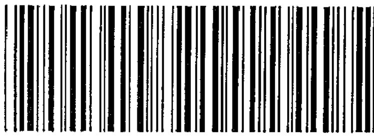

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Rereading Prose Fiction: Lyric Convention in Aphra Behn and Eliza Haywood

G. Gabrielle Starr

"Prose fiction," the default substitute for the complexities involved in the use of "novel" or "romance," is a convenient term for speaking of Restoration or early eighteenth-century narratives; as a descriptive category, however, it is more misleading than historically precise. This is especially clear when one considers that most theories of the novel's development in Britain do not account for, or even mention, the mixture of prose and poetry which constitutes much "prose" romance.[1] In both British and continental traditions, romance is metrical in its beginning, changing slowly into a more varied and flexible form. Works such as Honoré D'Urfé's *L'Astrée*, Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, and Mary Wroth's *Urania* combine prose narrat-

1 Critics whose work is not limited to British fiction have been more aware of this issue. In *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), Mikhail Bakhtin argues that Menippean satire, a mixed form, is one of the most important precursors to the novel. He also explores the relation between lyric and novel in *Eugene Onegin*. (See especially "Epic and Novel" and "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse" in *The Dialogic Imagination*.) Friedrich Schlegel argues for the interrelation of the novel and lyric in *Dialogue on Poetry*, trans. Ernst Behler and Roman Struc (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), focusing on the contributions of the novel to the aesthetic ideal and episteme of romanticism. Although he sees drama at the origin of the novel, he "can scarcely visualize a novel but as a mixture of storytelling, song, and other forms" (p. 102). Margaret Anne Doody, also working within a wider scope of literary history, makes some mention of the presence of lyric in the novel in *The True Story of the Novel* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), but does not pursue the connection.

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FICTION, Volume 12, Number 1, October 1999

ives with lyric forms that range from madrigal to lament, epithalamium, or sonnet. Lyrics, however, are not found only in pastoral romance. Even its heroic counterparts contain songs which erstwhile lovers seem unable to do without.[2] As metrical romance begins to die, lyrics remain as a ghost in the prose, used by writers from Gascoigne forward to provide a glimpse of interior life.[3] In the *Arcadia*, for example, poems are used to reveal the hidden, both as secrets and emotions: as Sidney put it, poems are "the badges of the passions" in his romance, the formal externalization of the stuff beneath the skin.[4]

Later fiction does not leave this practice behind. As writers such as Aphra Behn and Eliza Haywood sought ways to accomplish the affective requirements of their narratives, the substantial affinity between the province of the lyric and the demands of their writing led them to the use of lyric conventions. In *Love in Excess* (1719) Haywood reinterprets the metaphysical tradition of amatory poetry, especially that of Donne, to create her own figures of emotional excess. Behn works within the tradition of pastoral lyric as filtered through romance and her own poetry in *Love-Letters between a Nobleman and His Sister* (1684–87), using lyric to make the representation of emotion not merely descriptive, but affective as well. These uses of lyric form a distinct counter-tradition to the concurrent wane of the lyric mode in Augustan poetry, moving from Behn's contemporaries through the age of Pope.[5] There are twin traditions in this period: the absorption of lyric into the emerging novel and its near-renunciation (or re-

2 This practice is less frequent in heroic than in pastoral romance. Still, see, for example, Vasco Lobeira, *Amadis of Gaul*, trans. Robert Southey, 3 vols (1872): book 1 contains both Belterebus's song "made in his passion" (1:298) and Leonoreta singing "the song which Amadis ... made for [her] love" (2:15).

3 According to R.S. White, this begins with *The Adventures of Master F.J.* (1573), "Functions of Poems and Songs in Elizabethan Romance and Romantic Comedy," *English Studies* 68 (1987), 393. The French practice goes back to 1215 and Jean Renart's *Guillaume de Dole*. See Maureen Barry McCann Boulton, *The Song in the Story: Lyric Insertions in French Narrative Fiction, 1200–1400* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

4 Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, ed. Maurice Evans (New York: Penguin, 1977), p. 651.

5 On the much-noted problems or peculiarities of eighteenth-century lyric, see William C. Dowling, *The Epistolary Moment: The Poetics of the Eighteenth-Century Verse Epistle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Margaret Anne Doody, *The Daring Muse: Augustan Poetry Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Anne Williams, *The Prophetic Strain: The Greater Lyric in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); and Richard Feingold, *Moralized Song: The Character of Augustan Lyricism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989), to name a few.

configuration) in poetry. I focus here on the first, rereading prose fiction as a vibrant mixture of modes.[6]

In Sidney's *Arcadia*, the use of lyric to represent emotion seems almost second nature (that better, gilded nature only poesy can offer); he had been working on the representation of emotions in *Certain Sonnets* and *Astrophil and Stella*. Like the romance, the sonnet sequence exploits context and interrelation, offering poems as part of a larger, loosely narrative whole (even though, as in the *Arcadia*, each lyric may be extracted and stand on its own). Behn's *Love-Letters between a Nobleman and His Sister*, both novel and romance, extends this tradition, the patterns of her poetry informing her prose. The nobleman of the work's title is Ford Lord Grey. His scandalous elopement with his sister-in-law Lady Henrietta Berkeley combined with his support of Monmouth to provide the public with news, gossip, and eventually Behn's Tory-minded tale. Critics have repeatedly confronted the difficulty of accurately classifying the work.[7] It begins as a series of epistles, yet ends in mainly third-person narrative; it uses the extravagant language of heroic love, but is as much a political narrative as a romantic tale; it has the historical basis of the *roman-à-clef*, yet it shows formal and aesthetic concerns which go beyond the scope of *récit*. It is not important or useful here to identify *Love-Letters* unequivocally with any genre. As Michael McKeon, J. Paul Hunter, and others have argued, these categories have a dialectical history; they emerge only as products of historical processes, as the outcome of interactions which are by no means complete at the moment a work such as *Love-Letters* attains its fame. *Love-Letters* is intriguing precisely because it is both novelistic and romanesque, and neither novel nor romance; it represents a sort of freeze-frame, a text

6 In the process I emphasize formal characteristics of the lyric, not because these are the only options, but because I wish to avoid using the term "lyric" as a vague notion of either feeling or quality in certain kinds of representation. While formal studies have appeared to some as both ahistorical (a somewhat inaccurate perception) and restrictive (in so far as they have been misused to limit the range of studies of literature, rather than expand them), I have found some formalist techniques highly appropriate here.

