

The Actor, the Mirror, the Soul and the Sylph Finding the Passions

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Abstract The ‘unnatural’ mixed emotions of Chimène, heroine of Pierre Corneille’s *Le Cid* (1636), almost destroyed the dramatist. The 17th century brought strong new attempts to create a taxonomy of clearly defined and acceptably knowable ‘passions’. Stimulated by Descartes, Charles Le Brun produced his famous graphic representations of individual emotions as physically expressed in the face. Such catalogues of emotions attracted English theorists of acting, such as Aaron Hill whose *Art of Acting* interested Samuel Richardson. A standard feat of English poets from Dryden to Gray and Collins is to run through the passions, briefly exhibiting the activities and nature of the distinctive emotions. That the passions could be so well noted and imitated produced new problems, rendering representation of the passions doubtful, chicanery lacking in soul, as the acting of Garrick seemed to Diderot. New interest in mixed emotions and more fluid affections turned against the single passion and the encyclopedic list. Literary works moved towards a more dynamic and changeable account of emotional states and possibilities. Innovative large mirrors brought the self more literally to the eye, stimulating reflection on variability; we glimpse the possibility of future emotions and affective states not yet known. Mixed emotions and half shades become more engrossing than grand passions. Pope’s Sylphs, rooted in Paracelsian fiction, proffer new versions of both self and emotions, or emotional states. The mirror becomes not a diagnostic instrument detecting moral defect, but, as in Richardson’s novels, an opening to a possible future self.

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One of the noticeable things about the very noticeable seventeenth century is an ambitious endeavour to comprehend and categorise human emotion. Drama and religion have long stimulated our interest in feeling and the representation of feelings. Theatre is a site of innovation and inquiry. Athenian theatre gives rise to the first great work of literary theory – Aristotle’s *Poetics*. Aristotle makes a move so enormous that it becomes invisible; he uncouples Greek theatre – and theatrical works – from religion. You would not know by reading his text alone that the plays function in a religious celebration dedicated to a god. ‘What has this to do with Dionysus?’ Aristotle

studies human relationships and reactions as recorded in satisfying structures and strong poetic language. We are free to consider human emotions in themselves – if we can figure out those ‘selves.’ In Aristotle’s eyes, the most important emotions are not those of the character, but emotions genuinely experienced by the audience. The audience is ultimately to feel – preferably in unison – Pity and Fear.

Narrative fiction lacks the social simultaneity that theatrical fiction supplies. In the presence of our own allied emotional potential, we attend to ‘characters’ pressed by peculiar urgencies. Oedipus said things he did not intend to say. This man of mystery is the reverse of mysterious. Inglorious areas of uncomfortable normality are noticeable in his quick resentment, his flashes into hot temper. Proceeding through a repertoire at speed makes him appear complex, even before he is fully entitled to be called so. It is always freshly surprising to realise that Athenian theatre was a matter of *masks*, because the dramatists are so good at tracing nuances. But the characters wear masks to themselves.¹

1 Theatre and Painting: The Actor’s Face

In the theatre of the Early Modern/Modern world, the ‘unmasked’ face must present itself and do a good deal of the work. The French were pioneers in theory of emotion, so I will begin with French discoveries. The advance of theatre in France in the seventeenth century called for a fresh understanding of what exactly was being represented. The great plastic art of oil painting assumed a fresh theoretical role in describing and categorising the emotions. The work of Charles Le Brun, court painter to Louis XIV, is of singular importance. Le Brun’s ideas are influenced by René Descartes’ *Les Passions de l’Âme* (1649). Descartes attempted to supply

1 During the last 35 years or so major work on the passions and emotions has turned towards discussions of ‘sensibility’. Barker-Benfield (1992) offered a basis of definition and historical considerations. Interesting works relating feelings and literary expression followed hard upon, such as Barbara M. Benedict (1994) and Adela Pinch (1996). The collection edited by Stephen Gaukroger [1998] (2014) presents a wide field with a philosophic emphasis. Gaukroger’s own *The Collapse of Mechanism and the Rise of Sensibility. Science and the Shaping of Modernity* (2010) offers a new view of the cultural drama in which the fixed and stolid physical (the sense-informing world) is replaced or surpassed by that which is more flexible and less simply grounded: “affective states come to underpin cognitive ones” (409). The brain, however, retorts with fresh claims for the physical. Daniel M. Gross (2006) gives us a larger *panopticon* in which to play with feeling. Tobias Menely (2015) returns us to the claim of the human and other animals. In the conflict between the sensible real and the interpretive sensibility in supplying our understanding of emotion, I am most interested in the pull of the flickering representation of what is momentary if intense, and – whether cognitive or affective – subject to transience. Mixture, transience and uncertainty must apply to what we call the Brain (instead of the Mind) as well as to what we once called ‘the Heart.’

taxonomy, to make the passions 'known knowns.' He lists six emotions: Wonder, Love, Hatred, Desire, Joy, and Sadness (the 2015 film *Inside Out* brings the number down to five). Le Brun treated the King and a select audience to a discourse upon expression. He then produced a printed work with ingenious engravings depicting the individual passions. These figures offer keys to both the person and the moment:

Passion is a Motion of the soul, residing in the Sensitive Part thereof, which makes it pursue that which the Soul thinks for its good, or avoid that which it thinks hurtful to it: And for the most part, whatsoever causes Passion in the Soul, makes some Action in the Body. Being true then, that the greatest part of the Passions of the Soul produce Bodily Actions; it is necessary that we should know what those Actions of the Body are, which express the Passions, and what Action is. (Le Brun 1701, 3)

