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DESIRE AND RENUNCIATION: THE LETTERS OF DOROTHY OSBORNE

by

Carrie Anne Hintz

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of English
University of Toronto

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Dissertation Abstract

"Desire and Renunciation: The Letters of Dorothy Osborne"
Doctor of Philosophy in English, 1998
by Carrie Anne Hintz
Graduate Department of English
University of Toronto

Dorothy Osborne’s lively and accomplished letters to her husband William Temple (1652-54) have long been treasured for their literary qualities, and for their defense of companionate marriage. They are an important source for the history of the family, and of women’s lives in the early modern period.

My dissertation focuses on factors which discourage Osborne from seeking union with Temple: her oscillation between desire and renunciation. Although the prolonged Osborne-Temple courtship ended in marriage, Osborne betrays anxiety about love unions in general.

My first chapter describes the Victorian-Edwardian portrayal of Osborne as a renunciatory heroine. My second chapter evaluates the letters as a literary document—a narrative formed out of separate components. After these opening chapters, I consider factors which discouraged Osborne from pursuing marital union with Temple. One powerful obstacle is triangular structures which complicate the Osborne-Temple romance. I also consider the powerful effect of constant surveillance on the Osborne-Temple courtship and, in the chapter immediately following, Osborne’s articulation of her dream to be alone with Temple on an isolated island. This fantasy is a response to the extreme surveillance she experienced, as well as a vivid engagement with utopian thought of the time.

Critics have argued that Osborne’s reading of voluminous French
romances, by authors such as Madeleine de Scudéry, helped Osborne in her courtship with Temple. I argue that these romances were, in fact, a force to discourage Osborne from romantic attachment; most of the characters she fixes on were thwarted in love. My next chapter considers melancholy as a disease both the lovers share; illness functions both as a force to bind the couple together in an ethic of mutual care, and one which threatens their bond. My final chapter is a brief evaluation of the forces of desire and renunciation in Osborne’s letters, focusing on her decision to marry Temple despite her misgivings.
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I would also like to thank my external examiner Martine Watson Brownley for her careful attention to the manuscript, and insights about further work on Osborne. Mary Nyquist, my committee member and departmental examiner, helped at many key moments, and I would like to express my gratitude for her questions and suggestions.

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Many individuals in England helped with the dissertation, or encouraged further work on Osborne. I appreciate Kenneth Parker’s advice through E-mail and his useful edition of the letters. I am indebted to Frances Harris for bringing my attention to various materials at the British Library. I would like to thank the Island archivist of Guernsey, Hugh Lenfesty, for allowing me access to the original copies of Peter Osborne’s correspondence, and for allowing me to search
through the Greffe for additional materials. Major and Mrs. Jean Wilkinson allowed me to spend a wonderful day at Chicksands Priory, which enabled me not only to see the place where Osborne's letters were written but also to meet two very kindred spirits. Martine and Robert Frost of the Campana Finishing School gave me an extraordinary tour of Moor Park, and gave me access to their files about the history of the estate and building. Sir Richard Osborn, Dorothy Osborne's descendent, sent a letter of encouragement which I appreciate tremendously.

Many friends have provided insightful advice, especially Susan Lamb, whose questions and suggestions continue to deepen my understanding of the long eighteenth century. Don McBey read the chapter on surveillance with a helpful, lawyerly eye. I would like to thank my flatmates Elaine Ostry and Sarah Winters for commenting on the dissertation in its complete form and otherwise living with Osborne for the last three years.

Nick LoLordo bought me my first and only pair of sensible shoes (very important when completing my final draft) and convinced me not to take the renunciatory heroine ideal too seriously.

I would like to acknowledge, with warm gratitude, the funding agencies which supported this work financially, especially the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, who granted me a doctoral fellowship from 1993-1997, and the Alberta Heritage Trust Fund for their two-year Sir James Lougheed Award of Distinction. The Theodora Bosanquet Travel Bursary for research in women's studies paid for my accommodation in England for one month in the summer of 1996, and the Associates of the University of Toronto Travel Grant funded two weeks at the Houghton Library in Boston in the Spring of 1997.
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Preface

Dorothy Osborne is known for seventy-seven letters that she wrote to her future husband William Temple from 1652-54. These lively and accomplished letters have long been treasured for their literary qualities, and for their defence of companionate marriage. As a courtship document, they are an important source for the history of the family, and of women’s lives in the early modern period.

My dissertation focuses on factors which discourage Osborne from seeking union with Temple: her oscillation between desire and renunciation. Although the prolonged Osborne-Temple courtship ended in marriage, Osborne is often critical of marriage, and shows anxiety about love unions in general. The letters provide unique insight into the inner struggles of a seventeenth-century woman during her courtship, and the external constraints which threatened her ability to fulfil her desires. I will be considering an individual moment in the courtship when Osborne offers to give up her relationship with Temple, as well as anxieties which extend throughout the courtship.

In this brief preface, I will consider the biographical and historical factors which prolonged the courtship and necessitated the writing of the letters. Osborne and Temple’s story mirrors the experience of many couples during the war, and indeed throughout the period. Not every person was able to transform his or her love story into a literary artifact. The cultural, literary and religious influences which converge in Osborne’s letters, and her skill in writing, make the letters into a literary document. It is important to acknowledge, however, that Osborne’s story is also a product of historical forces more
or less typical of the period.

Osborne was in her mid-twenties when she wrote her letters. Not much is known of her early life. She was born in 1627, and likely spent most of her early life at Chicksands, a former Gilbertine Priory in the hands of the Osborne family. She also spent some of her youth on the island of Guernsey, and lived in St. Malo, possibly from 1647 to 1649.

The English Civil War had a deep impact on Osborne's family. Osborne's father Peter Osborne fought on the royalist side in the English Civil War as Lieutenant Governor of the Island of Guernsey, in the Channel Islands. Peter Osborne held a royalist stronghold, Castle Cornet, while it was under siege by the Parliamentary townsmen, from 1643 until 1646. Public opinion in the town itself was overwhelmingly against Osborne. Many of Peter Osborne's difficulties had to do with his rival Captain Carteret, who appropriated money and provisions intended for Castle Cornet during the siege, and who misrepresented Osborne to Charles I.  

1 G.C. Moore Smith remarks that Osborne does not make any reference to her childhood in her letters, "and we do not know where it was spent or to whom she owed her education" (xi).

2 The local museum in St. Peter's Port, Guernsey, bears the sign of a continued grudge against Sir Peter Osborne, stressing how Osborne and his soldiers fired at the townspeople—cannonballs from the period are still found now and then. William C. Grayson plaintively notes the lack of any commemoration of Sir Peter's heroism in the town itself. See Chicksands: A Millennium of History ([England]: Shefford Press, 1994), 104.

3 As G.C. Moore Smith notes, "when [Lady Osborne's] money was exhausted, she sold her plate; when that money was gone, she contracted a heavy debt with which she sent provisions for Castle Cornet. Carteret kept the supply for two months at Jersey while Sir Peter's men were starving, their bread ration being reduced to four biscuits a week." See The Letters of Dorothy Osborne, xiv. F.B. Tupper's account of the siege remains definitive. See The Chronicles of Castle Cornet, Guernsey, with Details of its Nine Years' Siege During the Civil War and
Sir Peter Osborne was relieved of his post in 1646, but did not return to England until 1649, having to compound for his estate at Chicksands, which would otherwise have been sold.¹ The siege of Castle Cornet was to last another five-and-a-half years.² The financial exigencies of the siege, and prosecution at the hands of the Parliamentary government, reduced the family fortune significantly, as Osborne herself notes.³ Shortly after the Osbornes returned to Chicksands in 1649/50, Dorothy’s mother died and was buried in Campton Church.⁴ Peter Osborne was seriously ill. Many of Osborne’s early letters were written, as Virginia Woolf duly noted, next to his sickbed.⁵

It was against a backdrop of financial suffering and impending financial defeat that Osborne and Temple met on the Isle of Wight in 1648. The Osbornes were on their

_Frequent Notices of the Channel Islands_ (Guernsey, Channel Islands, Stephen Barbet, 1851). If you visit Castle Cornet, which has a wonderful museum, it is possible to see pipes which Osborne’s men made from animal bones during the deprivations of the siege. There is a letter from Lady Osborne to Captain Carteret in the Bedford Country Record office, endorsed in Dorothy Osborne’s hand, urging Carteret to pay the Osborne family for the expenses they have incurred. See Bedford County Record Office, _Osborn of Chicksands: A Catalogue of the Family and Estate Papers of the Osborn Family of Chicksands_ (Unpublished Catalogue, 1994), 0/185/4.


⁵ G. C. Moore Smith, ed. xvii.

⁶ Osborne writes, “I have seen my fathers [Estate] reduced [from] better then 4000li to not 400li a yeare, and I thank god I never felt the change in any thing that I thought necessary; I never wanted, nor am confident I never shall...” (178-179).

⁷ I would like to thank John Barrell for kindly showing me Campton Church, and for allowing me to visit the Osborne family crypt. For more on the village of Campton, see D.J. Cadman, _Campton: A Story of a Bedfordshire Village_ (Privately Printed Guide, 1976).

⁸ “[Letter-writing] was an art that a woman could practise without unsexing herself. It was an art that could be carried on at odd moments, by a father’s sick-bed...” See Virginia Woolf, _The Second Common Reader_ (1932) (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1960), 52.
way to St. Malo to join Sir Peter there, and Temple was about to travel to France.

Martha Giffard, Temple's sister, wrote an account of their meeting:

He chose to pass by the Isle of Wight, where his uncle S' John Dingley then Master of a good estate, & one of the auncients Famelyes of that Country liv'd, & where His Majesty was then prisoner in Carisbrooke Castle. and twas there he first met with S' Peter Osbornes Daughter going with her Brother to their Father at S" Maloes, who was Governour of Garnesey, & held it out for the King; He made that Journey with them, in wch her Brother had like to be stop'd by an accident...The spite he had to se the king imprison'd, and treated by the Governour Coll Hammond soe unlike what was due to him, provoked him to step back after all His company were gon before him out of the Inne and write theese words with a Diamond in the window, (And Hamman was hang'd upon the Gallows he had prepar'd for Mordecai.) Twas easy to imagin what hast he made after his company when he had done; but had no sooner overtaken them then he was seis'd himselfe, & brought back to ye Governour, & only escap'd by his sister takeing it upon her selfe. In this Journey begun an amour between S' W T and M" Osborne...

Osborne's act of bravery clearly caught Temple's attention. He lingered for a while with Osborne and her family, until, pressured by his father to leave, he continued on to France. Temple, as Giffard explains, travelled widely in Continental Europe. While they were separated, he wrote several short romance stories, apparently dedicated to Dorothy Osborne, although she is not named outright.

In 1652, Temple wrote Osborne to see if she was well and unmarried, and she wrote back demurely but tellingly, “I am extreamly glad (whoesoever gave you the Occasion) to heare from you, since (without complement) there are very few Person's in


10 Temple's romances appear in The Early Essays and Romances of Sir William Temple Bt., ed. G.C. Moore Smith. The manuscripts for these romances are held at the Beinecke Library at Yale University.
the world I am more concern'd in” (3). The lovers wrote for two years, discussing love and marriage, attempting to gain permission to marry, waiting for Temple to establish his career, and seeking the consent of their families to marry.

Both families opposed the match. As Giffard phrases it, the couple sought to marry "against the consent of most of her friends, & dissatisfaction of some of his, it haveing occasion'd his refusall of a very great fortune when his Famely was most in want of it, as she had done of many considerable offers of great Estates & Famelies." 11 Writers have claimed that the two families opposed the union because they stood on different sides of the Royalist and Parliamentary conflict, but partisan politics were not the source of their objections. Both families included representatives of both parties; Osborne was even allowed to entertain a suit from Henry Cromwell, son of Oliver Cromwell. The objections of the families were motivated entirely by financial concerns. Since both families had suffered financially during the war, both the Osbornes and the Temples were, as Kenneth Parker points out, "actively looking for a marriage that would help to solve their liquidity problems." 12 Sir John Temple required a dowry that was significantly higher than what the Osbornes were willing—and indeed able—to provide.

Osborne expected to marry for a combination of love and social status. In her letters, she fiercely criticizes marriage for purely mercenary reasons. However, she repeatedly expresses a desire not to act in a rash and impetuous manner or marry for passion without regard to social standing. Given the many constraints on an individual

11 Giffard, 7.

who wished to marry, Osborne was aware that marrying according to one's desires was nearly impossible: "I can give noe reason why (Almost,) all are denied the sattisfaction of disposeing themselves to theire owne desyr's, but that it is a happinesse too great for this world..." (45). As I will be discussing at greater length later, Osborne was severely challenged to find a balance between her own desires and those of other people, including her family and the requirements of her social class.  

Deferred marriage was typical in the seventeenth century, as Keith Wrightson explains: "marriage needed to be deferred well past the legal or physiological minimum age until the point at which a sufficient degree of independence could be secured." Wrightson was not necessarily speaking of members of the gentry such as Osborne and Temple, who would certainly have been able to rely on a network of social support within their class, but Temple did have to establish a career for himself, and many of the later letters describe his trip to Ireland to advance his role in public life.  

Osborne had many motivations to marry beyond her affection for Temple. The life of an unmarried woman, even an upper-class woman, was difficult in many ways. After Osborne's father died, she was compelled to move in with her older sister and her family, in the household of her brother-in-law Thomas Peyton.  

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13 Osborne was appalled by the levity with which many members of her societies negotiated their marriages: "it will Easily bee granted that most People make hast to bee miserable, that they put on theire fletter's as inconsideratly as a woodcock run's into a noose, and are carryed by the weakest considerations imaginable, to doe a thing of the greatest Consequence of any thing that concern's this worlde" (96-97).

remarks on the strain an unmarried woman might feel from family members: "Even an aristocrat like Dorothy Osborne was acutely aware that she was welcomed reluctantly by the family members she stayed with; lower in the social order, an unmarried woman usually lived out her life in the dependence of service." Osborne complains bitterly about many aspects of her life in the Peyton household, including lack of privacy. To marry meant to enjoy a measure of independence.

Once the consent of Temple's father and Osborne's family was obtained, the courtship negotiations were able to proceed, although they were unstable until the last moment. Just before they were about to be married, Osborne suffered a devastating attack of smallpox, which had the effect of completely spoiling her beauty:

The week before they were to be married she fell soe desperately ill there was little hopes of her life & nothing the Doctors said but its prooueing the small pox could have sav'd her. He was happy when he saw y' secure his kindness haveing greater yres then that of her beauty though that Loss was too great to leave him wholly insensible. He saw her constantly while she was ill, & married her soon after.¹⁶

As Giffard makes clear, smallpox was a very real threat to Osborne's life as well as destroying the beauty for which she was so famous.

Despite the many setbacks in their courtship, Osborne and Temple were married at St. Giles Church in High Holborne in 1654. They spent their honeymoon at Moor Park in Hertfordshire (not to be confused with Moor Park, William Temple's future estate in


¹⁶ Giffard, 7.
Surrey). There is not much information about the next six years of the Temples' life. They seem to have spent time both in Reading and at Sir John Temple's house in Dublin and on his estates in Carlow (County Wicklow). All of their children born in Ireland died in infancy.\(^{17}\)

Temple's diplomatic career flourished for the most part; he emerged as one of the leading statesmen of his day. His major diplomatic achievement was the Triple Alliance (1668) between Sweden, Holland and England, an attempt to hold France's dominance of Europe in check. Temple was appointed Ambassador to the Netherlands in 1668, but he was soon recalled as Charles II adjusted his foreign policy to one more sympathetic with France. England went to war with Holland in 1671. After the war was over in 1674, Temple was required for the peace negotiations, and helped bring about the marriage between William of Orange and Princess Mary. There is evidence that Lady Temple was involved in his diplomatic career and his public affairs.\(^{18}\)

Increasingly estranged from the King and his advisers in the 1680s, the Temples retired to Moor Park, an estate near Farnham, in 1685. Here Temple dedicated himself to gardening, and wrote, among other essays, *Of Heroick Virtue, Of Poetry, Of Health and_
Long Life, and An Essay Upon the Ancient and Modern Learning. Temple is also well known as Jonathan Swift’s patron, and formative literary influence.

If Temple’s diplomatic career was a mixture of success and setbacks, the personal life of the couple was marked by significant personal tragedy. The only two children that lived past infancy predeceased their parents. Their cherished daughter Diana died of smallpox at age fourteen in 1678. Their oldest son, John Temple, committed suicide in 1689 by throwing himself into the Thames from a boat, leaving a note of explanation. He was in disgrace because he had mismanaged a serious political task which was entrusted to him. He had recently been appointed Secretary of War for William III with a responsibility to advise on Irish Affairs. In this capacity, he argued for the freeing of General Richard Hamilton, a soldier on the Irish side, from the Tower, in the hopes that he would go back to Ireland and persuade Tyrconnell to surrender. Instead, Hamilton joined the rebel forces, and Temple was so ashamed of his bad judgement in this matter that he committed suicide at the age of thirty four.

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20 Much has been written about Temple’s political career, personal life, and his contribution to literature and gardening. A good study which considers Temple both as an essayist and political figure is Clara Marburg, Sir William Temple: A Seventeenth Century “Libertin” (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932). For a remarkably detailed and thorough description of Temple’s relationship to Jonathan Swift, see A.C. Elias Jr., Swift at Moor Park: Problems in Biography and Criticism (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982).

21 There is a letter from Diana Temple to her father bound with the manuscript of Osborne’s letters. See Letter to Her Father Sir William. m.s. 33, 975, f. 134. British Museum, London.

Irvin Ehrenpreis describes the shift in Dorothy Osborne's personality in the later years of her marriage: "Lady Temple was no passionate, moody girl with an epistolary flair. Smallpox had long since spoiled her beauty; nine children born and buried had darkened her temperament." It is impossible to know where Ehrenpreis gets his information about Lady Temple's character but there is certainly evidence that she went through many public and private ordeals. Jonathan Swift, in a poem about the anxiety provoked by an illness of Sir William Temple's, describes her as follows:

Mild Dorothea, peaceful, wise, and great,  
Trembling beheld the doubtful hand of fate;  
Mild Dorothea, whom we both have long  
Not dar'd to injure with our lowly song;  
Sprung from a better world, and chosen then  
The best companion for the best of men:  
As some fair pile, yet spar'd by zeal and rage,  
Lives pious witness of a better age;  
So men may see what once was womankind,  
In the fair shrine of Dorothea's mind

(41-50).  

That is the last glimpse we have of her. Lady Temple died at Moor Park in 1695. She was buried in Westminster Abbey, along with her daughter Diana. Martha Giffard and William Temple were also buried there, in 1726 and 1699 respectively. Temple's heart was buried under a sundial at Moor Park.


25 Unfortunately, the sundial was stolen from what was the Moor Park garden about five years ago.
Osborne was a witness to, and sometimes a participant in, many of the major political events of her day, including the English Civil War and the Glorious Revolution. She met many of the statesman and writers of her day, travelled, and had a rich, if not uniformly happy, domestic life.