7 The debate over whether Behn or Defoe was the first English novelist has slowed down in recent years. On the status of *Love-Letters* in particular, see Maximillian Novak, "Some Notes toward a History of Fictional Forms: From Aphra Behn to Daniel Defoe," *Novel* 6 (1973), 120–33; Judith Keagan Gardiner, "The First English Novel: Aphra Behn's *Love-Letters*, the Canon, and Women's Tastes," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 8 (1989), 201–22; and Paula Backscheider, "Sex, Sin and Ideology: The Drama's Gift to the Genesis of the Novel," *Selected Proceedings from the Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 12 (1993), 1–15. I am tempted to (and do) call *Love-Letters* a novel, but it is certainly a novel much closer to romance than later works by Eliza Haywood, Sarah Fielding, Henry Fielding, and Samuel Richardson.

which captures the changes and fluxion that are the history of prose fiction in the greater eighteenth century.[8]

Whereas Sidney's *Arcadia* (1593) interweaves eclogues and songs with prose narrative (there are seventy-eight poems altogether), Behn's *Love-Letters* includes in its letters passages best described as prose versions of these pastoral forms.[9] The anti-hero Philander (Ford Grey) begins a letter thus to Silvia (Henrietta Berkeley):

> Say fond Love whither wilt thou lead me? thou has brought me from the noysey hurry's of the Town, to charming solitude; from Crowded Cabals, where mighty things are resolving to loanly Groves, to thy own abodes, where thou dwell'st, gay and pleas'd, amongst the Rural Swains in shady homely Cottages; thou hast brought me to a Grove of flowers, to the brink of Purling Streams, where thou hast laid me down to contemplate on *Silvia*! to think my tedious hours away, in the softest imagination a Soul inspir'd by Love can conceive; to increase my Passion by every thing I behold, for every Sound that meets the sense, is thy proper Musick, oh Love! and every thing inspires thy dictates; the Winds a round me blow soft, and mixing with the wanton Boughs, continually play and Kiss; while those like a coy Maid in Love resist and comply by turns.[10]

The correspondence between this passage and pastoral lyric is extensive, not surprising for a poet whose "main mode" was precisely that.[11] The opening of this letter, with its address to Love, is typical of pastoral and other lyric subgenres. Also typical is the layering of apostrophe or invocation and reader; while Love is invoked and addressed, the letter is directed towards the absent lover, Silvia.[12] As in the *Arcadia*, pastoral language is motivated by context; here it is the anti-royalist cabal of Monmouth; for Sidney's Musidorus, it was enforced rustication after his shipwreck. We

8 Carol Barash, *English Women's Poetry, 1649–1714: Politics, Community, and Linguistic Authority* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), writes that her "discussion of Behn attempts to show the overlap between the novel and a particularly women's poetic tradition based on Continental heroic models" (p. 2). Barash's chapter on Behn, however, makes little mention of the novels. She emphasizes the generic mixtures found in Behn's *œuvre*, reading the *Voyage to the Isle of Love* as a novel/romance in meter which includes lyric segments—songs and an epithalamium (p. 113). This essay attempts to link Behn's use of lyric conventions (and that of other novelists) to a poetic tradition in which women figure, but which is not limited to one gender.

9 On the seventeenth and early eighteenth-century popularity of the *Arcadia*, see Charlotte Morgan, *The Rise of the Novel of Manners* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1911), p. 15.

10 Aphra Behn, *Love-Letters between a Nobleman and His Sister*, ed. Janet Todd, vol. 2, *The Works of Aphra Behn* (London: Pickering; Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1993), pp. 34–35. References are to this edition.

11 Janet Todd, introduction to *The Works of Aphra Behn* (London: William Pickering, 1992), 1:xxxix.

12 See, for example, Edmund Spenser's *Epithalamion*, Ben Jonson's *Celebration of Charis*, or Richard Lovelace's *To Althea, From Prison*, among others.

recognize the Rural Swains, the homely Cottages, the emphasis on contemplation, as stays of the pastoral tradition. Philander, like the good pastoral poet, also lingers lovingly over words, as rendered in the near-rhyme and rhythm pair "to loanly Groves, to thy own abodes."

Like its romance precursors, this poetic passage appears as a kind of caesura; it is not that there is a great deal of action underway, but rather that interior events such as emotion and meditation preclude other kinds of activity. Just as it is commonly described in the late Renaissance (and much later), here love is a bar to the civilizing business of humanity, taking away attention and energy from social tasks. Philander's attention is certainly drawn from the political fray, but the fact of his meditation and its style have other importance. As in romance and in pure lyric, this utterance is designed to create a rising, perhaps mirroring response in its lady reader. Lyric is a site for creating emotional consensus. Behn and her characters frequently have recourse to such poetic language throughout the first-person, epistolary portions of the work, when evocative rather than merely illustrative accounts of emotion are necessary. The "necessity" of which I speak is as much aesthetic as it is expedient (for the purposes, for example, of seduction or reproach)—it is part of a literary decorum linking emotion to its proper poetic expression. Lyric is present in Behn where the question of emotional response is crucial, and where that response must seemingly be mediated by artful, and not merely adequate, self-presentation.

