," they also "oddly, overlook the importance of the *theatre*," instead skewing their discussions with examples from novels or narrative poetry ("Adam Smith" 126, original emphasis).[128] These critics, however, tend to similarly disregard the almost exclusively neoclassical examples of theatre that interested Smith, often turning instead to instances of popular British bourgeois drama and she-tragedy—*The London Merchant*, *The Fatal Marriage*, *The Grecian Daughter*, *Jane Shore*—which, as Jean Marsden points out, were for eighteenth-century writers "the most overly emotional of all literary forms and thus the most likely to spur a sympathetic response" (*Theatres* 25). While these plays might better clarify a general cultural approach to sympathy in eighteenth-century England, they offer a less promising method for fine-tuning how Smith specifically theorizes the process of sympathy. As Ellwood Wiggins points out, Smith's aversion to the "more natural, sentimental drama that would best fit his analysis in favour of stagey stoicism and

[128] See also Marsden who observes that "while Marshall astutely assesses what he describes as the 'interplay of theatre and sympathy'[…] he immediately removes actual theatre from the discussion, using it instead as a bridge to the novel" (*Theatres* 25).

tragedies of affect" presents a problem in need of consideration, one that "highlight[s] the tensions at work in the dynamics of sympathy" (87). "One would expect," he asserts,

> from a book of performative theory written in this vein in the 1750s (during the height of Diderot's and Garrick's fame), an appreciation for the new drama and actor's craft. Instead, the remarkably few times Smith mentions any actual play, he lauds Racine's *Phèdre* and Voltaire's *The Orphan of Zhao* [*L'Orphelin de la Chine*]—precisely the kind of affected fare the new naturalism was inveighing against. (109)

Moreover, continues Wiggins, despite parallels between Smith's impartial spectator and Diderot's paradoxical sublime actor who performs an emotion that they did not truly feel, Smith "never engage[s] seriously with the theatre or the actor's craft" (86).[129] For Wiggins, this refusal reflects an antitheatrical acknowledgement (even just an unconscious one): that the theatre and the actor that fakes their emotional interiority present an unresolvable problem for social theories grounded on the truth of sympathetic spectacles. The theatricality of the theatre—the affective presence of the performance—is, in this view, typically opposed to or haunted by a contaminating idea of the theatre as a space for representation.[130] The actor either is who they say they are, or they are not. More importantly, they either feel as they appear to, or they do not. Within this opposition, representation always threatens the truth of the actor's identity and their

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[129] See Marshall, who suggests "It is as if Smith were endorsing the two theories of acting that Diderot opposes in his *Paradoxe sur le comédien*: both the position that an actor should merge himself with his role and the position that the actor must be a cool observer who can stand at a distance from his own performance" (600).

[130] For the implied antitheatrical bias in a theatre of pure spectacle or presence see Ridout *Stage Fright*. Ridout reads Derrida's critique of Artaud's theatre of cruelty as a general criticism of those who try to theorize or create a purely theatrical theatre. "We must accept," says Ridout, "Derrida's account of theatre's inevitable entanglement with representation and also the empirical claim that all theatre is implicated in narrativity" (11). For Derrida, even a theatre of pure affect is caught up in the logic of representation or at least re-presentation, always a doubling of the real. Even when theatre strives towards a pure presence, it is always constrained by its theatrical status as a doubling of pure presence, as "the repetition of that which does not repeat itself" ("The Theatre" 250). Incidentally, Artuad's theatre of cruelty, and its search for a theatre of pure affective presence, can be read as a revolutionary act against Racine's dominance over French national theatre and literature established in part by the work of Voltaire and his allies.

feelings, a problem that has grave consequences outside of the theatre. The social actor who represents rather than threatens any production of sympathy that depends on theatrics. It creates the possibility of a malevolent agent who can disrupt the social machinery of sympathy by faking their feelings and manipulating the spectator towards immoral ends. The fictionality of narrative offers an exit from this rigid binary, so it is unsurprising that many turn to fiction as an escape from this problem. From this point of view, narrative fiction can be truthful without being wholly true, and while the truth of a narrative can oftentimes be verified, the truth of an actor's inner emotional state cannot.[131] But the figure of theatre that I have in mind here is not an antitheatrical one. It cannot be constrained by a model of potentially false theatricality soiled by representation. It is rather a theatre where theatricality adopts the same status of truthfulness afforded to narrative, one where the actor's false performance can be seen not as true but as truthful.

The Cato Problem

True, Smith never offers a treatise long (or even really chapter long) sustained analysis of the theatre or theatricality, but this observation does not mean he never considers them. In fact, theatricality is central to Smith's response to David Hume's criticisms. In a letter dated 28 July 1759, Hume raised the paradox of tragic pleasure—or the "difficult Problem to account for the

[131] When somebody narrates what happened to them, we can easily accept what they say as truthful, while recognizing that their point of view is limited, and thus their story may not be the whole truth. For more on fictionality's development alongside the novel see Catherine Gallagher "The Rise of Fictionality": "Novels promoted a disposition of ironic credulity enabled by optimistic incredulity one is dissuaded from believing the literal truth of a representation so that one can instead admire its likelihood and extend enough credit to buy into the game. Such flexible mental states were the sine qua non of modern subjectivity" (346). As I point out in my introduction, determining the truth of the actor's emotions has been an obsession for most of the history of the psychology of emotions.

Pleasure recievd from the Tears and Greif and Sympathy of Tragedy"—to warn his friend that the "Hinge of your system"—that sympathy was necessarily agreeable—was insufficiently proven (qtd in Smith, *TMS* 46n2). While certain expressions can draw a sympathetic smile from the spectator and create a moment of attraction, such as a "smiling face," which is "to everybody that sees it, a cheerful object," in cases of pain and torture, the opposite ought to be true (Smith *TMS* 11; I.i.1.6). These spectacles upset the spectator who sympathetically winces in discomfort. When the feeling is painful, sympathy repels rather than attracts. If in Smith's theory sympathy bonds society together through mutual pleasure of shared sentiments, then, claims Hume, he needs to resolve the details of this paradox lest he risk claiming "[an] Hospital woud be a more entertaining Place than a Ball" (qtd in Smith, *TMS* 46n2).[132]

In a note added to the second edition of the *TMS*, Smith responds to Hume by distinguishing between the sometimes-painful passions one sympathizes with and the "always agreeable and delightful sentiment" of approbation, which "arises from [the spectator] observing the perfect coincidence between the sympathetic passion and himself" (46n; I.iii.1.9n). Approbation explains the pleasure we experience from tragic pain because although the feelings we sympathize with might be painful, the very act of sympathizing with them is pleasurable. In a process that Aileen Forbes compares to "the fictional techniques of an actor," the spectator first imagines what they might feel and how they might behave were they in that same situation (36). The spectator can then compare the two feelings (what they imagine the other is feeling and what they imagine they would feel), incorporating what Vivienne Brown describes as "an element of

[132] Hume, incidentally, offered a different solution to the paradox of tragedy, one that closely resembles Voltaire's critique of the theatre. In his 1757 essay "Of Tragedy," Hume appeals to a sense of the rhetorical, Longinian sublime by arguing that the "melancholy passions" of tragedy are "converted into pleasure" through "noble talents, along with the force of expressions, and beauty of oratorial numbers" that "diffuse the highest satisfaction on the audience, and excite the most delightful movements" (191). Smith does not appear particularly moved by this answer, preferring instead to think of plays in terms of characters and situations.

judgment" to determine the appropriateness of the former (236). If the spectator sympathetically echoes the emotions of the other, then they have judged the expression of the passion appropriate to the situation. This agreement, claims Arby Siraki, means "disagreeable sympathy is an impossibility for Smith" (220). Smith's solution to the paradox then, argues Siraki, is that "the pleasure of mutual sympathy […] overcomes the negative emotions occasioned by distressing scenes" (214).

The sentiment of approbation, furthermore, functions in Smith's theory as a solution to the problem of false theatricality in a society held together by the sympathetic spectacle of social performers. For Smith, approbation is heightened by instances when individuals perform stoic composure despite feeling physical pain or painful emotions. "For approbation," he writes, "heightened by wonder and surprise, constitutes the sentiment which is properly called admiration, and of which applause is the natural expression"; and, he later continues, it is "[t]he man, who under the severest tortures allows no weakness to escape him, vents no groan, gives way to no passions which we do not entirely enter into, commands our highest admiration" (*TMS* 20; I.i,4,3, *TMS* 30–1; I.ii.2.12). We admire those who resist expressing painful feelings because we recognize that the performance is enacted for the benefit of all. The spectator may think the sufferer a liar, but the lie they tell is a noble one. Instead of sharing their pain—or worse, instead of sharing a false pain—the stoic actor shields their spectators by pretending otherwise. This pretense, however, paradoxically produces the effect of honesty by following a logic that echoes the Longinian sublime turn. Their performance may be false, but that falsity reveals a truth about their moral character, and this truth creates pleasure first in the spectator who admires the actor's stoic composure and then again in the stoic actor who sympathizes with the spectator's admiration.

As a solution to the paradox of tragedy and the problem of false theatricality, however, this focus on approbation and admiration creates what I call the *Cato problem*, or the question of why Smith prefers Racine's *Phèdre* over Addison's *Cato*. Given the importance of these sentiments to Smith's moral theory, the greatest tragedy should presumably exhibit admirable characters, which the stoic Cato exemplifies while the weepy and overwrought Phaedra does not. It is, for instance, not a coincidence that Siraki turns to Addison's *Cato* to exemplify the tragic pleasure of approbation as Smith likely has Addison's play in mind when he claims that the pleasures of wonder and admiration "ha[ve] already been more than once taken notice of"—Smith quotes specifically from Seneca the description of Cato's resistance to Cæsar's legions while "never supplicating with the lamentable voice of wretchedness" as "a spectacle which even the gods themselves might behold with pleasure and admiration" (*TMS* 48; I.iii.1.13). Cato has subsequently assumed a central role in understanding Smith's philosophy of moral sentiments. As Julie Ellison observes Smith's impartial spectator pays "homage to the figure of Cato" by the way he figures this spectator's stoicism as "a mark of masculine superiority—and how consistently this performance is experienced by other men as a tear-jerker" (591). But therein lies the problem. As Marsden points out, Smith is rarely interested in the theatre of stoic men; his examples are instead drawn "most often [from] she-tragedy of a previous generation, plays known for their focus on distress"—specifically the sorrow of overwrought women such as Phaedra (*Theatres* 25). To restate the *Cato problem*: if approbation for and admiration of an honest, stoic masculinity rather than a dissembling feminine excess solves the paradox of tragic pleasure as well as the problem of false theatricality, and if Cato exhibits these sentiments so strongly even the gods admire the spectacle of his self-mastery, then why is *Phèdre* rather than *Cato* the greater play?

Phèdre in France

To identify approbation as Smith's solution to the problem of tragic pleasure, Siraki compares and contrasts alternative answers to the paradox proposed by other philosophers: Hobbes, Addison, Hume, and Burke. This British tradition helps Siraki contextualize Smith's view of approbation as congruent with a cultural shift during the period from solutions predicated on self-love—or the pleasure we gain from the thought of our own security when watching others suffer—to more sympathetic or benevolent approaches rooted in the spectator's emotional investment in the character. This context informs the emphasis on approbation, admiration, and *Cato* when considering Smith's view of theatricality and the theatre. But Smith is not writing within this exclusively British context. When he asserts *Phèdre*'s greatness, for example, he does so in response to a French neoclassical debate over Racine's merits—one so severe that Smith suggests it as the cause of the playwright's retirement. As Parnal Camp argues, "Smith's theory of morals is not merely theatrical, but specifically French and neoclassical," and, as I will argue, by placing Smith's approach to the theatre and his understanding of theatricality within the French Neoclassical tradition a solution to the *Cato* problem becomes possible (558). Unlike Camp, however, I am less interested in what Smith borrows from the French Neoclassical tradition and far more interested in how he departs from it. Smith is nearly a hundred years removed from the original context of Racine's composition, and so while he might be writing within this tradition, he does so from a different time and place and in a different language. This difference informs the way he approaches this tradition; his views about theatre involve attending to the "vivid and complex psychological dilemmas that interested the French moralists

in the light of a very different psychology," one that evolves over the century as it crosses the channel (Phillipson 63).

Consider, for instance, *Phèdre*'s scene of inquiry, which, as noted above, Smith claims recommends the play to us. Phaedra enters, crying. Her Nurse asks, "what's wrong?" Phaedra won't say. Her Nurse cries too. Both carry on for some time before Phaedra finally reveals her love in a speech so magnificent it remains a highlight of the play and a well-known example of the Racinian sublime. But this scene was not always admired. Shortly after *Phèdre*'s opening night on 1 January 1677, a sonnet began to circulate in Paris:

> Dans un fauteuil doré, Phèdre, tremblante & blême,
> Dit des vers où d'abord personne n'entend rien;
> Sa nourrice lui fait un sermon fort chrétien,
> Contre l'affreux dessein d'attenter sur soi-même.
>
> Hippolyte la hait presque autant qu'elle l'aime,
> Rien ne change son cœur et son chaste maintien,
> Sa nourrice l'accuse, elle s'en punit bien,
> Thésée est pour son fils d'une rigueur extrême.
>
> Une grosse Aricie, au cuir rouge, aux crins blonds,
> N'est-là que pour montrer deux énormes tétons,
> Que malgré sa froideur Hippolyte idolâtre.
>
> Il meurt enfin traîné par ses courciers ingrats,

Et Phèdre, après avoir pris de la mort aux rats,

Vient en se confessant, mourir sur le théâtre.

In a gilded chair, Phaedra, trembling and blushing,

Says verses which at first no one understands;

Her nurse gives her a great Christian sermon,

Against the awful intention to violate herself.

Hippolytus hates her almost as much as she loves him,

Nothing changes his heart and his chaste bearing,

Her nurse accuses, she greatly punishes herself,

Theseus is extremely harsh to his son.

A big Aricia, with red hide and blond mane,

Only there to flaunt her two enormous tits,

That Hippolytus idolizes despite his coldness.

He finally dies dragged by his ingrateful stallions,

And Phaedra, after having taken rat poison,

Comes confessing, to perish in the theatre. (Deshouliers 30)[133]

[133] Aricia was originally played by the purportedly overweight Mlle d'Ennebaut. Other than the fact that she was not as beloved as Champmeslé, it is unclear why she is the target of such vitriol in this poem, which riffs on Hippolytus's traditional association with horses to depict her as horse-like.

The sonnet is attributed to Antoinette Deshoulières as part of a conspiracy by a rival literary cabal, an opening salvo for what by 1687 would famously culminate in *La querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*.[134] Legend has it that after a performance of Racine's play, Deshoulière's mother and some of her friends returned home to collectively compose this sonnet, which soon spread around Paris, sparking the notorious *L'Affair des sonnets*. An anonymous parody quickly appeared that responded by insulting the duc de Nevers, believed to have been the mastermind behind some of the cabal's activities. His sister, the duchesse de Bouillon, had, for example, supposedly bought all the seats for *Phèdre et Hippolyte*'s first six performances so that the empty chairs on stage would rob the play of its majesty.[135] Offended, the Duke replied with a third sonnet that threatened both Racine and Boileau with violence, forcing them into hiding. According to this legend, the playwright Jacques Pradon was one of the conspirators who penned the original poem.[136] Though this belief has no material evidence, Pradon had both the means and the motive to contribute to this critique of the play, as he was at the center of a separate attack against Racine. Persuaded by the senior Mme Deshoulières, Pradon wrote and produced a second version of the Phaedra myth, which opened at the Hôtel Guénégaud on 3 January 1677, two days after and thus in competition with Racine's version. The duchesse de Bouillon

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[134] For a fuller review of events that led to the outbreak of the Quarrel, as well as how scholars currently understand this event's contemporary relevance as a "culture war" over literary and aesthetic tastes that radically altered perceptions of interiority, of emotions, of history, and of modernity, see Helena Taylor's "The Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns," 605–6. Joan DeJean was the first to find echoes of the Quarrel in contemporary culture wars. See DeJean *Ancients against Moderns: Culture Wars and the Making of a Fin de Siècle*. Though a complete consideration of the Quarrel's causes and effects would be beyond the scope of this chapter, it is important to keep the possible impact or influence of this event in mind as I compare the perspective of the sonnet writers to that of Adam Smith.

[135] According to David Wiles, the practice of seating the aristocracy on stage was "thought to enhance the ambience" of the play (*A Short History* 222).

[136] For an account of this legend, see Thomas Bussom's *A Rival of Racine: Pradon, His Life and Dramatic Works*, 62–8.

apparently also purchased all the seats for the first six performances of this play as well—though this time she ensured they were filled.[137]

Pradon would become a lifelong antagonist to both Racine and Boileau, siding with the Moderns against Boileau in the Quarrel, taking aim specifically at what he saw as the two authors' uses and abuses of the Longinian sublime. To stake out his opposition to this concept, Pradon usurps the moral language that Boileau had originally used in the introduction of his translation of Longinus's text. This language initially helped situate the relevance of the sublime to neoclassical aesthetic debates over art as a representation of reality, a paradigm that faced two nearly insurmountable problems. Since Plato argued for ceasing the production of poetry and banishing its producers, representation had been condemned as a form of lying.[138] At its best, representation fails to capture the truth of what it represents; at its worst, it intentionally deceives. A compromise, however, was found by regulating representation, and by creating the kinds of rules that define the neoclassical period. But this solution only creates a second problem: making art by following the rules does not guarantee anyone will like it. Two works of art could follow the same rules and yet one be preferred over the other. Neoclassical theorists required something more to explain one's preference for some art over others—they needed a theory of affect.

Scholars tend to group such theories into a single tradition, one Ann Delehanty argues initially formed around resistance to modern Cartesian skepticism and rationalism by drawing on the "Pascalian model of knowledge" (19). When Pascal tells his reader that "the heart has its

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[137] See Arthur Tilley, 'Preciosite' after 'Les Pricieuses Ridicules," 178.

[138] See Nicolas Cronk *The Classical Sublime: French Classicism and the Language of Literature* for a more detailed analysis of how French aesthetic theory in general and Boileau's concept of the sublime specifically resists the rise of nomenclaturism, or the theory that "words were merely tokens, man-made and arbitrary, designating an external and separate reality," which had replaced a more medieval "notion that language in some sense inhered in reality" (3).

reasons which reason itself does not know," he means divine inspiration—but his aphorism encapsulates the fundamentals of contemporary notions of affect as the "visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing," whose effects register through the ongoing becoming of lived experience (158; Seigworth and Gregg 1, original emphasis). Dominique Bouhours expanded this sense of affective knowledge by creating a "bridge between the world of divine revelation and the work of literature" (Delehanty 21). He first theorized the famous *je-ne-sais-quoi*, a kind of knowledge that one gains of the "ineffable nature in human relations," an experience which can neither be fully represented nor schematized theoretically (Delehanty 21). Friendship or that "étrange sympathie entre nos esprits" was Bouhours' most prominent illustration of this *je-ne-sais-quoi*, as one cannot reason their way into feeling friendship; it must be spontaneous ("strange sympathy between our spirits"; Bouhours 258). And there is no hard or fast rule to govern how it is created. One's acquaintance might, for example, follow all the standards of decorum but still never inspire that feeling.

Boileau locates in Longinus's theory of the sublime a similar model of affective knowledge. By tracing a theory of affect to an ancient, Boileau sought to synthesize this developing affective approach to aesthetics and thus legitimize it to other neoclassicists by situating it as part of the classical rather than the medieval Christian tradition. At the same time, he finds in Longinus not only rules to guide the production of the sublime, but also a framework that allows him to invest affect with moral value by linking Longinus's theory of rhetoric to the seventeenth-century neoclassical discourse on the *honnête homme* or perfect gentlemen of the court. Longinus invites this reading when he uses the court as a metaphor to criticize the sloppy use of rhetorical devices:

> Playing tricks by means of figures is a peculiarly suspect procedure. It raises the suspicion of a trap, a deep design, a fallacy. It is to be avoided in addressing a judge who has powers to decide, and especially in addressing tyrants, kings, governors, or anybody in a high place. Such a person immediately becomes angry if he is led astray like a foolish child by some skilful orator's figures. He takes the fallacy as indicating contempt for himself. He becomes like a wild animal. Even if he controls his temper, he is not completely conditioned against being convinced by what is said. A figure is therefore generally thought to be best when the fact that it is a figure is concealed. Thus sublimity and emotion are a defense and a marvellous aid against suspicion which the use of figures engenders. The artifice of the trick is lost to sight in the surrounding brilliance of beauty and grandeur, and it escapes all suspicion. (164; 17.1–2)

The metaphorical brilliance of the figure recalls that Longinus insists we hide sublime figures in plain sight by using their excellence to blind the hearer or reader to the fact of their figurability. To mould the affective power of this marvelous brilliance into a moral force, Boileau draws attention to Longinus's honesty: Boileau observes that "[s]ouvent il fait la figure qu'il enseigne, et, en parlant du Sublime, il est lui-même très-sublime. Le caractère d'honnête homme y paroît partout, et ses sentiments ont je ne sais quoi qui marque non-seulement un esprit sublime, mais une âme fort élevée au-dessus du commun ("he often uses the figure he teaches, and, in speaking of the sublime, he is himself very sublime. The character of the perfect gentleman [honest man] appears everywhere, and his feelings have the I know not what [*je ne sais quoi*] that marks not only a sublime spirit, but a soul very elevated above the common"; 3.437–9). The perfect gentleman is then not a bore, but he is also no courtly flatterer. He cleverly draws attention to his

own cleverness by making known the truth of his own artifice. By doing so, he ends up speaking with the force of self-evident truths rather than the falsity of theatrical flattery.[139]

From Boileau's point of view, the Racinian sublime discussed in the previous chapter could be considered an example of Racine's truthfulness and gentlemanly perfection. Whereas Champmeslé's theatrical presence could be understood as a threatening, overwhelming power, Racine's attempt to master that force, revealing its falsity as a theatrical effect through his language, becomes a moral and truthful act. Pradon, however, challenges both Racine and Boileau on this point. He thought of himself as victimized by the machinations of Racine and Boileau, and he draws upon a similar moral language to declare that both writers misread and misappropriate Longinus; they use the sublime fraudulently to seize power and prestige. He complains in the preface to his version of *Phèdre et Hippolyte*, for example, about a grand conspiracy instigated by his rivals which prevented him from securing an actress to star as his Phaedra—though, as H. Noel Williams ventures, it was "more probable that the ladies in question were, not unnaturally, reluctant to challenge comparisons with the all conquering Mlle. de Champmeslé" (104).[140] Because of their immoral actions—either real or perceived—Pradon asserts that the ill-mannered Racine and Boileau "sont fort éloignées de ce Sublime qu'ils tâchent d'atraper dans leurs Ouvrages" ("are very far from the sublime that they try to capture in their works"; 4-5). Their crooked example leads Pradon to draw a distinction between the sublime writer and the *honnête homme*: "[J]'ay toûjours crû qu'on devoit avoir ce caractère dans ses

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[139] For more on the relationship between the combination of honesty and acuity that characterizes the sublime and Boileau's view of the *honnête homme* see Henry Phillips, "Language, Conduct, and Literature in the Writings of Boileau" and Jules Brody, *Boileau and Longinus*, 137–9.

[140] Williams records how Mlle de Brie and Mlle Molière both turned down the role, which postponed the production's opening from the same as Racine's until two days later. See also the *Dissertation sur les tragedies de Phèdre et Hippolyte* (1677), whose anonymous author claims that, for the sake of objectivity, he will not say whether the rumour that Racine had anything to do with blocking Pradon from finding performers for his play is true or not.

mœurs, avant que de le faire paroître dans ses Ecrits, et que l'on devoit estre bien moins avide de la qualité de bon Autheur, que de celle d'honneste homme, que l'on me verra toûjours préferer à tout le sublime de Longin ("I have always believed that one must have this character in their morals before making it appear in their writings, and that one must be much less eager to be a good author than a perfect gentleman, who I will always prefer to all the sublime of Longinus"; 5). Because, for Pradon, both Boileau and Racine are underhanded rogues who secretly conspired against him and his success, their invocation of the sublime tarnishes its use as a producer of moral character.

The attack against Racine did not end with this critique of his theoretical debt to Longinus. In the last chapter, I considered how Racine's sublime turn might not work if Phaedra's entrance flops, and one tactic employed by the sonnet's writers—which may have included Pradon—seems to have been to first ensure and then later communicate that this failure happened. While most of the offending sonnet just lampoons events in the play by describing them maliciously—it represents the play's events as silly, exaggerated, as exhibiting a grand set of breasts rather than any grand style or substance—the first couplet specifically accuses Phaedra's scene of inquiry of misfiring.[141] The problem, from the perspective of the sonnet writers, is that the scene has a jarring presence that shatters the viewer's absorption in the dramatic events. Phaedra stumbles on stage with tears streaming. Her Nurse cries too. And no one knows why. Without the context to understand the character's actions, we are left only with what can be described in Smith's terms as the spectacle of primary passion arising from the

[141] We know the couplet refers to this scene because it references what was previously mentioned as the play's only stage direction: "*she sits*." As David Maskell argues, this "cruel sonnet" retroactively demonstrates that Champmeslé acted out that direction while also providing evidence for set design on the traditionally believed to be bare French Neoclassical stage (69). In this case, Champmeslé did not just sit. She must have sat in what was likely a very lovely chair.

situation or disposition of the body. Under these circumstances, the illusion of the play crumbles and the audience becomes embarrassingly aware of the pure presence of the performance, of the actress's now awkward trembles, tears, and blushes, or of their own embodiment within the theatre's bustling crowd (or, if the rumours are true, its empty seats).

The sonnet writers were likely mindful, just as the author of the *Dissertation sur les tragedies de Phèdre et Hippolyte* (1677) was, that right up until her confession speech, "[c]ette languissante conversation de Phedre, et d'Henone, est prise toute entire & mot pour mot d'Euripide" ("this languid conversation of Phaedra and Oenone is taken entirely and word for word from Euripides"; 23). But since most of the dialogue is the same, it becomes unclear exactly what annoyed the play's critics. Though it could be that the sonnet writers just do not like Euripides, or that they, like the author of the *Dissertation*, are unimpressed with the translation, perhaps another more compelling possibility is that this complaint reflects a structural problem with the play. Racine alters the scene's context, eliminating two elements from Euripides's version: he removes the prologue spoken by Aphrodite—which establishes for the audience her role in causing Phaedra's incestuous desire—and he shortens the scene where the Nurse and the Chorus speculate about the cause of Phaedra's illness to just a few lines spoken by Oenone to Hippolytus. In his adaptation, she only announces that Phaedra is unwell, shooing him from the stage before the Queen's arrival. This change means that the sonnet writers may have been correct when they observe that when Phaedra enters sobbing, no one knows why. Pradon's play, by comparison, similarly has no prologue. Though Pradon uses Aricia instead of an Oenone for the scene of inquiry, his version is closer to Euripides in terms of structure. As with the source material, the scene before Phaedra's entrance is dedicated to speculating about her illness. Aricia specifically suggests Theseus's absence is its cause. Additionally, Pradon does not leave the

audience with this incorrect information for long. He has her confess the real reason for her suffering in less than half as many lines as Racine does, after only her third turn to speak. While he still includes this moment of revelation and recognition, there is much less room for confusion.