Osborne's courtship with Temple was a moment of transition for her, as she debated with herself, and to some degree with Temple, about the relationship between her own desires and society's demands, of the competing claims of reason and passion. She left the traces of her debate in her letters, allowing readers a glimpse into the internal struggles of a seventeenth-century woman at a pivotal moment in her life.
Chapter One
Dorothy Osborne's Victorian Suitors

Dorothy Osborne's letters to William Temple are private documents written during the tumult of the English Civil War, reflecting many seventeenth-century cultural and literary discourses. However, the letters are also literary artifacts of the Victorian and Edwardian age, since they first came to public view in the nineteenth century. The letters, first published in partial form in a 1838 appendix to a biography of William Temple,1 were rapturously received by the noted journalist and historian Thomas Babington Macaulay,2 and achieved something akin to cult status when they appeared in complete form in 1888.3

It is important to consider the nineteenth-century reception of Osborne's letters for many reasons. The nineteenth-century reaction to Osborne was a reaction to a text without any critical history. The struggle of individual nineteenth-century critics to define Osborne reveals the desires (political and personal) which fuel literary evaluation. More importantly for the purposes of this dissertation, the nineteenth-century critics laid the foundation for further responses to Osborne, portraying her as a renunciatory heroine. In fact, nineteenth-century reviewers and editors portrayed Osborne as an ideal Victorian lady, locating the


value of her letters in her exemplary character and demure British girlhood. I will consider the problems created when Victorian critics read Osborne as a positive model of female behaviour without taking the darker elements of her text into consideration. The current portrayal of Osborne as a modest individual constrained by her gender is almost certainly informed by the formative Victorian critical judgements. It is important, then, to explore the forces which gave rise to the portrayal of Osborne as a modest heroine after the initial publication of the letters.

Osborne's letters lay in a cabinet for two centuries before anyone outside of the Osborne family circle read them. William Temple had obviously treasured them enough to preserve them, although his own letters to Osborne are missing, save one. Temple's sister, Martha Lady Giffard, was aware of the vivacity and skill of Osborne’s letters, and described them in her 1690 Life of William Temple as worthy of preservation in a “Volum” of their own:

though I cannot venter of it my selfe, I have often wish’d the[y] might bee printed, for to say nothing of his writing, wch the world has since bin made judge off, I never saw any thing more extraordinary then hers.4

Martha Giffard's remark shows that there was at least one seventeenth century reader other than Temple who appreciated the letters, but there is no other response on record before the nineteenth century.

Osborne’s letters, a family heirloom, were first brought into circulation when Thomas Peregrine Courtenay was researching his magisterial biography of Temple. Amidst apologies

for presenting what he described as documents of purely private significance, Courtenay published forty-two of Osborne's letters in the bulky appendices to his biography of Temple. The letters were heavily edited and printed in modern spelling. These excerpts became the catalyst for Thomas Babington Macaulay's laudatory remarks on Osborne, which drew Osborne into public view. There were other reviews of Courtenay's biography, but Macaulay's response to Osborne is frequently cited by critics even fifty years later as the review which made them aware of Osborne's writing. Whenever Osborne was mentioned, Macaulay was as well.

Macaulay's review had a profound influence on the reception of both Osborne and Temple, and it is easy to understand why. The review bristles with the fierce polemical energy typical of the Victorian periodical scene. Much of what Macaulay says about Temple

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5 Macaulay's focus on Osborne's text is unique among early reviewers. Often, there is an account of the courtship but very little interest in the letters. See "Courtenay's Life of William Temple, Bart.," Fraser's Magazine 15 (March 1837): 400-417. See "William Temple," Eclectic Review 66 (October 1838): 502-512. See also "Life and Writings of Sir William Temple." In Dublin University Magazine 8 (October 1837): 61-65. By 1930, Courtenay's biography was thought to lack currency, although Clyde L. Grose remarked that he was particularly grateful to Courtenay for printing the Osborne letters. See "Thirty Years' Study of a Formerly Neglected Century of British History, 1660-1760." The Journal of Modern History 2, 3 (September 1930): 454-455. See also Violet Barbour's later appraisal of Courtenay: "honest and accurate within its limits but obtuse and unsympathetic in its treatment" in "Review of Sir William Temple: The Man and his Work. By Homer W. Woodbridge. 1940." The American Historical Review 47,1 (October 1941): 113.

6 Macaulay was undeniably comfortable wielding critical authority. In general, the periodical reviewer was able, as John Woolford notes, to function within the "collectivity of wider consensus" where the "virulence" of critical language stems from the "enormous and overbearing authority" derived from critical "centrality." See "Periodicals and the Practise of Literary Criticism, 1855-64," in The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings, ed. Joanne Shatock and Michael Wolff (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 115. See also Michael Wolff, "Victorian Reviewers and Cultural Responsibility," in 1859: Entering an Age of Crisis, eds. Philip Appleman, William A. Madden, Michael Wolff (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), 269-290.
is motivated by his political quarrels with Courtenay. Macaulay had some strong objections to Courtenay's biography of Temple, which he felt represented a knee-jerk Toryism abhorrent to his own Whig sensibility. Courtenay's "snarls against the Whigs of the present day," thunders Macaulay, "would become the editor of a third-rate party newspaper better than a gentleman of Mr. Courtenay's talents and knowledge." He sneers at Courtenay's remark that liberal thinkers of the seventeenth century "never extended their liberality to the native Irish," querying derisively, "What schoolboy of fourteen is ignorant of this remarkable circumstance?"  

It was not merely the explicit statements against Whigs to which Macaulay objected; he also bristled at Courtenay's attempt to annex William Temple to "conservative ideology of his times" by linking Temple's monarchism during the English Civil War to the Toryism of the Victorian period. However, instead of refuting Courtenay's Tory vision of Temple, Macaulay focused on Temple's character, which he portrayed as opportunistic and weak by turns:

He avoided the great offices of State with a caution almost pusillanimous, and confined himself to quiet and secluded departments of public business, in which he could enjoy moderate but certain advantages without incurring envy. If the circumstances of the country became such that it was impossible to take any part in politics without some danger, he retired to his library and his orchard, and, while the nation groaned under oppression, or resounded with tumult and with the din of civil arms, amused himself by writing memoirs and tying up apricots.  

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7 Macaulay, 412.

8 Parker, 12.

It would be hard to tell from such a description that Temple had retreated (at least in part) because of disappointment in Charles II's increased favour toward France, and the subsequent dissolution of the Triple Alliance between Sweden, Holland and England, an alliance which had been the prime achievement of Temple's diplomatic career. In Macaulay's essay, Temple appears less like a discouraged diplomat than like Marie Antoinette playing at being a shepherdess. And this is only the beginning of Macaulay's castigation: Temple is a colonialist in Ireland; he enjoys the benefits of power while taking none of the risks of power; he is fundamentally indifferent toward his country.

Macaulay, however, pauses in his critical appraisal of Temple's political career to dwell on Temple's romance and correspondence with Dorothy Osborne. In contrast to William Temple (a man "not to our taste"), the Osborne we meet in the letters is "charming": "modest, generous, affectionate, intelligent and sprightly." There exists "abundant proof that she possessed an ample share of the dexterity, the vivacity, and the tenderness of her sex."

Macaulay admits that his positive reaction to Osborne's letters was partially derived from the experience of reading her prose side by side with the grinding political documents Courtenay included in the long biography of Temple: "We would gladly purchase equally

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*and his Work. By Homer E. Woodbridge, 1940." American Historical Review 47, 1 (October 1941), 112.

10 Macaulay, 427.

11 Macaulay, 422.
interesting billets with ten times their weight in state-papers taken at random," he declares.\(^\text{12}\) In the midst of a tough-minded—even hostile—essay navigating through political and historical matters, Macaulay and the readers of the *Edinburgh Review* relax in Osborne's sympathetic presence. She is a charming, modest, sprightly woman who never troubles anyone with questions about the reliability of the Dutch or the threats to the Triple Alliance. Though a "royalist," as "was to be expected from her connexions," she possesses none of that "political asperity which is as unwomanly as a long beard."\(^\text{13}\) She is political insofar as it is decorous. A royalist because a good daughter and sister, she is neither a passionate political animal nor insightful about political matters.

It is odd that Macaulay should make this remark, since evidence to the contrary was so readily available in Courtenay's biography. For example, Courtenay printed a 1670 letter from Lady Temple when her husband was at Yarmouth (Isle of Wight) and she was watching the political situation in Holland on his behalf. It seemed as though Charles II might remove Temple from his diplomatic post in Holland, because Temple had been instrumental in forming an alliance with Holland that was no longer desirable. At that time, Lady Temple was more keenly attuned than Temple to his upcoming disappointment, if only because she was situated more advantageously. In a letter to Temple, she expresses concern about the threats to the Triple Alliance:

Downton says they have strong suspicions here you will come back no more, and that they shall be left in the lurch; that something is striking up with France, and that you are sent away because you are too well inclined to these

\(^{12}\) Macaulay, 427.

\(^{13}\) Ibid.
countries.¹⁴

Lady Temple advises her powerful diplomat husband of developments, communicating with local insiders, offering analysis and advice. In Temple's absence, she was busy exchanging views and opinions with political pundits and major players—if she had no political asperity in the 1650s, she had certainly developed it by 1670. She clearly possessed the ability to gather, synthesize and appraise multiple perspectives and voices.

Politics also permeate the early letters. Osborne makes repeated reference to her family's loss of fortune, and the upheaval caused by the English Civil War. Her letters contain a lengthy description of Cromwell's dissolution of parliament. She also includes some incisive commentary of the execution of the pregnant Lady Vavasor¹⁵ for treasonous activities:

my Poore Lady Vavasor is carried to y^e Tower & her great belly could not Excuse her because she was acquainted by somebody that there was a plott against y^e Protector and did not discover it (168).

This incident powerfully illustrates that Osborne knew that political concerns often overrule private ones. The controlled tone of this disturbing anecdote does not necessarily show a want of feeling (the epithet "Poore" would indicate otherwise), but Osborne is clear-sighted enough to assess the horrific consequences of Vavasor's implication in the plot. If you play in the political world, you might suffer the consequences.


Another instance of Osborne's political asperity is recounted by Macaulay himself, though he does not characterize it as political. As many reviewers were later to do, Macaulay recounts the apocryphal story (first reported in Martha Giffard's brief life of Temple) of Osborne and Temple's first encounter on the Isle of Wight. Osborne's brother, resenting the captivity of the King under Colonel Hammond, had inscribed an anti-Parliamentarian slogan on the windows of the house where they were staying, causing the entire company to be arrested. Dorothy Osborne, "trusthing to the tenderness which, even in those troubled times, scarcely any gentleman of any party ever failed to show where a woman was concerned," claimed that she had written the slogan herself, whereupon the party was set at liberty. Osborne's act was undoubtedly a political one, demonstrating the quicksilver apprehension and will to self-preservation Macaulay had found so objectionable in Temple. Perhaps the difference between Osborne's strategic move and Temple's actions is that she acts to save her entire family—within Christological paradigms assuming guilt on her innocent person—whereas Temple wishes to avoid blame or unpleasant duties. However, despite the different motivations and characters of their political actions, Temple's strategic refusals and acceptances of political posts and Osborne's fib about her culpability are both attempts to survive and thrive in troubled political times.

From this anecdote, it seems as though Osborne gained Temple's admiration because she did not shrink from active political involvement. To Macaulay, on the other hand, the attractive element in the scene is Osborne's womanly—almost quaint—expression of family feeling. He takes pleasure in the anecdote because it displays Osborne immunity to political

16 Macaulay, 422.
pressures, protected by the ethic of chivalry from the strictures of the law.

Macaulay, whether by choice or critical blindness, ignores the message of the text before him. He is determined, first of all, to see the Osborne-Temple union as a happy interlude in a mildly distasteful, though often politically useful, life. Temple's private life with Dorothy Osborne was more palatable to Macaulay than his later political activities. A romance-writing, starry-eyed young man and his sprightly damsel are vastly more amusing than an accomplished diplomat and his politically aware wife monitoring their political position vis à vis a fickle, uncommunicative King.

Details from Macaulay's own life might explain his idealized portrayal of Osborne. Owen Dudley Edwards contends that the "exceptionally tender" portrayal of Osborne was inspired by the death of Macaulay's sister Margaret, herself an avid letter-writer, in 1835: "the portrait that follows is Dorothy, not Margaret, but its appreciation begins from the same origin." \(^\text{17}\) There does seem to be something personal about Macaulay's vision of Osborne; his reception of her is an example of the intersection of the personal and the critical.

However, Macaulay goes beyond the merely personal in his appreciation of Osborne's letters, moving past the charm of their picturesque descriptions and sparkling wit (though he fully responds to these qualities). Macaulay also uses the letters as a springboard to discuss the purpose of writing history. Long before the twentieth-century social historian Lawrence Stone, Macaulay values Osborne's letters for what they contribute to the history of the family and of courtship: "the mutual relations of the two sexes seem to us to be at least as important as the mutual relations of any two governments in the world." Osborne's letters

can help teach us

how the young ladies of England employed themselves a hundred and eighty years ago, how far their minds were cultivated, what were their favourite studies, what degree of liberty was allowed to them, what use they made of that liberty, what accomplishments they most valued in men, and what proofs of tenderness delicacy permitted them to give to favoured suitors.\(^18\)

Macaulay acknowledges the importance of the history of private life.\(^19\) However, while defending the study of personal history (and, by extension, women's history), a note of condescension creeps into Macaulay's writing. Although this defence of the history of private life is exhilarating, and expands the scope of historical concern, it resonates oddly in an essay dedicated to chastising Temple for his weakness of character in political matters, his escapist impulses, and suspicious slickness in negotiating the murky world of Restoration politics. In making such a wide distinction between women's history and "real" history, all the while emphasizing Osborne's lack of asperity, he deprives Osborne of much of her historical significance. Despite his remarks about the illumination of the "general truths" of history in Osborne's letters, we have to ask what is of greater value for Macaulay: the struggles of an amiable young woman to achieve a marriage with the man she professes to love, or Temple's colonialist attitude toward Ireland?

Macaulay addresses this question to some degree as he comments: "in the seventeenth century, to be sure, Louis the Fourteenth was a much more important person than Temple's

\(^{18}\) Macaulay, 427.

\(^{19}\) Owen Dudley Edwards draws attention to Macaulay's prescience in anticipating the rise of social history in Macaulay, 134.
sweetheart. But death and time equalize all things...Louis and Dorothy are alike dust." The comparison between Louis XIV and Osborne is flattering to Osborne, but off-balance, since there was certainly a power difference between them—just as there might be between Osborne and the shepherdesses she bantered with near her family's estate. Disturbingly, the equalization of Time and History is expressed in terms of dust and death. Osborne is granted a pseudo-apotheosis where the reward of death is that it is more illuminating to read her sprightly letters than accounts of state.

On the other hand, Macaulay's career demonstrates that he was sincere in his commitment to social history. In a 1828 essay about history, Macaulay affirms that the ideal historian, in addition to chronicling military gains and losses, "would intersperse the details which are the charm of historical romances." According to the writer of the Guardian, Macaulay read history for the sake of the "unwritten romances in which he delighted." However, Macaulay's approach may represent an unhealthy idealization of historical figures, or a tendency to focus on the quaint and insubstantial. Walter Raleigh, for example, recognized Macaulay's tendency to emphasize personal, quirky details when writing history, a tendency to romanticize he perceived as a weakness.

20 Macaulay, 426-427.

21 Cited by Owen Dudley Edwards in Macaulay, 129.


23 Sir Walter Raleigh notes, "This 'castle building,' this romancing with the past, was his method in literature." See "Macaulay," in On Writing and Writers (London: Edward Arnold, 1926), 172.
The emphasis on social history in Macaulay's essay on William Temple is explicitly gendered. Macaulay's method when considering Temple is to read the evidence and condemn. When dealing with Osborne, he praises her character without looking for evidence to the contrary. In fact, Dorothy Osborne becomes the recipient of the highest gallantry, expressed in the language of courtship. Courtenay, when he reprinted some of Osborne's letters, had proclaimed himself her "servant" and, possibly to prevent the accusation that Tories are better wooers than Whigs, Macaulay takes a deep, stately bow of his own:

Mr. Courtenay proclaims that he is one of Dorothy Osborne's devoted servants, and expresses a hope that the publication of her letters will add to the number. We must declare ourselves his rivals.²⁴

Absurdly, this battle is no longer that of scholarly or political supremacy but rather a mock-contest for the affections of a long-dead female author, couched in a tone of jocular chivalry.

This romantic rivalry marks the beginning of the contest of male critics to appreciate—and thus define—Dorothy Osborne. Some fifty years after Macaulay's essay appeared, Edward Abbott Parry published an article where he termed himself one of the "brother servants of Dorothy."²⁵ He had read the passage from Macaulay praising Osborne, and was led to consult Courtenay's appendix. He wrote a sketch of the love affair of Dorothy Osborne in 1886 for The English Illustrated Magazine and then produced a full edition of the letters in 1888. For all of his fraternal association with male appreciators of Osborne (as a "brother suitor"), Parry struggles to establish his superiority as a critic. This takes the form

²⁴ Macaulay, 427.

²⁵ Edward Abbott Parry, "Dorothy Osborne," in The English Illustrated Magazine (1885-86), 475.
of the correction of what he felt to be Macaulay's excesses. Macaulay had commented in 1838 that Osborne's letters were not "at all the worse for some passages in which raillery and tenderness are mixed in a very engaging namby-pamby."²⁶ Parry brings him up short for misunderstanding the true nature of the letters, and their author:

Macaulay hardly appears to be sufficiently aware of the sympathetic womanly nature of Dorothy, and the dignity of her disposition; so that he is persuaded to speak of her too constantly from the position of a man of the world praising with patronising emphasis the pretty qualities of a school-girl.²⁷

Parry's point about the condescension in Macaulay's rhetoric is valid. However, because he does not discuss Osborne as a writer, or in terms of her action on the public stage, but whether she is womanly or girlish, he remains within masculinist paradigms.

In producing his édition of Osborne's letters, Parry claims to provide knowledge of "domestic trivialities," as Macaulay had wished:

Here are, indeed, many things of no value to Dryasdust and his friends, but of moment to us, who look for and find true details of life and character in almost every line. And above all things, here is a living presentment of a beautiful woman, pure in dissolute days, passing quiet hours of domestic life amongst her own family, where we may all visit her and hear her voice, even in the very tones in which she spoke to her lover.²⁸

With a unique mixture of poignant devotion and maddening presumption, Parry implies that, through his edition, reading is akin to actual conversation. This is an even more striking claim when combined with Parry's assertion that he has achieved a level of intimacy for which Macaulay had been yearning. Is Parry attempting a bit of belated wish-fulfilment on

²⁶ Macaulay, 428.

²⁷ Parry, introduction to Letters from Dorothy Osborne to Sir William Temple, 19.

²⁸ Ibid., 21.
Macaulay's behalf? Or is he showing that, in producing a full text, he could achieve what Macaulay wanted but could not do? Macaulay is a scholarly and romantic rival whom he simultaneously longs to please and surpass.

There is a fair amount of self-dramatization in Parry's article. He stingly describes himself as "a menial, drawing aside with difficulty, the heavy, dusty curtain of intervening ages which has veiled from human eyes the beautiful figure of Dorothy Osborne." Not only are the effects of time reversible, but the contemplation of a seventeenth-century female author becomes an opportunity for nineteenth-century male spectatorship; the imagery is that of a *voyeur*. Continuing in this line, the reviewer in the *Spectator* claims that readers of the letters will enjoy an "intimate acquaintance" with Osborne.

Women were involved in the early reception of Osborne’s letters, although it is undeniably true that the three early male critics were more powerful voices in shaping Osborne than any of her female appreciators. The two most notable women involved in Osborne’s early reception express objections to the way she is described by male critics, but also support the endeavours of male critics.