When Philander has abandoned her, Silvia has "recourse to pen and paper for a relief of that heart which no other way cou'd find it; and after, having wip'd the tears from her eyes, she writ" (p. 143) the following letter, which I have divided, going by sound and sense, into lines:

Hast thóu forgót thy wóndrous árt of lóving?
Thy prétty cúnings, ánd thy sóft decéivings?
Hast thóu forgót 'em áll?
Or hást forgót indéed to lóve at áll?
Has thý indústrious pássion gáther'd áll the swéets,
and léft the rífled flówer to háng its wíther'd héad,
and díe in shádes neglécted,
for whó will príze it nów,
nów, when áll its pérfumes fléd. (p. 144, scansion added)

It is to passages like this, perhaps, that Montague Summers refers when he calls *Love-Letters* "Romantic and sentimental, with now and again a pretty touch that is almost lyrical in its sweet cadence."[13] As in Philander's letter

13 Montague Summers, introduction to *The Works of Aphra Behn*, 6 vols (London: William Heinemann, 1915), 1:liv.

above, internal rhyme and an insistent though varying meter emphasize the strangeness, the un-prosaic nature of this writing. The insistence of stress in this passage encourages scansion; and when scanned it is strongly reminiscent of metrical patterns in Behn's Pindaric odes. If the above passage were a poem, it would divide metrically 5–5–3–5–6–6–3–3–4, and would have a clear rhyme scheme: *aabbcdded*. Usually, Behn's lines are divided on the basis of the number of stresses, varying from the infrequent hexameter line to a general mixture of pentameter, trimeter, and tetrameter ones. Behn also tends to work with pairs of lines such that the stronger meter of the first clarifies and governs that of the second: all these are characteristic of the above passage. In particular, the pattern of this passage is much like the variations used in Behn's *On Desire. A Pindarick*. Of all her odes, this one is closest in theme to *Love-Letters* as a whole, as Janet Todd has suggested.[14] It is also quite close to this passage in rhetorical strategy, both being dominated by questions and a tone of accusation. Significantly as well, in *On Desire* stanzas usually begin with two pentameter lines, and end in a single pentameter or tetrameter one.

The irregularity of Pindaric odes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries suggests several reasons for the similarity between Behn's Pindarics and the above passage. Abraham Cowley's experiments with the irregular ode ignited extensive debate and numerous imitations, largely because poets and critics were intrigued by his claims for the emotional potential of the form. The ode was supposed to be reserved for the greatest and highest of passions: this certainly encompassed the public passions of awe or reverence (see the public odes of Dryden or Behn herself) as well as, though less frequently at first, more private ones (as we see in *On Desire*). As the number of "Pindaric" odes increased, purists took the alarm. In 1706 William Congreve cried out against them: "The character of these late Pindarics is a bundle of rambling incoherent thoughts, expressed in a like parcel of irregular stanzas, which also consist of such another complication of disproportioned, uncertain, and perplexed verses and rimes."[15] Congreve's attack on the "Pindaric" ode seems almost like a complaint that these poems contain little of the discipline and order, either by meter, rhyme, or stanzaic

14 See Janet Todd, introduction to *Love-Letters* (New York: Penguin, 1996), p. xxvi. In *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing, and Fiction, 1660–1800* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), Todd also links *Love-Letters* to the poems, largely in terms of Behn's life: "Some of the letters are similar to her seemingly autobiographical poems concerning the value of sexual love when sincere and some of her problems over respectability when sexual nature has been acknowledged and expressed in Silvia's anxiety; these problems also inform the pattern of action, the repeated arousals and disappointments of the lovers" (p. 79).

15 William Congreve, "A Discourse of the Pindaric Ode" (1706), *Eighteenth-Century Critical Essays*, ed. Scott Elledge, 2 vols (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1961), 1:143.

division, which usually distinguishes poetry from prose. He may well have had Behn in mind in this complaint; in general such remarks were directed against women poets.[16] Behn's versification is by no means consistent and scansion is often difficult; the irregularity of her odes, and of Pindarics in general, is meant to be an index of the level of passion which moves them. Although by 1728 Edward Young insists that the proper ode should be "more remote from prose than any other [kind of poetry], in sense, sound, expression, and conduct," we can see that the freedom given by the Pindaric ode, at least as practised by Behn, lends itself to absorption in prose because of its multiform irregularity.[17] Whatever the looseness of the Pindaric, Behn sticks to a kind of decorum in choosing the literary language most often associated with the emotion she portrays. Behn's choices in language are linked to associative factors: she draws on drama for hectic emotions and for weighted considerations, on lyric for loss, attenuated desire, and gentle lament.[18]

The traces of poetic traditions we find in these prose letters may well be related to the parallel tradition of heroic verse epistles dating from Ovid's *Heroides*.[19] Traditionally, these passionate letters from abandoned women are elegiac and narrative, not lyric, but that distinction is somewhat

16 See Richard Steele's comment in the *Spectator* 366: "Numbers ... as loose and unequal, as those in which the *British* Ladies sport their *Pindariques*." Also note Edward Young's dictum in his later essay "On Lyric Poetry" (1728): "Judgment, indeed, that masculine power of the mind, in ode, as in all compositions, should bear the supreme sway; and a beautiful imagination, as its mistress, should be subdued to its dominion. Hence, and hence only, can proceed the fairest offspring of the human mind" (Congreve, 1:412).