The body is forced into the employment of the soul, providing constant physical expression. More immediately, everything (as Descartes said) comes from the Brain:

But if it be true, that we have one part where the Soul more immediately exercises its Functions: and that this part is the Brain; we may also say, that the Face is the part where it more particularly makes appear what it feels. And as we have said, that the Gland in the middle of the Brain, is the place where the Soul receives the Images of the Passions; so the Eye-brow is the part of the Face where the Passions are best distinguished. (13)

Le Brun visually emphasises the role of the eye-brows and the muscles that work them; see his illustrations of "Scorn" and "Hatred" (fig. 8 in Le Brun's text) and "Terror" (fig. 20). From the invisible Soul and the more physical but yet invisible Gland in the Brain, we come to the satisfactory physical play of the Face. Here is the incarnate emotion. The term 'passion' emphasises the person being played upon, but the emotions playing over a face become active entities in themselves. Emotion develops a map, the body is a landscape as literal and metaphorical as the geography of Madeline de Scudéry's *Carte du Tendre*.

Actors and those who theorise about acting can both show and tell how a person *should* look and move in the grip of a strong emotion. *Love* and *Anger* - in their variants - are particularly useful, and also entertaining to broadcast and behold. The endeavour of Reason to restrain feeling can be dramatically and graphically described with the aid of the faithful

body.² Sensibility can be read, even if perusal is dangerous to peruse. Alert awareness of another's sensibility assures us that we are never dealing with the entirely unknown; rage and grief and disdain have their identifying marks – like dangerous and delightful animals.

Richardson's friend Aaron Hill, the dramatist, pays tribute to Le Brun in *The Art of Acting. Deriving RULES from a NEW PRINCIPLE, for Touching the PASSIONS in a Natural Manner* (1746). Hill describes this work on the title page as "An ESSAY of General Use... *But Adapted, in Particular, to the STAGE: with View To quicken the Delight of Audiences, And form a Judgment of the ACTORS, in their Good, or Bad, Performances*" (Hill 1746). Hill seems to be educating theatre critics rather than actors, but this may be the result of tact in finding an audience. Hill's approach, taking off from Le Brun, is fundamentally physical. See what the body can do with its mechanism and parts under the influence of an emotion! Although Cicero told us that every passion marks the face, Hill's new system discovers "*that the FACE forms the PASSIONS*" ("Dedication to the Earl of Chesterfield", Hill 1746, IV). Catch "the peculiar LOOK, adapted to each Passion" (IV). Ascertain the basic unconscious movements of the face in a certain feeling-state. Become an acute observer; make these unconscious motions conscious in yourself. You can read others and, if necessary, deceive them. Get your own face right and the other muscles will follow:

From the Optic Nerves, by a direct, and necessary *Continuity*, the Muscles of the *Face* and *Neck* (as holding actual *Contact* with those visual ones) must take their *Bias from* them; and, so doing, must extend the *Disposition* to those stronger Muscles, which sustain the *Breast*; and *Heart*. (V)

Descartes' emphasis on the machinery of the animal comes into its own with the *machinery* of the human face and body. In his "Dedication" to Lord Chesterfield Hill emphasises the body as mechanism:

what we commonly call AIR, in bodily Department, (whether in the refin'd, and elegant, or coarse, uncultivated, Habits) is no other than a mere Effect of fibrous *Mechanism*: – a taught, or natural, Configuration, of impulsive, or remissive, *Sinews*. (V)

2 I have heard a lecture describing how the tragic actor in seventeenth-century France should indicate his emotions of attraction and repulsion. The central exhibited contest is between *Feelings* and *Reason*. If you passion inclines towards the other speaker, you incline your *poitrine*, or *Cœur*, but tilt your head away. If your head agrees with the other's discourse but your heart protests, then you incline your *tête* towards the speaker, but turn your *poitrine* away.

If your “fibrous Mechanism” can be taught refinement, then surely nowadays a Bourgeois Gentleman could learn to pass muster. Any actor can learn to – convincingly – assume grief, rage and love as well as noble deportment. Here is a return of the *bête-machine* with a vengeance! The body is a machine for living that can be trained and attuned to emotional expression. Emotions are not ‘in’ the person but in the body. Emotion is real only when incarnate in the body – at which point it may cease to become ‘real’ passion and become something else. The intelligible map is coded deliberately and readily subjected to decoding.

A few special problems confront portrait painters and actors of the eighteenth century: subjects of portraits were not to lose status. Important rules governed upper-class expression of emotion. Smiling is the duty of the lower orders; when not the loutish grin, the smile signals the extracted politeness of servants, who are obsequious and attentive. It is also difficult to represent, since (unlike a photograph) the formal portrait requires multiple sittings over different days. The artist who painted Mr. Darcy could evidently achieve it, although the hovering smile may be painted in by Elizabeth the viewer. Grief, like smiling, should not be public. In England for a couple of centuries ladies were not permitted to attend funerals, presumably lest they cry and ‘make a scene’. Funerals of the upper classes were all-male affairs. Feudal inheritance and the legacy of Stoicism valued the immovability of high persons. Betrayal of emotion shows a looseness of soul suitable only to the lower orders. A good portrait ought to hint at a noble self-discipline that would always subdue urges to yield to passion. A capacity for *gravitas* especially in a crisis rendered an aristocrat the more charming and the more reliable (perhaps Richardson in portraying *Grandison* – just before the accession of George III – is endeavouring to restore rather than merely reflect this reality). This set of behaviours and ideals obviously conflicts with our current TV-addicted desire for emotional display – a conflict captured in the film *The Queen* (2006). TV is hungry for sensibility – or for mockery.