Without the intervention of Sara Rose Longe, who transcribed the letters anonymously, Parry's edition would not have been possible, since the letters were owned and controlled by the Osborne descendants. Longe was the daughter-in-law of Mr. Longe of

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29 Parry, "Dorothy Osborne," 478.


31 However, since many of the periodical reviews were anonymous, and women did act as reviewers and journalists, it is impossible to know how many of the early reviewers of Osborne’s letters were women.
Coddenham, who had control over the letters. Before Parry even considered a full edition of Osborne's letter, and shortly after his article appeared in *The English Illustrated Magazine*, Longe wrote Parry a letter expressing how she felt about his article. Parry included parts of Longe's letter in his autobiography, and one senses a combination of acquiescence and resistance to Parry's interest in Osborne:

*My first* feeling on seeing 'Dorothy Osborne' in the Illustrated Magazine was one of anger, so much has she been to me the last 20 years; till I saw with what a tender loving feeling for her memory you wrote and then I could not rest till I wrote to you...I worked, encouraged by what Macaulay said in his essay on Sir William Temple, to publish them, or get some one to do so, but Mr. Longe would not allow me, though his father had allowed Mr. Courtenay to do so, who was a stranger.

At all events Dorothy became *my* Dorothy. When I had copied the letters I spared no trouble to learn all I could...I never speak of them to the Longes, and even my husband has never entered into the intense pleasure they are to me. I cannot help writing as if I knew you, it is such a strong bond of sympathy. The last two lines are what drew me to you—you thanking God that such a woman lived and died in those times.  

Parry reports that, in her next letter, the woman who could not bring herself to share her experience of Osborne's letters even with her husband "had already determined that all her labours of the last twenty years were to be placed at the disposal of a stranger to do as he willed with them." Parry then edited his edition using only Longe's copies. Parry acknowledges the "patient, single-hearted toil" of "my fellow-servant...the unknown, whose modesty alone prevents me from changing the title of fellow-servant to that of fellow-

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33 Parry, *My Own Way*, 130.

34 Parry adds: "although Mrs. Longe's handwriting was not very easy to read, yet there was no doubt that the copies had been made with great fidelity and care." See *My Own Way*, 131.
editor" but his acknowledgement comes only after Longe's death. Longe is portrayed as a modest woman in keeping with her ancestor, careful of her reputation. As Kenneth Parker notes, "while Parry scrupulously records Mrs Longe's central importance to the whole enterprise, it is nevertheless important to emphasize how the operation of patriarchy in particular, and of late-nineteenth-century 'gentility' in general, deprived her of the opportunity to become the first editor of the letters."

In many ways, Longe reacted like the male critics did, casting Osborne in romantic terms, or at the very least, possessive terms: "her" Dorothy. However, instead of fighting for editorial control, she handed it over to Parry, swayed by his idealized vision of Osborne.

Another woman, the novelist Charlotte Dempster, was not so eager to accept Parry's editorial vision. In 1888, Dempster reviewed Parry's edition in The Edinburgh Review, the periodical where Macaulay's review of Courtenay had appeared. Dempster is more critical than most reviewers. She is hard on Parry for his fussy notes, which she finds intrusive: "their style is rather affected." Parry's "gushing and self-conscious style" is inappropriate when contrasted to Osborne's frank plainness of tone; his notes do not reflect "the dignity of an English gentlewoman." Dempster would like a less heavily mediated access to Osborne,

35 Parry, introduction to Letters from Dorothy Osborne to Sir William Temple, 31.
36 See Parker, ed., Letters to Sir William Temple, 14.
38 Dempster, 519. She is not, however, critical of Parry's modernization of Osborne's spelling, which was done to make the letters easier for the "average reader" and for Americans. See
and challenges Parry's earlier description of himself as a "menial." Parry has not acted as a menial: his editorial presence is too conspicuous.

"Dorothy is really a lily that asks for no gilding," Dempster sallies, "the charm of this volume consists not in what is said of her, but in what she says of herself." In his preface to the letters, Parry had noted that he had a "mortal horror" of pedantic footnotes and opted for notes before each letter40 but Dempster claims that notes of any kind are unnecessary. In part, this is because Dempster was content with Macaulay's portrayal of Osborne: "To all readers of Macaulay's matchless essays Miss Osborne has long been so well known that there was not much left to say about her."41 Dempster objects to Parry's intervention in Osborne's text, and believes Parry has muddied the picture of Osborne, yet Dempster also approves wholeheartedly of Macaulay's remarks about Osborne, which are in many ways as heavy-handed. Dempster challenges editorial control but supports Macaulay's monopoly over Osborne's reputation.

Dempster's remarks about the obfuscating quality of Parry's notes prefigure current feminist critiques of editing, which defend the words of a female author against editorial intervention, frequently male.42 While editing the letters of Lady Arbella Stuart (published

My Own Way, 131.

39 Dempster, 519.

40 Parry, introduction to Letters from Dorothy Osborne to Sir William Temple, 20.

41 Dempster, 519.

42 One example of a feminist critique of the construction of female authors by male editors in Susan Kirkpatrick, "Towards Feminist Textual Criticism: Thoughts on Editing the Work of Coronado and Avallaneda," in The Politics of Editing, eds. Nicolas Spadaccini and Jenaro Talens
in 1996 by Oxford University Press) Sara Jayne Steen ruled out the use of prefatory notes in her edition:

    the Renaissance woman's voice will be continually interrupted as the reader switches between text and notes, and the reader's reading shaped by the editor's comments.⁴³

Assuming, as Steen certainly does, that doing justice to the author herself is of key importance,⁴⁴ the imperative for editor, critic and reader is to facilitate access to a writer's unveiled personality—or to get as close as possible. Unlike the Victorian critics, Steen acknowledges that there are limitations to the closeness she can achieve to an author, though continuing to stress as much fidelity as possible to the author during the editing process.

The nineteenth-century responses to Osborne show that the editorial and critical process involves the construction of an authorial character, in this case a highly gendered character.⁴⁵ The historical distance which separates us from the Victorian critics makes their preconceptions seem transparent, and leave the raw struggles of critical control exposed.⁴⁶

(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992): 125-139.


⁴⁴ Steen writes, "I feel a responsibility to a woman...who once existed in bodily form, walked on rush mats, laughed, and put her pen to paper. I want her to speak as directly as possible across the cultural and linguistic barriers that separate us." See "Behind the Arras," 231.

⁴⁵ This is the same phenomenon that Mary Ellmann pointed out in her study of the gendered nature of literary criticism, although she was mainly concerned with contemporary writers. See Thinking About Women (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968).

⁴⁶ Although there are struggles within the ranks of the Victorian-Edwardian critics, there are clearly common threads between them.
All of the early critics, for example, were seeking to affirm Osborne both within gender normatives and as paradigmatically British. "The soundness of the English nature was in her," the reviewer for the *Atlantic Monthly* stated approvingly.47 One author assured his readers, "No more delightful ideal of British girlhood ever existed than Dorothy Osborne."48

Late nineteenth-century critics were able to accommodate Osborne in part because she was seen as the embodiment of a unified England. She represents the continuation of British girlhood even in time of crisis; her life was quiet and untroubled enough that love could be her only concern. She took no part in the English Civil War. It is true that Osborne was not as committed politically as her royalist father Peter Osborne, who held Castle Cornet in Guernsey at great personal cost. As a woman, she did not bear arms. However, there is ample evidence from the letters that Osborne was heavily affected by the war.

The Victorian-Edwardian critics ignore Osborne's allusions to England's unhappy situation, the way in which the metaphor of England no longer works:

I have noe End's nor noe designes nor will my heart ever bee capable of any; but like a Country wasted by a Civill warr, where two opposeing Party's have disputed theire right soe long till they have made it worth neither of theire conquest's, tis Ruin'd and desolated by the long striffe within it to that degree as twill bee usefull to none (119).

England is not the same; she is not the same; she and her nation are both diminished. Perhaps Osborne is merely using a romantic trope to signify that her prolonged courtship has unsettled her repose as much as a war would have. However, her choice of metaphor is


48 "The Light Reading of our Ancestors." *The Quarterly Review* 171 (1890), 467.
telling. How could Osborne be a model of British girlhood if she keeps saying that England no longer exists as it did before?

There is nothing of danger in the nineteenth-century vision of Osborne. She is not threatening; nor is she threatened. Nineteenth-century critics do not acknowledge that much of her writing circles around the possibility that she will make the wrong choice, and pay dearly for it; they discount her haunted fretfulness and melancholy. Instead, she is transformed into an honorary Victorian lady despite polite murmuring about her historical interest. As a paradigmatic Victorian lady, she is modest, loyal, and retiring. Her domestic role brings herself—and everyone else—happiness.

To nineteenth-century critics, the relationship between Osborne and Temple is transcendent. Witness, as one example, the attitude of the reviewer in the *Temple Bar*:

"From that spirit-region in which the souls of Dorothy and Temple met and intermingled, how foolish and foreign looked the world of outsiders, eligible suitors, prudent relations and all their admonitions!"\(^{49}\) Parry's worship of Osborne as a pure soul inspires an invocation to God in gratitude for sending Osborne to earth. The credit for her personality and letters rests ultimately in a divine source:\(^{50}\)

She herself is the picture and the painter of it; the historian of her own history. But not even to her, are the real thanks due; these must be humbly offered to Him from whom she came, to represent


\(^{50}\) This is the invocation to God that Sara Rose Longe appreciated so much, and that she took as a mark of Parry's sincerity.
"A holy woman and the perfect wife."\textsuperscript{51}

In Parry's hands, as Charlotte Dempster implied, Osborne is anything but her own historian. By describing her as both the subject and object of her own discourse, Parry appears to grant her full control, the control one would associate with the narrator of an autobiography. However, Osborne also functions as an illustration of the fruition of English girlhood into marriage. The edition of letters Parry edited is dedicated to his daughter: "To my daughter Helen/ This Volume is Dedicated/ Exempli Gratia."\textsuperscript{52} If Osborne did not function as the "holy woman and perfect wife" it would certainly be difficult (as a Victorian) to recommend her to your daughter.

In fact, Osborne is a demanding and self-aware participant in marriage negotiations. She spells out what she wants in a husband by scornfully dismissing those who do not fit the bill; she cautiously ascertains that Temple has enough money to support her; she expects him to engage in a highly involved dialogue on the nature of love and friendship; she demands material tokens of love and seems in many ways to set the rules for the courtship. It is particularly difficult to understand how the Victorians rationalized her defiance of her possessive brother Henry Osborne, who sought to block her marriage to Temple, except insofar as they saw her brother's actions as unreasonable. Osborne tries to conform to many of the expectations of her society, and to present herself as virtuous and circumspect as she writes Temple; however, she has a clear idea of what she expects for herself as well.

\textsuperscript{51} Parry, "Dorothy Osborne," 478.

\textsuperscript{52} As well, Parry named his second daughter "Dorothy." He cites a letter from Sara Rose Longe where she expressed her delight that he chose this name: "quite natural and a beautiful name and \textit{association} for her as she grows up." See \textit{My Own Way}, 134.
It is tempting to scorn the views of the Victorian-Edwardian critics as purely patronizing, to see them as failing to understand what we ourselves can describe more correctly in the light of new historical information, or the clearer theoretical lenses through which we view Osborne. However, it is worth pausing to consider the particular virtues of the Victorian critics of Osborne, who are nothing if not appreciative. They did not shunt her to the side; they eagerly flocked to read her writing. Although Parry's hyperbolic tone borders on a disturbing obsession, and Macaulay's affection is infantilising, the enthusiasm of these critics is bound to be familiar to current critics who have been enriched and energized by the appearance or reappearance of early modern texts written by women.53

However, we may share more than gratitude about the recovery of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century authors. We may have inherited some of their critical prejudices, as is evident, for example, in Virginia Woolf's remarks on Osborne. Though Woolf differs from the Victorians in seeing Osborne in conflict, rather than harmony, with her gender, she is retiring and unwilling to speak out, as opposed to the flamboyantly dressed, public and publishing Margaret Cavendish:

Dorothy, who was sensitive and melancholy, the very opposite of the Duchess in temper, wrote nothing. Letters did not count. A woman might write letters while she was sitting by her father's sick-bed. She could write them by the fire whilst the men...

53 I was very moved by a passage in Parry's autobiography, My Own Way, where he speaks of identifying the individuals in Osborne's letters—without the help of the DNB: "There was no 'Dictionary of National Biography' in those days, and it was a much harder task to discover who, in the seventeenth century, was who, than it is to-day" (132). Parry's feat is quite impressive given the difficulty of following the specific references in Osborne's letters even when individuals have been identified.
talked without disturbing them.\textsuperscript{54}

More than half a century after Woolf's brief sketch of Osborne, feminist critics dwell on the way that Osborne fulfilled the role of a private woman. Her negative response to Margaret Cavendish is repeatedly quoted, almost as a kind of soundbite.\textsuperscript{55} It seems an injustice to Dorothy Osborne that her negative vision of Cavendish is the remark for which she is remembered,\textsuperscript{56} especially since she was comfortable with at least one other female author, Margaret of Valois, and her dislike of Cavendish may have been an exception rather than a rule.\textsuperscript{57} Furthermore, as I argue in my chapter about Osborne's dreams of retreat, Osborne's desire for privacy is motivated by a complex set of cultural and religious influences, representing not mere reaction to societal pressures, but a self-conscious and

\textsuperscript{54} Virginia Woolf, \textit{A Room of One's Own} (1929) (London: Grafton Books, 1977), 60.


\textsuperscript{57} Osborne says of the "Reyne Marguerite: "I think she had a good deale of witt" (21).
thoughtful vision of how a life should be lived.

Another trace of the Victorian vision of Osborne is found in the remarks of her most recent editor, Kenneth Parker, whose edition appeared in 1987. Parker is generally a skillful and sensitive editor, well attuned to historical forces bearing on Osborne and the letters. However, he displays a strong sentimentality at times which is worthy of a Victorian critic, emphasizing Osborne’s ability to smooth over social difficulties. For example, he argues that Osborne mediates skilfully between "apparently contradictory positions" in a search to integrate her complex needs and desires. She is able to "do justice to the demands of those around her, yet to retain her sense of her own integrity as a woman—a feminist before feminism." Parker’s acknowledgement of the contradictory nature of Osborne's desires is sophisticated and nuanced, but his confidence that she is able to work skillfully through these contradictions seems less intuitive.

In this dissertation, I will engage with many of the same problems which preoccupied the Victorian critics, and which continue to be manifested in Osborne's reception. I will consider what seems to be almost a sacrificial gesture of giving up a courtship that she claims means more to her than anything else, and try to ascertain the type of balance she tries to establish between herself and other people. In following this line of inquiry, I would like to avoid reinscribing the Victorian vision of a heroine whose charm lies in her modesty and self-effacement.

To avoid such a reinscription I have tried, first of all, to explore Osborne's own opinions on passion, insofar as they are expressed in the letters. While I have been interested

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in the social forces which threatened to thwart her courtship, I believe that Osborne was by no means passively responding to them. As I describe her responses to the adversity which beset her courtship, I emphasize the strategies she used to cope with it. On the other hand, I do not assume that the forces which thwarted her desires were easy to surmount, and that she was uniformly successful in doing so. In placing Osborne within seventeenth century discourses (religious, cultural, literary) I add a historical dimension to the oscillation of desire and renunciation. My reading of Osborne is marked by the inability to be as confident as the Victorian critics were in ascertaining either Osborne’s character or the reasons for renouncing her desire at a crucial moment in the courtship. This dissertation is an attempt to explore what is ultimately a mysterious gesture of self-denial.
Chapter Two  
Breaking the Glasses: Desire and Renunciation in Osborne’s Letters

I am dead, she thought. I will continue to walk through life but will be dead, sober and unscathed, because nothing will ever touch me again. I will be a spinster with a bun, wearing the same coat with a loose hem...  
-Susan Minot, Folly

The art of losing isn’t hard to master  
-Elizabeth Bishop, "One Art"

In her letters, Dorothy Osborne describes her desire as focused on a single object: William Temple. During a painful crisis in the courtship, Osborne argues that, instead of pursuing their union, the couple should dissolve their romantic tie. Osborne’s wrenching letters of renunciation are hermeneutically rich: a convergence of a wide range of influences and biographical pressures. In the rest of this dissertation, I will explore this renunciation of cherished desires as a response to societal and cultural pressures that appear throughout the letters. I will trace the factors that contributed to her crisis of faith: a tangled set of economic, political, literary and religious influences, including (but hardly limited to) negative models of marriage relationships she sees around her, extreme pressures from within her family, and the fear of separation due to bodily illness. In the process, I will reveal Osborne’s letters as a complex document showing the interplay of fondly cherished desires and pressures which challenge those desires.

Osborne’s letters of renunciation shed light on the way an early modern woman might conceive of the place of passion in her life, in particular the need to keep inordinate desire in check. Feminist critics of all schools have interrogated the role of
emotional/romantic ties in contemporary women's lives, the gendered nature of emotional labour, and the balance women must seek between personal autonomy and romantic/sexual attachment. Such considerations might fruitfully be extended backwards to an earlier historical moment; a more complex and historically nuanced explanation of the specific nature of women's experience of passion in the early modern period could emerge. In Osborne's case, the desire to control her passions might be explained by ways which include—but extend beyond—the concerns of her feminine gender. The extremity—even the melodrama—of Osborne's articulation of the need to dissolve the courtship is striking. Why does Osborne lose hope in the middle of the courtship? Why does she express her anxieties in such colourful terms, in stronger language than in the rest of her courtship?

Osborne's letters can be described as a text about attachment; the letters deepen attachment while attempting to curtail the excesses of attachment. Exclusivity of desire, and the degree to which one should indulge a personal predilection for a single object of desire, are persistent concerns for Osborne and Temple.

It is necessary to address the issue of renunciation in Osborne's letters because her reception has always followed such a line. The Victorian critics, almost without exception, were intrigued with the crisis in the courtship that unfolded in Letters 48-52; their view of the matter tends to be that the renunciatory act showed great depth of feeling on Osborne's part, but was not an active threat to the courtship. Thomas Peregrine

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Courtenay, for one, is not convinced by Osborne's act of renunciation:

She tells her lover to forget her, but adds, that if he must come to her, she will be glad to see him; she asks him to think no more of her, and assures him that she shall love nobody but him. She tells him of suitors rejected for his sake, and urges him to marry another...these specimens of resignation are curiously framed to ensure their own failure.²

The reviewer from *The Spectator* finds relief in the fact that the renunciation would not by any means be conclusive: "all her arguments failed, of course, to have any real influence on her lover...she returns to her old frank expression of affection, and confesses that she never had the least hope of wearing out her passion."³ Not only was Osborne's renunciation selfless, but she was ready to be reclaimed at any moment. Temple is never at risk at losing his position because Osborne is unfailingly loyal. As the Victorian-Edwardian critics tell the story, Osborne unites stoic resignation to events with the necessary finesse to achieve a form of compromise with her society.⁴ Whether Victorian critics transformed her into a suitable heroine for the period or whether her letters do exemplify these qualities is an open-ended question, and a reason for studying the letters in terms of their renunciatory nature.

Osborne's cycle of desire and renunciation finds its origin in her exclusive

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³ "Dorothy Osborne's Love Letters." *Spectator* 61 (May 26th, 1888), 721.