17 Congreve, 1:411.

18 On Behn's use of dramatic language, see Todd, *The Sign of Angellica*, Backscheider, and Rose Zimbardo, "Aphra Behn: A Dramatist in Search of the Novel," *Curtain Calls: British and American Women and the Theater, 1660–1820*, ed. Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1991), pp. 371–82. A brief aside: given the emotional weight often attached to soliloquies, it is useful to differentiate the passages I have described as lyric from their dramatic kin, especially since internal rhyme is also characteristic of Restoration drama. Soliloquies tend to two basic kinds: (usually rational) deliberations about action (or inaction, as we recall from *Hamlet*), and commentary about emotion. They give information about motive which conversation could not plausibly reveal (or which must remain secret for dramatic purposes). Behn's soliloquies work in both these ways, and syntactically, they show markings of orality that distance them from the more polished form of Silvia's or Philander's letters (see for example, Blount's speech in *The Rover*, 3.2). Behn's soliloquies also do not usually show the larger structure or development of a central metaphor which we encounter in Silvia's or Philander's letters. Moreover, soliloquies in Behn and in general tend to have no addressee. They are most often generalized utterances whose only acknowledgment of audience is found in their audibility, unlike the epistle-lyrics at hand.

19 The other most frequently cited influence of Behn's and the epistolary novel in general is Sir Roger L'Estrange's 1678 translation of Guilleragues's *Lettres portugaises*, a strongly non-narrative work. It is beyond the scope of this essay to demonstrate, but careful comparison of L'Estrange's translation to the original shows the influence of English amatory poetry in word choice and arrangement.

fraught. Heroic epistles are written in elegiac couplets, a meter used in both lyric and non-lyric subgenres. In addition to a heavy narrative presence, heroic epistles are distinguished from traditional lyrics in length and in verse form. However, heroic epistles share with certain kinds of lyric (in twentieth-century as well as Restoration and eighteenth-century terms) a heavy emphasis on emotion. Based on a construction of lyric as a subjective mode, one which filters experience in accord with subjective parameters, Anne Williams notes that "Although the heroic epistle ... is not usually thought of as a lyric genre ... its conventions offer obvious opportunities for lyricism—for a poem organized according to the motions of the letter-writer's consciousness."[20] For John Dryden, the Heroides were important locations for the exploration of passionate experience, showing "the various movements of a soul combating betwixt two different passions."[21] Whether or not heroic epistles are lyrics, in their representations of the emotional aspects of subjectivity, they certainly explore territory which becomes increasingly proper to the lyric over the next few centuries.

When Silvia realizes that Philander has cast her off, she writes what is best described as a heroide: she writes in the voice of reproach, and like Sappho, Oenone, or Ariadne, upbraids her lover for seducing and then abandoning her. Silvia even sees herself as Ariadne (abandoned by Theseus), her predecessor in genre and dilemma:

> Oh my *Philander*, oh my charming Fugitive! wast not enough, you left me like false *Theseus* on the shore, on the forsaken shore, departed from my fond my clasping Arms; where I believ'd you safe, secure, and pleas'd; when sleep and night, that favour'd you and ruin'd me, had render'd 'em incapable of their dear loss? (p. 144)

Like Ovid's heroines, she also makes much of the scene of her abandonment and the moment of writing.[22] Here as elsewhere, however, Behn insistently mixes genres. Along with the classical forms of speech we encounter in Ovid, we find the language of reproach (of self and lover) common to Restoration heroic tragedy. This heroic epistle also shows traces of lyric

20 Williams, p. 35.

21 John Dryden, *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, quoted in James Wellington, introduction to *Eloisa to Abelard* (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1965), p. 31. Dowling also notes the lyric affinities of the Ovidian epistle (p. 27).

22 Silvia writes: "Thou wert gone,—that very word yet strikes a terrour to my Soul, disables my trembling hand, and I must wait for reinforcements from some kinder thoughts. But, Oh! from whence shou'd they arrive?" (p. 145). For characteristics of the heroide, see Linda Kauffman, *Discourses of Desire: Gender, Genre, and Epistolary Fictions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 35–44.

genres—it is in this letter that the passage "Hast thou forgot thy wondrous Art of loving," so close in form and style to Behn's odes, appears.

In a collection published by Jacob Tonson in 1680, Behn offers her own version of a verse heroide, *A Paraphrase on Oenone to Paris*. The poem is in fact closer to imitation than paraphrase: Behn changes the tone of Ovid's epistle and makes several additions to the original scheme.[23] Among the latter are two verse paragraphs which stand out from their surroundings in ways that suggest a lyric influence (lines 67–85 and 181–91). Both rely on pastoral imagery much more than either the rest of Behn's epistle or Ovid's original. As with the pastoral segments in *Love-Letters*, these lines could easily figure as a lyric in something like the *Arcadia* (even given the couplet form):

> Now uncontroul'd we meet, uncheck't improve
> Each happier Minute in new Joys of Love!
> Soft were our hours! and lavishly the Day
> We gave intirely up to Love, and Play.
> Oft to the cooling Groves, our Flocks we led,
> And seated on some shaded, flowry Bed;
> Watch'd the united Wantons as they fed.
> And all the Day my list'ning Soul I hung,
> Upon the charming Musick of thy Tongue,
> And never thought the blessed hours too long.
> No swain, no God like thee cou'd ever move,
> Or had so soft an Art in whispering Love,
> No wonder that thou wert Ally'd to *Jove*.
> And when you pip'd, or sung, or danc'd, or spoke,
> The God appear'd in every Grace, and Look.
> Pride of the Swains, and Glory of the Shades,
> The Grief, and Joy of all the Love-sick Maids.
> Thus whilst all hearts you rul'd without Controul,
> I reign'd the absolute Monarch of your Soul.[24]

The three sequential triplets create a unique situation in the poem and mark an intriguing artistic choice. The base pattern of *Oenone*, as the genre requires, is the elegiac couplet; the set of triplets both interrupts this pattern and creates larger than usual internal groupings, the largest rhyme division

23 Tonson appended an introduction by Dryden to the collection, and in it he writes "That Oenone to Paris, is in Mr. Cowley's way of imitation only [giving latitude to the translator to embellish, staying within form but manipulating sense]. I was desired to say that the author, who is of the Fair Sex, understood not Latin. But if she does not, I am afraid she has given us occasion to be asham'd, who do," *Ovid's Epistles: With His Amours. Translated into English Verse by Mr. Dryden, Mr. Pope, and others* (1751).