If one believes that the scene requires advance knowledge about the cause of Phaedra's illness to be successful, then Racine's play must rely on prior knowledge of the myth. But this familiarity cannot be taken for granted. There is no guarantee that the playwright will follow the account that an audience member knows. Racine's previous play *Iphigénie*, for example, may have surprised some audience members by revealing in the final act that Agamemnon's daughter had survived, that Erphile was secretly born with the name Iphigenia, and that she was the one the prophecy required to be sacrificed. Although Racine claims in his Preface that he followed the legend of Phaedra, there remains a great deal of leeway for creative license. He justifies his inclusion of Aricia in his iteration of the story, for instance, because he found an obscure passage in Vergil that said Aricia was Hippolytus's wife.[142] Given that one cannot then assume foreknowledge about a play's events, the sonnet writers may have a point. Certainly, an unforgiving audience who had not read or seen Racine's version before could plausibly claim that they did not know what is happening. Under such conditions, this long, 116-line scene of a sitting Phaedra reciting incomprehensible dialogue to evade her Nurse, who keeps pestering her ward with questions—this is a theatrical failure. As a gross elaboration of just the situation of the body, it becomes an uncomfortable affective presence; an assault on the senses that reason finds senseless.

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[142]. See Vergil, *Aeneid*, 7.761–762. In his preface, Racine also credits other, unnamed Italian authors as sources for his inclusion of Aricia.

By the time Smith comments on *Phèdre*, the question of who wrote the better version between the two French poets had been settled in Racine's favour. Pradon, his play, and to a lesser extent, his allies, claims Jennifer Tsien, became not just a historical footnote, but a kind of boogeyman or "ghost," perpetually conjured up by a prominent faction of eighteenth-century French tastemakers led by Voltaire to demonstrate the threatening dangers of a "reading public's wayward judgments," a danger that reflexively confirmed the need for the elite tastesh makers who made these comments (94). In his preface to *Mariamne*, for example, Voltaire attributes the success of Pradon's Phaedra to what he considers the lesser qualities of theatre rather than the grandeur of poetry, noting that "le succès passager des représentations d'une tragédie ne dépend point du style, mais des acteurs et des situations" ("the initial success of a tragedy does not depend on the style, but on the actors and the situations"; 43). He contrasts these base elements of theatre with true artistic greatness, which can only be arbitrated by "ce charme inexprimable de la poésie que le génie seul peut donner, où l'esprit ne saurait jamais atteindre et sur lequel on raisonne si mal et si inutilement depuis la mort de M. Despréaux" ("that inexpressible charm of poetry that genius alone can give, where the mind can never reach and about which we reason so badly and so uselessly since the death of Monsieur Despréaux"; 43). He continues by rehashing some of the activities of the cabal, condemning Pradon for his paranoia, and rejecting Pradon's "préface insolente, dans laquelle il traitait ses critiques de malhonnêtes gens" ("insolent preface, in which he treated his critics as dishonest people"; 43). Between the two, he continues, "On ne saurait lire ces deux pièces de comparaison sans admirer l'une et sans rire de l'autre" (We cannot read these two pieces of comparison without admiring one and laughing at the other"; 43). Smith read and knew Voltaire. He was unquestionably aware of the affair between Racine and Pradon, and he must have known Voltaire's position on the issue. In fact, his comments about *Phèdre*'s

greatness occur during a section when he uses this history of Parisian literary cabals to discuss how the love of praise rather than the love of praiseworthiness can be detrimental to creative enterprises like poetry and drama.[143] That he resurrects some of the concerns of Pradon's allies and Racine's critics by defending the play's situations rather than its poetry suggests an intentional departure from the Eighteenth-century French Neoclassical context and consensus. What Smith means by this departure is, in my view, the key to solving the *Cato* problem.

In its initial conditions, Racine's play is for an audience, a word that emphasizes the aural quality of the Parisian theatre, where sightlines were poor, and where the play's coherence was constantly threatened by the unruly clamour of its patrons. By stilling and silencing the audience with the overwhelming affect of theatre—with the force of Champmeslé's presence, her voice, her *je-ne-sais-quoi*, and her theatrical sublime which his rhetoric attempts to master—the play conquers that audience and coerces them into spectatorship. For the emerging faction of Moderns, however, none of this works. They sit and watch Phaedra's tears and lamentations, and they are confused, disgusted, and bored. Smith, writing not only in another language and another country but also over a century later—after a period during which the proscenium arch was erected and the boundary between stage and seats successfully policed—now wonders why the scene succeeds despite this modern critique. He seeks to understand how and why this scene captures the attention of a more passive, more likely to be seated spectator, who has a fundamentally different affective relationship to the performance than the boisterous audience member found in seventeenth-century *parterre*.

Though eighteenth-century British theatre was still very much a loud, interactive social event, and the external affect associated with the spectacle of celebrity remained throughout an

[143] See Smith, *TMS* 125–6; III.2.23–4.

important aspect of the theatrical experience, Smith presents a very different view of this theatre, one that recenters this neoclassical play away from external affect and towards the internal feelings of its characters. The spectator of his theatre is not overwhelmed by a sublime presence but absorbed by a curious absence—namely, the same questions that occupy the nurse: what is wrong with Phaedra? What is making her sit? Unlike Racine's rival cabal, who were turned off by this absence, in Smith's theatre, it is what turns him on. The gender of the character plays an important role in how Smith explains the success of this scene: Smith—a man writing for other men—announces that women "occupy a curious subject position with respect to the laws of society, namely a more precarious one" (*TMS* 33; I.ii.2.4). Because of these laws, "weakness," becomes "peculiarly distressful in them, and, upon that very account, more deeply interesting" (*TMS* 33; I.ii.2.4). We men, he thus argues, become curious about their thoughts and feelings and about the obstacles they may face, such that we are more likely absorbed than repulsed by the lamentations that would otherwise be considered breaches of decorum. For Smith then, curiosity rather than sympathy saves the scene. Without its power to move and to charm us, Phaedra's appearance would be as Racine's critics understood it: incomprehensible and off-putting.

A Curious Curiosity

While curiosity saves the scene, I do not think it alone solves the puzzle of Smith's praise. What Smith's description of this scene does do, however, is draw attention to how understated curiosity is generally to Smith's moral philosophy. Consider, for instance, how Smith resolves the question of how we can have sympathy at all given that "we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, [so] we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected" (*TMS* 9; I.i.1.2). In his famous example of our brother on the rack, Smith argues that when we see this

man, we imagine ourselves in his position, and thus come to feel something akin to what he feels. This imagined feeling, Smith later clarifies, is made possible only by the simultaneous experience of both cause and effect. In such cases, both the situation of the passion (the cause) and the situation of the body (the effect) are perceived together: we see the rack causing the man's suffering in the same glance, and this combination engages our sympathetic imagination. While we may be affected only by the situation of the other's body—"a smiling face is," says Smith, "to everybody that sees it, a cheerful object; as a sorrowful countenance, on the other hand, is a melancholy one"—this immediate response is a special case that "does not hold universally" (*TMS* 11; I.i.1.6). A smile by itself suggests "the general idea" of a pleasurable cause just as tears suggest a painful one, and because of these general ideas we can sympathize albeit imperfectly without having the causes clarified (Smith *TMS* 11; I.i.1.7). To emphasize this point, Smith gives the example of the "furious behaviour of the angry man," who

> is more likely to exasperate us against him than against his enemies. As we are unacquainted with his provocation, we cannot bring his case home to ourselves, nor conceive any thing like the passion which it excites. But we plainly see what is the situation of those with whom he is angry, and to what violence they may be exposed from so enraged an adversary. We readily, therefore, sympathize with their fear or resentment, and are immediately disposed to take part against the man from whom they appear to be in so much danger. (*TMS* 11; I.i.1.6)

Here, we immediately sympathize with the fear and resentment of the angry man's victims because we experience both the expression and the cause at the same time. We do not, however, have any immediate sympathy with the angry man because we only experience his expression of anger, and we know nothing of its cause. For the victims, we can see the situation of the passion.

For the man, we see only the situation of the body. If we knew why the man was angry, then perhaps our sympathies might be different.

This idea that proximity between cause and effect enables sympathy presents a problem, since, as Smith observes, there are many instances where we sympathize with the feelings of others despite not being present for and having no general idea of their cause. As previously mentioned, for Hume, this issue was heightened by Smith's failure to directly address the paradox of tragedy. If, as Smith says, "the very appearance of grief and joy inspire us with some degree of like emotions," and if "[i]t is painful to go along with grief, and we always enter into it with reluctance," then it stands to reason that if approached by a tearful friend, we would flee rather than offer sympathies (*TMS* 11; 1.I.i.6, 46; *TMS* 1.III.i.9). While Smith adds a response to Hume's letter to make it clear that because of approbation full sympathy is always agreeable, he does not initially treat approbation as the primary motivating affect compelling individuals to adopt a sympathetic relationship. Instead, Smith introduces the delights of curiosity. Sympathy is "imperfect," he says, until we learn the specifics of the feeling's cause, and to learn that cause we are driven by curiosity to enact a scene of inquiry:

> General lamentations, which express nothing but the anguish of the sufferer, create rather a curiosity to inquire into his situation, along with some disposition to sympathize with him, than any actual sympathy that is very sensible. The first question which we ask is, What has befallen you? Till this be answered, though we are uneasy both from the vague idea of his misfortune, and still more from torturing ourselves with conjectures about what it may be, yet our fellow-feeling is not very considerable. (*TMS* 11–2; I.i.1.9)

In this scene—identical in structure to Phaedra's confession scene—Smith endows curiosity with the same qualities as Edmund Burke's idea of delight: "the removal or moderation of pain," or a satisfying release from *torture* (Burke 31; 1.4). Racine's scene of inquiry, furthermore, anticipates this view of curiosity. Unlike Euripides's Nurse, Racine's Oenone does not merely ask what's wrong with Phaedra at the behest of a chorus. Rather, just as a smiling face meets a smiling face or a melancholic one meets a melancholy, so too does Oenone respond by mirroring Phaedra's expressions. Just as Phaedra cannot hold herself together, just as her knees give out and her eyes fill up with tears, so too does Oenone fall to the ground weeping. As she drops to her feet, Oenone says to her ward:

> Madame, au nom des pleurs que pour vous j'ai versés,
>
> Par vos faibles genoux que je tiens embrassés,
>
> Délivrez mon esprit de ce funeste doute.

> Madam, in the name of these tears that I shed for you,
>
> By these feeble knees that I clasp
>
> Deliver me from this fatal uncertainty!" (1.3.243–5).

Oenone sees Phaedra's agonizing situation of the body and is so pained to discover the cause of it, that she too feels death's touch. Seeking relief from this pain, she lies at Phaedra's feet, clasping the woman's knees, begging to know what's wrong. Phaedra refuses to answer her Nurse. She says she would rather die than give an "aveu si funeste"—a phrase that echoes

Oenone's fatal uncertainty while hinting that her confession will somehow be more deadly than her death ("fatal confession"; 1.3.226), For both writers, curiosity presents an attractive, delightful pain rather than a repulsive one. It is a pain whose pleasurable relief is felt not by fleeing the situation of others but by investigating them. The satisfaction of this curiosity, which occurs once the other articulates their emotional self by explaining what happened—by creating a *narrative character*—then produces the conditions for sympathy.

Curiosity, incidentally, was a solution to the paradox of tragedy proposed by Corneille—Racine's most famous rival, a figurehead for the Moderns, and a mentor for Pradon—who famously dismisses Aristotle's *katharsis* as the end of tragedy instead giving this advice to playwrights for how to produce plays that will please the audience:

> Je n'y ajouterai que ce mot: Qu'il faut, s'il se peut, lui réserver toute la catastrophe, et même la reculer vers la fin, autant qu'il est possible. Plus on la diffère, plus les esprits demeurent suspendus, et l'impatience qu'ils ont de savoir de quel côté elle tournera est cause qu'ils la reçoivent avec plus de plaisir: ce qui n'arrive pas quand elle commence avec cet acte. L'auditeur qui la sait trop tôt n'a plus de curiosité; et son attention languit durant tout le reste, qui ne lui apprend rien de nouveau.
>
> I will only add this one word: that we must, if possible, delay for him the whole catastrophe, and even, as much as possible, postpone it towards the end. The longer it is deferred, the more spirits are held in suspense, and their impatience to know in which way it will turn causes them to experience it with greater pleasure; this does not occur

> when it begins with the fifth act. An audience that knows it too early loses its curiosity; its attention languishes for the rest of the play, which teaches it nothing new. (46)[144]

When it comes to curiosity, however, Smith sides with the Ancients against the Moderns. In the final section of *TMS*, he warns against the delights associated curiosity, which he argues threaten the smooth functioning of a moral, sympathetic society: "the passion to discover the real sentiments of others is naturally so strong," he claims, "that it often degenerates into a troublesome and impertinent curiosity to pry into those secrets of our neighbours which they have very justifiable reasons for concealing" (*TMS* 337; VII.iv.28). At the same time, he suggests that "to disappoint this curiosity […] is equally disagreeable in its turn," since the "impenetrable obscurity" produced by "the man who eludes our most innocent questions," and who "build[s] a wall about his breast," makes us feel "at once pushed back with the rudest and most offensive violence" (*TMS* 338; VII.iv.28). One subsequently "requires prudence and strong sense of propriety to govern," he claims, and "to reduce [curiosity] to that pitch which any impartial spectator can approve of" (*TMS* 337–8; VII.iv.29). Though it may set sympathy in motion, curiosity also competes with, and potentially overpowers that sympathy—it can transform sympathy for someone's grief into skepticism about their true feelings; it can render someone's caring inquiry into the experience of meddlesome intrusiveness.

Smith's appeal to and criticism of curiosity is consistent with a long tradition of concern about this feeling, one that stretches back to Plato and Aristotle, and which influenced how both British and French moral philosophers understood the psychology of motivation. While Plato

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[144] Corneille gives the example of Tristan L'Hermite's *La Mariane* (1636)—the same play Voltaire would rewrite with his preface comparing Racine to Pradon to demonstrate the superiority of verse to actors and situation—as the kind of play that lacks pleasure because it carries on too long after the catastrophe.

first describes wonder or *thaumaston* as the father of philosophy, a moral feeling that induces the philosopher to inquire, Aristotle divides this desire to know into two separate types based on the object of knowledge. [145] He separates the pleasures of knowing novel sensations from the desire to know philosophical causes and first principles, dubbing only the latter the virtue of wisdom. The Christian tradition would pounce on this distinction, transforming one side into a vice; the other, a virtue. Augustine, for example, condemns *curiositas* as a vice of excess. He argues that while wonder seeks pleasure in objects that are "beautiful, melodious, fragrant, soft," while "curiosity is its opposite"; it seeks pleasure in the knowledge of things like a "lacerated corpse" which well-regulated passions ought to steer us away from. He describes this desire as the "malady of curiosity," which he maintains leads away from God and towards "strange sights exhibited in the theatre" and secret powers over nature (234; 10.35.56). This Augustinian distinction was maintained well into the seventeenth- and eighteenth centuries. As Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park observe, two major moral categories born from this distinction characterize the drive for knowledge—wonder and curiosity—and form an "intricate minuet" through the history of philosophy and aesthetics (304). Descartes, for instance, praises wonder —caused by the pleasurable experience of a new and surprising object—as "première de toutes les passions," because it sets in motion an affective response prior to positive or negative judgements that intermingle with other feelings like love or hatred, although he still cautions against letting this feeling descend into "la maladie de ceux qui sont aveuglement curieux," an addiction to wondering at the rarities of the world without consideration for their utility ("the first of all the passions"; 109; "the sickness of the blindly curious"; 121). By the eighteenth century, the idea of curiosity as a motivational affect became a major topic of discussion for

[145] Plato famously claimed that "the experience which is characteristic of a philosopher, this wondering: this is where philosophy begins and nowhere else." (*Theaetetus* 173; 155d).

philosophers, in part because of what William Eamon describes as a "heightened consciousness of novelty" in Europe which developed after the "geographical explorations" and exploitations "brought back accounts of discoveries made in Asia and Africa as well as in America" (272).[146] This emerging consciousness blossomed first in Renaissance Italy, where trade practices and competition between the various Italian city-states led to high concentrations of and a desire to exhibit immense wealth. Affluent families established systems of patronage to build their prestige by attracting artists and intellectuals to their courts. One way of gaining the attention of a patrician was to advertise one's own collection of novelties and curiosities and offer them up in a "ritual of gift exchange" (Eamon 271).[147] More importantly, the idea of passions as motivations grew as reason's role in the constitution of the subject was challenged by eighteenth-century empiricists. The idea that the rational mind might check the irrational passions began to give way to a more materialistic and mechanical view of a body pushed around by affective forces. To purify and order (in theory at least) the social body awash with unruly affect, philosophers began to rationalize the passions, identifying and weighing the moral advantages of each. Those who did so broke from both the Greco-Roman and Catholic tradition of rational asceticism to adopt what Alan Hirschman identifies as "the principle of the countervailing passions," where

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[146] See Stephen Greenblatt's *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* for an account of how early European colonial discourses invoked the aesthetics of wonder and the marvellous to represent and interpret the New World. Greenblatt notes there that these discourses invoke what he describes as the "ritual of possession," a process not dissimilar to the sublime turn: interpreters of the New World represented their encounters first as unfamiliar wonders but then in a series of speech-acts made the "move toward sovereign possession as the result of an act of interpretation" (60, 13). For Greenblatt, the aesthetics of wonder function to produce a moment of rhetorical sleight-of-hand, and he observes how the marvellous obscures the infelicitous declarations of possession of territory and people.

[147] Galileo, for example, recorded this process in a letter sent to secure the patronage of Cosimo de Medici, where he advertised all his "particular secrets" which are "as useful as they are curious and admirable" (62-3). These secrets and curiosities were collected and displayed in cabinets of curiosities, and these displays were arranged in a manner that appealed to the Horatian neoclassical edict that art ought to please and to teach. Cabinets of curiosities pleased the princes; the scholars used them to teach.

powerful motivational passions could be used to encourage rational and productive ones; these passions could in turn check chaotic and destructive ones (2).

Curiosity surfaced during the seventeenth- and eighteenth centuries as a motivational affect in competition with other motivational passions capable of securing a rational social order. It was, for example, taken up by the emerging scientific communities like the Royal Society, which organized themselves around curiosity as a motivational affect.[148] It was also frequently derided. In Thomas Shadwell's play *The Virtuoso*, for example, first performed at Dorset Garden in 1676, the character of Sir Nicolas Gimcrack (a caricature of Robert Boyle) established the virtuoso as a popular comic character whose pursuit of useless curiosities and silly experiments was mocked by the then mostly middle-class theatre audience.[149] This character embodied the complaints of writers such as Mary Astell who protested that the virtuoso, who "sold Estate in Land to purchase one in *Scallop, Conch, Musele, Cockle Shells*, *Periwinkles, Sea Shrubs, Weeds*" and so on, gathers "Merchandizes [that] serve not to promote our Luxury, nor encrease our Trade, and neither enrich the Nation, nor himself" (96–7, original emphasis). The moral philosophers also sided against the virtuoso. Shaftesbury, for instance, ridiculed the virtuosi for their "Zeal in the Contemplation of the *Insect*-Life, the Conveniencys, Habitations and OEconomy of a Race of *Shell-Fish*," which they use to erect a *"Cabinet*," as wrongfully and

[148] See for example Robert Boyle, one of the founders of the Royal Society, who claimed in *The Christian Virtuoso* that "it was the duty of inquisitive and well-instructed Considerers" to unearth the "great many more curious and excellent Tokens, and Effects of Divine Artifice" hidden in the world that require "the most attentive and prying Inspection of inquisitive and well-instructed considerers" to unearth (15–6).

[149] Henry Peacham first recorded the use of the word in England in 1634, noting that those in "possession of such rarities" and who "are skilled in them, are by the Italians termed *Virtuosi*, as if others that neglect or despise them were idiots or rakeshells" (117, original emphasis). Unlike the Italians, who seamlessly incorporated these cabinets into a patronage system, the English felt pressure from the powerful middle classes to validate this practice. Richard Haydocke, thought to be one of the first of England's virtuosi, justified his work by appealing to the health benefits that could be gained through the pursuit of studying curiosities. For a history of the virtuosi in England see Walter Houghton's "The English Virtuoso in the Seventeenth-Century: Part 1" and "The English Virtuoso in the Seventeenth-Century: Part 2."

"monstrous[ly]" pursuing "RARITY *for Rareness-sake*" (96–7; III.1.156–7, original emphasis).[150]

When Burke begins his treatise on the sublime and beautiful with the claim that "[t]he first and simplest emotion which we discover in the human mind, is Curiosity," he offers a concise summary of how the tradition of moral philosophy had come to dismiss curiosity—it is a feeling required to initially motivate philosophical inquiry, but also one that quickly overstays its welcome; it is "the most superficial of all the affections," a feeling fit for "children perpetually running from place to place, to hunt out something new" (27; I.i.1). Though he notes that "curiosity blends itself more or less with all our passions," Burke's analysis quickly moves onto the more respectable "passions of people advanced in life to any considerable degree" (28; I.i.2). Smith's remarks on curiosity appear resonant within this context. While curiosity sets the process of sympathy in motion, it must be checked by the more advanced sentiments associated with morality, restraint, and decorum.

In the *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belle Literature* (*LRBL*), Smith extends his concerns over curiosity as a motivational pleasure to theorize literary taste. For David Reisman, Smith prefers neoclassical playwrights over British because their observance of the unities reduces curiosity to keep the audience attentive to the action. Smith's view of the audience, claims Reisman, is that it "may be willing to suspend its disbelief" but never "willing to suspend its curiosity, and will

[150] See also Hutcheson, who attacked the "dull Critick, or one of the Virtuosi" by comparing him with the "poet": "This latter Class of Men may have greater Perfection in that Knowledge, which is deriv'd from external Sensation; they can tell all the specifick Differences of Trees, Herbs, Minerals, Metals; they know the Form of every Leaf, Stalk, Root, Flower, and Seed of all the Species, about which the Poet is often very ignorant: And yet the Poet shall have a vastly more delightful Perception of the Whole; and not only the Poet but any man of a fine Taste" (*An Inquiry* 24; I.7).

never forgive a playwright for not providing it with adequate information" (46).[151] Smith, moreover, uses his distaste for curiosity to criticize novels because, he says, "newness [is its] only merit […] and curiosity the only motive which induces us to read them" (*LRBL* 97; ii.30). Though Smith recognizes that "[o]ne method which most modern historians and all the Romance writers take to render their narration interesting is to keep their event in Suspense," he complains that the modern appeal to curiosity has a deleterious effect on the reader or spectator (*LRBL* 96; ii.28). Maintained by withholding the "great event," the appeal to curiosity at first empowers a writer to trick their readers into "read[ing] thro a number of dull nonsensicall stories, our curiosity prompting us to get at the important event" (*LRBL* 96; ii.28). At the same time, the successful use of curiosity compels readers to skip over "the less important intervening accidents, which if the great event had been intirely concealed, our curiosity would make us hurry over; We would count the pages we had to read to get to the event, as we generally do in a novel" (*LRBL* 96–7; ii.29). The readers of these sprawling novels and histories are, in this view, like children, running from place to place in the narrative, eager to find out what new thing might happen next.[152] If the satisfaction of curiosity is allowed to become the primary motivational affect, then it will reduce the quality of both the production and consumption of literary material. It results in a sloppy approach to structure by an author and the loss of attention to detail by the reader.

Smith argues, however, that these problems are largely confined to modern literature: the ancients, he claims, "never have recourse to this method [of using curiosity] […] Vergil in the

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[151] Adam Potkay similarly argues that for Smith "the virtue of Racine's drama lies in continuity: in the case of his great tragedy, *Phèdre* we follow and to some degree feel along with the heroine as her obsessive love engenders self-loathing, criminal jealousy, and finally suicide" (135).

[152] Smith has in mind the Romance novel rather than the Realist novel; his critique is much better suited to Thomas Malory rather than Jane Austen. My argument about the importance of theatre for Smith does not discredit arguments about the importance of Smith to the novel's history.

beginning of the Aeneid and Homer in both his heroic poems inform us in the beginning of the chief events that are told in the whole poem" (*LRBL* 97; ii.30). He similarly lauds Euripides, who "often in his prologues by means of a God or a Ghost makes us acquainted with the Events and puts us on our Guard that we may be free to attend to the Sentiments and Actions of each Scene, some of which he has laboured greatly" (*LRBL* 97; ii.30). Here Smith appears concerned about the same issues with theatre that later bothered Gertrude Stein: that narrative interferes with our focus on the present, creating a "syncopated time in relation to the emotion" (Stein xxix). For both Smith and Stein, when engaging with narrative, our focus shifts away from what is happening to what happened and what will happen. While Stein experiments with ways to tether the spectator's emotion to the present by creating a series of radical modernist plays that are almost entirely absent plot, Smith solves this problem with the idea of repetition. "The graduall and just development of the Catastrophe," he argues, "constitutes a great beauty in any Tragedy yet is it not a necessary one, otherwise we could never with any pleasure hear or see acted a play for the Second time; yet that pleasure often grows by Repetition" (*LRBL* 97; ii.30). In fact, he claims, "A tragedy can bear to be read again and again tho the incidents be not new to us they are new to the actors and by this means interest us as well as by their own importance" (*LRBL* 97; ii.30). By re-reading or re-watching a familiar play, we achieve freedom from curiosity leaves our sympathies open.

Phaedra's Beautiful Confession

Smith's view that repetition increases tragic pleasure creates the potential for a fresh reading of Racine's *Phèdre* and its confession scene, one that might help explain his praise of the

play. As suggested previously, Smith's description of the scene of inquiry echoes the structure and theme of the play's confession scene by representing the dynamics between curiosity and the sympathetic imagination. Phaedra cries, and Oenone must know why. Phaedra refuses to say, and Oenone's overwhelming curiosity unwinds her relationship with her ward, representing to the audience what Smith describes as the threat of curiosity: Oenone interprets Phaedra's repudiation of her inquiry as a cruel, "silence inhumain" and responds with her own "juste douleur" ("inhumane silence"; 1.3.222; "righteous pain"; 1.3.237). In Smith's view, curiosity about Phaedra's pain recommends this scene to us. But when confronted only by her pain, she holds our curiosity rather than our sympathy. If sympathy enters the scene at all, it does so in relation to Oenone, whose desire to know the cause of Phaedra's grief we share. Oenone's love for her ward endears her to us. "There is something agreeable," Smith says, "even in the weakness of friendship and humanity. The too tender mother, the too indulgent father, the too generous and affectionate friend, may sometimes, perhaps, on account of the softness of their natures, be looked upon with a species of pity, in which, however, there is a mixture of love" (*TMS* 40; I.ii.4.3). Pity turns to sympathy in part because we too share her curiosity about the cause of Phaedra's grief though her need to know far outweighs our own. But if we imagine Phaedra's pain as the pain of our own child, Oenone's desperation—her desire to know why Phaedra sits and cries—becomes more than just sympathetically agreeable, it becomes admirable.

Phaedra too watches Oenone. She starts to become like us. She knows and understands the cause of her Nurse's pain and begins to sympathize with that pain. To add this new sympathetic pain to her own is too much, however, and she seeks relief, confessing her incestuous desire for her stepson Hippolytus. Potentially, the actress's performance delivers that external affective

power that reaches the theatrical sublime. If this feeling occurs, then we might reply alongside Oenone "Juste ciel! tout mon sang dans mes veines se glace!" ("Great Heavens! My blood freezes in my veins!"; 1.3.265). More likely, or at least more likely from the perspective of an eighteenth-century bourgeois audience, we are moved in another way. We begin to learn the cause of her actions by discovering the full situation of her passion. We subsequently begin to sympathize. This sympathy, however, does not last long—this sentiment is quickly interrupted by Panope who enters with news of Theseus's death. This news, claims Oenone, changes the conditions that made Phaedra's love painful: "Thésée en expirant vient de rompre les nœuds / Qui faisaient tout le crime et l'horreur de vos feux" ("Theseus's death unties the knots / that made your passion a horror and a crime" (1.5.351–2). At the same time, Phaedra's story is not over. Oenone reminds her she needs to worry about what happens next. What will happen to her and to her son if Hippolytus marries this other woman Aricia: will he kill his stepmother and stepbrother to take control of Troezen? The solution to this problem is also the solution to Phaedra's disquieting love: she should marry her stepson and secure the throne. And Phaedra agrees to follow in Oenone's plot: "Eh bien ! à tes conseils je me laisse entraîner." ("Well! By your counsels, I let myself be swept away" 1.5.363). And so the story continues. Phaedra's foreshadowing that this may have been a fatal confession, moreover, encourages our curiosity rather than sympathy, which dissolves as we turn our attention toward the plot of the story and the next great event. While Smith the philosopher describes the elements of a scene of inquiry, Racine the poet stages one, enabling us to enter into that scene and feel its dynamics. For this reason, Smith praised the poets over the philosophers: "The poets and romance writers, who best paint the refinements and delicacies of love and friendship, and of all other private and domestic

affections, Racine and Voltaire; Richardson, Maurivaux, and Riccoboni; are, in such cases, much better instructors than Zeno, Chrysippus, or Epictetus" (*TMS* 143; III.3.14).