⁴ Osborne herself remarks that her loyalty was unwavering. After Temple has won her back, she affirms: "I never had the least hope of wearing out my passion, nor to say truth much desyre..." (127). It is possible, however, that her remark is provoked by relief once the crisis has passed. Victorian critics explained the letters of renunciation as mere products of physical and mental exhaustion, rather than as the outcome of a very real struggle.
desire and single-mindedness of purpose. She protests, for example, that Temple is her only possible source of contentment:

nothing can alter the resolution I have taken of settling my whole stock of happinesse upon the affection of a person that is deare to mee whose kindenesse I shall infinitly preffer before any other consideration whatsoever, and I shall not blush to tell you, that you have made the whole world besydes soe indifferent to mee, that if I cannot bee yours They may dispose mee how they please (27).

Osborne uses commercial metaphors (her “whole stock” of happiness) as well as the language of resolution. She cannot visualize a love union with another man, although she can imagine being married in an “indifferent” manner. As a woman with many suitors, Osborne’s decision to settle her hopes on Temple has both practical and spiritual significance. No one but Temple is an adequate suitor. When Temple asks her what qualities she wants in a marriage partner she (half jokingly) rules out the sorts of men she could not marry. She begins by explaining the “ingredients” that will make her “happy in a husband”:

first, as my Cousin Fr: say’s, our humors must agree, and to doe that hee must have that kinde of breeding that I have had and used that kinde of company, that is hee must not bee soe much a Country Gentleman as to understand Nothing but hawks and dog's and bee fonder of Either then of his wife, nor of the next sort of them whose aime reaches noe further then to bee Justice of peace and once in his life high Sheriff, who read noe book but Statut's and study's nothing but how to make a speech interlarded with Latin that may amaze his disagreeing poore Neighbours and fright them rather then perswade them into quietnesse; hee must not bee a thing that began the world in a free scoole, was sent from thence to the University, and is at his farthest when hee reaches the Inn's of Court, has noe acquaintance but those of his forme in these places, speaks the french hee has pickt out of Old Law's, and admires nothing but the Storry's hee has heard of the Revells that were kept there before his time; hee must not bee a Towne Gallant neither that lives in a Tavern and an Ordinary, that cannot imagin how an hower should bee spent without company unlesse it bee in sleeping, that makes court to all the Women hee sees, thinks they beleewe him and Laughs and is Laught at Equaly; Nor a Traveld Mounsieur whose head is all feather inside and outside,
that can talk of nothing but dances and Duells, and has Courage Enough to were slashes when every body else dy's with cold to see him; hee must not bee a foole of noe sort, nor peevish nor ill Natur'd nor proude nor Coveteous and to all this must bee added that he must Love mee and I him as much as wee are capable of Loveing (105).

The passage is light and frolicsome, but it nonetheless articulates serious hopes, and satirizes what she finds inadequate. While the description of the laughable men she scorns is reminiscent of humours characters from Renaissance drama, filled with stock figures, her descriptions are by no means arbitrary. Osborne contrives her list to amuse Temple, and tailors the list to be everything he is not.

Osborne’s exclusive devotion to Temple is by no means unique; it is a commonplace of romantic discourse. The French romances on which Osborne doted stressed exclusive devotion to a lover in their code of honour. Scudéry’s Cyrus was devoted only to his beloved Mandana, and faced ten tomes of obstacles and eschewed other amorous involvements for her love. In the romances, women characters make explicit statements about the complete devotion they expect to command. The character Doralize in *Le Grand Cyrus* makes great demands of any man who dares approach her:

> Je trouve que de quelque façon que je regarde la chose, il ne faut point aimer celuy qui a desia aimé...la grande difficulté est de trouver tout ensemble vn honneste

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5 This passage has been anthologized, probably because it is an example of virtuosic writing. For example, see Peter Washington, ed, *Love Letters* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 136-137.

6 Temple apparently commented on this lengthy, fussy list. As Osborne notes, “You are not the first that has told mee I knew better what qualities I would not have in a husband, then what I would” (109). She goes on to note that “it was more pardonable in them, I thought you had understood better what kinde of person I liked then any body else could posibly have don, and therfor did not think it necessary to make you that discription too” (109-110).
homme qui n'ait rien aimé, & qui n'aimé rien que moy.7

It is not enough that her lover is faithful; he must be untouched by other emotional attachments.8 Osborne expresses approval of Doralize’s opinion rather than finding it extreme:

you will meet wth one Doralize in the Story of Abradate and Pantheé, the whole Story is very good but her humor makes the best part of it. I am of her opinion in most things that she say’s, in her Character of L’honnest home that she is in search of, and her resolution of receiveing noe heart that had bin offerd to any body else. pray tell mee how you like her... (109).

Doralize’s wit contributes significantly to Osborne’s enjoyment of the character: "her humor makes the best part of it." However, Osborne uses Doralize primarily to coax something akin to agreement from Temple regarding exclusive desire, and what is important in courtship. She exacts a commitment similar to that of Doralize. When Osborne tells Temple that she has placed all hopes of happiness in him, she implies that she could never effortlessly move to another attachment. We will see that Osborne contradicts herself on this matter, especially in jest, but for the most part, she expresses an unhesitatingly exclusive love. Anything less than total commitment would be an insult to


8 This demand for exclusivity surfaces in *The Female Quixote*, when Arabella expresses her anger at Sir George for shifting his emotions to a new woman. She exclaims, “You will never persuade any reasonable Person, that your being able to lose the Remembrance of the fair and generous Sydimiris, in your new passion for Philonice, was not an Excess of Levity: But your suffering so tamely the Loss of this last Beauty, and allowing her to remain in the Hands of her Ravisher, while you permit another Affection to take Possession of your Soul, is such an Outrage to all Truth and Constancy, that you deserve to be ranked among the falsest of Mankind.” See Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote, or, The Adventures of Arabella* (1752), ed. Margaret Dalziel (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 250.
the sanctity of love itself. The heroes and heroines of romances, for example, would not allow themselves to kindle a new desire in the ashes of the old. Love objects are unique and irreplaceable.

Another literary artifact which might have influenced Osborne's attitude toward fidelity and constancy was Sir William Berkeley's The Lost Lady. Osborne remarks to Temple that she will play the title role at an amateur production in 1654: "they will have me Act my Part in a Play, the Lost Lady it is, and I am she, pray God it bee not an ill Omen" (172-173). Osborne was referring to the character of Milesia. Milesia is apparently murdered at the beginning of the play by her uncle, but, at the end, it is revealed that she has escaped his plot to murder her. Seeking revenge, Milesia appears in the play disguised as a Moorish woman, skilled in divination. At one point, it appears as though her beloved, Lysicles, is courting another woman, Hermione. She disguises herself as a ghost, and accuses Lysicles of infidelity, but he explains that he pretended to love Hermione for the sake of her friend Eugenio, to distract her father from pursuing marriage negotiations with Eugenio's rival Lord Ergasto. Hermione, herself faithful to her lover Eugenio despite being forced to marry Lord Ergasto, has rebuffed Lysicles' suit by arguing that he should remain faithful to the memory of his dead mistress:

bee the example of a constant love,
And let not your [malitious] Milesias ashes shrinke
with a new Peirceing cold wth they will feel,
[feele] ith instant that your hart shalbe consenting
to any new affection, and glie me leaue to say,
your soule can nere omit a Noble loue
if it hath banisht her's you memory

Milesia and Lysicles are able to re-establish their bond of love because of Lysicles' fidelity, and his belief that Milesia was irreplaceable. Hermione, in love with Eugenio, is not even able to dissemble love for another. Fidelity becomes closely associated with virtue in general.

Given that she associates Temple with well-being itself, and that she sees love objects as sacred and irreplaceable, Osborne's move to dissolve her connection to Temple in a moment of despair is remarkable. Courtenay and the Victorians believed that this move lacked sincerity, but the letters of renunciation seem in many ways very powerful and sincere documents. Here is Osborne's first formulation of the need for the couple to dissolve their relationship:

I have seriously considerd all our misfortunes, and can see noe End of them but by submitting to that which wee cannot avoyde and by yeelding to it, break the force of a blowe which if resisted brings a certain Ruine (114).

As I will be discussing further, rhetoric about the avoidance of pain suffuses Osborne's letters. She bases her argument on the inevitability of failure in her courtship, and so tries to encourage Temple not to pursue a fruitless endeavour. As well, Osborne expresses guilt about the inordinate desire of the couple:

Wee have lived hitherto upon hopes soe Aïrye that I have often wonderd how they could support the weight of our misfortunes; but passion gives a Strengh [sic] above Nature, wee see it in mad People, (and not to flatter our selves) ours is but a refined degree of madnesse; what can it bee else, to be lost to all things in the world but that single Object that takes up on's ffancy, to loose all the quiet and repose of on's life in hunting after it, when there is soe litle likelyhood of ever gaineing it, and soe many, more probable, accidents, that will infallibly make us misse of it; And (which is more then all) tis being Masterd by that, which Reason & Religion teaches us to governe, and in that onely gives us a preheminence
Osborne's formulation is adept and heartfelt, with vivid descriptions of "Aïrye" hopes and the strength of "mad People." It underscores the strong role that rationality plays in the letters of renunciation. Osborne makes a distinction between human beings, capable of rational behaviour, and animals, hoping to steer Temple along a virtuous course worthy of rational humanity. Folly resides not in desire itself but an excessive degree of desire: "an unfortunate fancy to things that are in themselv's innocent, till wee make them otherwise by desyreing them too much" (116).

To be sure, Osborne does not avoid passionate excess herself even when she argues against emotional excesses. While earnestly wishing to espouse a rational course, she finds herself drawn to a passionate one, as Sheila Ottway explains:

she is caught up between the poles of passion and reason; unable to commit herself entirely to either of these, she performs a balancing act in her uncertain progress towards her longed-for destination of conjugal union.10

Ottway's appraisal matches my analysis of Osborne's mediation between competing emotions and courses of action. Osborne's struggle is one which finds its analogue in other literary works: a balancing act which will play a role in Restoration tragedy, with struggles between love and honour. One's own wishes clash with societal imperatives.11


11 There is a large body of scholarship considering the interaction between love and honor in dramatic works from the Renaissance and Restoration. See, inter alia, Paul D. Green, "Theme and Structure in Fletcher's Bonduca." Studies in English Literature 22, 2 (Spring 1982): 305-316. See also Harry M. Solomon, "Tragic Reconciliation: An Hegelian Analysis of All for Love." Studies in Philology 81, 2 (Spring 1984): 185-211.
Osborne's wariness of the "madnesse" of passion surfaces throughout the courtship. At one point, Osborne asks Temple to modulate his hyperbolic declarations of love into something more subdued: "Love is a Terrible word, and I should blush to death if any thing but a letter accused mee on't, pray bee mercifull and lett it run friendship in my next Charge" (81). Her remark that she is unwilling to admit "love" face to face—that she should "blush to death" if love was mentioned other than in a letter—is enigmatic, possibly signifying that she is unwilling to express love to Temple directly. As often happens in the letters, Osborne draws attention to her own demure nature, a shyness which is simultaneously virtuous and sexually appealing. However, it is also possible that Osborne truly does wish to avoid a direct expression of feeling which might prove disturbing.

Mary Astell, writing at the end of the seventeenth century, argued that women's emancipation was predicated on rational self-development. Astell, in *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, encouraged women to turn away from frivolous pursuits to seek cultivation of the mind. Later, Mary Wollstonecraft showed how political status was based on ideas of rational capacity, a rationality which women could not achieve if society ill educated them. It would be overstating the case to say that Osborne was anticipating either of these thinkers. She would not have shared the political and social goals of a Wollstonecraft, though she did share part of the vision of the politically conservative Astell.\(^\text{12}\) I would argue, however, that Osborne, though not probing the nature of

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\(^{12}\) For a sense of Astell's Tory perspective, see *Political Writings*, ed. Patricia Springborg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Ruth Perry gives a balanced and nuanced vision of Astell throughout her biography, explaining that many of her ideas were protofeminist, but she
rationality in an organized fashion, makes her own actions an argument for rationality. The mere fact that she believed she could control her emotions displays her conviction that self-control was available to women.

In many ways, of course, the sort of self-discipline to which Osborne gravitates was conservative even for her time. Much of Osborne’s call for rationality is anything but emancipatory. Her rationality is deferential to those in power and is predicated on the disempowerment of her personal will. Giving up what you passionately desire is often an act of powerlessness and quiescence. As things stood in the early modern period, many social mechanisms acted on women, compelling them to give up what they deeply desired. I see Osborne’s renunciation as both an expression of powerlessness and an exercise of her highest power. In arguing that the couple should cease their willful behaviour. Osborne seeks self-mastery, but resigns vital, lively hopes. The renunciatory moments in the letters reveal, in some ways, a conservative perspective based on conformity to curtailing factors.

Osborne argues that the couple should not use the language of passion, but rather of friendship; she shies away from hyperbolic expressions of emotion. This argument contrasts intriguingly with the dramatic language of the letters of renunciation. Her language takes on a more hyperbolic tone than usual, a signal of her frayed emotional


state. She frequently uses interrogatory structures, and a great deal more spiritual imagery than she habitually employs. This is high drama. She frames the situation as having two possible outcomes: utter misery without Temple, or success in the courtship. There is no middle ground between successful passion and a barren life where she will "sacrifice my self int and live a walking misery till the only hope that would then be left mee, were perfected" (62). Even if Osborne's family compels her to marry, she will not compromise. Without Temple, existence is merely a long, somnolent wait for the merciful release of death (expressed with grim irony as the "only hope"). Osborne does, however, reject one extreme: suicide. She forbids Temple to give in to such a temptation:

"I would not have you insencible of our misfortun's but I would not neither that you should revenge them upon your self. noe, that show's a want of constancy...but tis certaine that there was never any thing more mistaken then the Roman Courage when they kill'd themselv's to avoyde misfortun's that were infinitely worse then death (75)."

This is another form of "constancy:" control and moderation of the passions. On the other hand, the "Roman Courage" is in some ways the softer option when contrasted with the deadened life Osborne expects without Temple. The only alternative to shared existence will be annihilation, which will be slow in coming. Neither romantic fulfillment nor the conclusion of desire will be possible. Osborne conspicuously displays her likely passivity in waiting for this death to Temple, making her prospects appear even more horrific.

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14 Temple also inveighs against "Self-murder" in his letter to the Countess of Essex, which he describes as the "greatest Crime" by "all human laws, as well as divine." Intriguingly, he also extends this prohibition to other forms of self-abuse such as neglect of health. See "Of the Excesses of Grief," Works. Volume the Third (London: Printed for J. Brotherton and W. Sewell...and the Executors of H. Lintot and T. Wotton, 1757), 510.
There is ongoing debate in the letters about whether it is desirable—or even possible—to live when the object of your love has died. Osborne and Temple debate the question about who should die first, and what it might mean for one member of the couple to die. Osborne comments:

I am soe farre from thinking you ill natured for wisheing I might not outlive you, that I should not have thought you at all kinde, if you had done otherwise; Noe, in Earnest I was never soe in love with my life, but that I could have parted with it upon a much lesse occasion then your Death, and 'twill be noe complement to you, to say it would bee very uneasy to mee then, since 'tis not very pleasant to mee now (25).

Osborne’s rhetoric relates to a discourse of mutual care which permeates the letters; she argues that their lives are entwined and mutually interdependent. After Temple’s death, her own life will have no value.

The brief prose romances Temple wrote between 1648 and 1650 (before Osborne wrote her letters) foreshadow such discussions about the death of a loved one, and may have influenced some of their remarks about romantic loss in the letters of 1652-54. All of the typical materials of romance are present in capsule form here. There are, for example, several meditations on absent and dead lovers. In “The Constant Desparado,” the adulterous lover Alidor, bereft of his beloved Callirea (who dies of a rapid fever), exclaims that existence is worthless without her:

*tis impossible to outlive the losse of my heart; having lost the Sunn wth gave them light I have no longer use of my eys, nor of my breath, since tis impossible it should serve mee for so many sighs as my misfortune deserves...how little pleasure I have in my selfe now I have no hopes of her and how little time I intend to linger out behind her...”

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15 See William Temple, The Early Essays and Romances of Sir William Temple, Bart. With the Life and Character of Sir William Temple by his Sister Lady Giffard, ed. G.C. Moore Smith
Even at this early juncture, the couple explored the interrelation of love and grief. As Temple writes, "the rigor Alidor had us'd to himselfe the little repose hee had taken since his Missresses death, in fine melancholy and anguish had so undermin'd his health, had so broken his body, that no longer able to resist the assaults of so many wooes hee was newly deceas'd." Alidor feels he has no choice but to invite death. Love and grief are closely aligned.

As she considers whether it is possible to find new love in the wake of romantic disappointment, Osborne contradicts herself at least once. Her desire for Temple is exclusive, unshakeable, and irreversible, yet she argues that the couple can—and must—wean themselves from the intensity of their emotional attachment. She invokes the example of a local widow:

there is a Gentlewoman in this Country that loved soe passionatly for sixe or seven years, that her freinds who kept her from marryeng, fearing her death consented to it, and within halfe a year her husband dyed, which afflicted her soe strangely nobody thought she would have lived, she saw noe light but candles in three year nor cam abroad in five, and now that tis some nine years past she is passionatly taken again with another and how long she has bin soe nobody knows but her self (121).

The woman's original zeal for marriage signals an extreme attachment that can only bode ill. The widow's struggle reflects Osborne's own struggle to marry against her family's will (although the widow's was even more dramatic, verging on death). Osborne is drawing on the comic trope (so evident in early modern and Restoration drama) of the

(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), 57. G.C. Moore Smith, in a footnote, explains that the title “The Constant Desparado” refers to “the Man Constant in Despair, the Inconsolable” (194).

16 Temple, Early Essays and Romances, 67.
widow who remarries,\textsuperscript{17} thus calling into question her devotion. The widow undergoes a deathlike state similar to the one that Osborne proposes for herself should union with Temple elude her; the fact that the widow recuperates so resoundingly from her sorrow contradicts Osborne's sense that there is no turning back from exclusive desire. Here, she stresses the elasticity of the human heart, its ability to recover from pain, and the rejuvenating capacity of new romance.

Osborne meditates on the risks of attachment—including separation by death, or more subtle and insidious emotional estrangements—while fiercely seeking union with another person. The Christian tradition, with its accompanying distrust towards earthly attachments of all kinds, had a great deal to do with renunciation of this nature. Christian writers of the period are almost ruthless in their injunctions to control the nature of attachment. Loss becomes, if anything, an opportunity to prove religious fidelity, emotional strength, and the capacity to discipline attachment. For example, Anne Bradstreet's "Upon the burning of our house, July 10th, 1666"\textsuperscript{18} demonstrates a haunting gratefulness at the test of loss: "I blest his Name y' gave + took./ That layd my goods now in y° dust" (14-15).

When it comes to dealing with attachments to people, many seventeenth-century thinkers are stern about the necessity of keeping human ties from developing into extreme

\textsuperscript{17} For an examination of the comedic stereotype of widows, and a material analysis of the conditions which bore on decisions about remarriage in the early modern period, see Barbara Todd, "The Remarrying Widow: A Stereotype Reconsidered." \textit{Women in English Society 1500-1800} (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), 54-92.

bonds. Margaret Charleton Baxter reflected: "Too strong love to any, though it be good in kind, may be sinful and hurtful in the degree. It will turn too many of your thoughts from God, and they will be too often running after the beloved creature."19 Ruth Perry describes Mary Astell’s anxiety about inordinate attachment to the women in her circle.20

Osborne's renunciation of the courtship would have been entirely appropriate within Christian paradigms, which is why she draws so thoroughly on Christian imagery. One function of an injunction against attachment, apart from directing the individual's attention up to God, is to preempt the pain of loss. Osborne feared attachment to a vulnerable human being. As she tries to convince Temple to break their union, Osborne comments on the transience of even the most successful unions: "A thousand accidents might have taken mee from you, and you must have borne it, why should not your owne resolution work as much upon you, as necessity and time do's infalibly upon all People?" (121). She feels the constant threat of decay, expressed almost organically as "necessity" and "time."