24 *The Works of Aphra Behn*, vol. 1, *Poetry*, ed. Janet Todd, p. 14, lines 67–84. References to Behn's poetry are to this edition.

possible in the otherwise elegiac verse. These units allow a greater cohesion and aural resonance than the couplet provides. Generally, the main formal distinction between elegiac and other lyric verse has to do with the way that sense units are constructed around rhyme: in lyric, whether the poet uses a ballad stanza, terza rima, or octave and sestet, these patterns provide a kind of formal complexity different from that of the heroic or elegiac couplet. Throughout *Oenone*, triplets correspond to increased emotional intensity; the three triplets here suggest an emotional apogee as well as serving to encompass the temporal excess Oenone describes. Behn does not here build in stanzas pretty rooms—elegiac conventions disallow the spreading of sense or event from stanza to stanza. She does the next best thing. The couplet cannot (or does not) contain the emotion she here puts in play, and we might imagine that a lyric stanza would suit better.

Another of Behn's additions gives some confirmation to this suspicion:

> Now like a Ghost I glide through ev'ry Grove,
> Silent, and sad as Death, about I rove,
> And visit all our Treasuries of Love!
> This shade th'account of thousand Joys does hide,
> As many more this murmuring Rivers side.
> Where the dear Grass, as sacred, does retain
> The print, where thee and I so oft have lain.
> Upon this Oak thy Pipe, and Garland's plac'd,
> That *Sycamore* is with thy Sheephook grac't.
> Here feed thy Flocks, once lov'd though now thy scorn;
> Like me forsaken, and like me forlorn! (lines 181–91)

Similar sentiments are found in the *Sapho to Phaon* heroide (a version by Pope is included in Tonson's collection), itself significant because of Sappho's identification as queen of lyric verse and mistress of emotional registers. More significant, however, is that when Behn retreads this ground, she does so in lyric verse. "*On the first discovery of falseness in* Amintas," a later lyric which is also heroical in tone, echoes the stanza from "Oenone":

> There on a Bed of Moss and new-faln leaves,
> Which the Triumphant Trees once proudly bore,
> Thô now thrown off by every wind that breaths,
> Despis'd by what they did adorn before,
> And who, like useless me, regardless lye
> While springing beautys do the boughs supply. (lines 25–30)[25]

In reimagining the scene of abandonment and melancholy, Behn gravitates towards lyric verse, not just in *Amintas* but also in *The Reflection*. Behn

25 *Oenone* was published in 1680, *Amintas* in 1688. Composition dates are questionable.

seems to find the elegiac couplet inadequate to this kind of expression (and lyric more so); as we have seen, she also abstracts tonal and stylistic markers from lyric and places them in prose in her fiction.

The distinction I am here exploring between lyric and non-lyric verse may seem specious, but considering the almost total ascendance of the heroic couplet soon to be accomplished in Augustan poetry, Behn's experiments with lyric nuances are particularly important. Emotional intensity is representable in almost any verse form, but the accumulated richness of the lyric repertoire offers a poet like Behn—a writer already invested in generic innovation—something not easily refused. If, by the end of the next century, lyric forms like the sonnet or ode become the chief locus of emotional expression in the poetic canon, these indications of dissatisfaction with the closure of couplets in treating subjects of emotional magnitude are significant.

Let us return briefly to the prose "eclogue" with which this discussion began. However heavily marked by poetic cues that passage may be, it is, of course, not a poem. If it were, it would not be amiss to call it a bad poem: in foregrounding lyric characteristics of the prose I am not undertaking the sort of claim for aesthetic value usually associated with the term "lyricality." This is an argument, rather, about diction, morphology, and address. But in saying this would be bad verse, if it were verse, I am in part calling attention to Behn's insistence on interspersing recognizably poetic language with equally recognizable prosaic usage: "Say fond Love" and "the noysey hurry's of the Town" are followed by "Crowded Cabals, where mighty things are resolving."[26] Behn seems intent on grafting poetry into prose, but it is a curious mixture. The presence of the pastoral is relatively easy to understand; its amorous language carries with it the flavour of passion, artistic meditation, courtliness (manners of the Golden Age), and of course artificiality. It is not that the pastoral is not powerful and affecting—however artful, pastoral can be successful art. Rather, it is clear that artificiality is what draws manipulative and faithless Philander to the form. The question then arises, why not use a straightforward lyric?

Given a certain type of motivation (the wounded lover, the apprehensive swain), pastoral language and imagery and even the cadence of poetic composition seem to Behn imaginatively appropriate; given her refusal to employ poems in these situations, however, we may conclude that she deems actual lyrics imaginatively—or functionally—*in*appropriate. Balancing lyric within prose allows Behn to fine-tune the field of representation.

26 An aesthetic evaluation of this passage might also focus on the conventionality of the language. Too, it might investigate the radical volta which follows the apostrophe, "*Silvia*!" and explore the revision of convention and melding of styles which this change implies.