More importantly, and what separates the stage production of the scene from a scene of inquiry performed outside the theatre, is that theatre enables the audience to take up a far more impartial perspective by attending a second viewing. Repetition, Smith says, increases our pleasure, and the reason for this rise might be because our attention becomes less focused on relieving our painful curiosity about the plot. When we see or read the scene again, we know in advance why Phaedra cries. Because of this knowledge, we are no longer invested in what has or will happen; we can take up a more objective and impartial position relative to the present action on stage. On this second viewing, we can appreciate how Racine accurately demonstrates the dynamics between sympathy and curiosity and admire the playwright's ability to create a scene of inquiry that both once left us curious while also having us sympathize with the curiosity of the characters.

This second viewing, furthermore, enables audiences to attend more closely to the poetic details and sentiments of the scene. In general, Smith does not praise theatre for its poetry. But this does not mean he has little to say about poetic expression. In the *LBRL*, he contributes to eighteenth-century debates about rhetoric, modifying the theory of external affect associated with the Longinian sublime to include the internal emotional processes associated with sympathy when he defines what makes figures of speech beautiful. "When the sentiment of the speaker," says Smith, "is expressed in a neat, clear, plain and clever manner, and the passion or affection he is poss(ess)ed of and intends, *by sympathy*, to communicate to his hearer, is plainly and cleverly hit off, then and then only the expression has all the force and beauty that language can give it" (*LRBL* 25; I.v.53, original emphasis). Expressions like "fatal uncertainty" and "fatal

confession" are beautiful, in this view, because they clearly and cleverly communicate to an audience the sentiments of the characters by comparing the character's grief to death while also foreshadowing the tragic end of the plot. There is, furthermore, no reason to think that a similar approach cannot transfer to the performance of the actors in the play more generally. This view marks the possibility of a beautiful actor, a figure that provides an alternative to the stoic sublime actor as a solution to the problem of theatricality in a society that depends on the truthful communication of feeling. If we already know the plot, and we know that the actor is merely repeating that plot, and the actor knows we know all this as well, then these contrivances make it difficult to categorize either the performer or the character they play as liars or deceivers.

As Ridout points out, if the antitheatrical notion of theatricality sunders reality by distinguishing a false outer performance from a more truthful inner self hidden backstage, in the actual theatre "[e]verything is there, out in the open" (14). The openness created by the contrivances of the theatre helps repair the split between inner truth and outer falsity. This solution is felt most strongly by repeatedly viewing the same play because repetition allows the spectator to assume a seemingly otherwise difficult if not impossible position of pure objectivity free from curiosity, and from that position observe the beautiful actor whose movements, gestures, and tones of voice act like figures of speech, facilitating and enhancing that spectator's sympathy with the character. Unlike for Diderot, who theorized the actor as someone who either felt or did not feel the emotions they performed, and whose sublimity depended on their ability to do the latter convincingly, the beautiful actor is judged not on what they feel but on how they make the audience feel. Rather than disgust us, the beautiful actor—who touchingly falls and weeps and clasps knees—draws us into the role rather than the story, making truthful the fiction of the play.

Chapter 5

Staging the Heart: Poetic Justice and the Poetics of Hatred in Baillie's *De Monfort*

Can any thing be more just, than that that Providence which governs the World should punish Men for indulging their Passions, as much as for obeying the Dictates of their most envenom'd Hatred and Malice? [...] *Because 'tis for the most part, by their Passions, that Men offend, and 'tis by their Passions, for the most part, that they are punish'd. But this is certain, that the more Virtue a Man has the more he commands his Passions, but the Virtuous alone command them. The Wicked take the utmost Care to dissemble and conceal them, for which reason we neither know what our Neighbours are, nor what they really suffer. Man is too finite, too shallow, and too empty a Creature to know another Man thoroughly, to know the Creature of an infinite Creator, but dramatical Persons are Creatures of which a Poet is himself the Creator. And tho' a Mortal is not able to know the Almighty's Creatures, he may be allow'd to know his own.*

—John Dennis "To the *Spectator*, on Poetical Justice," 20

His heart, in this case, applauds with ardour, and even with transport, the just retaliation which seems due to such detestable crimes, and which, if, by any accident, they should happen to escape, he would be highly enraged and disappointed [...] *But if the murderer should escape from punishment, it would excite his highest indignation, and he would call upon God to avenge, in another world, that crime which the injustice of mankind had neglected to chastise upon earth.*

—Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments,* 90–1; II.ii.3.11

To lift up the roof of his dungeon, like the Diable boiteux*, and look upon a criminal the night before he suffers, in his still hours of privacy, when all that disguise. which respect for the opinion of others, the strong motive by which even the lowest and wickedest of men still continue to be moved, would present an object to the mind of every person, not withheld from it by great timidity of character, more powerfully attractive than almost any other.*

—Joanna Baillie "Introductory Discourse," 1: 6

It is the addition of strangeness to beauty, that constitutes the romantic character in art [...] *it is the addition of curiosity to this desire of beauty that constitutes the romantic temper.*

—Walter Pater, *Appreciations* 258

Fine Beginnings: Baillie's Exposition

Joanna Baillie's *De Monfort* (1798) opens with two of De Monfort's men in conversation: the old landlord Jerome and the servant Manuel. This use of lower-class, minor

characters in an introductory scene to provide contextualizing background is a traditional trope. Shakespeare—considered by some to be the "greatest master of fine beginnings"—used it often (Freytag 118). *Romeo and Juliet* similarly begins with servants conversing, describing the quarrel between the Montagues and the Capulets before demonstrating this rivalry's threat to peace in the city by brawling in the street. But while Shakespeare's scene both shows and tells its audience what is necessary to understand the play's inciting incident, Baillie's expository scene withholds crucial information. When Jerome asks what has "befallen" his master De Monfort, Manuel responds, "I cannot tell thee," because he does not know (1.2.19–20).[153] Instead of contextualizing the plot, *De Monfort*'s expository scene increases the mystery by scrutinizing the titular character's behaviour. The servant's talk reveals that De Monfort's frequent mood swings leave them on edge: "I have been upon the eve of leaving him," complains Manuel, because his master's "difficult, capricious, and distrustful" attitude "galls my nature—yet, I know not how, / A secret kindness binds me to him still" (1.1.27–9). De Monfort has a "suspicious nature"; he frequently overreacts to perceived offences, even "guiltless" ones (1.1.30–9). But he also overcompensates with "o'ertrain'd gratitude" for minor or unintentional favours (1.1.45). "Something disturbs his mind," says Jerome, and though curious about his character, they concede that a "gloomy sternness in his eye […] repels all sympathy" (1.1.78–9). As if beckoned by this gossipy preamble, De Monfort enters the scene with simmering hostility. "Ah, Manuel," Jerome reports to his colleague after furtively glancing at his master, "what an alter'd man is here! / His eyes are hollow, and his cheeks are pale" (1.1.95–6). Clearly, something is wrong, but what? The pair are too afraid to ask. Instead, they nosily creep about on their "*tip-toes*" so as not

[153] All citations from the play use the line numbers from Peter Duthie's 2001 edition of Baillie's 1798 first volume of the *Plays on the Passions*. Unless otherwise noted, all other citations from Baillie originate from the introductions located in each of the three volumes from the 1821 reprints of *Plays of the Passions.*

to disturb or annoy him, hesitantly watching his reactions for signs of approbation and displeasure (1.1.95sd). In this instance, intra- and extra-diegetic curiosities become aligned as the audience begins to imitate these characters, observing with them De Monfort's expressions, his tone of voice, and his words for secret meaning. (1.1.95sd).

Though the use of exterior performance to allude to a hidden depth of character is a common feature of modern, realist drama, Baillie applies it nearly a century before Ibsen to probe her concept of sympathetic curiosity: a propensity to know the heart of another, to identify, to classify, and to understand their interiority. This need to pry into the situations of others, to interpret their dress and manners as exhibiting their character, is, says Baillie in the introduction to her first volume of plays, so "strongly implanted within us" and it is such a "continually repeated occurrence," that "it thereby escapes observation" (1: 2). "From that strong sympathy," she continues, "nothing has become so much an object of man's curiosity as man himself" (1: 2). Baillie scholars typically interpret sympathetic curiosity as reinventing psychological theories and theatre practices, and pre-empting changes in both fields during the Romantic and Modernist periods. As James Allard points out, many construe Baillie "as a socially and politically conscious (some might say obsessed) playwright," whose work ought to be understood "as engaging in a kind of proto-psychoanalytic, psychosocial investigation of the passions and civility; as enacting a series of Foucauldian disciplinary gestures; as staging the drama of nationhood and cultural identity" and "as directly treating contemporary debates on criminal justice and capital punishment" (Allard 172). Such scholars typically analyze what Barbara Judson describes as "Baillie's commitment to psychological realism" in conjunction with the

playwright's insistence that the theatre be a pedagogical and moral practice" to conclude that her work pre-empts many contemporary approaches to psychological therapy (66n11).[154]

The aim of this chapter, however, is not to examine how revolutionary, Romantic, or even proto-modernist Baillie's analysis of our desire to delve into the hearts of others might be. Instead, I am primarily interested in how she shapes what we find there. While I agree that Baillie presents her readers and audiences with a novel subject-as-spectator—novel because this new figure's desire to uncover the truth of another's heart by attending especially to the unintentional details of the other's social performances corresponds to the deepening of individual identity often associated with the rise of the novel—the subject-as-spectacle remains for Baillie defined but for a few exceptions by the structure and traditions of classical poetics and neoclassical theatre. In other words, I argue that her attempt to revolutionize and romanticize late eighteenth-century theatre by making theatrical the representation of a character's deep interiority falls back on classical principles. By "opening to us the heart" so that we may know it, Baillie prioritizes character over plot, overturning classical tragic form (1: 41). But what Baillie uncovers by this incision is classical plot structure. By treating the body as a stage on which messages are transmitted, and by tracing the rise and fall of an individual's passions, she effectively plots character.

This transformation of character into plot has implications for the question of why Baillie's play failed on stage despite its popularity in print. Debates about the moral acceptability

[154]Aileen Forbes, for instance, contends that Baillie's project "to perform human interiority" means that her "psychological theater becomes a proto-psychoanalytic theater"; that her "theater of the passions" begins to articulate the theatrical structures that will shape psychoanalysis in the following century (194). Similarly, Daniel Bergen suggests that Baillie "posits a proto-cognitive theory of mind in her reimagining of the imagination" as a material process rather than an act of mental substance, while Marjean Purinton further claims that Baillie's theatre practice based on this proto-cognitive theory invokes a "pedagogical strategy that encourages theatre audiences to repossess themselves and then initiate social change," creating "a predecessor to cognitive therapy" (194; 233).

of a play during the eighteenth century were often focused on the neoclassical principle of poetic justice, a term coined by Thomas Rymer in *The Tragedies of the Last Age Consider'd* which extends Aristotle's idea of *ēthos* or moral character to include the just distribution of punishment and reward. "In former times," says Rymer, "*Poetry* was another thing than *History*, or than the *Law* of the Land. *Poetry* discover'd crimes, the *Law* could never find out; and punish'd those the *Law* had acquitted. The *Areopagus* clear'd *Orestes*, but with what *Furies* did the *Poets* haunt and torment him? and what a wretch made they of *Oedipus*, when the *Casuist* excus'd him *invincible* ignorance" (25, original emphasis). Rymer's distinction between what he calls *historical justice* and *poetical justice* follows the same modal distinction as moral character: historical justice is how someone is punished; poetical justice, how they ought to be punished. Phaedra (especially the Phaedra of Seneca) with her incestuous desires and false accusations, is, for Rymer, the perfect example of the kind of moral character that poetical justice demands be punished. She is unworthy of any reward—not even pity or sympathy:

> Now this Phedra of Seneca, what one occasion of pitty have we? what ground for terror? and, above all, what manners have we? […] She must be some brat of a Succubus, or an evil Spirit, (say they), that personates a Woman: or some Devil in a Machine, that comes to render the sex odious. Nor can they allow her more compassion that to a Bitch or Polecat, and what has no relation to human shape. (95)

Nearly a hundred and fifty years later, James Boaden confirms the persistence of poetic justice to the formation of sympathetic responses to character when he remarks that "[t]he grosser vices of our natures may sometimes form subjects for the tragic muse; and they then need every artifice of the poet to keep them from exciting disgust instead of dread. It is for this reason that Phedra, as a subject, is banished from the English stage though tolerated upon the French" (1: 4).

Baillie's *De Monfort* represents a challenge to the dominance of this principle in part because her revision of character into plot muddles the application of poetic justice, which typically depends on a clear separation between these two parts of tragedy. Her approach makes it difficult to define De Monfort's moral character because, while he is able to explain his anger by figuring it as a response to specific situations, even he recognizes that these excuses are insufficient in part because the real cause of that anger is his hatred, a passion which appears to be acting on De Monfort independent of his will and whose cause De Monfort struggles to clearly identify.

My claim in this chapter is that Baillie's representation of the passions as deep, almost hidden forces within character capable of acting and thus being plotted troubles this neoclassical view of poetic justice. While Baillie has De Monfort, who eventually murders his rival, die by the end of the play to satisfy this principle's surface requirements, her attempt to plot that character, and by proxy pathologize and humanize the actions of this privileged, aristocratic man teeming with a hate-fuelled rage did not draw appropriately upon the "furies" to "haunt and torment him," as Thomas Rymer suggests poets ought to do (25). Whereas Baillie wants her audience to understand this hate by appealing to their sympathetic curiosity, teaching them to recognize its possible growth within themselves and to cast it out before being overwhelmed, to a late eighteenth–century audience primed to hiss at De Monfort's actions and cheer his demise, her attempt to stage a preventative rather than punitive poetic justice failed because many found the hateful man reprehensible and unsympathetic. In a letter to Charles William Ward, Jane Linley, for example, records

> I liked the representation of [De Monfort] better than I thought I should, for Kemble and Mrs. Siddons conceived their characters very finely but still Charles, you must allow the subject to be a very unpleasing one, and therefore I don't think it will ever become a

> popular Play altho' the language is infinitely superior to any which has been produced for some time […] My Mother did not like the Play at all which I don't wonder at; *she* can not enter into all the finer feelings, as *we* know but too well!" (qtd in Black 250–1).

Although Linley records in her letter that both she and Ward had approved of and applauded the play, as the reviewer of "The London Star" records in 1821, a little over twenty years later, it would be the opinion of the Mrs. Linleys rather than their daughters whose opinion would establish the play's reception: "The vices depicted in De Monfort's character, operated against this Play when originally produced, and when it was supported by the united efforts of a Siddons and a Kemble, it could not retain its station on the Stage, and soon ceased to be recollected except in the closet" ("Theatricals" 3)

Joanna Baillie's Neoclassicism

The relationship between Baillie's plays and neoclassical traditions has gone unremarked partly because Baillie objects to replicating the forms passed down from the genre's Grecian origins. While Baillie praises the "high state of cultivation" associated with ancient works and their revivals, noting that the Greeks imparted and inspired many "beautiful compositions," she also observes that the refined "character and style" of the classical model drastically differs from what a more medieval, more British, "ruder people" might have produced or enjoyed (1: 26–7). Classical audiences, claims Baillie, were accustomed to long recitations of epic poetry, so they had no second thoughts when playwrights gave their actors nothing "to do but to speak [poetry] in which bursts of passions were few" (1: 26). Baillie finds these ancient forms constraining, and she rejects the neoclassical rules exported by French playwrights and critics as an arbitrary

demand to reproduce a too-poetic classical style. Since modern mixed-gender bourgeois audiences were no longer cultivated as the Greeks were, playwrights, she argues, should follow Shakespeare rather than the French and focus on great bouts of passionate acting while keeping the artifice of poetry to a minimum. By doing so, she articulates a quintessential Romantic doctrine: that it takes a "[v]ery strong genius" to break free from the inhibitions of these classical shackles (1: 27).

Despite this rejection of the classical model, Baillie gladly reproduces the aims of neoclassical tragedy, affirming the Aristotelian principle of *mimēsis* in its educational and moral function. She quarrels more with style rather than aspirations when she professes that certain earlier conventions can no longer achieve these educational objectives. As a mode of instruction, she claims, "our taste for [*mimēsis*] is durable as it is universal" (1: 26). To this pedagogical idea, she pairs the neoclassical principle of poetical justice. This rule requires representing "the admiration of virtue and execration of vice" to teach moral concepts (1: 44). In her theory, she approaches poetic justice in agreement with Rymer, who argued that tragedies must be relatable to the audience for the lessons of poetic justice to be learned. Rymer provides a compelling example of this problem when he complains that the monstrousness of Seneca's *Phaedra* made it a bad pedagogical example: "I could never speak or act at this impudent abominable rate," he says, "and since my conduct would not be the same, my case can never be the same; and consequently this example cannot move or concern, or have any operation to stir either pity or terror in me" (96). Audiences, she concurs, have difficulty learning any lessons when observing "great characters struggling with difficulties, and placed in situations of eminence and danger" since "few of us have any chance of being called upon to act" in similar circumstances (1: 41).

To learn from characters on the stage, spectators need to see those characters thinking and feeling as they do when placed in like situations.

For Baillie, however, the Aristotelean edict of privileging plot over character limits poetic justice's lesson by first presenting characters caught up in grand and often unrelatable events; and second, by subjecting the inner life of characters to the events of the plot so that only the most immediate and reactionary of passions—she gives the examples of "anger, fear and, oftentimes jealousy"—can be adequately represented (1: 38). But these "great masters of the soul," she continues, "ambition, hatred, love, every passion that is permanent in its nature and varied in its progress" must be represented as an internal conflict as "it is in contending with the opposite passions and affections of the mind that we best discover their strength, not with events" (1:38). For Baillie, the problem occurs when "in tragedy it is events more frequently than opposite affections which are opposed to [these passions]; and those often of such force and magnitude, that the passions themselves are almost obscured by the splendour and importance of the transactions to which they are attached" (1: 38). That we might judge an emotion appropriate to a given situation only teaches us about the situation rather than the emotion, and if that situation means nothing to us, then it teaches us nothing.

While the Aristotelean solution to this pedagogical problem would be to clarify the thought (*dianoia*) of character (*ēthos*) with speech (*lexis*), Baillie contends that just as plot muddies character, so too does speech obscure thought: "Besides being thus confined and mutilated, the passions have been, in the greater part of our tragedies, deprived of the very power of making themselves known" (1: 39). Baillie echoes the Moderns who complained that Racine's speeches violated the principle of verisimilitude when she observes that the poets too often circumvent this problem by relying on "[b]old and figurative language":

> Poets, admiring those bold expressions which a mind, labouring with ideas too strong to be conveyed in the ordinary forms of speech, wildly throws out, taking earth, sea, and sky, every thing great and terrible in nature, to image for the violence of its feelings, borrowed them gladly, to adorn the calm sentiments of their premeditated song […] In doing this, however, the passions have been robbed of their native prerogative; and in adorning with their strong figures and lofty expressions of the calm speeches of the unruffled, it is found that, when they are called upon to raise their voice, the power of distinguishing themselves has been taken away. (1: 39)

Seduced by "the beauty of those original dramas to which they have ever looked back with admiration," neoclassical dramatists have been "tempted to prefer the embellishments of poetry to faithfully delineated nature" (Baillie 1: 32). Baillie then extends this critique by giving it a moral twist: by parading great heroes and heroines reasoning about virtue in "the most eloquent and beautiful language," and holding them "forth to our view as objects of imitation and interest: as though they had entirely forgotten that it is only for creatures like ourselves that we feel, and therefore, only from creatures like ourselves that we receive the instruction of example," neoclassical and classical playwrights, argues Baillie, produce unrelatable representations of the passions that all sound the same (1: 31).[155] And, since we neither talk nor act this way, we learn nothing from their example.

To revise the Aristotelian formula, Baillie proposes an approach rooted in her theory of sympathetic curiosity (1: 11). This principle explains *De Monfort*'s opening scene. It names the infectious power of the servant's impulse to gossip, which spreads into the audience who observe

[155] Christine Colón gives Racine's *Phèdre* as an example of the kind of play Baillie may have had in mind in her critique of neoclassical drama (Colón 32).

De Monfort's every move alongside them. Baillie insists that this feeling is both natural and universal. We all participate even "without being conscious of it"; it is the source for both "the rich vein of the satirist and the wit" as well as the "trivial and mischievous tattling" that is the "occupation of children, and of grown people also, whose penetration is but lightly esteemed" (1: 2–3). To defend her theory, Baillie draws on the cutting edge of late eighteenth-century philosophy and scientific research, which increasingly thought of the inner body (the heart, the nervous system) as a medium that operated between the body and mind, carrying messages between the two. As her brother, the pathologist and early neurologist Matthew Baillie argues, "There is no part of an animal body more curious in its structure, or more interesting in its examination, than the nervous system"; it "is the source of action and sensation" (96). To this idea, Baillie suggests that passions become agents by acting upon that nervous system, altering our perceptions and motivating our actions. Baillie structures her plays around the rising action created by fluctuations in an individual's passion, changes that can be read in the way characters behave or report events. "Each play," she says, focuses "on exhibiting a particular passion" in order "to trace them in their rise and progress in the heart" (1: 40, 1: 37). *De Monfort*, for example, tracks the development of its main character's hatred for his rival Rezenvelt not by having him poetically express hatred, but by having that passion subtly impact his behaviour and expressions until it finally erupts in Rezenvelt's murder.

To plot character in this way, Baillie inverts Aristotle's priority of speech (*lexis*) over spectacle (*opsis*) in a manner that might recall the creation of theatrical character through the subtle motions of the Greek tragic mask: we watch in others for the "smallest indications of an unquiet mind," she says, like one monitors the "distant flashes of a gathering storm" until some "great explosion of passion bursts forth, and some consequent catastrophe happens" (1: 10).

Catastrophe is a Greek word and a technical theatrical term in plot construction. Literally a downward turn, catastrophe usually refers to the denouement or conclusion of a classical tragedy; it typically follows from some combination of recognition (*anagnorisis*) and a reversal of fortune (*peripetia*). When Oedipus recognizes that he caused the plague of Thebes by murdering his father and marrying his mother, his fortune reverses, and he subsequently cuts out his eyes and abdicates the throne. The catastrophe is usually the moment when moral character or *ēthos* is revealed. When asked "[w]hat superhuman power drove you on," Oedipus responds "Apollo […] But the hand that struck my eyes was mine, mine alone" (1469–70).[156] Here, Oedipus asserts responsibility for his actions, affirming his agency by enacting punishment upon himself. By staging the interior of the mind—by "looking back to the first rise [or rising action], and tracing the progress of passions"—through this classical model of plot, Baillie hopes that individuals might assert their own moral agency, learning to recognize "the approach of the enemy, when he might have been combated most successfully; and where the suffering him to pass may be considered as occasioning all the misery that ensues" (1: 42). She combines the educational principles of *mimēsis* and poetical justice with the principle of sympathetic curiosity. By replacing fate and divine intervention with the body and its nervous system, Baillie represents "the heart of man under the influence of those passions to which all are liable" in the hope it will "produce [a] stronger moral effect" (1: 41). Once one recognizes their moral character in any given passion, they can judge that character according to the strictures of poetic justice, as if that character were a hero in a tragedy.

[156] The line numbers from the Greek are 1329–1331. The expression Oedipus uses to describe the action as his is "*autochier*," which translates literally as "self-hand."

The Glasgow and Edinburgh Influences

Baillie's combination of neoclassical moral concerns with the scientific and medical innovations many associate with Romanticism has made her difficult to situate within traditional academic historical periods. Critics who argue on behalf of what I call the Glasgow influence typically center Baillie's notion of sympathy and see her as the culmination of moral sense theory linked to eighteenth-century philosophers such as Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, and Adam Smith.[157] Conversely, others emphasize what I call the Edinburgh influence when they read Baillie's plays intertextually alongside the medical and scientific work of her brother Matthew Baillie and her two uncles, William and John Hunter, all surgeons, pathologists, and collectors of curiosities, whose experiments, dissections, and collections, were performed and kept at the anatomical theatre attached to William's home at Great Windmill Street and later John's house at Leicester Square—these family members are typically recognized as being at the forefront of Romantic re-evaluations of the self and the body.[158] I name these influences after the

[157] Julia Murray argues that Baillie's concept of sympathetic curiosity is a "renovation of Smithean moral philosophy" that attempts to solve the "oft-noted disjunction between his economic and moral theories" by "[d]eploying a vicissitude of interest—curiosity"—to draw "economic man, an entity governed by the wildly individualizing forces of interest, into the purview of moral governance" proper to a "stoic or civic man" governed by the regulating and restraining social mechanisms of the "sympathetic imagination" (1044). Victoria Myers demonstrates that Baillie's language primarily "shows an affinity with that of eighteenth-century theorists of sympathy"; however, she claims Baillie modifies those theories using the "language of voyeurism, invasion, and inquisition" to describe "the dark side" of the sympathetic imagination (88). Barbara Judson concurs with Myers: while Baillie "follows the Scottish philosophers, Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, and Adam Smith" by framing "a theoretical model of sympathy as the foundational passion" she modifies that passion by defining "moral feeling as a secondary development growing out of a primary passion for spectatorship, particularly a lust to view human suffering" (50). Noting the close titular relation between Baillie's project *Plays on the Passion* and the spectacle of Christ's suffering in passion plays, Judson argues that this alteration reflects a "Protestant milieu in which moral self-examination was intimately tied to gossip and tale-telling" (54). Baillie grew up the daughter of a Presbyterian minister and joined a unitarian church later in life. In 1831 she published a theological treatise titled *A View of the General Tenour of the New Testament Regarding the Nature and Dignity of Jesus Christ* (1838). For an analysis of her theological views, see Colón, 37–50. In a footnote in her "Introductory Discourse," Baillie argues that theatre would be wise to follow the example of Christ's suffering when portraying its heroes, claiming that "had [Christ] been represented to us in all the unshaken strength of these tragic heroes, his disciples would have made fewer converts, and his precepts would have been listened to coldly" (1:32).

[158] Karen Dwyer approaches Baillie's concept of sympathetic curiosity, "which is something like the sympathetic theories of David Hume, Adam Smith, and the moral sense theorists," from the perspective of eighteenth-century medicine, arguing that she "derives from the scientific world of surgeons and natural historians"—a world in which

two Scottish universities located in Glasgow and Edinburgh because, despite not attending either school, both loom large over Baillie's approach. If the former reflects her interest in moral theories of sympathy, the latter represents her fascination with curiosity. Almost all scholarship on Baillie refers substantially to either one influence or the other; though all acknowledge that sympathy modifies curiosity and vice versa, rarely is each given equal weight. This scarcity is unfortunate because—as the principle's name would suggest—her recipe for sympathetic curiosity calls for both ingredients equally; understanding her theatrical project requires clarifying precisely in what measure she mixes the two. Thinking about these influences as schools engaged in a collective nationalist project rather than separate periods helps identify understated congruities in Baillie's thought.