A great deal of Osborne's brooding fear of attachment can be traced to her melancholic disposition, which I will speak about at greater length later in the dissertation. Robert Burton, for one, described the keen anticipation of loss as one of the symptoms of melancholy. Burton offers the poignant example of Cotys, King of Thrace, who "brake a company of fine glasses presented to him, with his owne hands, lest he


20 Perry notes, "It was a problem which vexed her mightily, this 'strong Propensity to friendly Love' which she could not control." See The Celebrated Mary Astell, 137.
should be overmuch moved when they were broken by chance."21 Renunciation is proleptic, a form of emotional self-defense. One renounces the object of affection before investment becomes too overwhelming or irrevocable. When she is chiding Temple for his self-abuse, Osborne draws on a story from Herodotus. She compares herself with Amasis, King of Egypt, who broke off his friendship with Polycrates when it seemed inevitable that his enemies would vanquish him. Amasis could not bear to see his bosom friend meet an ignominious doom.22 If Temple does not take better care of himself, she will be compelled to practise a similar detachment:

well seriously either resolve to have more care of your self, or I renounce my freindship, and as a certain King...whoe seeing one of his Confederats in soe happy a condition, as it was not likely to last, sent his Ambassador presently to breake of the League betwixt them least hee should bee obliged to mourne the Change of his fortune if hee continued his freind, Soe I, with a great deale more reason do declare that I will noe longer bee a freind to one that's none to himself...

(12-13).

This renunciation, although hypothetical at this early stage in the courtship, comes to a climax in the letters of renunciation. As we have seen, Osborne uses the imagery of yielding to an inevitable blow as she mounts a case for renunciation.

Some of the sense of helplessness in the face of events which compel resignation is purely temperamental. G.C. Moore Smith draws a telling contrast between Osborne and Temple:

[Temple's] philosophical training forbade him to rail against Fortune. He too had his fits of melancholy, but he had his London friends and his tennis and could


22 I am indebted to G.C. Moore Smith for this identification.
keep his mind sane and generally hopeful...[Temple] had never had to apply his philosophy to any great trouble of his own, while Dorothy's was no theoretical system but one based on her long experience of life's crosses. It had taught her self-discipline but perhaps also had inclined her to see the future unlit by hope.23

Virginia Woolf commented, rather gloomily, that Osborne was "oppressed by a sense of fortune and its tyranny and the vanity of things and the uselessness of effort."24 Osborne herself seems aware of this aspect of her temperament, as she compares herself to the inhabitants of Greenland, who spend much of their life in darkness waiting for the sun to rise:

in Earnest any thing of good com's to mee like the sun to the inhabitants of Groenland, it raises them to life when they see it, and when they misse it it is not strange they Expect a night of half a yeer long (162).

She can respond to the sun of hope, but does not trust in it. She is impatient with the capriciousness of fortune, chiding it for its cruelty. Even a minor cause for complaint, her inability to come to town to visit Temple, becomes an opportunity to quibble with fortune:

I doe not knoe that ever I desyred any thing (earnestly) in my life but 'twas denied mee, and I am many times aрайed to wish a thing meerly least my fortune should take that occasion to use me ill (14-15).

Osborne is confident her endeavors will be in vain, and thus curtails her wishes. More than a modicum of self-pity lurks in these statements. However, her remark may be an implicit challenge to Temple to ensure that some of her hopes come true.

Did Osborne really expect to lose Temple? I would like briefly to explore the

23 G.C. Moore Smith, xli.

possibility that Osborne’s renunciatory gesture was, in some ways, calculated. To be sure, there is something conspicuously virtuous in Osborne’s renunciatory act. In telling Temple they need to give up their relationship, she may be mounting a bluff, and threatening him if he does not act. The narrative sweep of the letters, where Temple redoubles his effort to save the courtship after she seeks to dissolve it, implies a link between renunciative action and the ultimate triumph of desire.

Perhaps Osborne, living in a Christian culture, is following a Christian pattern, consciously or unconsciously. The cycle of denial and reward is replete with Christian implications. The most explicit formulation of the connection between loss and recuperation is found in Christ’s remark: “Whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it” (Luke 9:24). Osborne may have been trying to exploit this connection between loss and reward. Yielding up desire is, paradoxically, one way to assure that one’s desire will be fulfilled. Disempowerment is a move toward greater power; self-denial brings reward.

In making her gesture of renunciation, Osborne was likely also drawing on a courtship convention. Contemporaries of Osborne, especially women, made gallant gestures to give up treasured love relationships, claiming that they would not be willing to compromise the men they loved by continuing to burden them with an unwelcome engagement. Margaret Lucas, later the Duchess of Newcastle, wrote her future husband William Cavendish, expressing her willingness not to marry him if the marriage would prove harmful to his social position:

if you think you have don unadvisedly in promesis your self to me, send me word
and I will resing up all the intrist I have in you, though unwillingly; but what
would I not doe for any thing that may condues to your content; for heerafter if
you should repent, how unfortunat a woman should I be.²⁵

Despite her irregular orthography, the reserve and control of Margaret Lucas's
remarks show that to renounce one's dearest hopes is an act of magnanimous dignity, and
a self-consciously altruistic concern for the happiness of the loved one. It was unlikely
that William Cavendish, having received this letter, would act on Lucas's suggestion, in
part because she expresses her unwillingness to resign her "intrist" in him. Like Osborne,
Lucas tries to preserve the happiness of her love object by removing herself from his life,
but in the process binds herself more closely to him.

Osborne, after the moment of renunciation, comments that she would have been
willing to part with Temple for his own sake:

nay in Earnest if I could have hoped that you would bee soe much your owne
friend as to seek out a happinesse in some other person, nothing under heaven
could have sattisfyped mee like Entertaining my self with the thought of haveing
don you service in diverting you from a troublesome persuite of what is soe
uncertain; and by that, giveing you the occasion of a better fortune (127).

Osborne tries to impress Temple with her rationality and self-control, as well as holding
herself to her own standards.

Charles Taylor affirms that self-control in the West originated with increased
exploration of the inward self, an appraisal which resonates intriguingly with Osborne’s
letters. As private documents written to a lover, the letters are involved with the
exploration of internal states as Osborne unfolds her mind to Temple. Taylor claims that

²⁵ See William Cavendish, The Phanseys of William Cavendish Marquis of Newcastle
addressed to Margaret Lucas and Her Letters in Reply, ed. Douglas Grant (London: The Nonesuch
Press, 1956), 115.
due to the influence of Cartesian and neo-Stoic thought, the “strength, firmness, resolution, control” of the warrior-aristocratic societies was transmuted into the “inner domination of passion by thought.” Taylor’s formulation helps explain how Osborne’s inward tone and her drive toward self-control are connected. The neo-stoic movement Taylor describes and Osborne's own development are roughly contemporaneous phenomena. Osborne is indeed fighting battles—not military battles, but struggles to control passion. She wishes to do this both to respond to social pressures, and to fulfill goals of self formation. She wishes to discipline her passion because it is both a duty and a way of improving herself.

As Taylor points out, the assumption that the self can be actively shaped is itself a historically contingent development. In the wake of neo-Stoicism, the human agent is capable of self-remaking through “methodical and disciplined” action:

the ability to take an instrumental stance to one’s given properties, desires, inclinations, tendencies, habits of thought and feeling, so that they can be worked on, doing away with some and strengthening others, until one meets the desired specifications.


27 Taylor is interested in the beginnings of this movement. Fredric Jameson draws a link between a new imperative toward self-control and postmodernity: “Notions of a new kind of post-AIDS self-restraint, of a discipline necessarily directed toward the self and its desires and impulses; the learning of new habits of smallness, frugality, modesty, and the like; a kind of respect for otherness that sets a barrier to gratification—these are some of the ethical ideas and figures in terms of which new attitudes toward the individual and the collective self are proposed by a (postmodern) ecology.” See The Seeds of Time (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 47.

28 Taylor, 159-160.
Like the neo-stoics, Osborne seems to believe that searing desire and untrammeled will might be tamed. Osborne's wish for self-improvement was likely motivated more by Christianity than the Neo-Stoic and Cartesian ideas Taylor traces, but the end result is her belief that she must challenge herself to curb her unruly will and vaulting passions. Literary models could have played a role in Osborne's attempt to achieve constancy of temper. Osborne is interested both in restraining extreme emotion, as the French heroes and heroines do, and achieving a balanced temper where contingency cannot have too detrimental an effect.

As regards the control of emotion, Osborne seeks to achieve what Edmund Leites calls an ethic of "constancy," an ethic he associates with seventeenth-century Puritan thought. The constant temper, as opposed to the oscillating temper, is characterized by "steadiness of feeling, the reduction of self-involvement, and the restraint on open emotion." Constancy of temper is attained for one's own sake, but also to spare others the vagaries of one's extreme emotion. Equanimity of temper conducive to social harmony allows events to continue without unwelcome surprises or friction: "with an even temperament, one could count on oneself and others to maintain a calm demeanor." Although Leites tends to associate constancy of temper with seventeenth century dissenters, Osborne's interest in Jeremy Taylor, who had much in common with

29 Leites, 8.

30 Leites, 6.

31 Susan Dwyer Amussen criticizes Leites for his use of the Cambridge Platonists as representative of seventeenth-century Puritanism, remarking that "other puritan texts suggest a more emotional religious experience...an emotion rooted in the fear of damnation and hope of
dissenters, exposed her to similar values. As well, the Cambridge Platonists who influenced Temple might have had some direct or indirect bearing on this aspect of her thought. The attempt to attain constancy of temper relates to Osborne’s hopes of forestalling loss. For example, for Leites emotional moderation is “an asset in a world of active or potential enemies,” a means of preventing the self-revelation which might increase one’s vulnerability. We have already seen Osborne’s defensive attitude towards loss; Leites’s insights into the need for a constant or controlled temper when dealing with external threats are reminiscent of Osborne’s fears about losing all the people she values. To loosen one’s defenses against threatening circumstances is to invite disaster. In one of Temple’s early essays, he notes that hope can sometimes shake "the settled constancy of mind wherewith we should stand the shock, receive the charge of assured evills." It is better not to indulge in hope at all, so as not to unsettle one’s resolve to bear ill.

Even though she strives for constancy of temper, Osborne claims that she does not possess much of it. Her strength of resolve, she claims, is not derived from a natural equanimity:

nobody is more sensible of the least good fortune nor murmurs lesse at any ill then I doe, since I owe it meerly to custome and not to any

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election." See her review of For Better, for Worse: British Marriages 1600 to the Present, by John R. Gillis and Marriage and Love in England: Modes of Reproduction, 1300-1810, by Alan MacFarlane and The Puritan Conscience and Modern Sexuality, by Edmund Leites, The Journal of Modern History 60, 4 (December 1988), 756. Even the merest brush with the restless self-torture of a thinker like Bunyan in Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners confirms her impulse; religious faith did not necessarily bring repose to those who experienced it.

32 Leites, 163.

33 Temple, Early Essays and Romances, 139.
constancy in my humor or something that is better (162).

Osborne must strive to react in a controlled manner when facing ill fortune. Her reference to custom invokes the sense of habitual or acquired behavior. Again, we see her confidence that she can modify her personality and outlook.

The interaction between the need for self-control and moderation, and Osborne's inability to achieve a constant temper, is one of the main sources of tension in the letters. Just as she tries to be the most calm and rational, grief breaks through to mottle the smooth surface of her text with conflict and contradiction. Kate Lilley remarks of women's elegy in the period that it "engages persistently with the figuration of desire under the aspect of lack." This formulation (with its Lacanian overtones) does hold true for Osborne. The actual absence of her treasured lover is, as it will be in Roland Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse*, a source of mourning, and the possibility that the courtship will never reach fruition is a persistent threat for Osborne. Lilley could be speaking of Osborne when she notes that "a woman's desire to cancel desire, to seal off the potentially transgressive irruptions of grief...to perfect renunciation and self-discipline, is never entirely efficient." In women's elegies of the seventeenth century, the attempt at containment reveals the intensity of desirous emotions.

The management of grief in general is a theme in the letters, and continues in

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36 Lilley, 92.
letters written later in the Temples' marriage. Some of the remarks Osborne makes about disappointment and emotional recovery in her courtship letters are continued in letters of consolation written after their marriage. William and Dorothy Temple both wrote letters of consolation. A striking letter Temple wrote to the Countess of Essex on January 28th, 1674 discusses the death of her daughter. Temple chastises the Countess for the intensity of her mourning for her daughter, accusing her of acting as if this child were the only blessing she had ever received:

You will say perhaps that one thing was all to you, and your fondness of it made you indifferent to every thing else. But this, I doubt, will be so far from justifying you, that it will prove to be your fault as well as your misfortune. God Almighty gave you all the blessings of life, and you set your heart wholly upon one, and despise or undervalue all the rest: is this his fault or yours?37

Ardent desire for one object scorns a divine benevolence which has brought multiple blessings; it is "scornful to the rest of the world."38 The Countess's grief was acceptable at first, but has spiralled into excess. She has fallen into "a desperate melancholy" and is about to "throw away" her health or her life.39

In part because Temple had sympathies with the Epicurean school, he stressed the pleasures that the Countess was rejecting because of her inordinate grief. In Temple's view, there are too many pleasures in this life to justify a preoccupation with a single source of anguish. Temple points out that her life continues to be enriched by other

37 See William Temple, "Of the Excesses of Grief," Works, 505.
38 Temple, "Of the Excesses of Grief," 505.
39 Temple, Ibid., 503.
children, a husband, health, and compassionate friends. As well, death changes the object so that it becomes unrecognizable as the beloved form it once was:

the longest time that has been allowed to the forms of mourning, by the custom of any country, and in any relation, has been but that of a year; in which space the body is commonly supposed to be mouldered away to earth, and to retain no more figure of what it was.\textsuperscript{40}

The decay of the body and the cessation of attachment intersect: the end of corporeal existence should trigger relief from attachment. This pronouncement on Temple's part is mediated through convention (hence his reference to the "Custome of the Country") generalized for the explicit purpose of rendering individual pain less potent. The process of mourning is one which distances the mourner from the corporeal body, and from embodiment itself, removing the object. Literally nothing is left of the beloved.

Temple pronounces on the role of passion in human life:

All the precepts of Christianity agree to teach and command us to moderate our passions, to temper our affections towards all things below; to be thankful for the possession, and patient under the loss whenever he that gave shall see fit to take away.\textsuperscript{41}

This is icily platitudinous, perhaps reflecting the distance he feels from his past struggles with extreme emotion, as well as his distance from this other loss. Perhaps Temple had little capacity for the discipline of desire early in the courtship, and he became more capable of dealing with it later in his life and career. It is of particular interest to speculate as to whether Temple's later philosophy was influenced by Osborne's remarks in the letters, particularly her sense of the futility of grief, and the threat that grief poses to

\textsuperscript{40}Temple 508.

\textsuperscript{41}Temple 509.
health itself.

In the 1680s, Lady Temple wrote a letter of consolation to Christopher Hatton, Baron of Kirkby, then Governor of Guernsey, to soothe him and his third wife over the death of a child.\textsuperscript{42} Lady Temple notes, “noe Mother Ever lost a finer Childe,” but, as her husband had done in his letter to the Countess of Essex, Dorothy Temple enjoins Hatton to control his wife’s grief: “I hope your Lorships prudence will Indeavor to moderate it.” Lady Temple exhorts Hatton to remind his wife of the blessings she has been given: “Her condition will bee yet happyer then that of many parrents who have Lost more children and are out of hope of repairing their Losses in that Kinde.” Osborne’s rhetoric implies that she has suffered more intensely than Christopher Hatton’s wife, due to the many deaths of her own children. Osborne does acknowledge the pain of Hatton’s loss: “soe sensible an affliction will hardly admitt of any consolation till time and ye support of Gods grace have made way for it.” Yet her expectations remain those of a bystander who expects and requires painful wounds to heal. On the other hand, her earlier letters include the rhetoric of resignation directed to romantic loss in the courtship.

Projecting from these neo-stoical discussions of grief back into the letters, which focus on romantic grief, there are definite differences between the statements of later life and the romantic anguish of a pair in their early twenties. However, Osborne’s remarks about the need to control passion and restrain volition prefigure these later letters, and we learn a great deal about management of grief in the courtship from the later remarks about

\textsuperscript{42} This letter is unpublished. The manuscript is in the British Library. See Dorothy Temple, \textit{Letters to Lord and Lady Hatton}, circ. 1680-1699. 29, 569, ff. 327-335.
the proper way of approaching grief.

The eruption of passion despite attempts to control it is certainly a feature of Osborne's letters of renunciation. Just as she tries to mount a convincing argument in favour of rational self-containment, her own wishes come through. The situation of possible loss highlights the keenness of desire itself.\(^{43}\)

Osborne employs a traditional Christian argument against improper passions, borrowing from cultural and literary examples around her. However, Osborne's desires break through for many reasons. First of all, desire itself is notoriously difficult to circumvent. The most famous epistolary expression of uncontrolled desire is Heloise's letters to Abelard. Heloise does not transcend or mute her desire; she burns with the same hyperbolic passion she experienced before she took vows of chastity. Instead of becoming resigned to her fate, or converting her desires into manageable or controllable emotions, she eschews constancy. In the words of Peggy Kamuf, Heloise lacks an "act of interpretation that converts that loss into a gain, that wound into a healing grace...Her desire remains intact."\(^{44}\) Osborne, trying to remain true to her Christian hopes to control unseemly desire, tries to turn romantic loss into gain, but does not fully achieve the transformation of desire. Osborne goes further than Heloise, because she actually

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\(^{44}\) See Peggy Kamuf, *Fictions of Feminine Desire: Disclosures of Heloise* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 23.
attempts to move her desire into virtuous friendship, a love that has nothing of passion in it. However, in failing to make that transition, she left us a record of the struggle between reason and passion.

In the following, I will be considering the many reasons why Osborne would have wanted to renounce her desire, most notably external forces which impinge on Osborne’s ability to seek union. The Osborne-Temple courtship resulted in a marriage. The couple, rather than deny desire, embraced it. But the traces of Osborne’s struggle can reveal more, perhaps, than the outcome of the struggle.

Osborne’s dilemma of whether to pursue union with Temple is an example of an early modern woman’s encounter with the vagaries of emotion and romantic attachment. It is a moving enactment of a perennial literary and human exploration of the way desire becomes expressed in an individual life—the interaction of the forces of desire and those of renunciation. The story of two people who seek to marry against parental opposition is marked not only by a set of discourses about marital union, but also a myriad of cultural ideas about desire, exclusivity of attachment, and the nature of loss itself.
Chapter Three
Osborne's Letters as a Narrative

I have been considering external forces which discourage Osborne from pursuing marital union with Temple, including her fears of giving in to inordinate passion. In this chapter, I will pause in my consideration of Osborne's doubts about her courtship—her oscillation between desire and renunciation—and focus on the coherence of the letters as a series. I will examine the letters in terms of narrative unity since the literary reception of the letters seems rooted to a large extent in their narrative qualities.