Many critics have found the sliding perspectives in *Love-Letters* to be the essence of Behn's narrative skill: "Moving between empathy and judgment, constantly adjusting the distance between readers and characters, Behn involves us in a comedy of sexual embarrassment, a tragedy of lost innocence, and a melodrama of erotic struggle, first through apparently unmediated letters, then through a third-person narrative. Drawing on old conventions, she helps create that new mixed genre, the novel."[27] This suggests a large-scale representational strategy: Behn uses first- or third-person narrative strategies to control the distance of the reader from her work; she uses lyrically inflected prose to control the focus, to elevate or foreground emotions or ideas. Lyric prose gives texture to the representation.

A string of sonnets could not do this; each moment/poem requires too much intensity, a level of fervour or emotional concentration impossible to sustain. Likewise, the introduction of a complete lyric induces disjunction, a sudden split in the pattern of representation which the greater subtlety of lyric inflection may overcome. To take the connection to romance further, it is as if Behn dilates the experience of a Musidorus or Cleophila, widening it to fit the larger space of a letter. Emotions which would motivate the presence of a song in pastoral romance introduce the lyric mode in Behn, but as a variation within her prose. Behn explores the continuity of experience in the letter, and in doing so forbears the sudden jumps in and out of the subjective register we find in the *Arcadia* or its kin; she does not formally separate lyric on the page, she produces lyrically inflected prose.

The single occasion on which Behn includes a verse lyric offers confirmation of this interpretation. Philander writes to Octavio an account of his first sight of Calista: resting on "the shady brink" of "a little Rivulet," he overhears her singing a lament which he reproduces for his friend (p. 173). When lyric appears separately in *Love-Letters*, it represents the subjective experience of another, not the fictive writer. The focus, the grain of representation must radically shift to encompass it. Lyrics are interpolated in Behn when the experience is proper to the speaker; they are blended in with surrounding prose, as we see in the blazon which follows Calista's song:

> But, Oh my Friend! how shall I present her to thee in that Angel form, she then appear'd to me? all young! all ravishing as new born light to lost benighted Travellers; her Face, the fairest in the World was adorn'd with Curls of shining jett ty'd up—I know not how, all carelessly with Scarlet Ribbon mixt with pearls; her Robe was gay and rich, such as young Royal Brides put on when they undress for joys! her Eyes were black, the softest Heaven e're made. (p. 174)

27 Gardiner, p. 210.

Behn's mixture of lyric and prose has an extended afterlife. Most immediately, literary experimentation in the early eighteenth century combines poetry with a range of forms. Lyrics appear in narrative frameworks in manuscripts by women poets throughout the late Stuart period, as Carol Barash has shown: "Often ... there is a sense of new narrative and dramatic forms loosely connecting series of shorter, lyric pieces." In fact, poetry was fundamental to the literary consciousness of most contemporary women writers: "virtually every woman who kept a diary or commonplace book wrote or copied verses now and then. And, judging from the poetry transcribed in commonplace books, many of these women read a great deal of it."[28]

This combination of tradition and example (romance, Behn, and the commonplace book or diary) suggests a cultural context for the continued presence of lyric inflection in prose fiction in the eighteenth century. One of the best-selling novels of the early century, Eliza Haywood's *Love in Excess; or, the Fatal Enquiry* (1719), shows the same sense of generic flexibility we encounter in *Love-Letters*. Haywood's partially epistolary story traces the intrigues of the ambitious Count D'Elmont as he goes from seducer to seduced and is eventually redeemed by his faithful love for Melliora: it alone could have made Haywood's reputation as mistress of passionate, even erotic language. As Richard Savage wrote in a puff in the second volume of *Love in Excess*, she possessed a genius for evocative description:

> Thy prose in sweeter harmony refines,
> Than numbers flowing thro' the Muse's lines;
> What beauty ne'er could melt, thy touches fire,
> And raise a musick that can love inspire;
> Soul-thrilling accents all our senses wound,
> And strike with softness, whilst they charm with sound!
> When thy Count pleads, what fair his suit can flye?
> Or when thy nymph laments, what eyes are dry?
> Ev'n Nature's self in sympathy appears,
> Yields sigh for sigh, and melts in equal tears;
> For such descriptions thus at once can prove
> The force of language, and the sweets of love.[29]

Savage stops short of claiming poetic status for Haywood, but insists on what is essentially a lyric character in her prose—its musicality, sympathetic force, and linguistic virtuosity. Indeed, the passion and eroticism of

28 Barash, pp. 11, 20.

29 Eliza Haywood, *Love in Excess; or, the Fatal Enquiry*, ed. David Oakleaf (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 1994), p. 86. References are to this edition.

Haywood's writing are partially the result of her adaptation of the language and sentiment of courtly lyric.

As in *Love-Letters*, the amorous epistle carries lyric echoes. The aptly named Frankville uses this strategy (after lamenting the insufficiency of sympathy) in his attempt to describe the birth of his passion for Camilla:

> But if language is too poor to paint her charms, how shall I make you sensible of the effects of them on me! the surprize—the love—the adoration which this fatal view [his first of Camilla] involved me in, but by that which, you say, your self felt at the first sight of Melliora. I was, methought, all spirit,—I beheld her with raptures, such as we imagine souls enjoy when freed from earth, they meet each other in the realms of glory; 'twas heaven to gaze upon her. But Oh! the bliss was short, the envious trees obscured her lustre from me.—The moment I lost sight of her, I found my *passion* by my *pain*; the *joy* was vanished, but the *sting* remained. (pp. 196–97)

Although Frankville may wish that D'Elmont's experience of love would make description superfluous, it does not; the descriptive language he chooses, here proving "the force of language and the sweets of love," in Savage's words, is both that of Platonic idealism and the poetry it inspires. The lyric of rapture (*The Extasie* or *Aire and Angels*, for example) aligns speaker and reader with the ideals of love so that the language intimates the structure of delight, attempting to draw it within sight, if not within reach. Lyric speech in this case aims at affective description, aims to represent experience so that it approaches consensuality (mutual feeling). The poetic character of this description, culminating in what is nearly a tetrameter couplet, provides the language with its own complimentary set of pleasures, enhancing and balancing the pleasure of the emotions described. Here Frankville/Haywood also mixes lyric/poetic description with narrative in a way evocative of the verse romance (Spenser, especially), allowing subjective registers of emotion to coexist with and not to impede narrative progression.