In 1729, Francis Hutcheson was appointed chair of moral philosophy at Glasgow, and his work there placed this school at the center of the Scottish Enlightenment, prominent members of which—such as Adam Smith (who would take up the chair in 1752) and David Hume—were Hutcheson's students and friends. Famed for his charismatic lectures, Hutcheson produced two significant works: the *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, which defended Shaftesbury's moral sense theory, and *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections*, which provided a more robust account of the passions in defence of that

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her uncles were leading figures—"not only empirical data about the passions but also, in part, her dramatic methodology" (23–4). Frederick Burwick argues that Baillie "chose to represent dramatic character not in terms of traditional literary models, but rather in relation to the accounts of mental pathology in contemporary medicine […] shar[ing] in her early endeavors the typology of mania that her brother had forwarded in his lectures" (48). By grounding "her analysis of behaviour on empirical observation" and identifying "the symptoms which foreshadow an impending emotional crisis," Baillie pushes her concept of sympathetic curiosity "into the very same province of aberrational psychology that Matthew Baillie had begun to explore" (Burwick 51). Matthew Smith observes that "There is a distinctly scientific sensibility to Joanna Baillie's vast project of cataloging, dividing, and investigating each separate passion […] a sensibility shared by two of the most prominent British neurologists of the age: Joanna's brother, Matthew Baillie, and their mutual friend Charles Bell" (29). John Hunter's infamy as a grave digger, his creepy laboratory/closet attached to his home, and his collection of and experiments on rare animals at his country home all served to make him an inspiration for the great Gothic Doctors—Frankenstein, Jekyll, and Moreau.

original doctrine. Moral sense theory is an empiricist account of moral and aesthetic judgments; it posits that alongside the external senses of sight, sound, and so on, human beings have an "Internal sense" of "Ideas of Beauty and Harmony" felt in the body (Hutcheson *An Inquiry* 1.2.4–5). Transforming moral and aesthetic judgment into a feeling was necessary for Hutcheson because philosophical commitments required submitting the ephemeral, rationalist mind to the material body. There can, he claims, "be no *exciting Reason* previous to *Affection*" (*An Essay* 139). But his empiricist theory of an embodied moral and aesthetic sense ran into an empirical problem: he knew little about the actual body. He merely asserts that we must "observe, 'that probably certain *Motions* of the Body do accompany every Passion by a fixed Law of Nature'"; he leaves it up to the "Physicians or Anatomists [to] explain the several Motions in the *Fluids* or *Solids* of the Body, which accompany any Passion" (*An Essay* 47). Without this explanation, Hutcheson's theory of moral and aesthetic judgment could only be hypothetical—an empiricist analysis that lacked empirical evidence or a theory of the body absent any actual bodies.

Fortunately for Hutcheson, three years prior to his appointment at Glasgow, the University of Edinburgh established a medical school that undertook this study of the body's motions. Historians argue that the purpose of this school was originally to address the economic decline facing the city after the Union of Scotland to England: the hope was not only to keep the locals from seeking their education abroad but also to help rejuvenate the city by attracting wealthy internationals. To achieve this goal, the school attempted to differentiate itself from other European medical schools by studying the body through what Christopher Lawrence describes as the "concept of the reactive organism"; they analyzed how "the physical condition of the nervous system" interacted with its "environment" ("The Nervous System" 24). This concept instantiated a broad metaphysical shift whereby "[t]he soul's place was taken by the

nervous system" as the seat of agency and the source of character, creating what Matthew Smith calls "the neural subject" (Vickers 146; 4).[159] By focusing on the nervous system and treating it as the agent of action, Edinburgh aligned itself with Hutcheson's hypothesis that embodiment and material sensation accounted for mental behaviour. This alliance meant Edinburgh could boost not only its prestige but also the standing of its fellow Scottish university by acting as Glasgow's scientific arm, strengthening the moral philosophy of Scottish moral sense theorists with a specifically Scottish school of anatomical and scientific experiment.[160]

Baillie and her family were all originally from Scotland, and her uncle William attended both Scottish schools. Born in 1718, William travelled to the University of Glasgow to study theology at the age of thirteen, and in his fourth year, he was privately instructed by Hutcheson. After two years of tutelage by the great moral philosopher, William abandoned theology and switched his field to medicine, apprenticing himself to William Cullen. In 1738, William travelled to Edinburgh to attend what Anita Guerrini calls the "moral anatomy" lectures of Alexander Monro *Primus*, a close friend of both Hume and Smith (2).[161] Monro had, as Guerrini argues, already been connecting Glasgow to Edinburgh, combining the moral teachings of Hutcheson—who thought that "witnessing acts of cruelty gave spectators an opportunity to experience compassion"—with the theory of "emotional catharsis" borrowed from Aristotle's

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[159] William Cullen, the physiologist, chemist, and personal physician to David Hume, is often credited as the leading figure in this development; he was appointed professor at Glasgow in 1751, the same year as Adam Smith, and, according to Margaret Schabas, after Cullen moved to the University of Edinburgh in 1755, it was "in part because Smith convinced him that sympathy was the most fundamental of human sentiments" that Cullen "emphasized the nervous system" in his physiological pursuits (264).

[160] The economic and theoretical alliance between these two schools informs Thomas Dixon's assertion that "certain Scottish empiricist philosophers and their followers" began to develop in the eighteenth century a "mental science" that would eventually culminate in 1820 with Thomas Brown's *Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, which Dixon credits as "the single most important work for introducing the term 'emotions' as a major psychological category to the academic and literary worlds (98, 109).

[161] For an account of Monro's influence on William Baillie See Christopher Lawrence's "Alexander Monro 'Primus' and the Edinburgh Manner of Anatomy."

Poetics to produce a moral theatre of surgical anatomy that explored the body's motions through the virtuous performance of the anatomist (1–2). Thomas Lacquer similarly refers to this desire to produce a moral anatomy theatre as but one element in the eighteenth-century rise of "humanitarian narrative"—a genre of political rhetoric of which the sympathetic appeal of "the novel is only the most self-conscious" (181). By dissecting the body while providing the narrative details about that body's suffering, the moral anatomist could join in this developing style and elicit sympathy from his audience to inspire political reforms.

William later moved to London, where he reproduced the work of his Edinburgh teachers in his own anatomy theatre at Great Windmill Street, which he built in 1768. He also began to turn his attention to the suffering of women. His *Anatomy of the Human Gravid Uterus Exhibited in Figures*, published in 1774, helped to establish the medical fields of gynecology and obstetrics. His expertise in this field lent authority to his 1784 essay "On the Uncertainty of the Signs of Murder in the Case of Bastard Children," where William, according to Lacquer, defends women accused of infanticide using "a narrational voice familiar to readers of *Pamela* or *Clarissa*" (185). For Lacquer, William "invites readers into the minds and bodies of supposed murderers," drawing readers to sympathize with these women by offering early descriptions of what might today be diagnosed as postpartum depression, blaming the cause of this neurological illness on psychological damage unjustly inflicted upon these women by uncaring and absent men rather than their own moral failings (185). In William's estimation, such women did not choose to murder their children; they were driven to it by social and psychological forces beyond their control.

William's success as an anatomist and obstetrician enabled him to assume the role of family patron: he trained his brother John in anatomy and, when his brother-in-law James Baillie

died in 1778, he assumed financial responsibility for his sister Dorothea and her three children Matthew, Agnes, and Joanna, providing the Baillie women with a home while funding Matthew's education first at the University of Glasgow and then later a medical degree from Oxford. When William died in 1784, the Baillies moved into William's London residence at Great Windmill Street. While in London, Matthew continued the family business, giving anatomy lectures, writing treatises on pathology, and eventually becoming a personal doctor for King George III. Both William and John were also well-known collectors. They invested their self-made fortunes into spectacular cabinets of curiosities. John's collection would become the foundation for the Hunterian Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons in London; William donated his to the University of Glasgow. These collections, kept in rooms adjacent to their residences, were famed. The 24 Feb 1897 edition of *The Sketch*, for example, reports that John Hunter's house and museum had "immortality bestowed upon them by Stevenson, the novelist, who is said to have chosen them as the scene of his story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" ("The Destruction" 213). While in London, Joanna maintained a close relationship with her uncle John's wife the poet Anne Hunter. Anne was an influential socialite; she frequently invited Joanna to visit and introduced her to the more elite circles in London. Joanna thus had a rather unique domestic and social life, travelling to and from domestic spaces famed for anatomy theatres and collections of body parts.

Lord Byron once wrote about Baillie in a letter: "Voltaire has asked why no woman has written even a tolerable tragedy? 'Ah (said the Patriarch) the composition of a tragedy requires testicles. If this be true, Lord knows what Joanna Baillie does—I suppose she borrows them" (203). This oft-repeated joke usually serves to exemplify the casual misogyny that permeated London's theatres: "she must become adept at making herself male," says Ellen Donkin, for

example, "in order to keep Byron's categories intact" (139). But Byron—who was a friend and ally to Baillie until his mistreatment of his wife Anne Isabella Milbanke caused Baillie to renounce the friendship—may have also had in mind here the unique conditions of Baillie's domestic life.[162] As the Glasgow (object GLAHM:119360) and the Royal Society Hunterian Museums (item RCSHC/3726) have preserved testicles bequeathed from the Hunters' collections, it is possible that Byron could have intended this joke to be read literally rather than figuratively, as Baillie probably had access to preserved sets of testicles while living in London and writing her plays. In addition to possibly borrowing appendages, Baillie could peruse the personal library of her uncle, as William's famous collection of books and body parts were delivered to the university piecemeal throughout Baillie's lifetime. During her stay in her uncle's house, she likely may have read through a signed copy of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, which the philosopher had gifted to William after attending the latter's anatomical lectures with Edward Gibbon during his stay in London. She would have had other reasons to consider Smith an important interlocutor as she developed her theory of sympathetic curiosity—reasons beyond the general popularity and influence of his work—as Smith's contact with her family was not isolated to William's lectures either. The philosopher sought out John Hunter to treat his hemorrhoids and a bladder problem in 1787, and subsequently repaid the doctor for his care by helping him secure two army appointments, claiming in a letter to Henry Dundas that "nothing is too good for our friend John" (*Correspondence* 307).

While Baillie's theory of sympathetic curiosity can be understood as one thread in a much larger historical pattern of growing interest in character depth, her unique domestic life—

[162] For Baillie's relationship to Milbanke, see Judith Slagle's *Joanna Baillie, a Literary Life*, 182–3. Duthie notes that this joke is a revision of an earlier comment by Byron that "Women (saving Joanna Baillie) cannot write tragedy. They haven't experienced the life for it." (qtd in Duthie 55n1)

one financed by public interest in the strange and often macabre—suggests a very peculiar set of life experiences that guided her theory and practice of theatre. The desire to identify and delight in the varieties and rarities of people, she argues, is so strongly implanted in us, that we remain always and forever occupied in the "dress and manners of men," an activity that would otherwise "dwindle into an employment as insipid, as examining the varieties of plants and mineral, is to one who understands not natural history" (1: 4). For Baillie, the virtuoso, the collector, or the pathologist, becomes the model for everyone: curiosity is universally distributed amongst "every person"—man, woman, or child—each of whom "is more or less occupied in tracing amongst the individuals he converses with, the varieties of understanding and temper which constitute the character of men"; each "receives great pleasure from every stroke of nature that points out to him these varieties" (1: 2). We are, in her view, all collectors and evaluators of character types.

Once she establishes sympathy and curiosity as human universals, she pivots to using them to solve the paradox of tragedy. If our curiosity towards variety in "the ordinary occurrences of life" brings us so much pleasure, then the experience of "extraordinary situations of difficulty and distress" must be absolutely delightful (Baillie 1: 5). "To see a human bearing himself up under such circumstances," says Baillie, must be a "powerful incentive," noting those who "press forward to behold what we shrink from," who when they cannot get "near enough to distinguish the expression of face, or the minuter parts of a criminal's behaviour," will instead attend to "whether he steps firmly; whether the motions of his body denote agitation or calmness" (1: 5–6). "It cannot be any pleasure," she argues, that "we receive from the sufferings of a fellow-creature which attracts such multitudes of people to a publick execution" that brings us to the execution, because "it is the horror we conceive for such a spectacle that keeps so many

more away" (1: 5). Instead, it is our curiosity about the character of the person placed into such an awful situation that compels us to look:

> [T]hough there is a greater proportion of people in whom this strong curiosity will be overcome by the other dispositions and motives; though there are many more who will stay away from such a sight than will go to it, yet there are very few who will not be eager to converse with a person who has beheld it, and to learn, very minutely, every circumstance connected with it, except the very act itself of inflicting death. (Baillie 1: 6)

As a solution to the paradox of tragedy, sympathetic curiosity provides her with the theoretical material to elevate character over plot. If we were primarily curious about what happens, we would stay clear of tragedy for fear of the inevitable painful conclusion. We attend tragedy then, not because of what happens, but because we are curious about the kind of person tragic circumstances reveal.

Baillie's Tragic Failure

In 1798, the first volume of *Plays on the Passions* (1798–1812)—which contained *De Monfort*, two more plays, and the Introduction that laid down Baillie's theoretical principles for the theatre—was published anonymously and they subsequently exploded onto London's literary scene. Mary Berry recorded in a 1799 letter how "this winter the first question upon everybody's lips is, 'Have you read the series of plays?'" noting the "raptur[ous]" way "[e]verybody talks" when discussing "the tragedies and of the introduction of a new and admirable piece of criticism" (88). This excitement made its way into the periodicals. A writer for *The Critical Review* described the work in 1798 as "honourable" to the entire "literature of our country": it

"avoided the faults of our modern theatrical authors" and indicated that should the author continue to produce such works, then "we may place his volumes near those of Massinger and of Beaumont and Fletcher" ("Series of Plays" 13, 21–2). One hopes, claims the reviewer from *The British Critic*, that her plays would "remove the present opprobrium of our theatres" by producing a new style of theatre for "the amusement of ages" ("Series of Plays" 290). But while successful in print, *De Monfort* flopped when it premiered at Drury Lane in 1800. Despite the hype, despite the performances by star siblings John Philip Kemble and Sarah Siddons, and despite it supposedly being "well received" and "announced for repetition with much applause" on its first night, the play ran for only eight performances and closed on 9 May ("Life of Joanna Baillie" xi).

Baillie accounts for this failure in two ways. Publicly, she acknowledges that the fault lay in her inability to write for the practical demands of late eighteenth-century theatres adequately: these "present circumstances," Baillie explains in the third volume of *Plays of the Passions*, "are unfavourable for the reception of these Plays upon the stage." (3: xvi). Since the Licensing Act of 1737 restricted year-round performances to just Drury Lane and Covent Garden, the market for theatre audiences in the rapidly growing city of London could only be expanded by increasing the size of these buildings. By 1800, these two theatres had been undergoing a nearly century-long process of deepening their stages and increasing their seating capacity. Staging sympathetic curiosity requires intimacy, and because of these conditions, London's theatres were anything but intimate. For her drama to be successful, Baillie required that the words be heard by more than "two thirds of the audience" and that the "finer and more pleasing traits of the acting" be seen (2: xvi). By the 1800s, this would have been impossible at Drury Lane, which was remodelled in 1794 to seat over 3600 people. The effect of merging the audience's curiosity with

Jerome and Manuel's as they observe the subtle signs of De Monfort's moodiness, for example, becomes impossible if audiences hear only muffled voices and see only blurry faces. Privately, however, Baillie blamed the loss of her anonymity for the play's poor performance at the box office. She was revealed to be the author by Thomas Dutton in his review of the play's opening night, and shortly afterwards ticket sales plummeted.[163]

Modern critics of Baillie's plays regularly agree with her reasoning. Judith Slagle, for example, points to Thomas Dutton's review in the *Dramatic Censor* on 29 Apr 1800, where he claims that "the Piece wants interest—it wants variety—it wants activity—it is too barren of incident—and very little art has been employed in the conduct of the plot" and the subsequent interfering with Baillie's play by Kemble—which he would likely not have done had she been "a living established male dramatist"—as demonstrating how the "gender politics" behind the scenes of Drury Lane interfered with Baillie's career (qtd in Duthie 448; Slagle 89, 94). Instead of respecting an anonymous writer's "experimental efforts," which reviewers hoped would revitalize London's theatre, these late eighteenth- early nineteenth-century critics decided that her plays needed to be altered to fit established theatre practices (Baillie 1: 60). Despite knowing that Baillie was trying to overturn the primacy of plot in favour of character by plotting passions rather than actions, even Baillie's allies conceded that the narrative was too thin. Byron, for example—who persuaded the management at Drury Lane to revive a production of *De Monfort* staring Edmund Kean in 1821—had, according to Baillie, recommended she "please the generality of the audience" by giving "stronger reason for De Monfrorts hatred" ("Letter to Walter Scott," Jan 1816, qtd in Slagle 195). The play's inciting incident was evidently not clear enough for the audience to properly sympathize. Baillie, however, refused, and Kean took

[163] See Slagle 73–4.

matters into his own hands when he decided to stage the play. *The British Press* noted that the actor had inserted a backstory of "Rezenvelt alienating the regards of a female from *De Monfort*" to help solidify the cause of the latter's hatred ("Theatres" 3).

But while the critical consensus rightfully blames the difficulties Baillie faced as a writer on misogyny, many often repeat the misogynist's concern over her inadequate plots when analyzing the play. Modern critical responses to the play often circle back to the question of plot by, as Jane Kim points out, trying to solve "the enduring questions about the legitimacy or cause of De Monfort's hatred" (707). The strategy typically involves rushing to Baillie's defence by arguing that the cause of De Monfort's hatred is already clearly laid out, and in one sense it is. Daniel Watkins, for example, points to the explanation given by De Monfort: Rezenvelt, is a self-made man, born "poor in fortune" but "bestow'd / Riches and splendour," and De Monfort, a member of the lower aristocracy, "So rankly […] loth[es] him" for usurping his position, since rank alone no longer affords him the privileges he believes he is entitled to by birth (3.2.82–5; 2.2.135). For Watkins, this context sufficiently invokes the "social conditions that undergird the psychological interests of De Monfort's character," transforming the play into an allegory for class tensions between the rising bourgeois and the fading aristocracy (119).[164] Catherine Burroughs, in contrast, reads De Monfort's stated reason for hating Rezenvelt as symptomatic of a repressed sexuality that has no appropriate social outlet. First noting the homosocial bond formed by the erotic triangle of De Monfort, Rezenvelt, and De Monfort's sister Jane, Burroughs then argues that a careful close reading of the play reveals that De Monfort positions Rezenvelt within this triangle as a tempter, what she describes as the "Satan to his Eve," through his various descriptions of Rezenvelt's power to "woo [his] hate" (Burroughs 125; Baillie 1.2.200).

[164] I consider this point more fully in my next chapter.

In this view, the plot is set in motion by De Monfort's "homoerotically charged hatred" repressed since childhood (Burroughs 127). For Burroughs, the thinness of this explanation becomes its strength, since it ensures that the play's form remains appropriate to its content. Because De Monfort has repressed the cause of his hatred, his reasons can only be revealed through the sexually charged, unconscious double meanings that pervade De Monfort's speeches.

Both eighteenth-century and contemporary critics then work to clarify and substantiate the cause of De Monfort's hatred. They all want to give the character a plot to react to, some situation that incites the events of the play, rather than plot the character. They all end up opposing what Baillie sought in her work—namely, separating the representation and development of certain primary emotions from the situations of plot.[165] Baillie, of course, does provide some explanation. De Monfort and Rezenvelt have a history of hatred that reaches back into a childhood rivalry in sports and games. But the details are hazy. Both characters give an account of their quarrel, but their perception of the past is coloured by their imagination; their narratives surprisingly absent much in terms of fact. For De Monfort, it matters less that Rezenvelt defied him—in what remains unclear—and more that this defiance was done out of "envious gibing malice, poorly veil'd / In the affected carelessness of mirth" (2.2.116–7). From De Monfort's point of view, Rezenvelt opposed and mocked him merely out of jealousy of De Monfort's noble station; and though he unjustly made himself De Monfort's enemy, this offence could be ignored until

honours came,

[165] James Armstrong attributes the desire of modern critics to "read between the lines" of the play (and subsequently against the words of the playwright) to "the scholarly environment of the 1990s"—but, he argues, in this case, "the playwright might indeed have been correct about the intentions of her own play" (90).

And wealth and new-got titles fed his pride;

Whilst flatt'ring knaves did trumpet forth his praise,

And grov'ling idiots grinn'd applauses on him;

Oh! then I could no longer suffer it!

It drove me frantick. (2.2.27–31)

In the next act, Rezenvelt offers his side of the story, again with a troubling lack of specific details. "O! from our youth he disintguish'd me / With ev'ry'ry mark of hatred and disgust," he explains, blaming De Monfort for starting the rivalry (3.2.76–7). When Rezenvelt later refused to join "[t]hat fulsome and applause / and senseless crowd bestowed," and instead mocked De Monfort's "proud pretensions to pre-eminence," he was only doing so in self-defence (3.2.78–80) And when after Rezenvelt inherited an unlooked for fortune, he returned and "sought to soothe him" and apologize, but "from some small offence [De Monfort] rear'd a quarrel with me" (3.2.89–90). That Baillie did not give De Monfort's hatred a "stronger reason" than what can be found in these two speeches suggests that she deliberately refrained from doing so to make a point: that hatred is often not a reactionary passion that responds to a specific event. It does not depend on plot; it is instead its own complex situation rooted in a series of failures and misunderstandings of the sympathetic imagination. Hatred, in some sense, creates itself, since its power to colour the imagination appears to cause the misunderstandings perpetuating that hatred.

Baillie clarifies this distinction between these two types of passions—those tied to events and those "great masters of the soul"—by revising Adam Smith's example of the angry man. As discussed in the previous chapter, Smith thought the angry man unsympathetic because we did not understand his situation. Meanwhile, we sympathize with the fear experienced by his victims

because we can recognize the angry man as the cause of that fear. Baillie counters, however, by observing that when we see a man caught up in a fit of rage, "every eye is directed to him; every voice hushed to silence" (1: 9). "Anger is a passion that attracts less sympathy than any other," she admits, "yet the unpleasing and distorted features of an angry man will be more eagerly gazed upon, by those who are no wise concerned with his fury or the objects of it, than the most amiable placid countenance in the world" (1: 9). True, the angry man might exasperate us, but he appeals to our sympathetic curiosity and catches our attention overpowering our sympathy for the victims. Since anger is an emotion tied to situations, we rightly want to know its cause.

De Monfort reacts with anger several times in the play. And like the servants hovering on their tip-toes in the background, we become focused on his anger and want to know its cause, especially since it is not clear why he should be angry at all. Something is wrong with De Monfort, but no one knows what. An early example of his questionable anger occurs when Freberg presents to De Monfort a good-mannered companion with the intention of cheering up the man with overtures of friendship. But this new friend turns out to be the hated Rezenvelt, and the moment he walks onstage, De Monfort loses his composure. He, for example, rings a bell to call a servant and interrupts the visit, before humiliating himself when the servant arrives, and he cannot fully explain to the servant the purpose of the summons. Feeling embarrassed on De Monfort's behalf, Rezenvelt and Freberg politely excuse themselves from staying for a "friendly length" (1.2.188). To the audience, Freberg and Rezenvelt are clearly trying to save face in response to De Monfort's inability to act with propriety. The two sympathize with what they believe is De Monfort's embarrassment and remove themselves. But after they leave, De Monfort offers a different interpretation of the scene, revealing the cause of his frustrations. De Monfort perceives Rezenvelt's attempts to imagine and understand his interiority as an invasive

violation; he envisions Rezenvelt not only fantasizing about his distress at this intrusion but also, like a bully, taking pleasure in De Monfort's breakdowns of propriety. He interprets Rezenvelt's politeness as an attempt to provoke more anguish—thus increasing that pleasure. From De Monfort's perspective, Rezenvelt treats him like a specimen to be probed because the latter enjoys observing the reactive nervous twitches of the former.

The problem, however, is that the cause of De Monfort's hate is not the facts of the situation but rather his interpretation of those facts:

> Hell hath no greater torment for th' accurs'd
> Than this man's presence gives—
> Abhorred fiend! he hath a pleasure too,
> A damned pleasure in the pain he gives!
> Oh! the side glance of that detested eye
> That conscious smile! That full insulting lip!
> It touches every nerve: it makes me mad (1.2.193–9).

From De Monfort's perspective, Rezevenlt's behaviour justifies his anger. And, De Monfort may have a point. Even if at this juncture of the play the audience may not agree with De Monfort's assessment, since there is little in this scene to suggest Rezenvelt's hostility, the latter admits much later to Freberg that he does frequently taunt his rival.[166] These actions, however, remain consistent with Rezenvelt's character type and the way he sees the world: as a version of the comic hero, he uses mirth to undermine what he sees as the injustice of De Monfort's unearned

[166] As Judson points out, "De Monfort's sense of imminent threat is far from delusional, for Rezenvelt does indeed engage in aggressive maneuvers designed to exhibit De Monfort's pride to public diversion" (58). Rezenvelt later admits to attempting to slight De Monfort when he tells Freberg that in response to De Monfort's perpetual hatred, he "would expose him […] I'd make him at small cost of paltry wit, / with all his deep and many faculties, / the scorn and laugh of fools" (3.2.63, 3.2.67–9).

and abusive privilege. From the perspective of his character's conventions, De Monfort's refusal to enter the sympathetic order makes him precisely the type of character whose behaviour merits Rezenvelt's exposure and ridicule. While Rezenvelt admits his goading contributes to De Monfort's anger, from his perspective, these actions are justified by De Monfort's irrational hatred towards him. Rezenvelt intentionally taunts De Monfort to reveal that inexcusable hatred to other spectators so that their judgmental presence might compel De Monfort to reassess his disposition. In this example, Baillie demonstrates hatred's cause as a compounding effect of skewed perceptions mixed with ambiguous actions rather than a specific event—hatred is an ongoing failure of alignment between the character's intentions, actions, and perceptions that leads to an increasingly tense atmosphere.