Eighteenth-century portraiture also had to find how to present rational and successful ruling-class persons in an interesting way. However self-controlled, the person portrayed should exhibit awareness of a current context, invoking the bigger world of dynamic expression rather than self-involvement. It can be argued, however, that sedate self-satisfaction is one of the primary emotions expressed in eighteenth-century portraiture; see, for example, Gainsborough’s *Mr. and Mrs. Andrews*. One method of making members of the upper classes look less stern or insipid is to turn sitters into actors of a kind – a popular device well before Sir Joshua Reynolds made this a standard vocabulary of entertaining portraiture. Alexander Pope early notes this pictorial development of fashionable role-playing:

Whether the Charmer sinner it, or saint it,
When Folly grows romantic, we must paint it.
(Pope 1735, 6)

Perpetual cos-play might open an avenue admitting feeling. There are even quicker ways to access the emotional self, as Pope also notes of the induced variability of a modern lady:

Or her who in sweet Vicissitude appears
Of Mirth and Opium, Ratafie and Tears.
(10)

A decade later, far from regarding his own era as given to fitful and wilfully stimulated emotional display, Aaron Hill seems determined to regard the 1740s as emotionally stultified, almost irremediably arid. He generously gives credit to himself for loosening the passions in his era, setting them free among the English public with the noble aid of those emotional auxiliaries, the acting profession:

The Time shall come – (nor far the destin'd Day!)
When Soul-touch'd Actors shall do more, than PLAY:
When Passions flaming, from th'assisted Stage,
Shall to taught Creatures fire a feeling Age!
Tides of strong *Sentiment* sublimely roll,
Deep'ning the dry Disgraces of the Soul;
Pity, Fear, Sorrow, wash'd from Folly's Foam,
Knock at Man's Breast, and find his Heart at Home.
(Hill 1746, 8)

But can we truly be helped by actors? They might be held to complicate the problem. Do not they lead us to question the reality of the passions themselves?

2 Mimesis and Its Threat to Soul

Advice offered openly to actors contradicts our desire that the actors should express the truth of inner being, not make use of a bag of tricks. And yet, that is essentially the actor's job. Denis Diderot (himself a writer of plays and man of the theatre) expresses the complexity of the calling of the actor. An actor can express passions perfectly *because* he or she does *not* feel them. We can find certain distaste for what can be done perfectly in Diderot's essay *Paradoxe sur le comédien* (The Paradox of the Actor).

Diderot describes what he observed when the celebrated English actor David Garrick, a consummate professional, went through his routine of changes of emotion as a kind of parlour trick for friends in France:

What I am about to tell you, I've seen for myself.

Garrick passes his head between the two leaves of a door, and, in an interval of four or five seconds, his face passes successively from mad joy to moderated joy, from this joy to tranquillity, from tranquillity to surprise, from surprise to astonishment, from astonishment to sadness, from sadness to despondency, from despondency to fright, from fright to horror, from horror to despair, and he then rises back through each degree to the state from which he descended. Was his soul able to experiences all these sensations and to execute, in concert with his face, this sort of game? I don't believe it at all, and neither do you. If you were to ask of this celebrated man to render the scene of the Little Fellow Pastrycook, he would play it for you; if you were to ask him suddenly for the scene from Hamlet, he would play it for you, equally ready to lament the fall of his little pastries and to follow the track of a dagger through the air.³

Diderot is fascinated by – and appalled at – the consummate ability to objectify the human world. The actor constructs a phantom 'self.' Through this phantom-face accurately observed emotions are taught to run. Garrick is thus able to seize upon his model to render satisfactorily – and at once – any emotion demanded.

Mimesis incarnate! A triumph of observation! Yes. But this is a kind of mechanization of the soul. If we know that the emotions are and can name, imitate and typify them – then do we really know emotion at all? The actor can be termed a great genius, Diderot admits. He or she can help us to understand the emotions. Yet this understanding is achieved by dint of transgressing nature and playing with the passions – even nullifying them. It is all a game of the eyebrows – or the pineal gland.

3 “Ce que je vais vous raconter, je l'ai vu. Garrick passe sa tête entre les deux battants d'une porte, et, dans l'intervalle de quart à cinq secondes, son visage passe successivement de la joie folle à la joie modérée, de cette joie à la tranquillité, de la tranquillité à la surprise, de la surprise à l'étonnement, de l'étonnement à la tristesse, de la tristesse à l'abattement, de l'abattement à l'effroi, de l'effroi à l'horreur, de l'horreur au désespoir, et remonte de ce dernier degré à celui d'où il était descendu. Est-ce que son âme a pu éprouver toutes ces sensations et exécuter, de concert avec son visage, cette espèce de gamme? Je n'en crois rien, ni vous non plus. Si vous lui demandiez à cet homme célèbre...la scène du Petit Garçon pâtissier, il vous la jouait; si vous lui demandiez toute de suite la scène d'Hamlet, il vous la jouait, également prêt à pleurer la chute de ses petit pâtés et à suivre dans l'air le chemin d'un poignard (Diderot 1967, 146; Author's translation). Posthumously published, Diderot's *Paradoxe* was based on a sketch on Garrick sent by Diderot to Grimm in 1769, printed in *Correspondence* between the two authors in 1770. Diderot may have confused a scene in *Hamlet* with a celebrated scene in *Macbeth*.