As we saw in the romance, Haywood occasionally uses verse in *Love in Excess* in letters or similar written communication. Like Behn, she uses lyric with the need to evoke as well as describe. D'Elmont's brother Brillian, in a fit of amorous despondency, scratches a couplet on a pedestal: "Hopeless, and silent, I must still adore, / Her heart's more hard than stone whom I'd implore." His beloved Ansellina, happening along, responds with a couplet of her own: "You wrong your love, while you conceal your pain, / Stones will dissolve with constant drops of rain" (p. 76). Like Romeo and Juliet, these two lovers join one another in completing a poem; here, as in the play, there is a special kind of intimacy implied by the mutual poetic endeavour. The lyric voice, doubled and shared, indicates the completeness

of their union (even in the union of two couplets). They do not merely share their love for one another; in expressing it thus, they are brought together as the emotionally expansive voice of lyric.

Camilla, separated from Frankville, sends him a lyric in a letter: "The unfortunate Camilla's Complaint to the Moon, for the Absence of her Dear Henricus Frankville." She prefaces this charmingly titled poem by setting the scene of its composition: "Gazing on the moon last night, her lustre brought fresh to my memory those transporting moments, when by that light I saw you first a lover; and, I think inspired me, who am not usually fond of versifying to make her this complaint" (pp. 205–6). In figuring the scene of Frankville's declaration of love, the picture of Camilla's emotions is as important as (if not more than) the landscape. Still more crucial is Frankville's emotional alignment with both its poetic and erotic tones: "Pity the extravagance of a passion which only charms like thine could create, nor too severely chide this soft impertinence, which I could not refrain sending you, when I can neither see you, nor hear from you, to write, gives some little respite to my pains, because I am sure of being in your thoughts" (p. 207). Although she explicitly asks for "pity," her poem calls for a different response, stirring the memory of their first erotic encounter.

Haywood's use of verse lyric underlines the ability of—or requirement that—lyric work for affective consensus, that shared sensibility be its end (and occasional means). We are accustomed to think of lyric as subjective, but there is no reason that its subject must always speak for himself or herself: we find the use of interpolated and impersonal lyrics in *Paradise Lost*.[30] From the invocations to the "Hail Wedded Love" epithalamium and multiple sonnet-like stanzas, *Paradise Lost* testifies to Milton's "explorations of the lyric possibilities within epic form."[31] The interpolated sonnets in *Paradise Lost* are particularly interesting. Anna Nardo identifies them based on their "bipartite structure, particular imbalance of parts,

30 There are other echoes of *Paradise Lost* in Haywood's novel. This is certainly a description has a Miltonic flavor: "God! With what an air he walked! What new attractions dwelt in every motion—And when he returned the salutes of any that passed by him, how graceful was his bow! How lofty his mein, and yet, how affable!—A sort of an inexpressible awful grandeur, blended with tender languishments, strikes the amazed beholder at once with fear and Joy!—Something beyond humanity shines round him! Such is their form! Such radient beams they dart and with such smiles they temper their divinity with softness!" (p. 193).

31 Anna Nardo, "The Submerged Sonnet as Lyric Moment in Miltonic Epic," *Genre* 9 (1976), 22. On the invocations, see John Mulder, "The Lyric Dimension of *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 23 (1987), 145–63; the epithalamium is canvassed in Sara Thorne-Thomsen, "'Hail Wedded Love': Milton's Lyric Epithalamium," *Milton Studies* 24 (1988), 155–85; on sonnets see also Peggy Samuels, "Milton's Use of Sonnet Form in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 24 (1988), 141–54.

and turn of thought so characteristic of the Italian sonnet"; even though these segments may be shorter or longer than fourteen lines, they retain the basic character of a lyric form. The resultant fragments cover a range of themes, from "God's fifteen-line laud of the warrior angel in book IV" to Eve's love sonnet in Eden (IV. 639–56), and the poem's final thirteen lines.[32] These embedded lyrics tend towards songs of praise, even in despair, and serve to forge emotional alliance between readers and our fallen parents. The final lines of the epic are incredibly powerful, and as Nardo points out, this involves a lyric effect:

> Although these thirteen lines are narrative and no speaker comments, Milton here is not confined by the "laws" of genre. This conclusion, a remarkable mingling of both decorums and genres, expresses the emotions appropriate to the single narrative scene of expulsion, the larger drama of the fall, and the epic vision of the total work. As the narrator refrains from comment, Adam, Eve, and the reader experience the tragedy of loss, the heroism of hope, and the ever-present possibility of lyric love simultaneously.[33]

Stripping the sonnet of an overt "I," Milton uses lyric nonetheless to draw readers into accord with a subject-position, a framework of sensibility and emotion laid out in the beautiful compression of these last lines.