In his *The Gulstonian Lectures* (1794), composed while his sister was working out the nuances of her theatrical project, Matthew Baillie begins by announcing that the nervous system is "the medium of connexion between the body and mind" (96). Through this system, he continues, "impressions are communicated from the different parts of the body to the brain, thereby producing sensations; and it is the system through which the influence of the mind, as connected with the brain in volition and various excitements, is communicated to many different parts of the body" (123). Impressions can have internal or external causes. Hunger is a sensation caused by an internal impression; satiation, an external one. We can also, as the moral sense theorists argue, have internal sensations caused "by the general affections of our nature," such as when "We receive a sensation of pleasure from the observation of virtuous conduct, and a sensation of pain from the observation of the contrary" (M. Baillie 139). Similarly, the mind's influence may additionally have two causes: volition and excitements of which emotions constitute an example of the latter. Volition is defined as producing an "action" with an

"intended" consequence; excitements are reactions since "volition has no share in these actions" (M. Baillie, 141; 146–7). Reactions often overpower actions. They can be "repressed by volition, when in a moderate degree; but when raised to a high pitch they readily overcome its opposition, which is then very feeble, and produce their full effects" (M. Baillie 146–7). This medical approach describes how the nervous system creates systemic problems for itself by interposing between the sign and the signified a third term: the signal transmitted by the nerves. While this signal is usually conveyed smoothly, the system itself can be a source of noise. Most of Matthew's lectures are spent reviewing examples of this interference, which can be both inside or outside of a normal range, both physical and mental. All sorts of physical phenomena such as referred pains, tumours, and phantom limbs can produce sensations referring to "a part of the body at a distance from the seat of the impression," and these sensations can produce excitements that have no referent outside that nervous system (M. Baillie 133). Similarly, mental states, habits, and expectations can all interfere with transforming an impression into a sensation. In extreme cases, where the brain loses "its healthy structure," such as "in many instances of mania," it can lead to the sensation of entirely "false impressions" (M. Baillie 130). While the problem of mania is, for Matthew, a material problem (insofar as it refers to hitherto unknown or unidentified elements of the nerve's minuscule structure), it is also a problem of interpretation, as the signal that connects the external, physical sign to its internal, mental signified can distort or even usurp either, causing someone to see or feel things that are not there. One ought to note that this problem of mania, which includes instances of unreasonable expectations or harmful

habitual thinking to extreme cases of hallucination is completely excluded from Smith's theory of the sympathetic imagination.[167]

The complexity Baillie attributes to hatred explains why De Monfort finds inquiries into his state of mind by friends and family so torturous. His hatred is pathological, it is its own internal situation, so inquiring into his external situation only frustrates him. Within the confines of a narrative structure that reads character in reaction to plot, his hatred is inexplicable, so he knows others will see his hatred as lacking moral justifications and that they will judge him for it. Yet, he continues to hate anyway, finding their imagined judgements oppressive. Baillie's practice of representing the development of this passion onstage then involves what Linda Brigham identifies as "exposing [the] interior processes that follow the closed loop of hatred's growth upon itself" (705). These processes affect De Monfort's social perceptions, producing what Brigham identifies as "misattributions of the relationship between social demeanour and interiority, between appearance and reality" and transforming his sympathetic curiosity into "a paranoid suspicion of social dissembling that disrupts the overall fabric of the natural social sympathies" (706). Hatred, in short, distorts the sympathetic imagination by introducing noise into the transmission of impressions and sensations. Plot and character merge in this play through the slow amplification of this noise as De Monfort becomes increasingly dishevelled and distraught over the first four acts before finally succumbing to full-blown paranoia.

Hatred's ability to alter perception becomes most evident when this passion peaks in the fourth act of the play. The act takes place in a forest like Shakespeare's Forest of Arden from *As*

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[167] See Paul Kelleher's "The Man Within the Breast: Sympathy and Deformity in Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,*" where Kelleher notices that Smith removes from the second edition a short passage that compares the imagination to a "common looking glass" whose glare can "conceal from the partial eyes of the person many deformities which are obvious to every body besides" (Smith 112; III.i.5n). For Kelleher, this passage was removed "because it explicitly threatens to undermine the status of the imagination in his text" (51).

You Like It. In an analysis of this setting, William Hazlitt referred to it as an "ideal" place rather than a natural one, a place where ideas become a reality—despite really being a cold and desolate place, it can be in your imagination, as the title of the play suggests, however you like it (*Characters* 234). Baillie marks this intertextual relationship between the two forests by having De Monfort echo the Duke's famous description of the pastoral forest as having "tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, / Sermons in stones, and good in everything," when he too perceives the forest as speaking to him in its "many tongues" (Shakespeare, *As You Like It* 2.1.16–7; Baillie 4.1.22). For Baillie, the meaning of the forest's speech depends entirely on the character's mental state. The first scenes of this act contrast each of De Monfort and Rezenvelt delivering a soliloquy prompted by the sound of an owl. For De Monfort, the "screech owl's cry" prompts his paranoia over all the "secret things" hidden in the forest (4.1.14, 4.1.19). He perceives the sound of the "Foul bird of night," the "whisp'ring noise" of "fall'n leaves," and "the dismal wailing" of "The distant river," as all describing to him a "scene of horrour" (Baillie 4.1.14–27). The scene oozes dramatic irony. It is the sound of his boots stomping on the stage that produces the "hollow groans [of] the earth beneath his tread […] As though some heavy footstep follow'd him"; it is similarly he who stalks about the forest, preparing to execute his imagined scene of horror (4.1.1–3).

At this moment, nature reflects back to De Monfort his own hateful and murderous intentions. True, De Monfort had heard that the forest is a place of "[f]oul murders," but this information is, once again, rumour; by chasing Rezenvelt into the forest, De Monfort is driven by hatred, creating that which he had only imagined (3.3.220). By contrast, Rezenvelt reaffirms his position as a pastoral or comic figure by hearing the owl's "hooting" as a "greet[ing]" in

"harmony" with the beauty of the forest (4.1.32–3).[168] The owl reminds him of a childhood spent exploring woods, "mimick[ing]" the owls, and "convers[ing]" with them "thro' the gloom" in a "friendly" manner (4.1.33–9). When he hears a church bell in the distance he remarks that to "a fearful suspicious mind / In such a scene, 'twould like a death-knell come," but "for me it tells but of a shelter near, / And so I bid it welcome" (4.1.54–7). Had De Monfort excised his tumorous hatred, he too might have entered Rezenvelt's pastoral green world. Instead, the hatred itself has usurped De Monfort's will by distorting his perceptions and transforming his nature. While it may seem to him that he remains in control of his actions, the information he acts on has been corrupted and controlled by his emotional state. What makes hatred especially dangerous is that once it consumes the individual, it then threatens the social order. Rezenvelt's attempt to imagine the scene as a cheerful one butts up against and is destroyed by De Monfort's own paranoid and hateful imagination. As he exits offstage, De Monfort sneaks up behind him and slits his throat.

After committing the murder, De Monfort begins to hallucinate. He sees Rezenvelt's body continue to move and mock him. The hallucination is revelatory—De Monfort recognizes in its impossibility the absolute corruption of his nature. Just as Phaedra's desire was in a blood and body that she could no longer identify as hers, De Monfort identifies this hatred not as his but as a product of a nervous system he no longer identifies with. It is only now that he sees

[168] Jonathan Wordsworth, for instance, considers Baillie an important source for the ideas of his great-great-great-uncle William Wordsworth, claiming that she invented the rustic aesthetic that defines the Wordsworthian lyrical ballad in her 1790 *Poems*. Similarly, the *Plays on the Passions* seems to have prefigured Wordsworth's "Preface" to the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* by attaching to the ruder classes of people an aesthetic pleasure linked to their closer ties to the natural world and a natural language. In that same edition, Wordsworth added the poem *There Was a Boy*, which borrows its description of a speaker reminiscing about their childhood spent hooting at owls "on a speech in *De Monfort*" (J. Wordsworth, "Introduction"). Wordsworth would have read both texts prior to publishing his work, though since both *Poems* and *Plays on the Passions* were published anonymously, it is unclear if he knew they were by the same author.

himself fully as a passive agent. But that recognition turns into the ability to actively restore his moral character, which he does with the only action he perceives as left available to him: suicide. In a gesture reminiscent of Oedipus's self-mutilation, De Monfort bashes his head against the "rocky wall" to "scatter these brains, or dull them" (4.3.91–2). Kean's 1821 version of the play ends here. "After his last speech" records John Genest, De Monfort "threw himself down, and the curtain fell" (177). Baillie, however, wrote an additional act, one that attempted to do what Smith once suggested could not be done: she tried to cultivate sympathy for De Monfort's murderous character—an attempt that Kean's cuts suggest was not and continued to not be popular with audiences and readers. In this original version, De Monfort temporarily survives and meets one last time with his sister. On his deathbed, De Monfort echoes Adam Smith's assertion that the murderer "cannot hope for the consolation of sympathy in this his greatest and most dreadful distress" when he tells his sister that "I am a foul bloody murderer […] Disgrace and public shame abide me now." (84; II.ii.2.3; 5.2.53–5). Jane stays anyway. As she moves toward her brother's hand Jane says:

> I know thy suff'rings; leave thy sorrow free:
> Thou art with one who never did upbraid;
> Who mourns, who loves thee still. (5.2.48–50).

Her sympathy saves her brother from "sink[ing] in abject wretchedness," enabling him instead to face his impending death with a sense of dignity despite his actions (5.2.76).

After De Monfort passes away offstage, his body and Rezenvelt's are displayed on tables. The exhibition takes place in a gloomy and gothic convent chapel. The interior set, spectacularly designed by William Capon for the 1800 production, gave the audience the illusion of being in

an actual church.[169] Early in the scene, Father Bernard proceeds to anatomize De Monfort's body:

> Look on those features, thou hast seen them oft,
> With the last dreadful conflict of despair,
> So fix'd in horrid strength.
> See those knit brows, those hollowed sun'ken eyes;
> The sharpen'd nose, with nostrils all distent;
> That writhed mouth, where yet the teeth appear
> In agony, to gnash the nether lip.
> Think'st thou, less painful than the murd'rer's knife
> Was such a death as this? (5.4.47–55)

This speech reflects the practice of that moral anatomy theatre performed by Baillie's uncles and brother as well as the attempt to produce a humanitarian narrative by exploring the physiological causes and consequences of pathological emotions in individuals. It also concludes the plotline that began with De Monfort's pale face and hollow eyes, a plot that tracked the development of his passion as if it were a species of inflammation that wrecked his body as it ran its course. This story—told by the spectacle of the body that presents De Monfort as a passive victim of physical transformation that his mind at times heroically struggled against.

Later in life, Baillie sought to amend the play, seemingly following Kean's decision to cut this final act. Baillie adds two footnotes to the 1851 publication of her complete works: the first suggests that the play be shortened for performance; the second, that Jane's praise of her

[169] The church setting became a relatively well-known set piece after the 1800 production of *De Monfort*; it would become "adapted for several further gothic plays" (Ranger 62).

brother is "not intended to give the reader a true character"—rather it serves only "to express the partial sentiments of an affectionate sister, naturally more inclined to praise him from the misfortune into which he had fallen" (Baillie, *The Poetical Works* 104n). For Burroughs, Baillie's desire to alter the original likely reflects how she could "sense the problems with Jane's eulogizing a murderer" (119). The issues presented by this ending harken back to the initial neoclassical principle of poetic justice. What changes in the approach towards poetic justice between the youthful, Romantic era Baillie of 1798 and the older Baillie is the configuration of this principle relative to her poetics of emotions: in the former, it is preventative; in the latter, punitive. Whereas the earlier Baillie teaches that one should reflect on their own passivity by if not sympathizing with then at least understanding De Monfort's hatred; the later Baillie appears to reject this position, reconfiguring De Monfort's character as entirely responsible, villainous, and unsympathetic. For the now more Victorian Baillie of 1851, even sympathizing with a sister's loss was too good a reward for such a bad guy. What both of Baillie's positions demonstrate, however, is how poetic justice informs one's understanding of an emotion, of its representation, and how the stories we tell about emotion inform our conception of character. The controversy surrounding Baillie's attempt to at times sympathetically depict an aristocratic white man as the victim of his own self-consuming hatred cuts right to the heart of the politics involved in any poetics of emotions.

Chapter 6

The Sublime Sarah Siddons; or Performance as a Poetry of Emotions

No performer was destined oftener than Mrs. Siddons to expend superlative genius on that acting of indifferent dramas. It is true that she sometimes turned this misfortune into the means of creating additional astonishment. Where there was little or no poetry, she made it for herself; and might be said to have become at once both the dramatist and the actress.

—Thomas Campbell, *Life of Mrs. Siddons* 2: 3

The homage she has received is greater than that which is paid to queens. The enthusiasm she excited has something idolatrous about it; she was regarded less with admiration than with wonder, as if a being of a superior order had dropped from another sphere to awe the world with the majesty of her appearance. She raised Tragedy to the skies, or brought it down from thence. It was something above nature. We can conceive of nothing grander. She embodied to our imagination the fables of mythology, of the heroic and deified mortals of elder time. She was not less than a goddess, or than a prophetess inspired by the gods. Power was seated on her brow, passion emanated from her breast as from a shrine. She was Tragedy personified.

—William Hazlitt, *A View of the English Stage* 103.

The dignity of Mrs. Siddons, of course, was the dignity of the British Matron. She walked the stage, and went through the world, as one whose chief aim was to show to what sublime heights a British Matron of genius might rise without infidelity to any one of the virtues which British Matronhood implies. There was an awe-inspiring intensity in her domesticated magnificence which made it almost an act of piety and public worship to applaud her.

—Francis Henry Gribble, *Romances of the French Theatre* 94

The Feminine Sublime

Throughout Sarah Siddons's career, her performances, her images, and her public persona were all regularly described as sublime. This sublimity, however, strikes many as unusual since it resists the gender divide that had, since at least Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, made the sublime into a masculine aesthetic category and the beautiful into a feminine one. Siddons's sublimity, observes

Pat Rogers, does not, however, transform her into an exclusively masculine figure, but rather suggests a "new phase of linguistic usage—one which departs from older gender-related vocabulary and allows to a prominent woman a wider range of qualities than those traditionally associated with 'feminine' strengths and virtues" (50). Laura Rosenthal, for example, analyzes the actress's celebrated cross-casted performance as Hamlet while pregnant, suggesting that Siddons succeeded in this role by affecting "not just the sublime but the beautiful as well" ("The Sublime" 59). This achievement, claims Rosenthal, indicates that "any understanding of her gender identity must account for *both* her maternity and her masculinity"; one must integrate "her masculine sublime with a specifically *maternal* beauty" ("The Sublime" 59, 70, original emphasis). More recently, the mixture of this sublime and beautiful maternity has been clarified as tied to Siddons's motherhood. "As epic in scale as her stage persona could be, and as sublimely masculine," observes Chelsea Phillips, "Siddons also consistently framed her career as that of a working mother providing for her many children"; Siddons defended the idea that "the pursuit of a successful and lucrative career was an active form of good mothering […] locating this economically and theatrically powerful woman within the 'cult of prolific maternity' that emphasized affective motherhood as a lifelong, noble, and correctly and innately feminine pursuit in the latter half of the eighteenth century" (123).[170]

This chapter examines how this self-fashioned identity as a working mother complicates Henry Irving's identification of her as a sublime actor discussed in my Introduction. In his attempt to figure her as someone whose honest labour cancels out the vices associated with false emotional performances, Irving idealizes and universalizes Siddons's example by unsexing her. Whereas Siddons uses the figure of hard work to absolve her practical and economically

[170] For more on actresses as working mothers, see *Stage Mothers: Women, Work, and the Theater, 1660–1830*, edited by Laura Engel and Elaine McGirr.

motivated decision to perform for the public rather than stay home with her husband and children, Irving revises this solution, generalizing it by making it applicable to any worker and recontextualizing it to resolve the theoretical problem of a threatening feminine theatricality and feigned emotional expression. He reads her strictly as a worker rather than a woman, stripping the nuances of gender from her performance of the sublime; transforming her into a precursor for his own sublimity and a role model for the young men he addresses entering not just the acting profession but the Victorian public sphere more generally.

Irving's view of Siddons's sublimity and his erasure of her feminine identity has gone unnoticed by Siddons scholars working out the details of and implications for her transgressive, feminine sublimity. His view of her, however, anticipates what Eva Illouz identifies as a crisis of masculinity in emotional capitalism, where workers are increasingly called upon to perform what she categorizes as a more feminine style of emotional conduct in the theatre of the workplace. In her analysis of emotional capitalism's tendency to consolidate and universalize emotional performances, Illouz argues against the reductive position that modern professional organizations previously staffed entirely by men are centred on "the ideal of a rational self-control" that "consecrates attributes of male identity and excludes women by rejecting care-oriented and emotionally expressive female styles of management" (62). This position, she argues, ignores evidence that "therapeutic self-control advocated in economic organizations is characterized by its mix of rationality and emotionality, by its very capacity to make emotions central to the self, and by its inclusion, rather than exclusion, of women's point of view" (62). "From the 1920s onward," she continues,

> Managers had to unknowingly revise traditional definitions of masculinity and incorporate into their personality so-called feminine attributes, such as controlling their

> negative emotions, paying attention to emotions, and listening to others sympathetically. This new type of masculinity was closer to the self-conscious attention to one's own and others' emotions that had characterized the female world, yet its descriptions simultaneously expressed an anxiety about warding off attributes of femininity. (77–8)

For Illouz, the demands imposed upon workers by the meeting of managerial and therapeutic discourses have in theory required everyone to "reconcile 'masculine' attributes of assertiveness with the 'feminine' capacity to monitor relationship and emotions" in ways that have "restructured and disorganized traditional gender identities, opening up a greater variety of cultural models for the formation of gender and, even more subtly, privileging women's selfhood and point of view" (240). In practice, however, the convergence into a more androgynous model of emotional conduct occurs messily as femininity becomes intertwined and modified by masculine discourses of empowerment and self-help while the traditional masculinity of a "rugged individualism that emphasized distrust, toughness, and physical strength," becomes pathologized and replaced by what Illouz describes as a "feminine masculinity," one open to yet in control of sympathetic emotional expression (235; 232). For better or for worse, Illouz argues, this androgynous emotional style has infiltrated nearly all walks of life under emotional capitalism, often defining what is desirable in both professional and personal relationships, as both the private and public spheres adopt the logic of the market in valuing self-possessed individuals capable of capitalizing on emotional performances.

The aim of this chapter, however, is not just to argue that Irving's unsexing of Siddons in his decision to model the sublime actor and ideal worker after the actress anticipates what Illouz identifies as the challenges to traditional masculinity by emotional capitalism. It is rather to credit this model to Siddons and her flair for self-fashioning her public persona through a

transgressive feminine sublimity apposite to an extraordinarily commercialized theatre. In other words, the late eighteenth-century theatre and celebrity culture that contributed to its commercial viability became for Siddons a space to explore how to construct a model of interiority best suited for anyone wishing to maximize their value. Siddons's performances, her writings, and the early biographical tradition that sprung up in response to public interest in her fame each present separate yet linked attempts to experiment with and secure advantage during emotional capitalism's infancy while also searching for solutions to the theoretical roadblocks and practical pitfalls of this emotional regime.

Characterizing Siddons

The private lives of actors and actresses have not always enchanted the public. As Kristina Straub points out,

> By the end of the seventeenth century, a change was taking place in the way the English public saw the actor: instead of the anonymous individual whose name seldom if ever appeared on a playbill, the actor was emerging as a personality, an object of public curiosity and inquiry. This change was probably part of larger cultural shifts in the social construction of the subject: historians of eighteenth-century culture have often noted the growth of a concern for, and a fascination with, individual character, as is evidenced particularly by the 'rise' of the novel, with its focus on individual psychology. (24)

Straub reads this public interest in the private lives of theatre performers as a form of surveillance, as the actor (suspected of homosexuality) and the actress (suspected of prostitution)

became the focus of a public discourse that organized and policed the performance of gender and sexuality, solidifying modern identity categories in the process.[171]

The rise of celebrity studies, however, has shifted interest from social control to individual agency by identifying how eighteenth-century performers—especially actresses—fashioned their own public lives. "For the first time," writes Laura Engel, "actresses had the chance to participate in active campaigns of self-promotion"; they exerted agency to "frame and stage their identities and sell […] idealized images of themselves to a wide range of spectators" (9). Actresses especially, argues Felicity Nussbaum, made use of what she calls the "interiority effect," or the "enjoyment that eighteenth-century audiences experienced in imagining the inner lives of actors and actresses through their performances rather than through reading," an effect which not only participates in but anticipates the rise of the novel (18). For eighteenth-century actresses, Nussbaum continues,

> Individuality and its objectification in the marketplace operated as a kind of currency with fluctuating worth in an emergent credit economy as inner life was projected on stage. When actresses such as Oldfield, Clive, and Woffington inserted their personalities into the otherwise impersonal space of the market, and created the impression that their interiority could be known, it enhanced their commercial value and mediated the distance between them and the aristocratic women and proper ladies in their audiences. (18)

Nussbaum's analysis of star actresses demonstrates their agency in this process: they "were at pains to insist that the market value of that expression of interiority should accrue to them" rather

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[171] Straub's Foucauldian account of the relationship between sexuality and power in the theatre has proven a valuable tool for analyzing the relationship between eighteenth-century theatre and the historical development of gender and sexual identity. See, for example, Lisa Freeman *Character's Theatre*, Jean Marsden *Fatal Desire*, and Julie Carlson's *In the Theatre of Romanticism*—especially her chapter "Romantic Antitheatricalism: Surveilling the Beauties of the Stage," 134–75.

than the male theatre managers (19). They "recognized the exchange value of their labour and their potential for self-commodification; they demanded remuneration commensurate with their talents," which they leveraged to become "among the first of their sex to achieve social mobility, cultural authority, and financial independence by virtue of their own efforts"—an economic independence coupled with "sexual liberty, and self reflexivity" which Nussbaum later identifies as "anticipat[ing] modern forms of female identity, the price of which was their reliance upon exploiting a free-market, possessive individualism with all its imperfections that would inspire, but also plague, an emerging liberal feminism" (11, 7, 272).

Siddons's cultivation of a maternal moral identity and her ability to avoid public scandal represent an innovation in this interiority-effect as a practice of this mixture between self-commodification and self-liberation. Siddons's approach flipped the script: "She carried her public persona […] into her private life rather than drawing the personal into the public," says Nussbaum, "investing in the intense emotion and deep subjectivity of the tragic characters she played," thereby "reversing the pattern of other eighteenth-century actresses who traded on manipulating allusions to their personal lives" (29, 281, 283). Rather than centring her public persona and alluding to it on stage, she infused these characters with aspects of her domestic and private inner life, creating a version of the interiority effect that Nussbaum describes as more "authentic than theatrical" (281).

Consider, for example, Siddons's breakout performance in London on 10 October 1782 in the role of Isabella in Thomas Southerne's tragedy *Isabella; or, The Fatal Marriage* adapted for the stage by David Garrick in 1758. In 1694, during its initial production, Isabella was played by the greatest tragic actress of the Restoration: Elizabeth Barry, for whom Southerne had

written the role.[172] The play creates a series of comparisons between Isabella and Barry. Isabella, for instance, has links to Barry's first major role: Hellena in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*, which premiered in 1677.[173] At the end of *The Rover,* Hellena flees before joining a convent and elopes with her lover, the libertine Wilmore; at the beginning of *The Fatal Marriage*, Isabella—banished by her father-in-law Count Baldwin and manipulated by her brother-in-law Carlos—is left alone in poverty with a child she has had after breaking her vows to a convent and eloping with her now presumed dead husband Biron. Behn had based Wilmore in part on the Earl of Rochester John Wilmot, who not only trained Barry for the stage but was also her lover. Shortly afterwards, she had a child with him. He died three years later.

In between her performances as Hellena and Isabella, Barry collaborated with the tragic playwright Thomas Otway, who created some of her most well-known tragic roles: Monimia in *The Orphan*; Lavinian in *Caius Marius*; Belvidera in *Venice Preserv'd*. Otway sought to transform this professional relationship into a romantic one, but Barry refused. Though he too had died by the time Southerne's play was produced, several of Otway's love letters to Barry survive, and they resemble some of the speeches of the equally besotted Villeroy, who seeks to gain Isabella's attention. Consider, for example, Villeroy's confession of love to Isabella:

> Thus, at this awful distance, I have served
> A seven years' bondage—Do I call it bondage
> When I can never wish to be redeem'd?
> No, let me rather linger out a life
> Of expectation, that you may be mine,
> Than be restored to the indifference

[172] Southerne notes in his introduction "I made the play for her part, and her part has made the play for me" (182).
[173] The play is loosely based on Aphra Behn's short story *The History of the Nun; or, the Fair Vow-Breaker* (1689).

> Of seeing you, without this pleasing pain:
>
> I've lost myself, and never would be found.
>
> But in these arms. (197)

This speech shares similarities to a well-known love letter, written to Barry by Otway:

> Could I *see* you without *Passion*, or be *absent* from you without *Pain*, I need not beg your *Pardon* for this renewing my *Vows*, that I *love* you more than *Health*, or any *Happiness* here or hereafter. Everything you do is a new *Charm* to me; and though I have *languish'd* for seven long tedious *Years* of *Desire*, jealousy and despairing; yet every *Minute* I see you, I still discover something *new* and more *bewitching*. Consider how I *love* you, what would not *renounce*, or *enterprise* for you? (479, original emphasis)

Certainly, not everyone in the audience would have been privy to Barry's relationships and correspondences. But these were all only semi-private, and it is not certain that no one knew. It is rather likely that some of the parallels between her life and the characters she played were intentionally referenced when these plays were written, cast, or performed to increase public interest (and ideally receipts) in what was, by the end of the seventeenth century, a theatre in decline.

Siddons's approach to Isabella reverses the direction of this interiority effect. Instead of alluding to prior performances and speculations about her semi-private, sexual life to inform her character's emotions, Siddons performs her character's emotions to give audiences glimpses into her completely private, domestic life—in this case, the relationship between her and her child. At the end of the play, a now insane Isabella attempts first to murder her child, and when prevented, stabs herself and dies. In her performance, Siddons played the part of Isabella alongside her "own dear beautiful Boy," her eight-year-old son Henry (Siddons, *The Reminiscences* 9). This

casting choice, observes Robyn Asleson, "encourag[ed] audiences to confuse the sentiments that the actress feigned on the stage with her actual feelings as a mother" (52). In a review for the *Morning Post* on 10 Oct 1782, for example, the author notes that "the boy, observing his mother in the agonies of the dying scene, took the fiction for reality, and burst into a flood of tears, a circumstance which struck the feelings of the company in a singular manner"—the effect of her natural performance, records the *London Chronicle* two days later, left "scarce a dry eye in the whole house, and that two ladies in the boxes actually fainted" (qtd in Campbell 1: 156n; "Theatrical Intelligence" 355). Instead of uncovering rumours about the actress's private life outside the theatre and watching to see how that information was incorporated into the performance, with Siddons, audiences imagined they were gaining direct access to the private dynamics of her family through the public spectacle.

As many commentators point out, this performance as Isabella was not, however, the first time Siddons brought her children on stage. In her final appearance at Bath in the summer of 1782, she displayed her three children—Henry, Sally, and Maria—to her adoring fans to assuage feelings of abandonment in those who supported her after her initial attempt to break into London's theatres and to suggest instead that she was leaving Bath and going to the London for the sake of her children's future. In a speech recorded by biographer Thomas Campbell, Siddons addressed her audience:

> Why don't I here, you'll say, content remain,
>
> Nor seek uncertainties for certain gain?
>
> What can compensate for the risks you run,
>
> And what your reasons?—Surely you have none.
>
> To argue here would but your time abuse:

I keep my word—my reason I produce. (1:91)

In one of the earliest examples of what Laura Engel describes as Siddons's "project of representing herself as a self-sacrificing mother and an emerging star," the actress then trotted out her children and announced to her fans that "These are the moles that bear me from your side, / where I was rooted—where I could have died" (44–5; Campbell 1:91). This appeal to her children softens her ambition. It is for their sake rather than her own that she must leave Bath and return to London to pursue fame and fortune. As Engel summarizes, "Siddons's job as an actress demanded that she act 'independently and selfishly,'" and it was as a "good mother" that she justified her success (44).

The Hard School of Provincial Theatre

While Siddons's performance of Isabella inaugurated the cultural phenomenon known as Siddons-mania, it was not her first performance on the London stage. Her true debut occurred at the invitation of Garrick at Drury Lane on 26 December 1775 as Venus in a revival of Garrick's *The Jubilee,* a small, four-line role in a short afterpiece that satirized the emerging cultural obsession with Shakespeare. Three days later, she assumed her first role in a mainpiece—the quick-witted Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*. By the end of the season, however, Siddons was sent back to the provinces to perform for regional companies. The reasons for Siddons's dismissal have invited centuries of speculation. We know, for example, that she spoke too softly in her initial appearance. Although some argue that her weak voice was a result of the differences in theatrical conditions between provincial theatres and Drury Lane, most diagnose her as suffering from stage fright, one of the primary examples of what Nicolas Ridout considers theatre's wrongness—a sign of the professional anxieties attached to performance and a crack in

theatre's attempt to snap into perfect illusion.[174] While the bourgeois audience attends the theatre to lose themselves in the illusory presentness of the play, stage fright ruins this effect since the presence of the performer's fear only occurs because that performer recognizes their success, and by extension, their financial livelihood, depends on the audience's approval.