The pure emotions, as we may call them, become more distinct, more identifiable in an ongoing taxonomy of the passions. As they are more categorised and distinguished, the passions oddly become less attractive. As we move from the late seventeenth century to the mid-eighteenth century we can, I believe, discern an increasing interest in mixed emotions as against sharp definitions of any single passions. The developing interest in mixture counteracts a defensive desire for clarity and public morality in the theatre (and other imitative arts). Rulers wish – or ought to wish – that artistic display be limited to clear and approved emotions. The arc of the plot should bend always towards justice by the end of Act V.

In 1636 Corneille's *Le Cid* shocked France in displaying Chimène, the heroine tormented by her continuing love for Rodrigue, even when her lover has been forced by the rules of honour to kill her father. In an orgy of disapproval, Corneille's reputation suffered – and the Académie Française was born as a censoring mechanism. Emotions and the Media are closely connected. Media sometimes turn against certain emotions. Chimène's emotion is against Nature and thus forbidden – forbidden *because* unnatural. No young lady could love the murderer of her father. Filial duty must not only surpass all other claims of duty, but also govern desire itself. Formally, Chimène governs her desire. She actually does the 'right' thing in asking the monarch for revenge upon her father's killer. Yet she still loves Rodrigue. Passion's power, the energy of inner disobedience, was publicly apprehended as degrading and horrifying. Religion and Nature demand that obedience to the father must entail total emotional assent. That 'unnatural' characters should *not* be exhibited becomes a kind of Enlightenment tenet – one of the many instances when the 'Enlightenment' fights itself. But in the long run such a tenet leads to further questioning of the 'natural.'

It proved impossible to eliminate 'sick' or perverse emotional states from the repertoire. Jansenism, like some forms of English Puritanism, emphasized the evil in the human heart, thus providing a stimulus to the investigation of *mixture*. The categorization of emotions then becomes – ironically – freshly interesting, as in Pascal and Racine. Our best impulses, most noble emotions, are likely to be corrupt and deceitful. The claims of *Reason* demanded some *wholesome* emotions, but where are these to be found? Is *Reason* itself so fallen in us that all our emotions impure? Rochefoucault asserts that in the sufferings of our best friends there is something that does not altogether displease us. Before the end of the century that once repudiated Corneille's important play, we learned to like mixed and defective personages like the anti-hero 'hero' of Molière's *Le Misanthrope* (1666).

3 Passionate Catalogues of the Poets

Cataloguing the passions in order became an important poetic device. Seventeenth-century lists of the passions become steadily amplified, like a kind of periodic table. A number of important English poetic works run through the passions. A major example is Dryden's *Alexander's Feast* (1697); here mobility of passions within the labile soul is tied to Music. In England, effective catalogues continue to multiply, clustering in the mid-eighteenth century. Thomson's review of the Passions comes early in his first version of *Spring* (1728; final version 1746). In *Spring* he laments the loss of a golden age of concord to a hectic age of passions:

the Passions all
Have burst their Bounds; and Reason half extinct,
Or impotent, or else approving, sees
The foul Disorder
(Thomson 1728, 18-19; Fairer, Gerrard 2015, 263)

Thomson admits the existence of "a thousand mix'd Emotions", but *mixed* emotions are strongly negative; they storm the mind and almost nullify moral cognition (Fairer, Gerrard 2015, 263).

One might wonder how, in the 1740s, Aaron Hill could lament a heartless age lacking in passion whereas twenty years earlier James Thomson presents a disordered and emotionally overwhelmed Britain. Thomas Gray's *An Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College* (written 1742, published 1747) offers a certain agreement with Thomson – but also a reversal. Gray's *Ode* is particularly moving because the passions are portrayed as a dire destiny, unshunnable. The little boys at present know the pleasures of the body in play, their joy in free movement. The children do not even have to feel hope; they live joyfully in the moment, certain of themselves. Joy and certainty will perish as the unwitting "little Victims" are fated to experience the "Fury Passions", the "Vulturs [*sic*] of the mind". They are doomed to experience.

Disdainful Anger, Pallid Fear,
And Shame that skulks behind...
And Envy wan, and faded Care,
Grim-visag'd comfortless Despair,
And Sorrow's piercing Dart.
(Gray 1747, 6; Fairer-Gerrard 2015, 415-17)

Gray's primary effect lies in his reversal of the conventional belief that the child is unformed and passionate. Tradition alleged that the child must be firmly disciplined. It needs to be taught to restrain its incoherent

wilful passion and to exercise virtue; only thus can it advance to the age of Reason. In Gray's poem, however, traditional morality is reversed. The child is innocent and happy. The adult will know the self to be increasingly a prey to gnawing and unhealthy feelings (hard to believe, however, that Fear, Anger and Shame have played no part in your life before age twelve). Gray's stance on the passions defies all Stoic teaching and most traditions of education – although he will be somewhat in tune with Rousseau, and although Rousseau – in *Emile*, thought he knew how to rescue the boy from the dismal state through self-reliance and avoidance of complications.

In Gray's world, the grown-up person will fall into irritable and/or depressive states of being. Childhood becomes a sacred space secured briefly from the Passions. These are entirely negative: all killers, even "pineing [sic] Love". The Passions are like fairy-tale ogres, bending in baleful anticipation over the ignorant and unconscious children. Thomson's golden age of concord, never to be recaptured, is here translated as sunny childhood. The modern state of life is equated with a grim adulthood.