The reception of the letters as a narrative is somewhat surprising considering that any unity the letters possess does not originate in Osborne's self-conscious artistic shaping of the letters as a sequence. Osborne may have put a great deal of energy into writing individual letters, as many critics have acknowledged, but she would not have expected the letters to be collected together and read in sequence. However, critics have spoken of the letters as a narrative, with the unity of a coherent artwork. David Cecil, for example, seems convinced that the letters are an organic whole: "By a freak of fortune this slender chance-kept bundle of letters has composed itself into a brief drama that has the unity and concentration and harmony of a conscious work of art." Unity comes about by chance, Cecil stresses, but the letters nonetheless seem as though they were planned.

Any account of the letters will offer something of a narrative about them, or find a narrative within them, as does this dissertation. My focus is on an early modern woman's uncertainty about marital attachment, and her hope of controlling a passion she feels is both

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unseemly and untrue to her Christian beliefs, while attempting to fulfill her desires and bring about a marriage. Instead of seeing the letters as a narrative of courtship, I am describing them as a narrative of anxieties about courtship. Factors which discouraged Osborne from marrying Temple, such as unhappy models of desire and the intervention of her meddlesome brother, comprise a major part of this story.

The narrative of desire and renunciation, which involves the intersection of personal hopes and societal intervention, is a story that will be resonant for the wider community of people interested in women's lives in the past. However, as my remarks about the narratives nineteenth-century critics developed about Osborne might indicate, different scholarly generations will extract their own narrative from the letters. It is necessary to be cautious about the individual narrative I find in the letters, as well as considering aspects of the letters that work against narrativity.

Before considering the narrative qualities of the letters, or aspects of the letters which work against narrative, it is important to consider whether non-fictional letters like Osborne's can be considered literary objects at all. Genie Lerch-Davis complained in 1977 that letters as a genre were neglected: "such scant attention is generally accorded peripheral genres like the familiar letter that even the few outstanding representations—as Osborne's letters are considered to be—seldom receive more than perfunctory notice." Osborne's letters fall

outside of the focus of most literary investigations. Lerch-Davis adds that studies of the English familiar letter are not helpful in investigating Osborne's letters since "most scholars consider the eighteenth century to be the heyday of the genre and customarily discuss seventeenth-century familiar letter-writers briefly, and largely in terms of their shortcomings when contrasted with their eighteenth-century successors." In fact, Lerch-Davis's article is the only detailed technical evaluation of Osborne's letters I have seen, other than a few brief remarks made by Kenneth Parker, her latest editor, in 1987.

Although there is still a dearth of technical considerations of non-fiction letters, reservations about the status of Osborne's letters as a literary object seem to have dissolved. Sheila Ottway claims that "their status as literature would at one time have been debatable," locating such an attitude firmly in the past. Why is Ottway (and for that matter, why am I) so confident that Osborne's letters, unpublished private documents, can be discussed at all


3 Lerch-Davis, 386-387.

4 My own work on Osborne's letters has tended to be historical and thematic, rather than formal, so I have not done much to correct this omission. However, I hope to see more work on Osborne's letters from a formal perspective, and may do work of that nature myself. In 1931, Joyce William did a linguistic study of verbs in Osborne's letters. See Uses of Shall and Will, Should and Would in the Letters of Dorothy Osborne (M.A. Thesis, University of Iowa, 1931).

as a literary object?

My ability to consider Osborne's letters as a literary object is largely indebted to several significant changes in the discipline of literary studies. Many critics and theorists have been instrumental in breaking down rigid conceptions of the nature of the "literary," with profound implications for what literary scholars study. Involved in the expansion of the literary canon has been a consideration of what a proper object for literary study might be. This challenge has taken many forms, and is motivated by both formal and political concerns. 6 Mikhail Bakhtin has commented helpfully on the artificiality of literary/non-literary distinctions, noting that "the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction, between literature and nonliterature...are not laid up in heaven." 7

Since the late 1970s, there has been considerable interest in the narrative nature of non-fiction prose, in the wake of Hayden White's assertion that historical discourse is always shaped as a narrative. 8 By discussing the role of imaginative (and imagistic) elements in historical writing, Hayden White showed that the distinction between non-fictional expository writing and an artistic work is by no means clear. For example, White discusses

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the continued artistic significance of Gibbon's *Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and its
status as a literary object, despite the fact that the historical data it contains has been
superseded.\(^9\) While Osborne's letters are not, strictly speaking, a historical narrative, White's
description of the way non-fictional objects always take on narrative qualities is certainly
resonant for them.

Various critics collected under the umbrella term "New Historicism" opened up a
wide range of textual materials to literary scholars, encouraging a cross-pollination between
historical and literary materials.\(^10\) The feminist analysis of the early modern period has
focused attention on works not previously deemed to hold literary value, and works which
fall outside of traditional literary genres, including, for example, recipe books and midwifery
texts.\(^11\) This has had the dual effect of validating women's cultural production in general, and
opening a wide range of texts for literary interpretation.

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\(^9\) White, 58. Martine Watson Brownley describes the limitations of White's tropological
model for seventeenth-century historical writing in his 1973 *Metahistory: The Historical
Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. See *Clarendon and the Rhetoric of Historical

\(^10\) Alan Liu, in a 1989 article which remains a provocative critique of New Historicism,
criticizes the awkwardness of the relation between text and historical context in New
Historicist analysis. Liu is sympathetic to many of the aims of New Historicism and drawn
to its self-consciousness, but calls for more firmly articulated methodology. See "The Power
of Formalism," *ELH* 56, 4 (Winter 1989), 731-771. For other articles about New

\(^11\) For one example of feminist work on seventeenth-century writing which takes many genres
into account, see Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writing, 1649-88* (Ann
Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989). A well-known example of a validation of
women's creativity in general is Rozsika Parker's *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the
creativity not in text, but in textiles, see Betty Chambers, "Dorothy Osborne's Coverlet." *Bedfordshire Magazine* 11, 81 (Summer 1967), 30-33.
The feminist interest in documents which are not necessarily self-consciously crafted works validates the academic study of Osborne's letters. Many feminist critics claim that the distinction between literary production and other forms of creativity is artificial, and that Osborne's letters are worthy of appreciation as evidence of female creative production, even though Osborne had no pretence to authorship beyond the letters, and no literary aspirations for the letters outside of their role in the courtship.\(^\text{12}\)

Cultural studies has opened up the discipline of literary study to include the analysis of performative practise as well as historical documents; the writing of love letters participated in the same culture which produced lyric poetry about love. It might be possible, for example, to focus on the cultural meanings of the sending and receiving of the letters using a cultural studies approach.\(^\text{13}\) Since cultural studies tends to break down the distinctions between text and cultural practise,\(^\text{14}\) the literary status of the letters would be less important than the cultural illumination they could provide.

The study of life writing as a literary genre with its own conventions is a major

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\(^{12}\) Genie Lerch-Davis describes Osborne's "pragmatic attitude" in writing to Temple: "The most cogent evidence that Osborne had no literary pretensions and no special love of writing literary familiar letters is the utilitarian, colloquial, unartistic epistolary prose that she wrote immediately after the marriage" (405).

\(^{13}\) For a variety of approaches to cultural studies, see *Field Work: Sites in Literary and Cultural Studies*, eds. Marjorie Garber, Paul B. Franklin and Rebecca Walkowitz (New York: Routledge, 1996).

\(^{14}\) Cultural Studies and New Historicism are sometimes distinguished by their relative accordance of centrality to the literary text, with the latter retaining literature as its primary focus whereas Cultural Studies tends to let culture and literature take on equal importance. The distinction between New Historicism and Cultural Studies is, however, by no means always clear in practice.
validating force for work on non-fictional letters such as Osborne’s.\textsuperscript{15} There has been significant commentary on the way that autobiographical narratives are shaped just as creative works are, especially since autobiography describes events in retrospection.\textsuperscript{16} Autobiography allows a writer to impose a narrative on the past, shaping the way life events are told. Even with ephemeral documents, such as letters and diaries, there is a certain measure of artistic construction. An analysis of Osborne's letters as life writing would emphasize the performative aspects of her letters, her construction of self, and her narratization of events.

Given the expansion of definitions of literariness, and a general widening of what literary scholars study, it may be surprising that I have decided to consider Osborne’s letters in light of their unity, and the way they fit into traditional categories of literary unity. Unity is by no means a necessary precondition for a literary object, despite the organic theories of literature that dominated earlier in our century.\textsuperscript{17} In current critical practise, the ruptures and disunity in a text are often considered more worthy of study than a unified text, or at least have a value of their own. Many critics, in fact, find it difficult to conceive of any text as


\textsuperscript{16} See, for example, Georges Gusdorf’s pioneering essay on autobiography, where he notes that “autobiography...requires a man to take a distance with regard to himself in the focus of his special unity and identity across time.” See “Conditions and Limits of Autobiography,” in Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 35.

possessing organic unity in the New Critical sense.  

I intend to consider Osborne's letters in terms of narrative continuity and unity because I find it striking that critics seem to agree that these disconnected letters, written as purely private documents, form a narrative. Witness, for example, G.C. Moore Smith's comparison of the letters to a “marriage comedy” in his introduction to his edition of the letters. He affirms that the letters have “many of the elements of a drama.” He describes the letters as if they were a play:

Two young lovers endowed with qualities which win our sympathy and admiration pass through times of separation, suspense, and dejection to be happily united in the last act: there are well-meaning friends who raise difficulties and make misery; and there is a crowd of minor figures in the background who give now touches of comedy, and now colour and atmosphere, to the scene of the play.

Figuratively speaking, the letters become a staged drama, divided into acts and scenes. To be sure, Moore Smith does not claim that the letters are a drama, but that they remind him of a drama of courtship. In speaking of the “suspense” of the letters, and the “well-meaning friends who raise difficulty,” Moore Smith seems to indicate that the narrative aspects of the letters are formal as well as thematic, since they have elements such as complicating action, climax and dénouement.

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18 Fredric Jameson notes that, in the light of Pierre Macherey's work, works of art are no longer viewed as possessing organic unity: “The work, then—the former work—is rather to be seen as an act whereby a batch of disparate materials—a kind of lumber room of all kinds of different contents, partial forms, linguistic phenomena, social and psychological raw material, semi-autonomous ideological fantasies, local period concepts, scientific spare parts, and random topical themes—are forcibly yoked together and fused by the power of aesthetic ideology into what looks like an organic whole.” See The Seeds of Time (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 168.

19 See G.C. Moore Smith, "Dorothy Osborne and her Times as Seen in her Letters," The Letters of Dorothy Osborne, ed. by G.C. Moore Smith, xxxv.
Moore Smith’s perceptions ring true to a certain extent. The letters undeniably have a definite beginning, as Osborne writes to express her joy at hearing from Temple. The various pressures to which the lovers were subjected, most notably the objections of the Osborne and Temple families, serve as complicating action. The letters of renunciation create a point of highest tension, or climax, in the action, which proves decisive for the courtship negotiations. Temple intervenes to encourage Osborne to continue with the courtship. The marriage negotiations could be said to form a graceful dénouement. In other words, the letters flow organically, one after another, as James Fitzmaurice and Martine Rey argue: “the earlier letters lay the groundwork for those which follow, and the letters written in the middle period lead logically to what was composed just prior to the time when the marriage contract was settled.”

Thinking of the letters as an organic literary work narrating a courtship places them in a wider (almost archetypal) structure, and links them to the literary and cultural conventions of courtship narrative. There are rewards in considering the letters as a narrative, not the least of which is that they can be compared to other narrative forms, like

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20 Fitzmaurice and Rey, 152.

21 For example, the letters resonate with Northrop Frye's vision of New Comedy which “normally presents an erotic intrigue between a young man and a young woman which is blocked by some kind of opposition, usually paternal, and resolved by a twist in the plot...At the beginning of the play the forces thwarting the hero are in control of the play’s society, but after a discovery in which the hero becomes wealthy or the heroine respectable, a new society crystallizes on the stage around the hero and his bride.” See Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 44. The significant difference between New Comedy and the Osborne-Temple courtship is the twist in the plot. Rather than any “discovery” making the marriage possible, Osborne and Temple are able to be married because Temple’s father finally gives his consent, and Osborne’s brothers are mollified into accepting the match—a much more prosaic turn of affairs than Frye describes.
plays or novels. This might explain Moore Smith's motivation for describing the letters as a play; he was likely looking for ways to justify the letters' cultural and literary importance as he produced another edition. In relating the letters to a courtship drama, he rendered the letters simultaneously more familiar and more significant to people with an interest in courtship narratives, and charmed those who derived pleasure from courtship narratives.

Another move critics make is to compare the letters to epistolary novels, especially *Clarissa*, as does Sheila Ottway. Ottway finds Osborne's situation to be similar to that of Richardson's heroine:

Dorothy Osborne, like Clarissa Harlowe, is involved in a dangerous liaison: she secretly corresponds with a man of whom her family strongly disapprove. Like Clarissa, Dorothy leads an isolated existence at her family's country seat. Like Clarissa, Dorothy is torn between her sense of duty to her family and her feelings of amorous desire for her admirer. Just as Clarissa is provided by her family with a suitor, in the form of the odious Mr Solmes, Dorothy is presented with a whole series of suitors, some carefully selected by her imperious brother...like Clarissa, Dorothy makes a visit to London where a meeting with her lover turns out to be an emotionally disturbing experience. Dorothy is of course more fortunate than Clarissa; it is obvious from her letters that William Temple is a man of integrity, unlike the vicious and depraved Lovelace. But both Dorothy Osborne and Clarissa Harlowe earn our admiration, as readers, by the way in which they negotiate their amorous relationships, putting their trust in their respective lovers while retaining their female dignity.\(^{22}\)

Ottway, in comparing Osborne's letters to the novel *Clarissa*, is imposing a certain type of narrative on them. Ottway's comparison seems forced, since Osborne's letters diverge from Richardson's novel in more ways than she acknowledges. There are undeniably some thematic similarities and resemblances between the two characters, but it does not follow that the letters are either proto-novelistic or a variety of the epistolary novel.

\(^{22}\) Ottway, 152-153.
Osborne was clearly able to view her courtship in terms of literary structure. She famously exclaimed: "can there bee a more Romance Story then ours would make if the conclusion should prove happy?" (130). Osborne was referring to the dilatio of the seventeenth-century French romances, where romantic fulfillment was deferred. She drew an analogy between actual events (like the struggles of the couple to marry) and a literary work. However, when speculating about the "Romance Story" the courtship resembles, Osborne means the romance itself, rather than the letters which are the product of the romance. Osborne's ability to connect her life with literary structures does not prove that she was shaping the correspondence. It is entirely possible, as James Fitzmaurice and Martine Rey have claimed, that romance diction and verbal structures crept into the correspondence itself, especially as the letters reached a climax. However, there is no proof that Osborne was trying to make the correspondence take on the form of a romance.

Unlike autobiographical narrative, Osborne's letters were not written with the benefit of hindsight. She did not know the outcome of the courtship until the final sequence was almost concluded. Even in the latter part of the letter sequence, it was possible for the marriage negotiations to flounder. There is no sense while reading the letters that Osborne knows what will happen to her. Her remark that the courtship could resemble a romance

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23 One of the most effective discussions of dilatio is Patricia Parker's consideration of the trope, with attention to the gendered nature of dilated narrative. See Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property (London: Methuen, 1987), 8-35. The deferral of desire in romance has fascinating implications for Osborne's situation, as should be evident from my discussion of the complication of the courtship in the first chapter.

24 Fitzmaurice and Rey comment: "As the tension in the love story between Osborne and Temple grows, so does the French influence" (152).
story is all the more wistful for the indeterminacy of events; the happy ending which is so much a part of romance narrative was necessary if the letters were to become a romance story.\textsuperscript{25}

The lack of retrospection in Osborne's letters, however, does not necessarily disqualify them from having a narrative. It does, however, mean that readers will necessarily be limited to a certain type of narrative: one where events are not settled. A story emerges, but it is through increments which build on each other, events which proceed step-by-step without the narrator knowing what will happen next.

Rootedness in the temporal present is a notable feature of epistolary fiction. Suspense emerges from accounts of events which have recently taken place, are taking place in the present, or are about to take place. Epistolary novelists try to make a crafted narrative seem provisional and scrappy, adding a sense of suspense which derives from writing-to-the-moment.\textsuperscript{26} Osborne's letters work in an opposite fashion from the epistolary novel, though there is similar suspense. They are not crafted like a novel.

Osborne's letters contain many quotidian details and references which might bog the

\textsuperscript{25} In fact, the "happy ending" of the letters may have been one source of the perception that the letters were emplotted.

\textsuperscript{26} Christine Marsden Gillis remarks on "writing-to-the-moment" as a narrative technique in \textit{The Paradox of Privacy: Epistolary Form in Clarissa} (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1984), 95-96. Oddly enough, there has been very little consideration of the potential of the electronic mail genre in this regard. E-mail is a medium which encourages frequency of communication, an informal tone, a lack of formal structure, and very detailed temporal information, where letters are not written merely on June 15th, but sent at 5:05:34 on June 15th. Of the recent epistolary novels which use e-mail as the narrative pretence, one of the most remarkable is Nick Bantock's naive but stirring \textit{The Venetian's Wife: A Strangely Sensual Tale of a Renaissance Explorer, a Computer, and a Metamorphoses} (Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 1996).
reader down in minutiae. Some of these references add to the overall narrative pattern of the letters, contributing to the narration of the Osborne-Temple courtship, or adding local colour, but others distract the reader from the dominant line of concern. The many details might derail the narrative altogether.

The absence of many of the letters makes it difficult to piece together any narrative which might be in place. Not all of Osborne’s letters are preserved. There is no way of knowing how many letters are missing, and what other documents of the Osborne-Temple courtship were lost. Only one of Temple’s replies to Osborne remains (though he published some of his other letters himself). The traces of Temple’s replies to Osborne are found within her letters, through references to his previous remarks. However, it is impossible to reconstruct the exchange completely. As well, there is a fair amount of random loss of text, as some of the letter-seals on the manuscript were cut away, removing some individual words within individual letters.

Despite the absence of many of the letters, the series has been printed in a bound volume since 1888, which has a definite effect on the semiotic impact of the letters. The

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27 On the other hand, detail is a major part of epistolary fiction, as Gillis notes, 101.

28 For examples of Temple’s published correspondence, see Letters written by Sir W. Temple, Bart., and other ministers of state, both at home and abroad: containing an account of the most important transactions that pass’d in Christendom from 1665-1672... (London: Printed for J. Tonson...and A. and J. Churchill...and R. Simpson..., 1700). This edition was read by Temple before his death, and published by Jonathan Swift.