There are other practical reasons for Siddons's dismissal that do not necessarily correlate with poor performance but rather theatre's wrongness and its metonymic relationship to modern life under capitalism. For one thing, she would have needed to wait her turn in what was a competition between actresses to secure the choicest roles. As her first biographer, James Boaden points out, one of the more alluring features of a new actress relates to public speculation about how they might compare to the other, past great actresses, especially when playing similar parts:

> At Garrick's Theatre, there were Miss Younge and Mrs. Yates, often disputing, but constantly occupying, all that was worth doing in tragedy and sober comedy. Mrs. Abington carried the sparkling gaiety or pungent satire of the lighter muse higher than the moderns can conceive. Whom was this new actress to displace, or was she to await a lingering succession, with sometimes the chance […] of doubling the imperious majesties of Younge, Yates, or Abington?" (1:30)

When Siddons first performed as Portia, however, it was a role that lacked grand passion. Despite being a character that could exemplify Siddons's "taste, her sensibility, her reflecting dignity, her unexpected powers of almost masculine declamation," says Boaden, "[t]here was

[174] For Ridout, stage fright is not only "the founding crisis upon which the possibility of truthful acting seems to depend" but an intensified version of the malaise and alienation he associates with the requirement of modern, everyday performance (39).

nothing to alarm, to excite, to fire indignation, or subdue by tenderness"; there was nothing in the role for Siddons to demonstrate her potential as a star or create favourable comparisons to past actresses and present competition (1: 28–9). But because she was blocked by the day's current stars, Portia was all Siddons could get. What is worse, Boaden observes, the potential intrigue of a new, young actress on the London stage was poorly advertised: "The arts of instilling favour into the town, if they were then known, were not in her case practiced" (1: 31). Subsequently, her initial performances were sparsely attended, and her reviews, prejudiced and unsubstantial. Boaden entertains even the possibility of conspiracy—the possibility that other actors or actresses may have interfered to tarnish Siddons's reputation and that her harsher critics may have been attempting to protect their favoured established performer from this upstart provincial girl. Though he dismisses this possibility, that he includes it suggests some may have thought that way.

Not all reviews were unkind. One anonymous reviewer, writing on 6 Jan 1776 for the *Norfolk Chronicle*, acknowledged her difficulty speaking, but nonetheless responded positively to her performance. "[A]llowing for her great natural diffidence," claims this reviewer, Siddons's performance as Portia was "one of the most respectable first essays ever seen on either theatre royal" ("London" 1). "Her figure is a fine one," continues the reviewer:

> Her gestures are beautifully expressive, her action graceful and easy, and her whole deportment that of a gentlewoman; but her forte seems to be that of enforcing the beauties of an author, by an empathetical, tho' easy art, almost peculiar to herself. Her fears last night prevented her from doing justice to her powers that at times her voice was rather low; however […] she cannot fail to rise to great eminence in her profession. She was received with the warmest applause, by a splendid and numerous audience. (1)

The idea, however, that Siddon's first forays into London's theatre may have been merely adequate—neither an astonishing success (as was her return as Isabella in *The Fatal Marriage*) nor an absolute disaster—rather, "one of the most respectable"—did not make for great storytelling. That the greatest actress of the age couldn't quite make it her first time around, that she was, as Irving suggests, "a conspicuous failure," has become a focus for biographers who see this moment as a compelling subject; the gap between the dispiriting lows of rejection and the great heights of her triumphant return is a compelling subject, one that her official biographer Thomas Campbell suggests "renders her history more interesting by the contrast." (*Sir Henry Irving* 106; 1: 77).

Interest in this history could be expected to pay dividends, as both of Siddons's biographers—as well as Siddons herself—worked to shape this story and portray Siddons's interiority and emotions to enhance her public image. Boaden casts her story into the image of epic, casting the actress as a masculine hero when he claims that "[t]he absence of Mrs. Siddons for six years from the capital, may perhaps remind the reader of the retirement of Achilles from the field before Troy when insulted by Agamemnon" (1: xvi). In his account, the actress was spurned by audiences and colleagues alike. Though he refuses to call them petty, he recognizes their actions as unjust. Her return to London in triumph subsequently recalls Achilles's vengeance, when he finally and devastatingly crashes into the Trojan lines. The Greek host assembled at Troy missed its hero as much as the London theatre missed its star.

Siddons herself offers a contrasting version of events in a short text or "memoranda" included with emendations in Campbell's biography entitled *The Reminiscences,* a memoir whose manuscript was discovered at the Harvard library in the 1940s. If Boaden tells the story of greatness spurned and then heroically restored, and Siddons paints herself in the image of the

victimized tragic heroine, then her *Reminiscences* tells a story of a young actress who sacrificed much to gain an opportunity to perform in London with Garrick's company, but who, when she arrived, found a man close to retirement, who was "indifferent" to her requests for better roles, who "always objected to my appearing in any very prominent character, telling me that the fore named ladies [Mrs. Yates and Miss Younge] would poison me if I did" (5). She paints herself as a "wretched victim" of Garrick's callous neglect: "He let me down," she continues, "in the most humiliating manner and instead of doing me common justice […] rather depreciated my talents" (*The Reminiscences* 5–6). "Oh!" cries Siddons, recalling the episode, "It was enough to turn an older and a wiser head, cruel cruel treatment!" (*The Reminiscences* 6). "Who can conceive the size of this cruel disappointment," she laments, drawing on the affectations of a she-tragedy heroine to describe her dismissal from Drury Lane as a

> dreadful reverse of all my ambitious hopes in which too was involved the subsistence of two helpless infants! It was very near destroying me. My blighted prospects indeed induced a state of mind, which preyed upon my health, and for a Year and an half, I was supposed to be hastening to a decline. For the sake of my poor babies, however, I exerted myself to shake off this despondency, and my endeavours were blessed with success, in spite of the degradation I had suffer'd from being banishd Drury Lane as a worthless candidate for fame and fortune. (*The Reminiscences* 6–7)

Like Isabella, Siddons and her children would be forced to pay penance for the callous crimes of neglectful men. She had the "mortification of being obliged to Personate many subordinate characters in Comedy," where she "laboured hard" for "only three pounds a week" when she took up residence at Bath (*The Reminiscences* 7). Her "industry and persevereance were indefatigueable" she tells her reader—she earned a "reputation" for it: "That I had strength and

courage to get through all this labour of mind and body, interrupted too, by the cares and childish sports of my poor children who were (most willingly often) hushd to silence for interrupting my studies, I look back with wonder" (*The Reminiscences* 7–8).

Campbell's later biography presents an important document for the history of emotions because of the way it takes these narratives of epic vengeance and tragic victimhood and reshapes them for public consumption by revising Siddons's story and character to appeal to Victorian values of humility, responsibility, and self-determination. While Boaden's account generally treats Siddons as a hero incapable of doing wrong, whose slights were avenged by her triumphant return, Campbell contests this view when he writes that he is "not prepared to blame her audiences implicitly for wilful blindness to her merit" (1: 76). The part of Portia, he agrees, was not the right one for her—it was "manifestly too gay for Mrs. Siddons under the appalling ordeal of a first appearance in London"—but the real issue was her stage fright, a problem Campbell excuses not by praising other elements of the performance but by observing that "[h]er case adds but one to the many instances in the history of great actors and orators, of timidity obscuring the brightest powers at their outset" (1: 76). "It is remarkable," he continues, "that Mrs. Elizabeth Barry, the greatest of Mrs. Siddons's stage predecessors, and Mrs. Oldfield, the most beautiful, were both, like herself, unsuccessful *debutantes*" (1: 77n, original emphasis). By admitting that Siddons's initial performance was bad, Campbell crafts a narrative that demonstrates character growth: "It is true," he observes, that "she was the identical Mrs. Siddons who, a year afterwards, electrified the provincial theatres, and who, in 1782, eclipsed all rivalship whatsoever: but it does not follow that she was *the identical actress*" to the one dismissed from Drury Lane (1: 76, original emphasis). Irving seems likely to have had Campbell's version of events in mind when he depicts Siddons not as greatness snubbed, but as

an actress whose genius manifests because she overcame her rejection by putting in the work at "the hard school of the provincial theatre": Siddons left London, worked hard, and got better. She returned a star (Irving *Sir Henry Irving* 106).

Unlike Boaden's version, with which Campbell can simply disagree, Siddons's account of events is trickier to dispute. Though his text was published three years after her death—so she may not have given it final approval—Campbell was Siddons's authorized biographer. She approached him to write it, and he worked closely with her. Not only does he frequently refer to private correspondences with her to support his views, but her account in the *Reminiscences* is embedded in his text. He subtly revises rather than challenges what she has to say; the way he edits and embeds her words within his, as Laura Engel observes, produces the peculiar effect of letting her "put forth an analysis and an opinion while still remaining within the authorized confines of another person's book," giving the text both insight into Siddons's private interiority and an impression of objectivity and truth (32). One observes in microcosm this codependent effect when Campbell attributes Siddons's failure to stage fright: "The great obstacle to the early development of her powers, I have heard Mrs. Siddons declare, was timidity"—Campbell interrupts his objective and declarative statement with Siddons's own subjective declaration, attributing the claim's factuality to the latter (1: 67). While the assertion's truth ultimately hinges on Siddons's opinion as recollected by Campbell, the sentence's structure rhetorically lends credibility to that view by having it appear verified by the objective and neutral author.

At the same time, however, Campbell reshapes Siddons's rhetoric as he edits her text to remove some of the actress's affectations. Both interjections in her description of Garrick's behaviour—the "Oh" and "cruel cruel treatment"—are, for example, omitted in his text. He revises her rhetorical question, "who can conceive the cruelty of disappointment" into a calmer

statement of fact—"It was a stunning and cruel blow"—and he tempers the piercing image of "poor babies" suffering by aging them into much softer "poor children" (1: 63). He then suggests that while Siddons's recollection of events might be truthful, it is not necessarily the truth: "These sentences," he suggests, "which were penned by Mrs. Siddons in her advanced age, shew that neither a long lifetime, nor most forgiving habits of mind, had effaced the poignant feelings which this transaction had inflicted on her" (1: 63). He responds to the fictionality of her story by assuming a more objective position, sparing Garrick's reputation by moderating Siddons's criticisms: "Her statement however, I think shews that Garrick behaved to her rather like a man of the world than with absolute treachery" (1: 64). To modify Siddons's account of her hard labour at Bath as a punishment, Campbell spaces out her biography, inserting sections of commentary between Siddons's text. He separates the story of her poor London performance as Portia from her recollection of the difficulties working at the Bath playhouse by nearly seventeen pages. By using this section to deflect her criticisms of Garrick and to refocus the reason for her failure on her own limitations, Campbell recharacterizes her hard work at Bath as an act of redemption rather than punishment. The seventeen-page separation alters the narrative arc of the story from tragic and unjust punishment to personal responsibility, hard work, and perseverance, recharacterizing her according to the Victorian liberal ideal.

The advantage of Campbell's narrative is that it provides a framework to solve some of the moral issues at the center of debates about the sublime actor. For Ridout, the solution to stage fright in professional life involves adopting what he calls a "blasé attitude […] a paradoxical psychic formation—a modern social variant on the proper detachment of Diderot's comedian—in that its apparent indifference marks a 'highly personal subjectivity" (43). "Despite, or rather, because of, the necessity to observe and empathise with others," continues Ridout, "the actor is

in fact the most 'blasé' of all (apart, of course, from psychoanalysts). The actor must be professionally 'blasé', treating empathy and fellow-feeling as means to a professional end […] because the relationship between feeling and calculation, or between inner disposition and external attitude, lies at the heart of his or her professional life" (44). In a manner that recalls not just Diderot's sublime actor but also Smith's stoic sublime, the blasé attitude that Ridout describes as required for the supposedly psychologically healthy, self-focused individual of modern life enables to the actor to overcome this anxiety, which, paradoxically, demonstrates that actor's concern. By denying that an audience's presence influences their performance, the actor demonstrates their complete sympathetic identification with that audience. The trouble, however, is that the effect of cool detachment does not guarantee that its cause is sympathetic expression. Irving, as discussed in the introduction, accuses this kind of sublime actor of permanently separating themselves from their family, their neighbours, and their community, as lacking the moral qualities that make a proper personality. And, despite his praise of this kind of tranquil attitude, Adam Smith even identifies the neglect of children as a clear sign that "stoical apathy" has gone too far: we are "much more offended by the defect" of too little sympathy, he says, than by the "excess of that sensibility", giving the example of "[t]he man who appears to feel nothing for his own children, but who treats them upon all occasions with unmerited severity and harshness," who "seems of all brutes the most detestable" (143; III.iii.14). The figure of hard work, however, resolves this issue. With great difficulty, and for the sake of her children, Siddons adopts the blasé attitude that lets her overcome stage fright and produce sublime performances. She must work hard ignoring her children paradoxically because of her motherly attachment to those children, and her deeply felt care is precisely what makes this work so difficult. This paradoxical turn enables Siddons to reverse what might otherwise have been a

symptom of masculine-associated immorality or even psychopathy into an example of feminine sympathy and care.

Personifying Tragedy

Most studies of Siddons's sublimity refer to her biography because they relate her aesthetic, theatrical presence to an effect Marvin Carlson refers to as "ghosting," an echoing of the past in the present in which the interplay of identity and context "become a part of the reception process"—in this case, through the conflation of character and performer (*Haunted Stage* 7).[175] It is, for instance, all well and good for L. C. Knight to suggest that when *Macbeth* is read as poetry, then it doesn't matter how many children Lady Macbeth has. It may, however, have mattered a great deal how many children Siddons had when she played that character, and the effect of her presence as a mother may have contributed to the play's theatrical sublime. From 1774–94, for instance, Siddons gave birth to seven children. When she awed London audiences on 2 Feb 1785 in the role of Lady Macbeth, she was already the mother of five and was soon pregnant with her sixth, George, born 27 Dec 1785. "When the public learned of her pregnancy that summer," argues Chelsea Phillips, "her condition became an occasion for exploring and expressing the complex intertwining of varied strands of her celebrity in the minds of audience members" (132). As Siddons continued to play the role of Lady Macbeth throughout the year, the presence of her pregnant belly on stage, claims Phillips, "radically changes the

[175]"Of course," continues Marvin Carlson, "on the most basic level all arts are built up of identical material used over and over again, individual words in poetry, tones in music, hues in painting," but unlike other genres, he continues, theatre "has been in all periods and cultures particularly obsessed with memory and ghosting" as one of if not the primary method for producing meaning (*Haunted Stage* 7). The interiority effect described could be understood as an example of ghosting insofar as they both involve the production of meaning through repetition, comparison, and performance, but for the crucial difference that ghosting increases the possible meanings available for a particular play whereas the interiority effect generates meaning in the performer.

implications of [her] 'unsexing speech, when she declares her intent to make the witches' prophecy that Macbeth will be king come true" (Phillips 137).[176] "[A] pregnant Lady Macbeth," writes Phillips, "enhances the sublime horror of the play," heightening the stakes of the witches' prediction that Macbeth would have no heir while provoking anxieties about what, on a stage, counts as illusion and what counts as real (141).

This view of her sublimity reflects a radical departure from the tradition of the Romantic sublime. In his essay, "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare," Charles Lamb invokes this sublime to criticize how late eighteenth-century audiences identified "the actor with the character which he represents": "It is difficult for a frequent playgoer to disembarrass the idea of Hamlet from the person and voice of Mr. K[emble]"; "We speak of Lady Macbeth, while we are in reality thinking of Mrs. S[iddons]" (327). Lamb views this effect as a "perverse" example of theatre's wrongness (327). This identification, claims Lamb, obfuscates the presence of the author by making those "unlettered persons […] dependent upon the stage-player for all the pleasure they can receive from the drama" (327). Once the performer seizes possession of the theatrical character from the author in the imaginations of the illiterate audience, then "the very idea of *what an author is* cannot be made comprehensible without some pain and perplexity of mind" (327–8, original emphasis). For Lamb, the substitution of the author's genius for the performer's body exchanges the near-infinite possibilities for sublime poetic delight with a "juvenile pleasure" found in "this sense of distinctness" (328). By going to the theatre and reducing the "fine vision" of the imagination's illusion "to the standard of flesh and blood," he says, "[w]e have let go of a dream" (Lamb 328). "How cruelly this operates upon the mind," he moans, "to

[176] The line in that speech that commands devilish spirits to "take my milk for gall," says Phillips, describes "a process that would likely kill the child within her womb," representing a clear danger in the minds of those already concerned about the well-being of the unborn child subjected to the rigours of the stage (137).

have its free conceptions thus cramped and pressed down to the measure of a strait-lacing actuality," especially when the memory of that performance continues to influence the imagination long after the curtain falls (328). In comparison to the debate over who controls the effects of the theatre discussed in chapter three, Lamb's use of the Romantic sublime to assert the author's prerogative appears to have ceded some ground. The effects of the theatre have been claimed by the performer, but that loss is reconceived as a victory since the pleasure of these effects now pales in comparison to the much greater power of the work when staged in the theatre of the mind rather than the actual theatre. But the victory is a pyrrhic one, since for Lamb, the more illiterate members of society do not see it this way.

At the same time, however, Siddons and her allies worked to shape her as an exception to the limitations of this antitheatrical sublime, perhaps in part to justify her fame and her wealth, since by the end of the eighteenth century, performers—especially actresses—were some if not the highest paid artists in the period. Campbell, for example, rehearses Lamb's arguments when he introduces Sarah Siddons's performance as Lady Macbeth:

> [T]here are parts of 'Macbeth' which I delight to read much more than to see in the theatre. When the drum of the Scottish army is heard on the wild heath, and when I fancy it advancing, with its bowmen in front, and its spears and banners in the distance, I am always disappointed with *Macbeth*'s entrance, at the head of a few kilted actors [...] Could any stage contrivance make it seem sublime? No! I think it defies theatrical art to render it half so welcome as when we read it by the *mere* light of our own imaginations. (2: 8)

If the army shrinks when it steps on stage, however, Siddons's performance of Lady Macbeth—her "masterpiece," as Campbell puts it—has the opposite effect (2: 10). When played by

Siddons, Lady Macbeth becomes a "larger interest on the stage, and a morefull and finished poetical creation" (Campbell 2: 10). Such an experience does not reduce the character to the standard of flesh and blood, it rather—as Longinus puts it—"makes a strong an ineffaceable impression on the memory" (148; 6.3–4). "It was an era in one's life to have seen her in it," recalls Campbell; "She was Tragedy personified" (2: 10).

If Siddons's larger-than-life performance as Lady Macbeth solves theatre's deficiencies, Campbell does not explain how. Instead, he includes in his biography a short essay written by Siddons entitled "Remarks on the Character of Lady Macbeth," where the actress outlines her approach to this character. The performance tradition prior to Siddons and perfected by the actress Hannah Pritchard emphasized Lady Macbeth as an evil and bloodthirsty temptress who seduces her husband into committing murder. This characterization is designed to affect audiences so that according to Siddons, "even whilst we abhor the crimes," we come to "pity the infatuated victim of such a thraldom" ("Remarks" 11). Siddons, however, rejects this view of the woman and uses this rebuff to detail her theory of acting—one that finds interest in complicating and humanizing what would otherwise be straightforwardly villainous characters and their behaviours in ways that Catherine Burroughs claims demonstrates that "she shared with Joanna Baillie an affinity for what Baillie described in her theory as 'sympathetic curiosity'" (57). Instead of choosing to portray Lady Macbeth as a monster, Siddons describes her as a woman with "all the subjugating powers of intellect and all the charms and graces of personal beauty" ("Remarks" 10). She continues: "You will probably not agree with me as to the character of that beauty," but she attributes "this difference of opinion" to "the difficulty of your imagination" in breaking the habit of the past's limited conception of the character (Siddons, "Remarks" 10–11). To expand our imaginations, she doubles the narrative arc of temptation we already know but

places it within Lady Macbeth's character. Siddons recasts the monster as ambition itself, with Lady Macbeth, "whose bosom the passion of ambition has *almost* obliterated all the characteristics of human nature," caught in its thrall just the same as her husband ("Remarks" 10, emphasis added). By repeating this plot structure inside the character's mind, Siddons seeks to duplicate the sympathetic response Macbeth typically receives. Similar to the play's hero, her Lady Macbeth is not inherently evil. She is instead like the biblical Eve, merely the first to give in to temptation.

To defend this interpretation, Siddons demonstrates how Lady Macbeth's most vile statements rely upon yet displace a fragile and feminine self-image. Her desire to be unsexed and have her milk turned to gall, for example—expressed in the famous "come, you spirits" speech—requires her to have been originally a paragon of feminine beauty. Without this initial loveliness, she would not have needed the assistance of demons to strengthen her resolve. Moreover, Siddons argues, such lines ought to be read as figurative rather than literal because they are delivered "only in soliloquy" rather than spoken to her husband ("Remarks" 18). Of course, what Lady Macbeth does say to her husband might be worse—a graphic description of infanticide:

> I have given suck, and know
>
> How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
>
> I would, while it was smiling in my face,
>
> Have plucked the nipple from his boneless gums,
>
> And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn
>
> As you have done to this. (1.7.54–9)

But these lines, Siddons argues, turn on a similar logic of displacement and rhetorical substitution:

> The very use of such a tender allusion in the midst of her dreadful language, persuades one unequivocally that she has really felt the maternal yearnings of a mother towards her babe, and that she considered this action the most enormous that ever required the strength of human nerves for its perpetration […] the naturalness of her language makes us believe her, that she had felt the instinct of filial as well as maternal love. ("Remarks" 18)

Infanticide works in this passage as a figure designed to convince her husband to act rather than a literal demonstration of her cruelty. It is as if Lady Macbeth were saying

> "You have the milk of human kindness in your heart," she says (in substance) to him, "but ambition, which is my ruling passion, would be also yours if you had courage. With a hankering desire to suppress, if you could, all your weakness of sympathy, you are too cowardly to will the deed, and can only wish it. You speak of sympathies and feelings. I too have felt with a tenderness which your sex cannot know; but I am resolute in my ambition to trample on all that obstructs my way to a crown. Look to me, and be ashamed of your weakness." ("Remarks" 18–9)"[177]

She does not then mean the infanticide literally, argues Siddons, but as a metaphor for her willingness to put everything on the line, to sacrifice her children for the sake of her family's future, and to shame her husband into doing the same.

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[177] Siddons quotes this line from the play: "Yet do I fear they nature, / It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness" (1.5.17).

While these refinements of her character draw attention from Macbeth to his wife, Siddons contends this shift deepens our respect and sympathy for the play's hero. She claims, for instance, that it is otherwise impossible to explain how Lady Macbeth could "fascinate the mind of a hero so dauntless, a character so amiable, so honourable as Macbeth," if she were a monster from the outset ("Remarks" 11). The thought of Macbeth willingly marrying a Lilith rather than an Eve ruins the image of him as honourable and admirable, an interpretation at odds with the view of the play as a character study of lost innocence. Her ambition needs instead to be tempered with those attributes "generally allowed to be most captivating to the other sex—fair, feminine, nay, perhaps even fragile […] Such a combination only, respectable in energy and strength of mind, and captivating in feminine loveliness, could have composed a charm of such potency" ("Remarks" 11). This view guides Siddons's later performance of the character's madness, which Siddons argues would also be inconsistent with the idea of a monstrous Lady Macbeth. Unlike her husband, observes the actress, whose "less sensitive constitution […] bears him on to deeper wickedness," Lady Macbeth's "feminine nature, her delicate structure […] are soon overwhelmed by the enormous pressure of her crimes" ("Remarks" 33). If the woman were naturally despicable, the act of murder would have had no effect on her conscience, but because she was originally good, she goes mad once her virtue is lost.

Some have struggled with the perceived disjunction between Siddons's claim that her portrayal feminized and softened the character with "contemporary descriptions and pictorial depictions of Siddons as Lady Macbeth [that] foreground her majesty, superhuman power, and sublimity rather than her feminine frailty" (H. McPherson 303).[178] But this difficulty depends on

[178] See also Sandra Clark and Pamela Mason: "In her 'Remarks on the Character of Lady Macbeth' [Siddons] claimed to want to dispense with [Hanna] Pritchard's 'fiend-like queen,' describing the ideal Lady as 'fair, feminine, nay, perhaps even fragile,' but accounts of her acting belie this. She could make audiences start from their seats

the assumptions encoded in a limited and masculine view of the sublime. Siddons's sublimity relies instead on enacting the kind of sublime turn expounded by Longinus in his reading of Sappho—a sublime power created by the forceful representation of passivity. "[I]ronically," claims Jeffrey Cox, who observes this sublime turn in effect throughout the actress's career, "Siddons's power as a woman on stage […] arose from depicting women as lacking the power to act […] and the sign of that power was her ability to overwhelm—to render passive, unconscious—her audience, and particularly the women in it" ("Baillie, Siddons, Larpent" 38). The attempt to feminize Lady Macbeth, for example, culminates in Siddons's famous decision to depart from traditional performances of the sleepwalking scene and associate her madness with feelings of guilt and shame by putting the candle down to rub imaginary blood from her hands. The sublime power of the pathetic/powerful, handwashing gesture was specifically identified by Diderot more than thirty years before Siddons's performance when he imagined the scene creating an effect so sublime "que toute l'éloquence Oratoire ne rendra jamais" ("that all the oratory eloquence could never translate it"):

> Tel est celui de Mackbett dans la Tragédie de Shakespear. La somnambule Mackbett s'avance en silence et les yeux fermés sur la scene, imitant l'action d'une personne qui se lave les mains, comme si les siennes eussent encore été teintes du sang de son Roi qu'elle avoit egorge il y avoit plus de vingt ans. Je ne sçais rien de si pathétique en discours que le silence et le mouvement des mains de cette femme. Quelle image du remors!

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when she commanded, 'Give *me* the daggers' or believe they could smell the blood on her hands in the sleepwalking scene" (107, original emphasis)

> Such is Shakespeare's tragedy of *Macbeth*. The sleepwalker Lady Macbeth, advances on the stage silently with closed eyes and rubs her hands together, imitating the action of a person who washes her hands, as if hers had still been stained with the blood of her king's whom she had shed twenty years before. I know nothing in speech so pathetic as the silence and motion of this woman's hands. What an expression of remorse! (*Lettre sur les sourds et muets* 16–17)

The impact of this sublime turn performed by Siddons affected audiences so forcefully, that "[t]he character of Lady Macbeth," claims Boaden, "became a sort of exclusive possession to Mrs. Siddons. There was a mystery about it which she alone seemed to have penetrated" (2: 103–4). Campbell concurs: "The moment she seized the part, she identified her image with it in the minds of the living generation" (2: 56).

Siddons encouraged audiences and fans to conflate her public image with Lady Macbeth for reasons beyond the economic benefit of permanently claiming the part in further performances. By identifying herself with the character, and by guiding audiences to sympathize with the ambitious mother in the play, they learned, as Engel suggests, "to equate their sympathy for Lady Macbeth's inner monologue with an appreciation of Siddons's (the actress's) own private struggle to understand and perfect her portrayal of the role" (Engel 47). In what is perhaps a nod to Charles Lamb's dismissal of the theatre in favour of the imagination, Siddons asks the reader in her "Remarks," to imagine not just the emotional interiority of Lady Macbeth but the difficulty in performing that level of depth:

> What imitation, in such circumstances as these, would ever satisfy the demands of expectation [for this character]? The terror, the remorse, the hypocrisy of this astonishing

> being, flitting in frightful succession over her countenance, and actuating her agitated gestures with her varying emotions, present, perhaps one of the greatest difficulties of the scenic art, and cause her representative no less to tremble for the suffrage of her private study, than for its public effect. (28)

Siddons is anxiously caught between two competing expectations: the infinite possibilities of the imagination and the specific tradition laid down by previous actresses like Hannah Pritchard, whose overly simplistic yet popular portrayal of Lady Macbeth she must overcome to build sympathy for the character.