La Rochefoucault's disquieting observation on our 'sick' emotions – "Dans l'adversité de nos meilleurs amis nous trouvons quelque chose, qui nous ne deplaist pas" – serves as epigraph to Swift's biting *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift* (1731; publ. 1739). This poem is a parodic but all-too-truthful run through the passions:

Self-love, Ambition, Envy, Pride,
Their Empire in our Hearts divide.

Swift calls our bluff in choosing not the grand or impressively intense passions – no hurricanes of lust or raging revenge. He picks up ordinary shameful emotions, internal manifestations that we really *do* want to keep hidden – self-doubt, shame at humiliation, envy, petty rivalry. Unwearying common emotions constantly result from a pathetic egotism. Swift is especially biting on easily discovered resentment at another's success:

To all my foes, dear Fortune, send
Thy Gifts, but never to my Friend:
I tamely can endure the first,
But, this with Envy makes me burst.
(Fairer, Gerrard 2015, 101-2)

In William Collins's *The Passions. An Ode for Music* (1750), the Passions themselves are too restless and irritable to be passive topics of an Ode. On first hearing Music, they refuse to contain themselves. They wrench the lyre from "Music, heavenly maid". The Passions then hold a sort of recording session of different performers, going from Fear to Anger to "wan Despair" to Hope. "Then Revenge impatient rose". Revenge is *not* to be

overcome by the “soul-subduing voice” of Pity (Fairer, Gerrard 2015, 446-8). The Passions themselves become the active performers, not mediated through artist or actor – nor through any Art of Acting.

But suppose there are no set categories? No clear list of Passions? As we move further into the eighteenth century we notice that the fictional characters in plays and novels themselves become ever more deeply immersed in untangling their own feelings. Audiences and readers can be less certain where their loyalties lie, or what must be the right answer. The big blow-out, the festival of passion, comes in Racine’s *Phèdre* (1677). But Moliere’s plays give more space than of yore to *uncertainty* regarding emotions. Alceste’s ardour for sincerity marks the birth of a modern value. ‘Sincerity’ has become secularised. Yet we can see in Alceste’s sincerity an obstinate self-love muddled with confused noble ideals and earnest self-deception. For Alceste’s emotional state there is no exact vocabulary. This flawed hero reacts to himself all the time; he consents to no defining consensus.

4 Self-Reflection, Mixed Emotions: The Mirror

Alceste is the herald of multiple eighteenth-century characters who might be called the ‘Pioneers of the Emotions’. They refuse to accept absolute definitions or recipes regarding the Passions. They are headed for collision with social values. Social engineering is all in favour of ‘regulating’ the Passions. If we learn to ‘regulate’, so the theory goes, we shall then be able to create a reasonable society. Acknowledgement of ‘Mixed Emotions’ can impede this project. A vocabulary of clear words identifying clearly delineated passions would be much more helpful. Passion should move at the command of Reason. Samuel Johnson claimed Richardson taught us and Passions how to do this. Yet Richardson himself is a pioneer of deregulation and questioning. Of the gang seeking ‘Mixed Emotions’ he is a chief.

Eighteenth-century literature is most interesting at the points at which it recognises the confusions and even impracticability of regulating Passions – or of defining Reason. ‘Sensibility’ gives greater status to the physical-physiological body and its nuances – including self-invited ‘Vicissitudes.’ Sensibility opens space for escapism, drugs and self-stimulus – Opium, Ratafia and Tears. A living person cannot truly be ‘insensible’ – i.e. unconscious. A chaos of multiple stimuli impinge upon and even form ‘Self,’ which compulsively vibrates. The Self soon becomes one of the stimuli impinging on and altering the Self. I just said of Alceste that he consents to no consensus, but reacts to himself all the time. With the rise of the Mirror such reaction becomes common. And the Self becomes more readily a community of its own.

We have not paid enough attention to the role of the Mirror in the Early Modern era in relation to our concept of the Self. The ancients had mirrors, but their hand-held metal looking glasses offered inferior images. In antiquity, the image of the mirror most often showed you a character associated with vanity. In the Renaissance, mirrors become disciplinary; they convey public warning and rebuke: *A Mirror for Magistrates*. You look into a mirror to find out what is *wrong* with you. Changes in the technology of the mirror, however, apparently alter – and alter radically – the use of the image. The Venetians began a new era of important glass and mirroring. France, after shanghaiing the glassmakers of Murano to instruct them, created ever larger mirrors – hence the ‘cheval glass’. By the 1680s or 1690s one might look at oneself from head to toe (or nearly; see DeJean 2005, ch. 9 and pages 180-200). This unexpected ability to see the Self, in an unprecedented ‘Selfie,’ renders ‘Self’ fabulous. Both fantastic and accessible, the instant self is a reservoir of a new sort of future that can enter into the present. In Perrault’s *Contes*, both in his verse fairy tale *Peau d’Âne* (*Donkey-Skin*) and his short prose tale *Cendrillon*, a heroine suffers deprivation and official ugliness. Her own beauty is a psychic luxury – fully knowable to herself on account of the magic of the Mirror. *Cendrillon* emphasises the luxurious pleasure of the long looking-glasses. At first the heroine is deprived of this modern artefact. The one big mirror at home is first monopolised by the stepsisters: “elles étaient toujours devant leur miroir” (Perrault 2002, 166).⁴ In Perrault’s verse fable *Peau d’Âne* (*Donkey-Skin*), the heroine, on the run from her incestuous father, is disguised in an ugly donkey skin. She becomes a grimy menial in a farmer’s kitchen. But alone, on a Sunday, she goes to her room, has a wash and then wears one of the magnificent dresses her fairy godmother created for her:

Devant son grand miroir, contente et satisfaite,
De la lune tantôt la robe elle mettait,
Tantôt celle ou le feu de soleil éclatait.
(Perrault 2002, 84)⁵

In *Pamela* Richardson adopts this situation, and spins it round. Pamela in her own room takes pleasure in looking at herself in the mirror, *contente et satisfaite*. Dressed not in elegant luxury but in her chosen peasant garb, she defends herself against somebody else’s definition, luxuriating in independent self-approval. Pamela’s enthusiastic liking for her own image is the mental act of a rebel, deeply hostile to conventional imposed morali-

4 “They were constantly in front of their mirror” (Author’s translation).