29 There are occasional indications that a letter has gone missing. Sometimes Osborne comments on this directly (88).

30 Who cut out the seals? It could have been Lady Temple herself, for a letter-seal book.
movement from manuscript into print has given the letters the authority of a book, extensively footnoted, and treated with the seriousness of a literary object. Martha Giffard, who read the letters in the late seventeenth-century, noted that the letters which passed between Osborne and Temple might form a "Volum." It is important, however, to reflect on the manuscript form of the letters, how they were initially read. Woolf, in her draft for A Room of One's Own, amends her previous description of the "book" of the letters to "casket of letters." In a vision of Osborne's writing which stresses their materiality as a "casket" of letters, it is less likely that this group of letters would be perceived as a narrative, and makes the reading of the letters a random, aleatory process. Describing the manuscript as a "casket" of letters is also an acknowledgement of the unassuming nature of the letters, the fragile nature of the documents, a provisionality and improvisationality which seems to belie their claim to form a narrative. While some of the letters (especially the early ones) seem to be written with care, sometimes the letters devolve into notes hastily scribbled on scraps of paper: "I cannot call on you to night" Osborne notes, making hasty plans (113). Once again, the fact that these letters are literally fragments does not necessarily negate their

31 For work on the visual appearance of the book, as opposed to its textual content, and considerations of "unediting," see the work of Random Cloud/Randall McLeod. For an example of his frequently reiterated stance that editing causes a work to lose many of its essential qualities, see "from Transformations in the text of Orlando Fvrioso," Library Chronicle of the University of Texas at Austin 20, 1/2 (1990). 61-85.


ability to contribute to a narrative. However, Osborne's correspondence is literally a patchwork of different components, and this will affect the type of narrative which emerges, if a narrative is indeed in place.34

The chronology of the letters is uncertain. Osborne rarely dated her letters, and editors differ as they try to put them in order for print. The lack of order in the letters further reenforces the idea that the letters as a series lack the authorial control to render them coherent. Editors rely on topical remarks Osborne makes, attempting to make the extant letters flow in a logical sequence. G.C. Moore Smith relied heavily on the manuscript of her brother Henry Osborne's diary.35 The fact that editors tried to get as close as possible to the actual ordering of the letters demonstrates that they conceived of them as having an "ideal" ordering, one which reflected the actual history of the exchange of letters.36 On the other hand, editors are at least reasonably frank about their inability to reconstruct the sequence of the letters completely. In many ways, the varied stories which emerge from the reordering of the letters act as further proof that the letters are narrative constructs rather than


36 Herbert Grierson notes that, before G.C. Moore Smith's edition, "the chief drawback to their full enjoyment...has been the want of a convincing arrangement, making it possible to follow the story of the last year of the long engagement through all the vicissitudes of fear and hope" and that Moore Smith "has succeeded in giving a reader a heightened sense of the coherence of the series." See “A Review of The Letters of Dorothy Osborne to William Temple,” in Essays and Addresses (London: Chatto & Windus, 1940), 239.
documents which reflect events as they happened.

The "patchwork" quality created by textual gaps is also a quality of Osborne's writing itself. Often, there are things she promises to tell but does not. She often begins stories without finishing them, switching topics rapidly.\(^7\) She raises questions she does not answer. She interrupts herself, is suddenly reminded of something she wanted to say, or forgets what she means to say next. She begins a discussion of a serious topic, then pauses to mock herself for her gravitas. At times, Osborne's writing gives us a sense of a crepuscular dream landscape where events do not make much sense, where much is left unsaid. Early in the courtship, for example, she describes a dream where Temple's mother, though dead in real life, gives her a ring with an inscription, part of which is in Italian and she cannot read. The other half reads, "there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee." The strangeness of this nonsensical scene makes her laugh in her sleep (she says) and she wakes up, mildly worried that her laughter is sacrilegious. Osborne notes: "I could never learne, whome these Rings were for, nor what was in the letter besydes" (11). The enigmatic scriptural text seems to hint of Osborne's desire for marriage, yet the meaning of the dream is unclear, with the text of the letter and the recipient of the letters mysterious.

\(^7\) Peggy Kamuf has written very suggestively about digression in Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, describing Woolf's indirection in the text as akin to Penelope's unweaving of her labour: "Penelope is the name I take in order to designate a conjunction of fiction in history in which a woman's text plots the place of its own undoing." In Woolf's text, questions are sometimes posed but left unanswered: "Asked to explain, in other words, the narrator promises an answer once she is through spinning out her story. But this narrative sets out from a doubling back, or crossing out, in which a meaning, a sense of direction, gets lost." Osborne's digressiveness may have been a model for Woolf, who was also fascinated, of course, with the digressiveness of Sterne. See "Penelope at Work: Interruptions in A Room of One's Own," in *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*, eds. Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), 152.
Osborne works with the world of dream and revery here. She is not always so vague: she can sometimes be razor sharp, and even follow a powerful argumentative line. However, more often than not, Osborne’s letters appear as a flighty, unstable set of unconnected observations.

Now I would like to consider the scattered nature of the letters, their instability as a text, *en route* to seeing them as a version of a narrative form. I have considered some factors which might counteract a perception of the letters as a narrative. Virginia Woolf had particularly nuanced views about narrative unity in the letters. Woolf avoided conflating the letters with other literary forms, such as courtship dramas or epistolary novels, while arguing that the letters did present a kind of narrative. In her short essay about Osborne in *The Second Common Reader*, Woolf considers the design (or lack thereof) in the letters. Using a process-oriented style of rumination typical of her critical writing, she chronicles the oscillation of her attitude towards the letters. At first, she affirms that the letters possess no real sense of design:

our glimpse of the society of Bedfordshire in the seventeenth century is the more intriguing for its intermittency. In they come and out they go—Sir Justinian and Lady Diana, Mr. Smith and his countess—and we never know when or whether we shall hear of them again.

Woolf’s attitude towards the letters shifts, however, and she begins to stress continuity rather

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But with all this haphazardry, the *Letters*, like the letters of all born letter-writers, provide their own continuity. They make us feel that we have our seat in the depths of Dorothy's mind, at the heart of the pageant which unfolds itself page by page as we read. For she possesses indisputably the gift which counts for more in letter-writing than wit or brilliance or traffic with great people. By being herself without effort or emphasis, she envelops all these odds and ends in the flow of her own personality.⁴₀

What holds the letters together, what transforms the "odds and ends" into something coherent, is the compelling persona of the writer.

Woolf's stress on personality is unsurprising in many ways, since personality is perhaps the *sine qua non* of epistolarity, as Christina Marsden Gillis notes when she cites Jean Rousset's dictum that the letter-writer "does not have a style, he *is* the style."⁴¹ The revelation of personality is intimately connected to the letters as courtship documents, where the lovers are trying to explore each other's personalities to ascertain whether a union might be possible.

The personality to which Woolf referred was, in part, their ability to capture isolated moments of experience, and also to give a sense of inward states. Insights into Osborne's dreams and thoughts create a powerful sense of intimacy. In fact, the letters are noted for their powerful portrayal of private domestic life, which is linked to access to Osborne's personality: "for the first time in English literature we hear men and women together talking over the fire."⁴² What Woolf is referring to in this remark, and other similar remarks, is

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⁴₀ Woolf, *The Second Common Reader*, 53

⁴¹ Gillis, 5.

Osborne’s ability to capture an isolated moment in time. The scene in Osborne’s letters to which she refers reads like a scene from a Woolf novel:

You could not but have Laught if you had seen mee last night. My Br: and M’ Gibson were talking by the fyre, and I satt by, but as noe part of the company. amongst other things (wth I did not at all minde) they fell into a discourse of flyeing and both agreed that it was very posible to finde out a way that people might fly like Birds and dispatch theire Journy’s soe. I that had not sayd a word all night started up at that and desyr’d they would say a little more in it, for I had not marked the begining, but instead of that they both fell into soe Violent a Laughing that I should appeare soe much concern’d in such an Art; but they little knew of what use it might have bin to mee (108).

What Woolf responded to was a complex set of interactions between the characters, but also a portrayal of a psychological state. There is both intrigue and introspection. Osborne’s interest in flying is motivated by an interest in her courtship of which her brother and Mr. Gibson are unaware, adding both dramatic irony and narrative depth. In this scene, Osborne’s internal state is more important than external events. Osborne’s woolgathering, her dreamy absence from the conversation until it touches on her courtship, is reminiscent of many of Woolf’s own writings, where the main action is, in fact, inward, and where the narrative does not reside in the external action, but inward personality and reflection. External events are mainly significant as a means of presenting personality and personal psychology.

43 Erich Auerbach, in his monumental study of realism in Western Literature, considers Woolf’s unique contribution to the representation of events. Osborne’s description of the scene by the fire is similar to Auerbach’s description of Woolf: “exterior events have actually lost their hegemony, they serve to release and interpret inner events, whereas before her time (and still today in many instances) inner movements preponderantly function to prepare and motivate significant external happenings. This too is apparent in the randomness and contingency of the exterior occasion...which releases the much more significant inner process.” See Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953), 538.
Expression of personality extends into the stylistic aspects of the letters, the development of a unique voice. Osborne, for example, has a tendency to exclaim "in sober earnest" or "in earnest" when trying to be serious, or when she protests against something Temple has said. She often turns her closing into a kind of verbal, and sometimes a visual, pun. Some of the creation of personality resides in characteristic attitudes or tones Osborne strikes—including (though not limited to) irony and persiflage. She has a tendency to switch her tone from seriousness into raillery, then back again.

Personality is also developed, as Woolf said, through consistency of reaction to other individuals and events. As Osborne shuttles people "in and out," it is possible to predict to at least some degree what Osborne will think of any given individual. For example, she has a predictable attitude towards unworthy suitors like Sir Justinian Isham and James Baldwin. Even though these gentlemen appear at disparate moments for short periods of time, it is obvious that Osborne will shower them with scorn; the predictability of this reaction allows for the development of some sentiment of consistency.

Lyn L. Irvine remarked on the style of Osborne's letters:

The letters...are full of little real things such as escape all but the most delicate and natural minds, those fragments which recreate something so much larger than themselves, tiny mirrors that reflect great rooms, four-inch windows that look out on half a county. She caught and preserved as only rare and original writers can the interstitial acts and emotions of life.44

If Osborne's letters are a narrative, it is a narrative built around the interstitial and the fragmentary. Her narrative is build out of the particular and the realistic, but also the unsaid,

44 Irvine, 106.
the contradictory, and the ephemeral. Osborne's letters, like Woolf's writing, captures moments of being, showing the fleeting thoughts of an individual mind. I am arguing that the main narrative which emerges from the letters is a story of oscillation between desire and renunciation: perhaps this is all the more powerful because of the way in which it is rooted in the mind and the expression of personality.

The letters are a mix of continuity and discontinuity; they seem to promise the unfolding of a plot, but there is much in them to contradict narrative movement. Unity is assembled out of fragments, with constant obstacles to that unity. The ephemeral document becomes something more lasting, though it never sheds the traces of its own ephemerality.

The letters form a narrative, but one made up of discreet and unconnected elements which come together—if they do come together—through a gradual accretion of disparate parts. It is important, then, when considering a topic such as Osborne's lack of comfort with extreme desire, to realize that the theme of control of the passions emerges indirectly, and loosely, rather than through a concerted meditation on this or any other issue.
Chapter Four
Conducting the Romance: Osborne's Reading and Models of Courtship

Dorothy Osborne was a passionate reader. Her letters to William Temple are peppered with descriptions of her reading—especially French romances. Osborne speaks about characters as if they were real people, and these remarks are of key importance for understanding her fears about marital union, and her misgivings about desire. In fact, Osborne's reaction to the romances is extremely nuanced and demands further exploration. While critics have argued that Osborne casts her courtship in terms of romance conventions, no one has delved into the primary texts to explore why certain scenarios and characters might particularly interest her. Many of the stories she mentions show the failure of desire or romantic relationships, despite the critical commonplace that the French romances upheld romantic courtship. I would like to explore the way that reading romances both aids Osborne in her courtship, and creates significant doubt about the possibility of sustaining romantic desire.

Although recent critics have stressed the low literacy levels of women in the period, Osborne, with her significant leisure, consumed everything from French romances to

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2 Kate Aughterson writes: "Literacy levels remained much lower for women than for men during this period, as they were far lower for those of lower social status. Female illiteracy has been estimated at 90 per cent in the 1640s, with male rates at 70 percent, dropping to 70 per cent and 55 per cent, respectively, in the early eighteenth century, although the measures used have been much debated: women who could not sign their name, for example, may well have been able to read, or to understand accounts." See Renaissance Women: A Sourcebook (London: Routledge, 1995), 167.
theological treatises written by Jeremy Taylor, memoirs (*La Reine Marguerite*), and the latest literary offerings of Margaret Cavendish, the Duchess of Newcastle. She read a remarkable number of voluminous French romances given that the letters were written over a mere two years (although she had read one, *Polexandre*, seven years before). Osborne mentions Lord Broghill's 1652 *Parthenissa*, Madeleine de Scudéry's *Artamène, ou, Le Grand Cyrus*, (written from 1649-1653), La Calprenede's *Cleopatra* (printed in ten volumes in 1647) and Marin Le Roy de Gomberville's 1647 *Polexandre*. She read these romances in the original French (a language she had perfected during her stay in St. Malo), complaining about the inferiority of English translations of some romances she sees.

Osborne seized on the romances for reasons quite particular to her courtship with William Temple. In looking at the texts she mentions, I seek to embed Osborne’s reading in her biographical circumstances to suggest that the experience of reading seventeenth-century romantic fiction was, in actual fact, more complex than has been acknowledged. Recent reader-response theory supports my intuition that Osborne’s unique stamp on her reading is more significant than her participation in interpretive communities. For example, David R. Anderson has demonstrated that Stanley Fish’s model of interpretive communities does not account adequately for readerly experience. In Fish’s model of interpretation, Osborne writes: "I have noe Patience neither for these Translateurs of Romances; I mett with Polexandre and L’Illustre Bassa, both soe disguised that I who am theire old acquaintance hardly knew them, besydes that they were still soe much french in words and Phrases that twas impossible for one that understood not french to make any thing of them..." (91).

3 Osborne lived in St. Malo between 1647 and 1649.

4 Osborne writes: "I have noe Patience neither for these Translateurs of Romances; I mett with Polexandre and L’Illustre Bassa, both soe disguised that I who am theire old acquaintance hardly knew them, besydes that they were still soe much french in words and Phrases that twas impossible for one that understood not french to make any thing of them..." (91).

critical concern is shifted from the formal characteristics of the text to specific interpretive communities whose participation in an institutional framework is largely determinative of their interpretation of texts. Anderson pinpoints the failure of Fish's model of interpretive communities to account for experience outside of broader institutional groupings. He echoes the arguments of critics concerned with sexual, political, and economic differences within interpretive communities. Any construction of an interpretive community relies on a formal choice to group given individuals together—paradoxically the sort of formalist analysis Fish claimed he was trying to avoid—without accounting for variation within the community.

Anderson, in contrast to Fish, stresses the individual action of reading. Reading is conceived as a Jamesian pragmatic process of working through the text. The predispositions a reader brings to a text are subject to constant correction and reevaluation. Anderson's model strikes a balance between some of the pressures that interpretive communities (or simply circumstances) bring to bear on readerly experience while retaining an awareness that individuals can diverge from their institutional framework significantly.

It would be tempting to cast Osborne as a representative of an interpretative community (royalist, female) in the early modern period. It is fruitful to gesture slightly in that direction, especially when attempting to chart the rise of prose fiction, and to search for the roots of the novel in the French romances. However, Osborne's reading offers a

and Barbara Riebling (Northwestern University Press, 1993), 155-76.


7 Anderson, 161.
challenge to that type of thinking, demonstrating as it does variance from her presumed intentional community, and significant variation within her own reading patterns. As will be evident from an examination of her remarks about the experiences of the characters, her reading affects her in ways that are inconsistent and unfathomable even to her. Her responses are affected by the contingencies of her courtship. As well, her reading has multiple effects on her opinion of romantic love.

It is necessary to consider what led Osborne to read French romances in the first place. French romances were one of many possible sources reflecting on romantic love available in Osborne's culture. The heroism in the romances, their vital, militaristic action-based content, is combined with a feminocentric vision where the hero's conquest of empire is ultimately less important than his own conquest—by the charms of a woman. The romances reflected a culture in which women figured prominently as cultural arbiters.8 Romantic love is discussed at length in the romances, and Scudéry's romances were particularly renowned for such "conversations." In the middle of Osborne's courtship with William Temple, the romances highlighted issues of central importance to her.

Judging from her comments in the letters, it seems as though Osborne was seeking role models, which might explain why she turned to the romances. Osborne is highly receptive to the opinions of others, to the extent that she is ready to be governed by their standards of conduct. She notes: "others Judge us with more severity then our indulgence

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8 Not only were many of the authors of the French romances women, like Madeleine de Scudéry, but there were significant ties between the French romances and the courtly culture of the woman-dominated salon. See Joan DeJean, Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).
to ourself's will permitt...tis saffer being ruled by their opinion then by our owne" (143).

The royalist elite was a natural locus of cultural normatives for Osborne. Before the Civil War, courtiers provided models of behaviour, but during the Commonwealth, behaviour has suffered:

Tis strange to see the folly that possesses the young People of this Age, and the libertys they take to themself's; I have the Charrity to beleive they apear very much worse then they are, and that the want of a Court to govern themself's by is in great part the cause of their Ruine; Though that was noe perfect scoole of Vertue, yet Vice there wore her maske, and apear'd soe unlike her selfe that she gave noe scandal; Such as were realy as discreet as they seem'd to bee; gave good Example, and the Eminency of their condition made others strive to imitate them, or at least they durst not owne a conterary course (143).

Despite their duplicity, the courtiers maintain cultural leadership, and the general populace follows meekly, impressed by class status and outwardly virtuous behaviour. The flaws Osborne discerns in the Court are eclipsed by the regulatory function she wishes the Court would fulfil.

Given a lack of social models in her setting, and her geographical isolation in rural Bedfordshire, Osborne's reading is fuelled by a wish to identity and empathize with the characters of romances. She is certain that the romance characters can tell her something about her situation. Her eagerness to seek out the characters of romances might be derived from her perception that the romance scenarios reflected, in however diffuse a fashion, the circumstances of her own life. Characters of the romances are often displaced aristocrats and women who exhibit signs of their true nobility although forced into reduced circumstances.

9 According to Michael McKeon, such an association was under siege. Status inconsistency was one of the precursors of the rise of the novel. See The Origins of the English Novel (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 131-176.
The elegant stoicism of the romance characters would appeal to Osborne, whose family had experienced a marked decline in status, and whose estate was sequestered in the aftermath of the Civil War. For example, Cyrus, Prince of Persia, spends most of Scudéry's romance disguised as the humble Artamène. Resigned to her family's financial embarrassment, and aware of the many obstacles to her marriage, Osborne would have found the romance heroes' triumph over daunting circumstances inspiring.

Osborne may also have self-consciously established parallels between herself and various characters for Temple's benefit. For example, she has keen sympathy for Amestris, a beautiful damsel from *Artamène*. As I will be discussing, Osborne is riveted by Amestris's dolorous experience of love. Amestris, who comes from the provinces, is perceived as courtly and sophisticated by her lover Aglatides. Osborne, who constantly makes reference to Temple's greater urbanity, might have empathized with the tension between Amestris's qualities and her comparative naivety. Like Osborne, Amestris's attractiveness makes her the center of male attention. Another instance of possible self-identification is found in Osborne's praise of the virtuous Delie from La Calprenede's *Cleopatra*. Delie repeatedly expresses unwillingness to cause conflict between her beloved Philadelph and his father. Osborne often wrote of her hope that William Temple would not aggrieve his kindly father by wooing her.

Osborne's mode of reading may seem naive, but her culture certainly allowed for an equation between life and text. Romance conventions allowed and even encouraged readers to draw a parallel between the fiction they were reading and real-life situations. For example, the preface to *Artamène, ou, Le Grand Cyrus* (likely written by Georges de Scudéry)
foregrounds the tension between fictionality and historical referentiality, as Scudéry claims that Cyrus, "n'est pas vn de ces Heros imaginaires." Cyrus is real, even in his incarnation in the romances. More to the point, he functions as an example in the political and social sphere: "C'est vn Prince que l'on a proposé pour Exemple à tous les Princes."