She circumvents these two challenges by tying her persona to the character even tighter. This move enacts another sublime turn. By describing herself as at the mercy of the role's difficulty, she not only equates her ambition to succeed in this difficult role to Lady Macbeth's ambitious desire to seize a crown, but she also claims for herself the same anxiety and remorse that she uses to humanize and sympathize with that character. This turn suggests a response to those who thought Siddons's pregnant performance demonstrated her avarice and callousness towards the unborn children.[179] On the one hand, Siddons's presence as Lady Macbeth softens the latter by virtue of the actress's prior attempts to claim she sacrifices her time with her children to pursue a career for the benefit of her children. On the other hand, as Engel indicates, by teaching others to have sympathy for "Lady Macbeth's mothering instincts," she trains audiences to have a more favourable opinion of "her own performances and pregnancies,"

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[179] For more on public response to Siddons's pregnancy, see Engel 45–6 and Shearer West "Siddons, Celebrity, and Regality," 195–6. West notably finds that some in the public accused her pregnant performances as "lacking decorum" and demonstrative of greediness at the expense of her body and family (196). See, for example, Hester Lynch Thrale: "Mrs Siddons is going to act Lady Macbeth on the new Theatre Drury Lane next Easter Monday; She is big with Child, and I fear will for that reason scarce be well received: for People have a notion She is covetous, and this unnecessary Exertion to gain Money will confirm it," 2: 876–7. See also Phillips, who explores these views through her reading of archival newspaper coverage and the correspondences of Mary Tickell, a Drury Lane insider, to discuss a wider range of concerns and responses to Siddons's pregnancies.

conflating the logic behind the character's action with her own by building an analogy between the latter's desire for the crown and her own desire to become a star (45). If audiences can learn to sympathize with Lady Macbeth's difficult situation, then so too can they learn to sympathize with hers.

As she was preparing for her first appearance onstage as Lady Macbeth in London, Siddons recounts "the utmost diffidence, nay terror," that she felt, an anxiety about her innovative performance exacerbated by theatre owner and manager Richard Sheridan, who interrupted her preparation for her first performance to warn her that her decision to depart from the past convention of holding the candle "would be thought a presumptuous innovation" (*The Reminiscences* 37–8). Siddons persisted with the gesture, however, and the performance was met with such applause that she recounts "Mr. Sheridan himself came to me, after the play, and most ingenuously congratulated me on my obstinacy" (*The Reminiscences* 39). Siddons then describes how, once Sheridan had left, and she began to remove her costume, she experienced a strange, almost hallucinatory moment:

> While standing up before my glass, and taking off my mantle, a diverting circumstance occurred, to chase away the feelings of this anxious night: for, while I was repeating, and endeavouring to call to mind the appropriate tone and action to the following words, 'Here's the smell of blood still!' my dresser innocently exclaimed, 'Dear me, ma'am, how very hysterical you are to-night; I protest and vow, ma'am, it was not blood, but rose-pink and water for I saw the property-man mix it up with my own eyes. (*The Reminiscences* 39)

If the conflation of her public persona with that of the character of Lady Macbeth contributed to the success of the performance, Siddons here also starts to imagine the inverse. Her ambitious

performance has captured the imagination of her audience and figuratively killed off her rival Pritchard. She can now assume her role as Queen Macbeth—and the Queen of the theatre.

The Sublime Jane De Monfort

Siddons would continue to cultivate a queenly image for herself throughout her career. Just before Siddons's character Jane walks onstage in Joanna Baillie's *De Monfort*, for example, the Page runs ahead to describe her to the Frebergs (and the audience):

> So queenly, so commanding, and so noble,
>
> I shrank at first in awe; but when she smil'd,
>
> For so she did to seem me thus abash'd,
>
> Methought I could have compass'd sea and land
>
> To do her bidding. (2.1.21–5)

As James Armstrong suggests, "The image presented in the passage of someone 'queenly,' 'commanding,' and 'noble,' corresponds directly with the public persona of Siddons" (76). "Baillie was writing not just for performance," he concludes, "but for performance by the greatest actress of her day: Sarah Siddons" (59).[180]

Baillie's contemporaries agreed. Campbell calls these lines a "perfect picture of Mrs. Siddons"; William Charles Macready quotes them to describe "The impression the first sight of her made" on him, and Elizabeth Inchbald remarks that this description "has given such a

[180] See also Jeffrey Cox who claims that "Baillie clearly wished to draw upon the power of Siddons's performances in *De Monfort*, for she designed the character Jane De Monfort with Siddons in mind" (*Seven Gothic Dramas* 53).

striking resemblance of both the person and mien of Mrs Siddons that it would almost raise suspicions she was, at the time of the writing, designed for the representation of this noble female" (2: 257; 401; 5).[181] Although Joanna Baillie had not yet secured Siddons when she wrote her first volume of *Plays on the Passions*, "[i]t is probable," recounts the anonymous biographer of "The Life of Joanna Baillie,"

> that John Kemble and his sister [Siddons] had been present to the mind of Joanna when she composed the tragedy of De Monfort […] Certain it is that Mrs. Siddons thought the character of Jane well suited to her talents, and the passage in the play, descriptive of that personage, has been applied to the great actress as the best portrait of her in existence. The authoress and actress were introduced to each other at this period and the interview was the commencement of a friendship, which continued to the end of life, founded on mutual admiration and esteem. Mrs. Siddons upon this occasion, whilst taking her leave, uttered these parting words: "Make me some more Jane De Monforts." (xi)

While the claim that Baillie and Siddons became fast friends after this initial meeting may be overstated, Siddons did persuade Baillie to write her more Jane-like characters.[182] Baillie prepared a manuscript for a new play, *Constantine Peleologus,* which would have given Siddons another great role, although Siddons would never take it on.

In addition to the testimony of their contemporaries, Armstrong offers two arguments to support his claims that Baillie wrote the part for Siddons and that this act exhibits how eighteenth-century and Romantic playwrights and actors often collaborated to create character as

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[181] For a discussion of these references to Siddons as Jane see Armstrong, 75–7.
[182] See Slagle, who finds evidence in Baillie's letters that suggest that their friendship "developed very slowly"—even by 1819, Baillie was unsure how the actress felt about her (90).

writers shaped their literary creations around the self-fashioned image of the performers. The first considers the motive behind this collaboration: Baillie's flattery contributed to the public image of Siddons who was economically dependent on the adoration of her fans, and "Baillie likely did this," he continues, "not just because she admired Siddons's work, but also because she knew the play could not succeed—and probably would not even be staged—without star performers" (77). The second identifies certain theatrical effects produced by Siddons ghosting the role. These effects, claims Armstrong, were heightened by the decision to cast her brother John Kemble as the titular character, Jane's brother De Monfort.

When the siblings first share the stage, for example, Jane is in disguise at a party, observing her brother after hearing from Freberg about his strange, suspicious behaviour. Hidden behind a veil, she speaks to her brother, explaining to him that she wears it because she has a brother who "Was the companion of my early days, / My cradle's mate, mine infant play-fellow," yet one she now claims has abandoned her (2.1.211–2). Angered on her behalf, De Monfort tells her of the "dear sister of my earliest love," whom he would never forsake (2.1.229). As they converse, De Monfort starts to recognize his sister's voice, but when he reaches to take off her veil and confirm his suspicions, he is physically confronted by Rezenvelt. To prevent a fight from breaking out in the middle of the party, Jane removes the veil and "*extends her arms,*" and De Monfort, seeing his sister, "*rushes into them*" and "*bursts into tears*" (2.1.254sd). "Having the parts performed by a real-life sister and brother" in such an emotional scene, suggests Armstrong, provided "an ideal situation for Siddons to repeat the same type of sensation she created when appearing onstage with her son" (79). The performance of sibling affection reaches its crescendo in the final Act of the play when Jane sympathizes with her brother's plight and mourns his death. Siddons's stage presence and relationship with her brother

appear to have been crucial to her intended effect, as Baillie would later remove the scene when the play was collected in her *Dramatic and Poetic Works*. Though, presumably, no one believed Kemble mistook fiction for reality in the same way Siddons's eight-year-old child Henry had done, it is possible audiences believed they were not watching the simulation of emotion, but rather the performance of the true feelings the siblings felt for one another.[183]

While the practical theatrical effects of the siblings' ghosting of the characters are numerous and not difficult to identify, the impact of their presence on Baillie's more theoretical views of the theatre and the passions is less clear. Partially inspired by Straub's Foucauldian analysis of the power of surveillance and the modern sexuality categories that informed earlier approaches to celebrity and spectatorship, Catherine Burroughs, for instance, suggests that the casting of Siddons as Jane opposite Kemble's De Monfort transforms the former into the antagonist of the play. As I discussed in my previous chapter, Burroughs suggests repressed homosexuality as the cause of De Monfort's hatred, so when Jane gives her brother books to read on virtue and etiquette and invites her brother to "come to my closet" to rehearse the social performances advised by such books, she acts, in this view, as an agent of oppression by driving De Monfort's sexuality deeper into the closet so that when his hatred finally boils over again, it is worse than before (2.2.210). In Burroughs's view, Jane's attempts to control her brother and convince him "to perform according to the culture's standard for the socially valuable 'man'" are oppressive, and she contrasts this social imperative to conform to what she calls the "Kemble school of performance"—a highly conventionalized and pictorial style she ascribes to Siddons's

[183] As Armstrong continues: "The stage direction not only cues the actors to pull out all of the emotional stops, but by specifying that De Monfort sheds tears, it encourages the audience to give vent to their own emotional reaction. Such a reaction might seem premature for a reunion with a character who has only just appeared for the first time at the beginning of the scene, but it makes perfect sense if the audience's sympathies have already been heightened by seeing a real-life sister and brother in the roles" (79).

performances, an approach to acting she describes as "mechanical" rather than the kind of "organic" performance that Baillie praises in her introduction (126, 111).[184] By opposing the siblings, Burroughs continues, Baillie "criticizes the style of acting that Siddons embodied by pitting the histrionics of De Monfort against his sister Jane for the purpose of highlighting her oppressive behavior" (127). In this view, the Kemble school of acting exemplifies what Erika Fischer-Lichte describes as the "possible connections between the art of acting and the civilizing process in European history"—Jane teaches her brother how to act, and by doing so civilizes and represses his desires (23).[185] For Burroughs, De Monfort's violent outburst is the outcome of the price Jane—who represents civilizing systems of social control—requires him to pay by repressing his true feelings and modifying his behaviour.

Burroughs's interpretation, however, would likely have been impossible in the eighteenth century; it is, as Linda Brigham points out, "strongly at odds with Baillie's female contemporaries' reception of the character" (712).[186] In a 1799 letter to her friend Mrs. Cholmley, for instance, Mary Berry remarks that Jane de Montfort's character tipped her off to

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[184] Burroughs takes the categories of mechanical—now associated with British theatre—and organic—associated with American method acting—from Richard Hornby's *The End of Acting: A Radical View* but traces the lineage of these two approaches to the contrast between French neoclassical performance (mechanical) and British and German Romantic styles (organic). Baillie draws a similar contrast when she argues in favour of a more natural style over the poetry and formalism of classical drama.

[185] This process, first delineated by Norbert Elias, describes a "long-term change in human personality structures towards a consolidation and differentiation of affect controls" which began in Europe during the Early Modern period (451). For Elias, this process is not progress. It is rather an increase in social power over individual behaviour, a "price," Fischer-Lichte summarizes, "within elaborate conditions of order and control, that the European cultures had to pay for their technological, scientific, economic, and social change" (22). Fischer-Licthe continues: "This is an argument, from a different perspective, that Michel Foucault also makes in his series of historical studies" (22).

[186] As Armstrong points out, Burroughs's attempt to figure Baillie as a radical author and her play as a vehicle for social critique can only be achieved "not just by ignoring what Baillie wrote, but by ignoring her intention in writing plays in the first place" (92). He suggests that Burroughs's views reflect "[t]he scholarly environment of the 1990s, particularly the rise of queer theory, encouraged critics to read between the lines, but, in this case, the playwright might indeed have been correct about the intentions of her own play" (90). But rather than dismiss Burroughs for relying on the prevalent theoretical assumptions of the period, it is worth considering how the methodological approaches to eighteenth-century theatre have evolved since Burroughs.

the idea that the playwright was a woman: "I say *she*, because and *only* because no man could or *would* draw such noble, such dignified representations of the female mind as the Countess Albini and Jane de Mountfort. They often make us clever, captivating, heroic, but never rationally superior" (89–90, original emphasis). Berry's use of the comparative adjective *superior* within this context suggests that in her view of *De Monfort* at least, the contrast between Jane's queenly presence and her brother's uncontrollable hatred is one of the distinguishing features of the play. When considering how the ghosting effect of the sibling performance may have intermeshed with Baillie's more theoretical concerns, counters Brigham, one ought to instead look for "an alliance between Siddons's acting style and Jane, together with a much more positive reading of the character's intended role in the drama" (713). That Baillie casts Siddons to perform the task of sympathizing with De Monfort, and of trying to characterize him to others as "noble" despite his transgressions, recalls, for example, Siddons's earlier attempts at softening Lady Macbeth's villainy with hatred instead of ambition the offending passion.

Consider, for instance, when, just before initially meeting her brother in the play, Jane arrives at Freberg's house, and the two discuss her brother's state of mind. "He is suspicious grown," comments Freberg (2.1.64). "Not so," replies Jane,

> Monfort is too noble
>
> Say rather, that he is a man in grief,
>
> Wearing at times a strange and scowling eye;
>
> And thou, less generous than beseems a friend,
>
> Hast thought too hardly of him. (2.1.65–9)

The problem, as Brigham points out, is that De Monfort maintains throughout the play a view of nobility which does not seem to fit with his sister's descriptions. Whereas Jane ties nobility to moral character, sensibility, and the theatrics of social performance, De Monfort sees nobility as steeped in what Brigham identifies as an "aristocratic nominalism," a nobility tied to notions of honour and deference owed to him by virtue of his inherited social station, one expressed by what Illouz identifies as the older, now pathologized model of masculine behaviour that "prescrib[ed] men to be self-reliant, aggressive, competitive, oriented to mastery and dominance, emotionless, and, when necessary, ruthless" (708; 80).[187] This gendered view of a masculine sublime linked to a view of self-worth grounded in inherited power and station, however, encounters a challenge: the social upheaval inaugurated by the upward mobility of the bourgeois represented by his rival Rezenvelt. When the value of the limited material or what Brigham calls "positive content" afforded to members of the minor aristocracy declines as capital replaces rent as the more productive economic source, this loss leaves aristocratic claims to the privileges of class vulnerable (Brigham 708). While not the efficient cause of De Monfort's hatred, gender and class tensions provide a material cause by contextualizing and contouring De Monfort's behaviour. As he finds his entitlements of natural nobility, of station, and of masculine sublimity eroding beneath his feet, De Monfort realizes he "has no defense against his own fears of valuelessness because he lacks substantive criteria for self-evaluation" and so must strike out violently to secure a material, physical advantage (Brigham 708).

By contrast, Jane exhibits what Brigham describes as the "freedom *to* sublime self-formulation" through her mastery of nobility that theatricality makes possible (712, original

[187] The distinction between the siblings is a near-perfect example of Kant's division of the sexes in his "*Remarks on the Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*": "The honor of a man consists in the valuation of his self, of a woman in the judgement of others […] The courage of a woman consists in the patient bearing of ill fortune for the sake of honor or love. Of a man, in the eagerness to drive it away defiantly" (70; 20:8).

emphasis). Unlike De Monfort, who feels his naturally owed honour is threatened by those who refuse to accept it, and so is forced to protect his claims to nobility by seeking out and confronting those who might challenge it, Jane adopts the blasé attitude of the modern sublime actor. By accepting her complete dependence on the perceptions of others as something beyond her control, she enacts a sublime turn, overcoming the fears and anxieties that plague De Monfort and mastering her social performance. Brigham reads this turn into the description of Jane's queenly presence, which she identifies as "a nearly literal catalogue of the sublime" from Edmund Burke's treatise on the sublime and the beautiful—as larger-than-life, powerful, domineering, awe-inspiring—by drawing attention to how a few lines later, the Page undermines these claims, turning the initial description into parody:

> So stately and so graceful is her form,
>
> I thought at first her stature was gigantick,
>
> But on a near approach, in truth,
>
> She scarcely does surpass the middle size. (713; 2.1.29–32)

The Page's discovery that Jane is merely of the "middle size" reveals his initial view of Jane to be false. This falsity recalls Lamb's critique of theatre: that the theatrical cannot compete with the grandeur made possible by the poetic imagination. Yet, Jane's body does not diminish the sublime effect of her presence when the Page reassesses his view of her. If the revelation of her "middle size" exposes the initial falsity of the Page's epic description, the reduction of her size when she comes into view does not correspond to a reduction in effect. That Jane's presence continues to impress indicates that her sublimity is not tied to her natural stature but to her performance of stately grace. This demonstration of a theatrical sublime would have been doubled in the theatre when Siddons played Jane, in a manner so precise that Cox suggests, "*De*

Monfort can be read as an investigation of 'Siddons-mania,' the nearly hysterical response to the performances of Sarah Siddons" (*Seven Gothic Dramas* 53). As the imagined, larger-than-life actress steps on stage and reveals herself to be of the middle size, her sublime effects do not diminish—her audience remains awed by her presence.

While many look to Burke's descriptions of the masculine sublime to figure Siddons's theatrical effects—and lock into place the very gender categories they claim her sublimity overcomes—the point of the parody is to disassociate the sublime from nature, as Brigham points out, to criticize an aesthetic tradition which had since Burke relied on "gender categories to do the work of moral categories" (714).[188] This critique, however, had already been undertaken by Mary Wollstonecraft, who, according to Joseph Roach "appealed to the antitheatrical prejudice of [her] readers" to underpin her challenge to Burke's position (Roach *It* 153). Wollstonecraft undermines the natural foundations that Burke uses to link beauty to femininity by equating beauty instead with theatrical duplicity or "courtly insincerity" (Wollstonecraft 13).[189] While Burke claims that women "counterfeit weakness, and even sickness" because they "are guided by nature," Wollstonecraft counters that they instead "learn to lisp, totter in their walk, and nick-name God's creatures," because they are encultured in a patriarchal society that values women for their beauty rather than their morality, their intellect, or their sublimity" (88; 3.ix; 73). Wollstonecraft counters Burke's assertion that beauty is an aesthetic natural to women and linked to social order and procreation by linking the surface theatricality of beauty as an obstacle to social morality. Instead of strengthening social bonds, theatrical beauty, claims Wollstonecraft, becomes a display of sexual availability that produces a

[188] See, for example, Rogers 55–7; Phillips, 124–5, 130–1.
[189] As Crafton points out, Wollstonecraft often associated "courtly insincerity" with the "theatrical bent of the French culture or taste" responsible for "the failures of the French Revolution's earliest promise" (78).

dissolute social order, one "more captivating to a libertine imagination than the cold arguments of reason" (Wollstonecraft 73). Even more alarmingly, instead of driving individuals to form a moral society, theatrical beauty threatens to conceal unjust power. To make this second point, Wollstonecraft contrasts the sublime, unspeakable tortures experienced by plantation slaves with slave-owning women who feign sympathy with the pain inflicted by their order:

> Where is the dignity, the infallibility of sensibility, in the fair ladies, whom, if the voice of rumour is to be credited, the captive negroes curse in all the agony of bodily pain, for the unheard of tortures they invent? It is probably that some of them, after the sight of a flagellation, compose their ruffled spirits and exercise their tender feelings by the perusal of the last imported novel.—How true these tears are to nature, I leave you to determine. But these ladies may have read your *Enquiry* concerning the origin of our ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, and, convinced by your arguments, may have laboured to be pretty, by counterfeiting weakness. (72)

The pleasing illusion created by the theatre of feminine beauty, distress, and fragility, becomes, in this view, a performative substitute for real moral behaviour, and functions to shield the sublime power of immoral social institutions by exempting those who participate from responsibility.

Wollstonecraft was not, however, uniformly antitheatrical. She was friends, for example, with Siddons, at least until the scandal of Wollstonecraft's false marriage to George Imlay broke in 1797. As Godwin recalls, the actress even wrote a letter to his soon-to-be wife, claiming that no one "was in possession of 'more reciprocity of feeling, or more deeply impressed with admiration of the writer's extraordinary powers'" (107). When the marriage scandal became public, however, Siddons joined most of Wollstonecraft's acquaintances and distanced herself

from the now-disgraced author. The problem, however, was that most already knew of the scandal, so their public renunciation struck Wollstonecraft as an example of hypocrisy—and of theatricality. "It was only the supporters and the subjects of the unprincipled manners of a court, that she lost," claims William Godwin in his memoirs, and this was "immaterial" (106). Such people were either false friends, false moralists, or both, concerned primarily with theatrical beauty, and so their severed relationship was no great loss. Wollstonecraft, he continues, was only really hurt by two friends who abandoned her: Elizabeth Inchbald and Sarah Siddons. Unlike Inchbald, however, Siddons was forgiven for her theatrical rebuke of his wife. "I am sure," writes Godwin, that Siddons "regretted the necessity, which she conceived to be imposed on her by the peculiarity of her situation, to conform to the rules I have described" (107). By claiming Siddons was a victim rather than a perpetrator of courtly insincerity, Godwin enacts a sublime reversal, revealing a truthful and authentic theatricality. Siddons's theatrical performance of moral condemnation—one Godwin suggests is forced upon her by her financial dependence on the theatrical court of public perception largely organized around the same social pressures that Wollstonecraft sought to criticize—exposes rather than repeats the falseness of similar denunciations. Because of the two women's authentic reciprocity and friendship, the falsity of her moral outrage reveals the truth of the coercive and misogynistic theatrical social situation.

For Lisa Crafton, Siddons's treatment of Wollstonecraft, and Goodwin's recollection of his wife's response, provide a compelling instance of the author opposing a false theatricality to what she calls "transgressive" or "fully embodied performance"—a kind of theatricality that Crafton claims Siddons models for Wollstonecraft by underscoring her theatrical presence with a material authenticity, one that transforms "the coercive nature of theatrical illusion into

subversive actions" (134, 120). When Siddons performs the role of "powerless female victims," claims Crafton, she does so "with an empowering, disruptive force," because her formidable performances of beautiful helplessness reveal that this weakness is theatrical rather than natural (132). Conversely, when Siddons performs "powerful females with an empathetic force," she provides models for feminine agency, crafting disruptive roles for women that most would otherwise overlook beyond casting as villains (Crafton 132). In both cases, an authentic theatricality, which reveals rather than conceals Siddons's subversive persona, opposes the false theatricality that Burke naturalizes as the feminine and the beautiful.

Baillie's parody also denaturalizes Burke's aesthetic categories by similarly linking theatricality to courtly performance. Instead of the beautiful, however, she targets a sublime that Burke had linked to sovereign power, one "which arises from institution in Kings and commanders," and "has the same connexion with terror" as the "*natural* power" of fierceness and strength one finds in wolves—a power he legitimizes by linking it to divine right and the absolute, omnipresence of God (55; II.v). That Jane—who is of lesser nobility—and Siddons—who is not nobility—can reproduce the theatrical effects of the sovereign in the theatre demonstrates the falsity of the court's claim to a divine or natural sublimity. This revelation suggests a further reversal: whereas the court's sublimity is false because its power depends on a hidden theatricality, the theatrical sublime of Jane and Siddons is truthful because its effect is based on merit and work rather than nature or station.

De Monfort's Masculine Nobility

Jane's view of De Monfort's nobility is coloured by the tender moments they share in private. Her brother, however, finds it impossible to maintain this level of emotional sensitivity

when in public, where his sense of nobility as masculine honour takes over. When, for example, during the party De Monfort's rage gets the better of him, and he nearly duals his rival Rezenvelt, Jane afterwards encourages him to do better and invites him to her apartments where they enact a scene of inquiry. As Jane follows a distraught De Monfort onstage, he exclaims:

> No more, my sister, urge me not again:
>
> My secret troubles cannot be revealed.
>
> From all participation of its thoughts
>
> My heart recoils: I pray thee be contented. (2.2.1–4)

Like Phaedra's Nurse in both Euripides's and Racine's versions of the play, Jane persists. But the tone is entirely different. While both sympathetic to her brother's pain, and curious about its cause, she models a posture of self-control much closer to Seneca's version of the Nurse. She demands from him a confession rather than begs for one: "I do beseech thee speak;" and then "I do conjure thee speak;" and finally, "I do command thee" (2.2.62, 2.2.67, 2.2.72). Similar to Racine's Oenone, she drops to her knees to request his confession, but when she does so, she flips what was for the Nurse a passive, almost helpless movement into an intentional and powerful activity, announcing to her brother "do not thus resist my love / Here I entreat thee on my bended knee" (2.2.73–4). Far from being overwhelmed with sympathetic pain and a troubling curiosity, Jane forcefully demonstrates her love and respect for her brother to try and overpower his resistance to confession.

Like Phaedra's love, which compels her to act with such power that—at least in Racine's version—it dissolves her sense of self, De Monfort treats his hatred as the active agent, one that originates in the nervous system and moves him just as Venus acted through Phaedra's blood. And like Phaedra, whose shame compels her to hold her tongue, De Monfort too feels the need

to keep this "secret weakness of my nature"; he too refuses to "confession make," lest his interlocutor "wilt despise me / For in my breast a raging passion burns, / To which thy soul no sympathy will own" (2.2.20, 2.2.77–80). At the same time, De Monfort's shame differs from Phaedra's, which has more to do with sexual deviancy rather than just being overcome with emotion. She is not ashamed of her feminine, uncontrollable love; she is ashamed that this love is for her stepson. For De Monfort, however, a feminine loss of self-control is shameful enough. He seems to want to mould himself in the image of an Achilles, whose actions are rooted in his righteous sense of vengeance, and whose rage is justified by virtue of who he is. Unlike Achilles, however, De Monfort is uncomfortable with this self-justification as his self-image keeps encountering a problem insofar as he recognizes that the reasons for his hatred are insufficient and will not be accepted by his peers. Although Achilles too was judged by his allies at Troy who questioned his decision to withdraw, his prowess and position secured his station. De Monfort, however, is no Achilles and cannot simply stand on his own. His view of himself is far more dependent on the perceptions of others. The problem then is not that he is overwhelmed by emotion, nor just that others will perceive that emotion as unjust. It is that this view of others matters, and it is the inclusion of the other's point of view that makes him vulnerable and transforms his character from an epic hero into a tragic heroine, a subject position that as an aristocratic man he is ashamed to occupy.

To further emphasize the comparison between Phaedra and De Monfort, Baillie has Jane initially suspect that De Monfort's curious behaviour is the result of a "lover's jealousy" (2.2.87). But De Monfort disabuses her of this idea: "No," he says,

> [I]t is hate, lasting, deadly hate;
>
> Which thus hath driv'n me forth from kindred peace,

From social pleasure, from my native home,

To be a sullen wand'rer of the earth. (2.2.89–92)

Unlike Racine's Nurse, who responds by pushing the plot forward, Jane acts to change De Monfort's internal narrative. "[T]his is fiend-like, frightful, terrible," she counters as she recasts De Monfort into a noble and heroic slayer of monsters—

Unknit thy brows, and spread those wrath-clench'd hands:

Some sprite accurst within thy bosom mates

To work thy ruin. Strive with it, my brother!