5 “Before her great mirror, happy and satisfied, | She put on sometimes the dress of the Moon, | Sometimes the one where the fire of the sun shone” (Author’s translation).

ties. The mirror is no longer a reflection of rebuke and social expectations. It attaches itself to the flow of time, to variety and choice.

Looking in the mirror, or being aware of mirroring, multiplies and refines the 'original' emotion. And looking at the emotion, looking at one's own mobile face, changes the context. Self knows itself - with its personal transience of sensations and feelings - as existing and observable in the world. The actor-viewer catches what is going on, as in a short 'Self-Movie' in which the feelings are reflected upon and become modified, admired, even added to: 'My heart is broken. How do I look now my heart is broken?' The eighteenth-century emotion becomes less identifiable, more variable. It counters the contemporary morality that asks us to fix a Passion - any Passion - as discrete, separate, identifiable and corrigible. You do not have to wait for actors to instruct you how to look and how to feel. With a mirror, we all become actors. 'Interiority' comes off as surface. What the Actor began the Mirror continues, diving down into the depths of private life, even the life of inferior classes. Pamela and 'Donkey-skin' dive into the glassy changing depths of their multiple selves. The Mirror can create or amplify interest in various powers of self-representation. Individuality gains in control - along with more, and bigger, mirrors. Mirrors are fairy-tale things. Rather than enforcing a fable of stability, they offer the possibility of change and play. Oddly, they authorise the exploration and voicing of hitherto unknown feelings or feeling-mixtures.

In the first volume of *Clarissa*, Anna Howe teases Clarissa to admit she is in Love. Clarissa resists that definition: "this man - this Lovelace - is a man that might be liked well enough, if he bore such a character as Mr. Hickman bears... And further still I will acknowledge, that I believe it possible that one might be driven, by violent measures, step by step, as it were, into something that might be called - I don't know what to call it. A conditional kind of liking, or so" (Richardson 2000, vol. 1, Letter xxviii, 183). Anna mocks as 'Prudery' Clarissa's "conditional kind of liking!" (Letter xxxvii, 254). In Clarissa's expression Anna sees mere an evasion of the straightforward or conventional term. But the straightforward description is a cliché. Clarissa sees a considerable space between conventionally 'being in Love' and the kind of cautious and insecure partial attraction she is currently almost experiencing. In most respects Lovelace is a much more conventional describer of emotions than Clarissa, even though - or perhaps because - his emotions and the emotions of others are playthings. Lovelace is always the actor - or almost always. At a few moments he cannot sustain his role and admits of an unauthorised feeling. That, too, is desired by him - these moments are almost always planned traps for himself. Such moments of slippage are desirable precisely because the disconcerting sensation interrupts monotony; it permits the designer to feel that he is still spontaneous and unrehearsed.

Samuel Richardson presumably had learned something of the passions by the time he wrote *Pamela*. That was several years before he printed Aaron Hill's book on *The Art of Acting* in 1746. As he explains to Hill, he read it attentively:

Last Sunday I attempted to read it not as a Printer; and was not aware that I should be so mechanically, as I may truly say, affected by it: I endeavored to follow you in your [wonderful] Descriptions of the Force of Acting, in the Passion of Joy, Sorrow, Fear, Anger, & c. And my whole Frame, so nervously affected before, was shaken by it: I found, in short, such Tremors, such Startings that I was unable to go thro' it; and must reserve the Attempting it again, till your *Oak Tincture* ... has fortify'd the too relaxed, unmuscl'd Muscles, and braced those unbraced Nerves. (Richardson to Aaron Hill, 29 October 1746. Quoted in Carroll 1964, 74-5)

In attempting to 'run through the Passions' Richardson becomes physically and facially exhausted. His nerves - presumably in both old and new senses, his 'fibrous *Mechanism*' - become 'unbraced'. His whole frame is 'shaken'. The body in the Passions is commanded into strenuous labour. Insights gleaned from this rather frightening encounter with the Art of Acting, and with running through the Passions, presumably afforded the novelist new insight. His descriptions of Lovelace's play with grand (if often pseudo- or partially pseudo-grand) passions acknowledge the amount of effort demanded by Lovelace's distinctive acting. Richardson understands the actor's strenuous command of body and eye. Robert Lovelace's various impersonations of feeling are genuinely very taxing to him - not least because he does not want *entirely* to relinquish some delicious claim to the reality of the emotion, somewhere in depths far below.