Haywood also uses depersonalized lyric in her prose; this flexibility enables her to diffuse lyric sensibility throughout the work. We see this clearly in the partner-piece to Camilla's nocturne. Earlier in the novel, the "inconsiderate" Amena puts herself in a dangerous situation with D'Elmont, who is too attractive for his own—or anyone's—good (p. 67). She steals at night from her father's house and meets D'Elmont in the Tuileries. An otherwise modest and amiable woman, Amena places herself in circumstances where only one thing can happen. Of course, sexual encounters must occur off-scene, or so we might think—Haywood's eroticism often approaches the pornographic. Here, however, she deliberately replaces the physical and emotional aspects of the scene with poetic landscape description:

> all nature seemed to favour his design, the pleasantness of the place, the silence of the night, the sweetness of the air, perfumed with a thousand various odours wafted

32 Nardo, pp. 23, 28.

33 Nardo, p. 33. These are the final lines of *Paradise Lost*: "In either hand the hast'ning Angel caught / Our ling'ring Parents, and to th' Eastern Gate / Led them direct, and down the Cliff as fast / To the subjected Plain; then disappear'd. / They looking back, all th' Eastern side beheld / Of Paradise, so late thir happy seat, / Wav'd over by that flaming brand, the gate / With dreadful faces throng'd and fiery Arms: / Some natural tears they dropp'd, but wip'd them soon; / The World was all before them, where to choose / Thir place of rest, and Providence thir guide: / They hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow, / Through *Eden* took thir solitarie way." John Milton, *Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis: Odyssey, 1957), pp. 468–69.

by gentle breezes from adjacent gardens compleated the most delightful scene that ever was, to offer up a sacrifice to love; not a breath but flew winged with desire, and sent soft thrilling wishes to the soul; Cynthia her self, cold as she is reported, assisted in the inspiration, and sometimes shone with all her brightness, as it were to feast their ravished eyes with gazing on each others beauty; then veiled her beams in clouds, to give the lover boldness, and hide the virgins blushes. (p. 63)

Haywood draws on the language of Ovidian narratives and Renaissance epyllia in this passage, but more important, she makes the landscape an alibi for emotional and psychological events. This is more than the pathetic fallacy: it is not precisely that the landscape is in sympathy with Amena's emotional state, but that poetic description with its use of tropes and figures gives access to Amena's emotions without giving us access to Amena herself. It is literally an alibi, an alternate site, for subjective experience. The landscape is not important because it mirrors Amena's experience, but because it allows us to echo it—to come into alignment, understanding, or consensus with it.

When, immediately following this description, Haywood asks, "What now could poor Amena do, surrounded with so many powers, attacked by such a charming force without, betrayed by tenderness within?" we know that the answer has already been given. Poetic description provides us with an evocative, almost parallel version of Amena's rising passion and waning discretion. The description of her passions which would seem to answer the question does not: "Vertue and pride, the guardians of her honour fled from her breast, and left her to her foe, only a modest bashfulness remained" (p. 63). This may define her state, but does not call for the reader's emotional response as did the earlier view of moon, winged breaths, and souls. Both are descriptions, but only one calls for affective participation. We may note that the language of the passions is not entrusted with this mission; only poetic language carries this burden.[34]

Haywood frequently thus extracts lyric sensibilities and language from their first-person home, and uses them to suffuse an entire scene with emotional fervour, a sort of landscape erotics. Most frequently this parallels and draws on figures such as those of Donne's *The Extasie*. Of Melliora and D'Elmont, she writes, "With these words she sunk wholly into his arms unable to speak more. Nor was he less dissolved in rapture, both

34 Haywood is skilled with traditional descriptions of the body agitated by passions: "He read the fatal scroll again and again, and every time grew wilder than before; he stamped, bit his lips, looked furiously about him, then starting from the place where he had stood, measured the room in strange, disordered, and unequal paces; all his motions, all his looks, all his air were nothing but distraction" (p. 189). For contemporary discussion of the passions, see Aaron Hill, *Essay on the Art of Acting* (1753). For criticism, see Alan Mackenzie, *Certain, Lively Episodes: The Articulation of Passion in Eighteenth-Century Prose* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990).

their souls seemed to take wing together, and left their bodies motionless, as unworthy to bear a part in their more elevated bliss" (p. 130).[35] More powerfully still we find *The Extasie* in their final reunion (this particular lyric could be "their song"): "A while their lips were cemented! rivetted together with kisses, such kisses! as collecting every sence in one, exhale the very soul, and mingle spirits! Breathless with bliss, then would they pause and gaze, then joyn again" (p. 265). "Cemented" certainly seems to come from *The Extasie*, where the lovers sit, their "hands ... firmely cimented," and Donne's ecstatic lovers gaze at each other so intently that their eyes were "thred ... upon one double string."[36] Haywood's scene is more erotically explicit than Donne's (she writes of "straining gasps"), for her aims are different; she certainly, however, makes use of the vocabulary Donne and lyrics like his have given her.

Haywood's reliance on models of the previous century is crucial in a period where contemporary lyric is on the wane. In fact, Behn's lyrics, along with those of poets such as Rochester and Waller, are the last sighs of the lyric tradition for at least the next half-century (with the exception of hymns). In these two uses of lyrically inflected prose we see the counter-movement to the oft-noted fugitive status of lyric in eighteenth-century poetry. Behn seeks out lyric and brings it transformed into her prose. Haywood also uses lyric inflections in her novels, expanding upon the usual use of lyric in letters as first-person form to suffuse entire scenes with sensual power. If, like the river Arethuse, lyric goes underground during the century, it bubbles forth, fountain-like, in a new place.

Harvard University

35 Compare to Donne: "Our soules, (which to advance their state, / Were gone out,) hung 'twixt her, and mee. // And whil'st our soules negotiate there, / Wee like sepulchrall statues lay; / All day, the same our postures were, / And wee said nothing, all the day." John Donne, *The Extasie*, lines 15–20, *The Elegies and Songs and Sonnets*, ed. Helen Gardiner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 59.

36 Donne, lines 5, 7–8.