Strive bravely with it; drive it from thy breast:

'Tis the degrader of a noble heart;

Curse it, and bid it part. (2.2.94–104)

After De Monfort's objection, she repeats this theme in a speech that bears some similarity to Lady Macbeth's summoning of courage to murder Duncan and seize the Scottish throne:

Call up thy noble spirit

Rouse all the gen'rous energy of virtue;

And with the strength of heaven-endued man,

Repel the hideous foe. Be great; be valiant.

O, if thou could'st! E'en shrouded as thou art

In all the sad infirmities of nature,

What a most noble creature would'st thou be! (2.2.197–203)

By recasting De Monfort as someone engaged in battle with an internal rather than external enemy, she rewrites what it means to be a masculine hero in this new social world.

The revision of his feelings into an epic narrative that imbues De Monfort with heroic

agency struggling against divine forces beyond his control enables Jane to teach her feminine method of emotional openness while speaking to his older, masculine and aristocratic values. By figuring emotional control as a fight, one that celebrates rather than overwhelms De Monfort's self-agency, she reaches him and creates the conditions for him to adapt his viewpoint. Although the narrative might be a masculine one, the instruction takes on feminine qualities. She invites him to "[c]ome to my closet"—a space often figured as one made for feminine sociability—where she will

> school thee there; and thou again shalt be
>
> My willing pupil, and my gen'rous friend;
>
> The noble Monfort I have lov'd so long,
>
> And must not, will not lose. (2.2.210–14).

At the start of the next act, De Monfort's battle is refigured as a herculean labour:

> De Monfort *discovered sitting by a table reading. After a little time he lays down his book, and continues in a thoughtful posture. Enter* Jane De Monfort
>
> Jane: Thanks gentle brother.—
>
> (*Pointing to the book*.)
>
> Thy willing mind has been right well employ'd. (3.1.1–2)

Despite working hard, De Monfort insists he is losing his fight. While he denies he can control his hatred, he also grants he could pretend otherwise—"I'll crave his pardon too for all offence / My dark and wayward temper may have done […] This I'll do, Will it suffice thee? More than this I cannot" (3.1.46–52). Though she hopes for a change of heart, Jane responds that the theatrical "outward act" is enough; "no more than this do I require of thee" (3.1.53–4). She soon invites Freberg, his wife the Countess, and Rezenvelt over to enact the forced apology. "*With*

dignity" De Monfort offers his hand to his rival, and, with "a noble effort" of "manly plainness bravely told" he demonstrates his "noble spirit." (3.1.185sd, 3.2.45–6, 3.2. 3.1.195). Though the apology is false, and forced upon him by his sister, it demonstrates from the perspective of the spectators a truth about his nobility by revealing all the honest hard work De Monfort put into steeling himself for that moment.

The idea that there might be dignity to the theatrics of a false apology appears to be lost on De Monfort as his hatred soon comes roaring back. He remains entrenched in the view of nobility as something he is due by virtue of his birth rather than earned and something to be defended rather than accrued, so he instead falls back on the external action of an epic hero. That Grimbald later reactivates De Monfort's hatred by implying Jane's care and concern for him were merely a theatrical attempt to manipulate a reconciliation so that she and his rival might marry connects this failure to De Monfort's anxieties about theatricality. As an aristocrat, he sees little value in hard work and merit, so he cannot recognize what Jane sees as true about the false apology. Instead, De Monfort interprets this apology's truth as a dishonourable concession to his rival, a surrender made all the worse when done publicly, which is why he takes pains to insist it is his sister rather than his rival who has forced his handshake.

Baillie uses this apology scene to contribute to her critique of the natural sublime. By focusing on De Monfort's anxiety about the apology, Baillie shows how De Monfort's view of authenticity is already theatrical. His identity is so closely tied to establishing his superiority over Rezenvelt, whose nobility he perceives as false, that successive failures to prove to others what he sees as this truth lead him to finally kill his rival. That he needs to defend the independence of his masculinity, his nobility, and the appropriateness of his hatred of others demonstrates how dependent on spectatorship his position always was. Only once he eliminates his opponent does

he realize the shallowness of this identity as his complete victory reverses into a total defeat. As he looks at the corpse of his rival he exclaims: "Oh! Those glazed eyes! / They look me still" (4.3.86–7). They continue to judge him. And that judgment gives De Monfort a moment of clarity, of Smithian impartiality—a flash of self-awareness, or a recognition that what he believed would be the ultimate demonstration of his power and mastery over the situation had flipped into its opposite: complete lack of self-control.

Baillie and Siddons depict the socio-economic conditions—specifically the relationship between an aristocratic, masculine sublime and the more feminine theatrical sublime associated with more middle-class, liberal values—operating in this play as a kind of filter or guide for legitimizing certain expressions of the passions, one that despite Jane's best efforts, De Monfort does not learn to adjust to until the end of the play. In contrast, Jane, with her deep capacity for sympathy, her insistence that emotional expression be characterized as hard work, her recognition of the inherent theatricality of these expressions, and her modern, blasé attitude towards her spectators, all demonstrate how De Monfort could have adapted were it not for his recalcitrant views of nobility, masculinity, and sublimity. Through this juxtaposition, Jane's character becomes a model for a new nobility, masculinity, and sublimity. It is no wonder then, given Siddons's desire to present herself as such, that despite the play's failure, she very likely continued to play the character in private performances and solo recitals for several years after.[190]

[190] See Ellen Donkin 172n17.

Conclusion

Affective Properties: Agency, Affect, and Ownership in Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*

Robert Edmund Jones's setting for "Desire Under the Elms" was profoundly dramatic. The end of a New England farmhouse with its overhanging elms was for all practical purposes built there on the stage, with a wall of actual stone coming down to the footlights; a scene that was realistic but at the same time strangely and powerfully heightened in effect.

Stark Young, "Eugene O'Neill's Latest Play," *The New York Times* 12 Nov 1924, p. 20.

In scene and action there is no pretense of reality. The characters utter their passions as directly and vigorously as if they were speaking blank verse. They even soliloquize. The dominant intention is to strip away the trivial surface of life and reveal the raw, subconscious prompting, the quivering vitality, of human impulse […] *The dominant passion is a love of the land, of this ugly little cottage under the elms.*

"Primitives of the Drama," *The New York Times* 1 March, 1925, p. 65.

In the Theatre of the Sublime

When the curtain rises on the stage for Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*, the audience is welcomed by the following set:

> The action of the entire play takes place in, and immediately outside of, the Cabot farmhouse in New England, in the year 1850. The south end of the house faces front to a stone wall with a wooden gate at the center opening on a country road. The house is in good condition but in need of paint. Its walls are a sickly grayish, the green of the shutters faded. Two enormous elms are on each side of the house. They bend their trailing branches down over the root. They appear to protect and at the same time subdue. There is a sinister maternity to their aspect, a crushing, jealous absorption. They have developed from their intimate contact with the life of man in the house. They are like

> exhausted women resting their sagging breasts and hands and hair on its roof, and when it rains their tears trickle down monotonously and rot on the shingles. (O'Neill 2).

O'Neill's imaginative description of what the stage ought to look like goes far beyond what is possible; he attributes to the elms and the house a deep, metaphorical meaning without offering any indication of how to translate it into the visual medium of the stage. The gap between how O'Neill imagines the set and the impossible task of realizing that imagination in an actual theatre tells us the play addresses the kinds of themes I have argued throughout this dissertation fall under the auspices of the theatrical sublime.

It is not just the audience who must confront the question of what this set means. O'Neill introduces this issue as a problem for the characters in the first line of the play by having Eben exit the house and look up and behind him before exclaiming: "God! Purty!" (3). When the old man Ephraim Cabot tells his new much younger wife Abbie that his sons made him "bitter 'n wormwood" because they "coveted the farm without knowin' what it meant," his comments suggest a correlation between attempts to define the aesthetic or ideological meaning of the house and the character's competing claims for ownership over the farm (35). As Joel Pfister suggests, "Members of the Greenwich Village Theatre audience who felt owned by corporations or more generally dominated by the production of life under capitalism" were made to see by this play "that they are possessed by something more elemental, a force originating in their very depths—desire" (91). It is onto this economic struggle that O'Neill maps the incest plot of the Phaedra myth to make, claims Pfister, as "the focal point of dramatic tension" the equivalence between a "sexualized notion of self-ownership [and] economic ownership" (91). In fact, the word *purty* is spoken by most of the play's characters a total of 26 times, in most cases to describe either the setting (the farmhouse or the sky) or a woman (Abbie or the prostitute

Minnie) in a manner that suggests a resemblance between the two. By mixing these themes O'Neill not only examines the close relationship between feeling and possession, but he does so to also consider what a poetics of emotions might now look like outside of the drive to self-possession so powerfully imposed onto the individual under emotional capitalism. If the sublime actor transcends the passivity of the emotional body through the power of self-ownership, then O'Neill's play asks if it is possible to transcend the systemic ideology of possessive individualism that legitimizes that turn.

Desire Under the Elms opened in 1924 with Walter Huston as Cabot, Mary Morris as Abbie, and Charles Ellis as Eben. While Huston was a movie star who "showed his talent and proved to be the best choice possible for the role," and while Morris was one of the "flowers of the [last] season's acting," the performers appear to have been upstaged by the set (Young 20). This effect appears intentional since the characters they play are all exceptionally shallow when contrasted with the sublime depths of the house and the elms. Rather than expressive of the deep psychological humanity that O'Neill explores in his more realist plays, each character becomes almost a caricature of what it means to be human in their competition for the property. As Hamlin Garland wrote in a scathing review of the initial production, "This play is not drawn from American life, but from the study of a pessimistic European philosophy. It is so false to New England life that it becomes comic at times when it is intended to be most impressive. Its characters lose all humanity at the last and move like pasteboard puppets in a toy theatre" (Garland 22).[191] While the two elder sons—Peter and Simeon—perceive the farm in strictly

[191] During its initial run, *Desire Under the Elms* was met with protest and calls for censorship due to its portrayal of incest and infanticide. On 13 March 1925, the play was acquitted by a play jury established collaboratively by various social organizations, and professionals working in the theatre, with the backing of the New York District Attorney's office. In the early months of 1925, and in conjunction with the establishment of this new play jury, a debate emerged in the editorials of *The New York Times*, with several people writing to the editor to debate the play's merits and faults. On 19 Feb 1925, the entire cast of the West Coast production was arrested in Los Angeles on the charge of giving an obscene play.

economic terms, the three main characters (Eben, Abbie, and Cabot) invest in their perception of the farm far more than just dollar signs.[192] For each of these three characters, the set stands in for the system of values that defines their feelings, their desires, and their identities. Eben, as many commentators have emphasized, is an Oedipal character. Cabot assumed ownership of the farm when he married Eben's mother, and Eben sees the house and its connection to the elms as an extension of that mother, a site over which he must challenge his father for control. Cabot exhibits the Puritan archetype by extolling the virtues of "hard work" and by bragging about his ability to transform "nothin' but fields o' stones" into a thriving farm, (33). He believes that his strength is "the will of God" and that the farm's success is a sign of God's favour towards him (34). Abbie desires to play the role of a respectable housewife. For her "[a] woman's got t' hev a hum" (20). Ownership of the farm becomes a necessary condition for her to be that character. Her methods, however, align her more with the medieval image of an insatiable loathly lady who consumes those in her path. When she manipulates Eben into a sexual relationship by appealing to and offering to satisfy his desires by becoming for him an incestuous stepmother and lover, her claim to take his "Maw's place" plays with a Ma/Maw homonym and confirms Eben's suspicion that she "plan[s] t' swaller everythin'" (37).

The play has no scene of inquiry. Instead of asking "what's wrong," Abbie is happy to dictate to her stepson what he is feeling as she attempts to circumvent his claim to the house by seducing and having a child with him in a perverse example of economic concerns restructuring familial emotional bonds. To explain his inner conflict, Abbie figures the force of capital-N-"Nature" as a power that operates on their bodies like a divine spirit (27). She tells Eben that nature is "burnin' inside ye–makin' ye grow–into somethin' else–till ye're jined with it–an' it's

[192] For Peter and Simeon the farm simply represents the means of production and they happily liquidate their "shares" in exchange for "three hundred dollars" (12).

your'n–but it owns ye, too" (27). By punning on the word growth, Abbie situates the power of nature not just in human biology, but also in the environment. Nature operates as the force that both grows Eben into an adult seeking his place in the world and gives him an erection. But then Abbie's speech recalls the Sapphic *de* by using a conjunction to describe a split subject. Just as Sappho paradoxically both chills and burns, or is crazy and sensible, and just as she affirms her agency by representing herself as lost, one can, for Abbie, own only if they are also owned, and possess only because they are possessed.

Most critics of this play focus on Eben's relationship to the divine. They point to the elms and suggest that Maw's "dominance over the action […] has become a given" (Stinnet 9). According to this view, Maw transforms the farm into a "haunted house […] where specters of memory and past guilt stalk about as perpetual reminders" of past transgressions (Lee 72). This reading misses how each character's desire shares a similar structure, albeit with a different sublimated divine power. All three main characters present their subjectivity as bifurcated in some way; each uses their internal desire to demonstrate they are possessed by an external, divine force. To explain his rugged strength and perseverance, Cabot claims that "something in me fit me an' fit me" and that thing was the "voice o' God" reeling him back to the farm (34). As previously discussed, Abbie gives into a sexual desire by elevating it to the status of an irresistible nature, and Eben believes that this force is the spirit of his Maw, who encourages him to seek revenge on his father. When Cabot forcefully blocks Eben's claim to the property, Eben imagines it is his Maw who pushes him to open a new battlefront and claim his father's new wife for a lover.

These three spiritual, possessive forces—an animalistic Nature, a puritanical God, and the Freudian Mother—all coalesce in the set piece of the play: the house and the elms. That the

characters respond to the house in a similar way suggests that they may be misdiagnosing what possesses them. Eben, for example, tells his brothers "[i]t's purty! It's damned purty! It's mine!" (15). Similarly, when Abbie is first brought to the house by her new husband, she looks upon it and declares, "It's purty—purty! I can't b'lieve it's r'ally mine" (20). And, while Cabot tends to describe the sky as *purty* rather than the farmhouse, when Abbie questions him about this inclination, she asks him if he is "aimin' to' buy up over the farm too? (*she snickers contemptuously*)," Cabot replies "(*strangely*) I'd like t'own a place up thar" (29). Apparently, for Cabot, heaven itself is something that can be aestheticized and by being aestheticized, owned. The close relationship between aesthetics and ownership shows how the feeling of possession or the *mineness* of an object is an aesthetic disposition; that the speech-act "this is mine" works by making *me* a property of it—a process by which *myself* expands into the world by putting my "will into any and everything" (Hegel 41; P44). While each of the characters recognizes themselves as split or bifurcated subjects, it is these possessive claims that enable them to transcend their passivity and articulate themselves as active, or actively possessive, agents. But it is not Nature, God, or the spirit of Maw that possesses them. It is rather the very desire to possess, a desire that seems to emanate not only from them but also from the property they seek to own.

The house has its sides removed so that it becomes a stage where both the characters and the actors who play them are put through their paces, performing their flattened roles in their attempt to secure for themselves life, liberty, and property. Under these metatheatrical conditions, the question of the natural becomes almost suspended. The elms droop onto the house, attaching themselves as if to connect nature, home, and stage. The sublime depth of this connection expressed by a set that physically dominates the stage, and whose figurative meaning

exceeds the very possibilities of that stage, suggests that the house and the elms stand in for the entire ideological system of possessive individualism that underpins the drama of this play. By elevating the set over the characters and the stage over the actors, O'Neill diminishes the power of ownership claims to express or produce the free-willing and responsible emotional subject. It is instead the system—the house, the stage, the theatre—that compels the characters to desire to become this kind of subject. In other words, it is the symbolic content of the farm that not only makes the claim "this is mine" true as an expression of agency, but it also reveals the falsity of that claim because it's the property itself that seduces and by seducing possesses the speaker into expressing themselves this way.

O'Neill's contemporaries recognized that the theme of the sublime actor, which I have been tracing throughout this dissertation, as the ideal liberal subject similarly takes a backseat to what Garland describes as the "poisonous ways" of thinking promoted by the "degrading and cynical plays" of Europe "born of lugubrious Russian philosophy and certain decadent French masters of hopeless and debasing fiction"—expressionism, symbolism, existentialism, Marxism, Freudianism, nihilism (20). "We are inundated just now," he continues, "with the worst of European books—books which do not represent the normal wholesome life of France or England, whose people are bravely and cheerfully reconstructing their lives on the basis of integrity and virtue and the home" (20). But the play does not just criticize this ideal life of integrity, virtue, and the home as an ideological cover for the contradictions and paradoxes that define the subject of emotional capitalism. It examines what attempt to break out or break free from the system of emotional capitalism that scripts the characters' actions and feelings might look like. As the story advances, Abbie has a child with Eben, While the child secures Abbie's future claims to the house, to keep her safely homed in the present, Eben and Abbie pretend the

child is Cabot's. Eben is, of course, content with the situation, as the child—similarly described three times as *purty*—signifies to him a secret victory in his competition with his father. The plan, however, starts to fracture when Eben confronts Cabot about how the latter mistreated his mother. From Eben's perspective, the puritanical Cabot had worked his mother to death by imposing on her his uncompromising work ethic and then later unjustly denying his mother's family's claim to the farm. From Cabot's Lockean point of view, his wife's family had tried to steal the farm only once his hard work made it prosperous. Her family may have originally owned the land, but the labour he put into it made it his. "Other folks don't say so" replies Eben; "(*after a pause—defiantly)* An' I got a farm, anyways!" (50). Eben means by this that he has stolen his father's wife and used her to produce for himself an heir, but Cabot thinks Eben merely refers to his inheritance. But then he laughs in Eben's face: "God A'mighty, yew air dumb dunce! They's nothin' in that thick skull o' your'n but noise—like a empty keg it be! […] Yewr farm! God A'mighty! If ye wa'n't a born donkey, ye'd know ye'll never own stick nor stone on it, specially now arter him bein' born. It's his'n, I tell ye—his'n arter I die" (50, original italics). When Eben laughs back, Cabot launches into a second tirade: "Ha? Ye think ye kin git 'round that someways, do ye? Waal, it'll be her'n, too—Abbie's—ye won't git 'round her—she knows yer tricks—she'll be too much fur yet—she wants the farm her'n—she was afeerd o' ye—she told me ye was sneakin' 'round tryin' t' make love t' her t' git her on yer side … ye … ye mad fool, ye!" (51). The two fight, and Cabot leaves Eben beaten and bloody in the road.

When, later, Abbie comes to check in on her stepson and lover, she tries to kiss him, but Eben "*pushes her violently away*" (52, original italics). He accuses her of lying about her feelings towards him, of faking her love so that she could produce a child to secure her claim to the house. For Eben, the child has become a symbol of her falsity: "Ye love him! He'll steal the

farm fur ye! (*brokenly*) But t'ain't the farm so much—not no more—it's yew foolin' me—getting' me t' love ye—lyin' yew loved me—jest t' git a son t'steal!" (54, original italics). In response, Abbie's love for Eben turns revolutionary. She overthrows the poetic and moral system that had been scripting her emotions in accordance with the drive to accumulate property by performing the only impassioned act that guarantees her freedom from the system that seems to have colonized both her present and her future: she finds a pillow and smothers her son. But Eben initially misses the emancipatory radicalness of the gesture. Before running to fetch the Sheriff, he says to her "[h]e looked like me. He was mine, damn ye!" (56). It is only after the Sheriff arrives that Eben—perhaps recognizing that his love for Abbie was similarly subordinate to his desire to accumulate property, a family, and an heir—understands that this was an act done out of a love free from the concerns of capital. When he returns, he also decides to claim an identity free from this drive. He confesses equal culpability to the crime of infanticide and shares Abbie's fate. As the two are escorted from the farm by the authorities, they look up to the sky, and Eben says, "Sun's a-rizin'. Purty, hain't it?" (64). And Abbie replies "Ay-eh" as "*[t]hey both stand for a moment looking up raptly in attitudes strangely aloof and devout*" (64, original italics). The play continues with one final line. As the Sheriff looks "*around at the farm enviously*" he says to his companions: "It's a jim-dandy farm, no denyin'. Wishin' I owned it!" (64, original italics).

The play evokes some difficult questions about affect and autonomy and, like Euripides's *Hippolytus*, does not provide many acceptable answers. As the plot and its characters twist, stretch, and pervert the structure of the sublime turn until it finds an articulation of self not outside of emotional capital but in opposition to it, a conflicted and radical if not outright monstrous sense of agency emerges from the struggle of different desires—sexual desire, the

desire for ownership, the desire for authenticity, the desire to be free. At the center of that opposition, O'Neill places a sickening violence coloured by the beauty of the rising sun, whose wider, revolutionary impacts are immediately and terribly neutered by the Sheriff's remarks. We have seen themes of infanticide before—with William Hunter's humanitarian narratives and Siddons's Lady Macbeth—but not like this. In those instances, the feelings surrounding the murderous acts and thoughts are framed by a poetics of emotions that seeks to locate a sense of responsibility within a system of identity and agency defined by material and historical conditions. In both cases, social and emotional pressures are figured to partially relieve the individual from responsibility over their behaviour by making readers, audiences, and juries recognize, understand, and sympathize with the situation that possessed them to entertain and commit murderous thoughts and actions. Abbie's problem, however, is that being possessed by this system undermines her ability to articulate a claim of emotional self-possession because her *purty* child is already caught up in the system of inheritance, competition, and property accumulation. When Eben refuses to accept that her love for him is truly and really a love independent of the desire to accumulate, Abbie is forced to demonstrate her authenticity by freeing both from that system. She achieves this freedom by suffocating their child. But then the passive tense formulation of *is forced* reveals the falsity of this horrible act by which the pair claim an absolute autonomy and freedom signified by the rapt aloofness they experience when looking up high to the rising sun. The possibility of their flight is entirely conditioned and controlled by that which they seek to escape from. The truth of this falsity then calls upon the audience to have some sympathy as the characters are subtly drawn back into the representational system of affect and agency which they flee. By closing with this play, I end this dissertation with the sorts of questions and problems its examination of the poetics of emotions

under emotional capitalism poses. Namely, if emotional capitalism and the ideology of possessive individualism condition how we express agency and the moral self, then what might the emotional self look like outside of these material and cultural arrangements?

What I have shown in this dissertation is how different reinterpretations of the Phaedra myth generally and the scene of inquiry more specifically explore and develop the theme of the theatrical sublime in ways that not only chronicle the development of strategies for emotional control that eventually come to define the sublime actor as the ideal subject of emotional capitalism but that also participate in shaping that history. What began as a ghostly notion of character haunting the ancient stage and kept alive by the repetition of ritual performance was revised by Longinus and his notion of the sublime into a model for the author whose genius was revived through interpretive reading practices. As the theatre engaged in a process of commercialization during the Early Modern period, this deep theatrical character began to lose touch with its more metaphysical and ethical qualities becoming instead the sublime subject of a cultural value intertwined with economic and cultural capital, a process that reaches its apex with the rise of public celebrity that made possible the economic freedom of eighteenth-century actresses only to eventually become the model for everyday subject working under the conditions of emotional capitalism. The sublime actor crafts its identity by inspiring the imagination of spectators through the public presentation of emotion, a performance they subsequently legitimize as truthful by figuring that emotion and its expression as a product of their labour.

That Adam Smith claims Racine's *Phèdre* is the greatest tragedy in any language in his influential *Theory of Moral Sentiments* offers an important clue for understanding why the intertextual history of the Phaedra myth provides a framework for analyzing this history. At its

core, the myth represents the conflict between a subject seeking agency and the overwhelming power of passions, emotions, or desire, and its adaptations in different places, at different times, by different people speaking different languages, can offer a control variable for comparing how these differences manifest. What reading Smith into this history does is help shift focus from the elements of the play that are true for many ancient tragedies—a hero or heroine confronted by a force beyond their control—to the play's use of the scene of inquiry to create a space to enact a poetics of emotions. The scene of inquiry, in other words, is a trope that when enacted allows for the logic of representation to transform affective intensities into an activity that delineates and demonstrates agency and moral character. While this type of scene is not limited to this play and its adaptations, Euripides's use of it is illustrative because, possibly in response to the reception of his previous play, the playwright seems to have used this scene not just as a trope to produce moral character but specifically to explore the process and implications of this transformation. Since Smith never clearly explained why he praised *Phèdre* to the extent that he did, it is impossible to say for sure what motivated his preference. Yet, as I have shown, Smith not only adopts the way Racine structures the dynamics between curiosity, sympathy, imagination, narrative, and theatre in his version of this scene of inquiry, but Smith also places that dynamic at the center of his theory of human sociability, a theory that, as others have argued, influenced the course of the realist novel and, through the novel, the modern Western subject.

When Racine uses the Longinian sublime as a model for understanding and recapturing the affective power of the ancient Greek theatre to revise this scene, he introduces a general metaphysical equivalence between the ancestor, the author, and the celebrity's public persona as figures or forces—theatrical characters whose power manifest through and in an audience or culture. At the same time, following Boileau, Racine alters the Longinian sublime to consolidate

that power in the figure of the author in a manner that pre-empts the sublime's later development into a gendered romantic aesthetic of masculine poetic self-mastery in opposition to and over a feminine theatricality. In *Phèdre*, Racine claims ownership over the outward affective force of the theatrical performance by locating its origin in the mind of the poet rather than the body of the performer. While this theme in the play is not directly addressed by Smith, who is nearly a century removed from the original context of Racine's poetic competition with Champmeslé's performance, the competition between a sublime masculine interiority and outward feminine theatricality had by Smith's time become a broadly understood cultural distinction that emerges in his attempts to navigate the distinction between inner depths of stoic masculinity and outward performance of feminine beauty and sensitivity.

When Baillie and Siddons use the theory of sympathetic curiosity to adapt Smith's sympathetic imagination to better understand the psychological force of the passions, they present a view of humanity that is more theatrical than even Smith envisaged. Whereas Smith's theory of sympathy tries to circumvent the problem of an actor who knowingly performs false emotions, Baillie introduces the problem of an actor who does not fully know the truth of their own actions. The validity of De Monfort's anger, for instance, partially depends on him misrecognizing his delusional hatred. It is only by plotting the development of his incongruous and failed social performances that De Monfort comes to know the truth of his own feelings, an insight that likely influenced Ballie's partiality towards theatre as the ideal genre for teaching others to recognize and resist the influence of the passions. It is under this worldview—where individuals lose trust in their own assessments of themselves—that the sublime actor emerges as the solution rather than the source of the problem of false social performances. In her experiments with performing a parasocial, sympathetic relationship that depended on convincing

audiences that they had access to her authentic feelings as a mother, sister, and wife, Siddons developed the strategy of using the idea of labour to legitimize those public feelings. While this figure filters emotions through the ideology of possessive individualism to produce a masculine, active self, whose difficult labour enables that subject to claim ownership and mastery over their feelings, the labour itself is feminized—its difficulty in part depends on the recognition that the social and financial success of that individual is dependent on the viewpoints of others.

O'Neill's play enters this intertextual history by critiquing this development. While the extremely pessimistic answer O'Neill gives to the question of how to represent or enact a sense of emotional agency outside of a now almost global social and cultural system that increasingly understands emotions through the logic of capital accumulation and exchange is perhaps too restricted by the tragic genre he employed, the problems that this play makes clear are pertinent none the less. From its perspective, emotions, passions, desires, and feelings all become increasingly perverse once contaminated by this system, as each attempt to articulate agency or self-mastery flips into a demonstration of one's bondage to that system. In this way, O'Neill's adaptation returns us to the Troezen of Euripides's *Hippolytus*, by updating it so that its corridors trap its characters within an inescapable system of capital rather than one of shame.

Appendix A: Works Cited

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