In *Sir Charles Grandison*, Sir Hargrave Pollexfen is the conventional vain man, forever paying "his respects to himself at every looking glass" (Richardson 1754, vol. 1, Letter xi, 57). More interesting is the authorial epistolary Harriet Byron, for whom a mirror becomes an accessory to social thought. Harriet recasts herself as others with the help of a mirror - an important ancillary. In describing the pedant Mr. Walden who "made... so many different mouths of contempt," Harriet goes further:

I have been making mouths in the glass for several minutes, to try to recover some of Mr. Walden's, in order to describe them to you, Lucy. (Letter xi, 58)

Later, Harriet records how offended she was when the mannish and laughing Miss Barnevelt addressed her in very free and condescending expressions:

Just here, Lucy, I laid down my pen, and stept to the glass, to see whether I could not please myself with a wise frown or two; at least with a solemnity of countenance, that, occasionally, I might dash with it my childishness of look; which certainly encouraged this freedom of Miss Barnevelt. (Richardson 1754, vol. 1, Letter xiii, 75-6)

Harriet Byron takes herself as that 'Other' whom she observes, endeavouring to remodel her countenance and make a different impact. She fears he looks too eager, cheerful and babyish, but cannot manage a solemnity of countenance that comes up to her standard. In this odd exercise Harriet becomes an object of her own sympathy, while also trying to see herself as the object of somebody else's gaze. How does the older (and presumably lesbian) Miss Barnevelt see her? Can Harriet enact another self? The mirror is asked to mirror what is *not yet there*. She *will* be somebody else, somebody serious. This strange way of looking into the glass exhibits a different use of the mirror from that flourished in standard strictures on vanity. The mirror offers a fantastic space for future selves, and future feelings.

Where is the Soul in all this? Are we not getting into a series of costumes, a sequence of shells? Diderot worries about an absence of individual Soul – however defined, whether as moral responsibility or as essence of the personal. Soul is absent during an actor's efficient play of passions. So, then, can one take a holiday from the Soul? If one becomes like Garrick playing his face through a French door, then what is left? The Soul simply cannot be identified with the body's passions – that list of names, that sequence of communicative grimaces. The eighteenth century wants to find out where the Soul is – even if the writer is not party to a religious program. The Passions might be recognised as afflictions of the Soul. Or are the Passions a kind of alphabet that we learn on the way to a moral language? Adventurers in the Passions are likely to move close to the boundary where the Soul *cannot* say it knows itself. Yet, if there is no Soul behind the play of personality, what then? Without a Soul, the emotions are, or can become, brilliant fakes. Marcasites, not diamonds.

5 Magical Transience and the Fairy-Tale

There is a magical quality to emotions. In the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries we notice the dominance and adaptability of two elastic literary forms: fable and fairy tale. Fable indicates social and moral stability. Fables are mostly bad news. Nature asserts herself once more. The wolf *is* just going to attack that lamb. Fairy tale backs experimentation and the unknown. Formally, fairy tales throw spanners into works. 'Fairy-Tale' is often employed as a disparaging adjective denouncing wish-fulfillment. But in 'fairy tales' affairs can take shockingly negative turns. Prolonged

negative feeling states – e.g. of depression and estrangement – are frequently described, as in Mme D’Aulnoy’s *Le Oiseau Bleu* (*The Blue Bird*, 1697). Changes are undergone without the full intent, or consent – or even full consciousness – of the thinking mind. Alteration includes severe shifts in wishes and orientation. In D’Aulnoy’s *La Chatte Blanche* (*The White Cat*, 1698) unconscious change is reflected in the conduct of the narrative itself. The reader insensibly drops interest in the contest between the three sons. A new story breaks through, becoming the main feature once we acknowledge the Prince’s unorthodox and altered state of being as he falls in love with the White Cat.

In England the fairy tales have a great vogue from Perrault’s time onward. They become a permanent part of English literature. So too did the *Mille et Une Nuits*, translated from the French early in the eighteenth century. In the fairy tales ideas of personality and character mutate: ‘Soul’ seem mutable and variable, while emotions mutate into mysteries. Why does the beautiful young woman beat the lovely black dogs so harshly every night? Representation of the ‘emotional self’ becomes reorientation of altered states. Characters are often non-human or humanoid – as animals, fairies and ghosts. They are emerging from the past or beckoning from the future. Shakespeare’s fairies and ghosts resume or increase their appeal. Considerations of emotions become less encyclopedic taxonomy of identifiable passions than a recording of intense *transience*. The growing emphasis on transience was emphatically signalled in England’s Restoration era, as in Dryden’s *Marriage A-la-Mode* (1673):

Why should a foolish Marriage Vow
Which long ago was made,
Oblige us to each other now
When Passion is decay’d?
 (“Song”, sung by characters Doralice and Beliza to lute music,
opening of first scene in *Marriage A-la-Mode*; Dryden 1677, 1)

The livelong minute is ‘all that heaven allows’: so says Rochester, to whom Dryden’s play was dedicated. We cannot be ‘true’ to somebody else because we cannot be ‘true’ to ourselves. We are always changing. In this ‘magical’ environment it is possible to evade the old ‘Periodic Table’ of the Passions. We are free to find new mediums or images for emotions no longer fully defined.

6 Sylphs

New characters arrive on the psychic landscape. For a fine example, let us take Pope’s Sylphs. Since the sixteenth century all Sylphs derive more or

less directly from Paracelsus' essay *De Nymphis*, which might be considered a recording of folklore or a hidden psychological (or even scientific) allegory. Paracelsus' account is cited in *Le Comte de Gabalis* (1670), a playful gay trifle significantly referred to by Pope in introducing *The Rape of the Lock*. In a turn of genius the poet, revising his poem of 1712 in 1714, brought in the celebrated 'machinery', with direct reference to *Le Comte de Gabalis* and Rosicrucians. What are Pope's Sylphs? Essentially they derive from two basic images of a 'self':

- a. A sylph is a beautiful and competent fairy being devoid of soul. A sylph will get a soul if he or she or copulates with a mortal of the opposite sex who has one.
- b. A sylph is a post-death person. The soul - as in Ficino and Henry More - finds after death its truer, freer body, i.e. its 'airy Vehicle'.

In one view, Sylphs are emotion-free. In another interpretation, they are in constant longing for the one thing that they (like paintings and actors in roles) must lack - a soul. Ariel has bad luck. If at first this guardian Sylph seems to be getting on with Belinda, an earthly Lover lurking in her heart means his chance for a soul - at least in relation to this human lady - is blown. On the other hand, airy Sylphs crowding boudoir and boat, at home at the card table, are the lightest aspects of Self, of inconsequential personality. Having got over death they have nothing to fear. They are free to roam and sparkle - little diamond chips of personality, emotions without consequence. Movement and Variety express what they are, though they are nothing without the sustaining Light. See Pope's *tour de force* of description: the 'lucid Squadrons' flying about the boat and over the water in the sunshine:

Transparent Forms, too fine for mortal Sight,
Their fluid Bodies half dissolv'd in Light.
Loose to the Wind their airy Garments flew,
Thin glitt'ring Textures of the filmy Dew;
Dipt in the richest Tincture of the Skies,
Where Light disports in ever-mingling Dies,
While ev'ry Beam new transient Colours flings,
Colours that change whene'er they wave their Wings.
(Canto 2, ll. 61-8; Pope 1963, 224)

Here is a world rendered iridescent and insubstantial, yet full of motion. All is new transience. Nothing is sufficiently stable to be categorised. In this amazing iridescent poem, these 'Mini-Me's' are Self with the lightest of touch. Living in the moment, almost dissolving into light, and constantly regrouping, Sylphs are in a uniquely blessed condition. They bear no full emotions because they will not stay still long enough. Suggestions of emo-

tions are flicker through the multitude, as if they were personalised electrons. They reflect Belinda, in turn reflected in her Mirror, who is herself an assembly of personae and emotions. In glittering changeability the Sylphs suggest ever-changeable emotional life. Sylphs are able to explore carnality without Gravity. They are Levity.

Here we behold the magical quality of emotions expressed in beings that seem free from the pain of passions. Pope's Sylphs are in a sense ghosts of feelings. In another light – and everything is presented in changeable lights – they are *essence* of emotion. Here we find emotion's multitudinous fleeting phases, its affective momentary coloration. What in aforesaid we identify as 'a Passion' is crass – there remains the escaped airy essence, the fleeting fragrance of a feeling itself. Sylphs represent potential – emotions that we have not yet been able to pin down or catalogue and name. These sprites airily inform us that there are feeling-states not yet identified.

As we pass through the experience that is the poem, gender, like passion, becomes increasingly difficult to define. Sylphs seem perfectly 'feminine' – all *anima* is feminine. Yet they express gender difference and can sustain both masculine and feminine role-play (if Sylphs may take on a human mate in order to achieve a soul, then Ariel is the defeated hero of Pope's poem, which could change our reading of the ending). Alexander Pope has brought into Paracelsus a complementary idea of the airy beings, drawing on the neo-Platonists, particularly Henry More's poems on immortality of the soul. Pope is also adapting Emperor Hadrian's address to his own Soul as beloved diminutive: *animula vagula blandula*.⁶ *The Rape of the Lock* has, oddly, some of the makings of a 'Gothic' work. After all, half the population of the narrative is in a post-death state. The sylphs can be read as cheerful ghosts, in whom only the social preoccupations (fashions, cards) survive. Now great passions have lost weight; all emotions, subsumed, are to be played with.

Passions and Emotions, like Personality, here become *qualia*, qualities, like colour or mobility. Nouns, as it were, become adjectives. This is in itself a Rosicrucian or Cabalistic trick. The Sylphs are chips or fragments of human personality, free of the social bondage. Gender becomes increasingly unnecessary, and emotions almost impossible to pin down – save in the crassest of the human characters. Sylphs express emotional states as mood, without being fastened to emotion. They do not seem – unlike the still incarnate human characters – doomed to Spleen. Our old term Passion suggests being operated on from the outside. Sylphs need yield to no such

6 Around the time of composition of early versions of *The Rape of the Lock*, Pope was writing new verse translations of Emperor Hadrian's address to his own soul. Pope does not treat this poem as trifling; he argues that Hadrian's use of diminutives reflects the language of erotic love. The man feels affection for this departing soul, which is feminised. Like the sylphs, Hadrian becomes multitudes. See Ault 1967.

pressures. Emotion becomes something like fragrance. Sylphs resemble Soul without the heaviness of sin or judgment. Living in Levity instead of downright Gravity. Pope's Sylphs are a challenge to all that we think we are talking about in terms of person, soul, Lockean identity, or categories like 'Passions'.

Given different concepts of person or personality, Pope reminds that we would not have the same 'Passions'. The catalogues of passions run through by the poets certainly have their grim or negative side. Might we learn to do without them? Sylphs caught on – there are a number of sylphs in eighteenth-century literature, including the novel by the Duchess of Devonshire, *The Sylph* (1779). The person described by that name, a guardian and lover, is a personality type that does not yet exist. Sylphs are post-death, and also pre-rebirth. They represent possibilities of being in the future – possibilities on their way, if not here yet. There are future feelings we do not even have names for.

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