Parallels between fictional and historical personages were strengthened by the fact that the characters of Scudéry's romances were based on real figures during the Fronde. Cyrus was based on the Grand Condé, a challenger to the French throne; Mandane, Madame de Longueville; Sapho (the fiery heroine of the final tome) Scudéry herself, and so on. Slippage between the fictional and the real was enacted in the culture. As one critic explains, "persons thus designated often continued in real life to be called by their romance appellations."

A certain suspension of disbelief was required to read the romances as literal truth. For example, Cyrus's exploits are recounted in a different manner in the histories of Herodotus (which Osborne read), but she does not seem particularly troubled by conflicting accounts. In fact, she treats romances and history with equal seriousness, referring to them only insofar as they bear on her courtship with Temple. Osborne seems well aware of the differences between fiction and real life, but is determined to treat all writing, regardless of

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generic and factual difference, as equally valuable in considering love. Any tensions which reading creates arise from conflicting messages about love, not conflicting historical representations. In contrast, the reformation of Arabella in Charlotte Lennox's 1752 The Female Quixote hinges on her realization that the romances have no historical verisimilitude. If the facts are inconsistent, it is not possible for the eighteenth-century reader to put any stock in the events of the romances.

Osborne seems free of such limitations, and can find value in the romances even though they do not cohere logically. To be sure, Osborne differs from Arabella in the extent of her belief in the romances. Although much in the romances compels Osborne's interest, she does not embrace them uncritically. Osborne's incorporation of romance conventions into her life has distinct limitations; she expresses scepticism about the wisdom of patterning one's behaviour too slavishly on the French romances. She offers a satiric portrait of a local sheriff whose ardour for the romances is reminiscent of Don Quixote:

What has kept him from marryeng all this while, or how the humor com's soo furiously upon him now, I know not, but if hee may bee believ'd, hee is resolved to bee a most Romance Squire and goe in quest of some inchanted Damzell, whome if hee likes, as to her person (for fortune is a thing below him & wee do not reade in History that any knight, or squire, was ever soo discourteous as to inquire what portions theire Lady's had)...I doe not see whoe is able to resist him, all that is to bee hoped, is, that since hee may reduce whomsoever hee pleases to his Obedience, hee

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will be very Curious in his choise, and then I am secure (42-43).

Osborne has evaded a suitor due to his own eccentricity, she claims, rather than any flat refusal to marry him. However, the sheriff's literalist approach to the romances has clearly rendered him an unacceptable suitor. For Osborne, it is crucial to be receptive to the romances, and heed their message, but it is equally important to comprehend their limitations. Protocols of reading bore on the romances—works of literature themselves deeply concerned with social normatives and codes of conduct. Reading the romance was meant to bring people closer to the proper way of acting, not provoke grotesque self-parody. Osborne has a practical streak which makes her resist an unthinking belief in the romances.

There was perennial cultural concern about the sway romances had on inexperienced readers. Condemnations and criticisms of the romance extended far beyond the Civil War and Restoration periods, extending through the nineteenth century, and into contemporary society with anxiety over romance novels and mass media depictions of love and sexuality.

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15 The association of the romance with danger can still be seen in Lawrence Stone's assertion that "the romantic novel of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has much to answer for in the way of disastrous love affairs and of imprudent and unhappy marriages" (286). Stone also cites a 1792 article from Bon Ton Magazine which warned young women that they were likely to mistake male lust for the emotions they read in novels. See Lawrence Stone, The Family, Sex, and Marriage (New York: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), 284.

16 Some of the many considerations of the impact of romance reading on contemporary women include John G. Cawelti, Adventure, Mystery and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976); Helen Hazen, Endless Rapture: Rape, Romance and the Female Imagination (New York: Scribner, 1988), Jayne Ann Krentz, Dangerous Men and Adventurous Women: Romance Writers on the Appeal of the Romance (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992); Tania Modleski, Loving With A Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1982); Christine Marie Nabel, Rape Myths are the Theory; Romance Novels are the Practice: The Impact of Exposure to Images of Women in Popular Culture (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of
Female commentators of Osborne's period highlight their concern about the romances, and the debate seems to center on the effects the romance had on readers and their ultimate value (or lack of value) for readers. Romances took time away from more useful endeavours. Mary Astell urged women to cultivate their minds and leave off the frippery of "idle Novels and Romances." Mary, Lady Chudleigh, Astell's friend and an avid reader of the classics, condemned the romances because they detracted from more useful studies and filled the mind "with extravagant Fancies, with false Notions of Love and Honour." Romances drained energy that should be expended on the acquisition of more solid knowledge. The insubstantial, frivolous nature of the form detracted from women's attempt to fortify their talents. Reading of this nature prepared a woman for romance, but it did not enable her to bring strengthened abilities to her partnerships or to the world at large.

The objections of Chudleigh and Astell are an intriguing foil for Osborne's use of the romances, but it is important not to underestimate Osborne's purposeful use of the romances. The romances themselves are more than a means of killing time: Osborne craves them for what they can tell her about herself and the world. The stimulation of the imagination so unacceptable to the critics of romance is precisely the source of their appeal for Osborne and other readers, and they employ them to good effect. Even if, as J.J. Jusserand claims,

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"ancient history is put to the torture,"¹⁹ some historical sense can be gleaned from these sources, just as Arabella in Lennox's *The Female Quixote* impresses her lover with facts she has gleaned from the romances.²⁰ At the very least, the romances tie Osborne more closely to the polished court culture which has been missing during the English Civil War, as well as allowing her to taste something of foreign locales.

One of Osborne's more important uses of the romances is to discover whether or not she and Temple share the same sensibility. Common views can serve as the foundation for a marital union. At times, it seems like Temple will never share Osborne's vision of the romances: he simply does not read them. Osborne banterst with Temple about these lengthy tomes, and jokes that he will only be willing to read such material because of the boredom of visiting her:

> have you read Cleopatra? I have sixe Tomes on't heer that I can lend you, if you have not, there are some Story's in't you will like I beleeeve. but what an Asse am I to think you can bee idle enough at London to reade Romances. noe i'le keep them till you come hither, heer they may bee welcome to you for want of better Company (21).

Later on, waxing romantic, Temple sends her metaphysical speculations about the moon, and she sallies: "since you are at Leasure to consider the moone you may bee enough to read Cleopatra" (24). At times, Osborne verges on badgering. Once Temple has begun to read *Cyrus*, she piles on the volumes: "I have a third Tome heer against you have don with the second, and to encourage you let mee assure you that the more you read of them you will like them still better" (59-60). Noting that she is "hugely pleased" with one story, she makes

¹⁹ Jusserand, 384.

²⁰ Arabella impresses her lover with her knowledge of the Olympic Games in Book IX, Chapter VII of Lennox's *The Female Quixote*, 79-83.
a bargain familiar to bibliophiles wheedling reluctant friends: "at least read one Story that
ile marke you downe, if you have time for noe more" (144). Temple's response to the
romances is so important to her that she is willing to settle for a partial reading if she cannot
have his wholehearted cooperation.

Why does Osborne feel she must share this material so urgently? To share a response
to a text which depicts a romantic relationship is not only to share a disposition (though this
is devoutly to be wished) but also to agree on the way that love should be navigated, just as
Scudéry's famous carte de tendre instructed lovers what path to follow while navigating
through the pays de tendre. In a vaguely Bunyanesque progression, lovers move through
"Tendresse," "Petits soins," "Sensibilité," "Assiduité" and so on, but cautiously avoid
"Negligence," "Légereté", "Oubli" and the dreaded depths of the "Lac D'Indifference." 21
Scudéry's map fuses the courtly and the pedagogical. Literary models serve as vehicles to
express competing visions of devotion, culpability, strength, and power. Osborne knew that
the romances were not frippery; they could be used to strike at the heart of matters which
would affect her destiny. To turn what she is learning from the romances into a dialogue is
to advance the courtship.

Osborne, an accomplished reader, has strong opinions about appropriate responses
to books, reminiscent of the Midwestern romance readers in Janice Radway's contemporary
study, who were able to articulate precisely what a proper response to romance fiction might

21 For more information on the Carte de Tendre see Jusserand, 361. James S. Munro has
written an intriguing monograph exploring the composition and meaning of the Carte. See
Mademoiselle de Scudéry and the Carte de Tendre (Durham, England: Durham Modern
Languages Series, 1986).
entail, and the necessary elements such formulaic fiction must possess in order to be appealing. For Osborne, anything other than the expected response augers badly for Temple, and therefore Osborne's instruction about how to react become very detailed. Speaking of the "fower Pritty Story's" interlaced throughout Le Grand Cyrus, she asks Temple to tell her which he has most "compassion" for. However, she is cautious to specify: "let mee desyre you not to Pitty the Jelous one, for I remember I could doe nothing but Laugh at him, as one that sought his owne vexation" (81). As we will see later, Osborne is capable of conceiving the romances as a warning both for herself and other people. Of course, the success of her warning depends on Temple's agreement that the jealous lover was the cause of his own ruin.

The romances, combined with examples culled from people she knew or that the couple knew in common, allow them to discuss weighty issues about their own courtship while safely displacing them onto fictional scenarios. Osborne describes, for example, the unhappy fate of a woman whose lover believes she has been unfaithful:

> I know you will pitty Poore Amestris strangely when you have read her Story. i'le swear I cryed for her when I read it first though shee were but an imaginary person, and sure if any thing of that kinde can deserve it her misfortunes may (85).

Amestris is only an "imaginary person," but Osborne is shaken by her story. The structure of Osborne's remarks to Temple about Amestris is particularly interesting because it moves from an assumption of what his reaction will be, followed by a description of her own

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reaction. Clearly, the two should be identical.

The ongoing discussion between Osborne and Temple about the romances mirrors a discussion Osborne has with her brother. Literary examples become a means of discussing how love unions should be navigated. The siblings use literary examples as ammunition in a verbal contest about the nature of love and attachment. Osborne's brother uses some verses of Roger Boyle, Lord Broghill (later Earl of Orrery) to argue that marriage leads to the death of love:

My B. urged [Lord Broghill's verses] against mee one day in a dispute where hee would needs make mee confesse that noe Passion could bee long lived and that such as were most in love forgott that ever they had bin soe within a twelve month after they were Marryed, and in Earnest the want of Examples to bring for the Contreary puzzled mee a little, soe that I was faine to bring out these Pittifull Verses of my Lord Biron to his wife; wth was soe poore an Agument [sic] that I was e'en ashamed on't my self, and hee quickly Laught mee out of Countenance with sayeing they were Just such as a marryed mans flame would produce, and a wife inspire (93).

Verses literally become arguments. As in Scudéry's romances, where long "conversations" provide the opportunity for the characters to discourse on abstract ideals, these poems are valued for reasons which extend beyond their style. The credibility of Osborne's position in the debate about love after marriage rests on her ability to find literary examples to prove her point. The pitiful verses of Lord Biron, however, are a "poor argument." After Osborne tells Temple about this exchange, he feels obliged to provide her with an argument to counter her brother should he "ever enter upon the dispute againe" (96). Unfortunately, Osborne does not explain what sort of counter-argument Temple provides her with; we can assume that a

\[\text{\textsuperscript{23}}\] The specific verses Henry Osborne used, and those of Lord Biron employed by Osborne, did not survive with this letter.
literary example of some kind was necessary.

It is curious that Osborne did not use examples from the romances in this literary contest with her brother. The romances would have given Osborne the idea that marital unions required affect, since French romances, in the words of DeJean, were concerned with the "political and social implication of affective choices." On the other hand, like a fairy tale or a Jane Austen novel (and unlike the marriage comedies of the 1690s that probe what happens after marriage), the action of the romances ceases once the beloved has been attained. However, French romances repeatedly affirm that women should choose their marriage partners rather than allowing their families to direct their lives. Osborne's own opinions about companionate marriage emerged slightly before Lawrence Stone places the rise of the companionate marriage bond. Perhaps Osborne's comparatively early articulation of the need for companionate marriage was derived from her continental literary and personal influences (though Stone's dates are not to be taken literally). Not only do the romances stress companionate relationships, they affirm that there is only one beloved truly suited to any given individual. In Artamène, for example, the sprightly character Doralize declares that she will not accept the heart of anyone who has previously pledged his love to another. The romances establish a set of paradigms for love itself.

Despite the romance's affirmation of affective marriage, many of the situations on

24 DeJean, 11.

25 As DeJean has pointed out, French and English pre-novelistic traditions are not necessarily comparable, and certainly with reference to the involvement of women: "we can speak of a veritable tradition of French women's writing as early as the 1660s, when across the Channel, there is far less evidence of literary community" (7).
which Osborne focuses illustrate the difficulty of establishing and sustaining affective relationships at all. Despite the reassuring telos of the romances, their resounding amor vincit omnium themes, most of the situations Osborne refers to specifically involve lovers who suffer from unfulfilled love or the outright cruelty of a lover. Jealousy and rivalry hinder lovers who are truly meant to be together; love is articulated only after lover or beloved dies; and accusations of unfaithfulness are levelled at an innocent woman by a bitter, jealous man.

It is useful to look at a few of the negative examples from the romances in greater detail. Remarkably, when Osborne mentions Artamène, ou, Le Grand Cyrus, she does not discuss Cyrus and Mandane, the besieged but ultimately triumphant lovers. Rather, she focuses on characters who conduct love affairs badly. One set of intertwined stories is set up as a comparison of the possible ways of being miserable in love. The lovers explore different manifestations of romantic pain. Thimocrates is loved by his mistress Telesile, but she is absent from him; Philocles is rejected outright by the fair Philista; Artibies's mistress Leontina dies; the jealous Leontides is in a frenzy over the possibility that his mistress Alcidiane gave her picture to another. 26 The lovers have many faults, ranging from excessive zeal to extreme indifference. None of them find the right balance of passion and reason, a balance of prime importance to Osborne. The system of companionate unions can easily fail; people make the wrong choices while fully convinced that they are the right ones.

The four lovers' stories create an opportunity for the other characters to pronounce on the narrative presented. Cyrus asks one of the listeners, Martisie, to judge which of the

26 Scudéry, 67-328.
four lovers has suffered the most. She does not hesitate to pronounce her opinion:

IE DECLARE donc hardiment, que Thimocrate tout absent qu'il est, puis qu'il est aimé, est le moins malheureux des quatre: que Philocles quoy que non-aime, n'est pourtant pas le plus infortuné de tous; puis qu'apres tout, ce quit fait son mal, pourra peut-estre causer vn jour sa guerison. Et pour Leontidas, ie soustiens qu'il est le moins à pleindre, bien que ie soit persuadée qu'il souffre plus que tous les autres ensemble: Et ie declare enfin, que le Prince Artibie en pleurant sa Maistresse morte, est le plus digne de compaision; & celuy de tous pour qui i'ay le plus de pitié, quoy que ie sente auui3i les malheurs des autres: à la reserve du jaloux Leontidas, pour qui i'ay beaucoup d'estime, & point du tout de compaision.  

I declare then with audacity, that Thimocrates, though absent, yet since he is loved, is the least unfortunate of the four: That Philocles, though not loved, yet is he not the most unfortunate of all, since that which causeth his Misery, may perhaps, hereafter, cause his Cure. And as for Leontides, I affirm that he is the least to be pitied, though I am perswaded he has endured more Misery than all the rest. And to conclude, I declare, that the prince Artibies, in lamenting his dead Mistress, is most worthy of Compassion, and him whom I most pity, though I am sensible of the Miseries of all the rest, except the jealous Leontides, for whom, I reserve much esteem, but little pity.  

Osborne reenacts this small literary scene of judgement in her epistolary dialogue with Temple, and asks him to send her his judgment of the lovers. She notes that Temple may not agree with the remarks the characters make (82). Her own judgment differs from that of Martesie:

L'Amant Absent has (in my opinion) a Mistresse, soe much beyonde any of the rest that to bee in danger of loosing her, is more then to have lost the others, L'Amant non Aimé was an Asse under favoir...his Mistresse had Caprices that would have suited better with our Amant Jaloux then with any body else; and the Prince Artibie was  


much too blame that hee outlived his belle Leontine (82).

First of all, it is worthy of note that Osborne does not feel the need to agree with Martisie, which is a further testament to Osborne's freedom to utilize the examples in the text according to her own desires. As well, Osborne's attempt to engage in a dialogue with Temple bodes well for the courtship, because it aims at a shared articulation of the required qualities of a lover. It is remarkable, however, that the examples used are negative ones, and represent unions which are torn apart, whether through jealousy or death.

When she notes that she cries for Amestris, (85) Osborne focuses on an even more tragic subplot from *Le Grand Cyrus*. Amestris is about to be married to her lover Aglatides when his rivals Arbates and Megabises provoke a duel. The unrest caused by this conflict causes the ruler of the nation to exile Aglatides. As Aglatides goes to say farewell to Amestris in a beautiful garden, he sees her in conversation with his rival Megabises. He is not aware that Megabises has forced Amestris to speak with him, and becomes fiercely jealous. Aglatides tries to punish Amestris by paying elaborate homage to another woman. Aglatides's confidante tells Amestris that he acted out of jealousy due to her apparent connection to Megabises, and not out of passion for the new woman. Piqued by his doubts about her constancy, Amestris marries a man she despises, Otane. She chooses a man for whom she has no regard to make it obvious that she does not act out of love or desire. Later on, Amestris and Aglatides reconcile, but too late. By then, she is married to Otane. Aglatides, in recounting his story, expresses his shock at his original heartbreak, and offers a dim view of love:
I ignoroi que la doleur & le chagrin, sont inseparables de l'amour; que l'on ne fait point de conquestes sans peine: que l'on ne les conserue pas sans trauail; & que l'on ne les scacr sii perdre, sans perdre la raison.  

I was such a Novice as I knew not, that Grief and Melancholly were inseparable Concomitants of Love; That a Lover never gets a Conquest without pain; That he can never keep his Mistress without Trouble, nor cannot lose her unless he lose his Reason also.

The pain of love is universal. Happiness hinges on variable tempers; it is subject to storms of human indifference and self-absorption. Osborne writes eloquently, for example, about the sorrows of Almanzor at the hands of the beautiful but inaccessible Alcidiana, a Sehnsucht that ultimately causes his death:

I doe not use to forget my old acquaintances, Almanzor is as fresh in my memory, as if I had visetted his Tombe but Yesterday, though it bee at least seven yeer agon since; You will beleve I had not bin used to great afflictions, when I made his Story such a one to mee, as I cryed an hower together for him, and was soe angry with Alcidiana that for my life I could never love her after it (26).

Osborne does not attach a source to this tale because she assumes that Temple is familiar with these characters. Critics and editors of the letters have variously claimed that she is referring to the 1572 Palmerin de Oliva or Robert Ashley's 1627 Almanzor the Learned. However, Osborne is actually referring to Marin de Gomberville's 1647 Polexander, a heroic

31 G.C. Moore Smith asserts, in Appendix VIII to his edition of Dorothy Osborne's letters, that Osborne is not referring to Almanzor but actually Amaran in Palmerin de Oliva, 310-311.
romance set in Mexico. Polexander chronicles the titular character's struggle to pursue Alcidiana to the Inaccessible Isle, although she has forbidden such pursuit. He arrives on the island, defends her against Spanish invaders, and overcomes her resistance to his love. Almanzor, who has fallen in love with Alcidiana after seeing her portrait, encounters his rival Polexander early in the romance, to his distress. They duel. Almanzor, emotionally battered by the existence of his rival, and disconsolate at the inaccessibility of his mistress, rapidly constructs a magnificent tomb and prepares to die. As his friend Almandarin recounts, Almanzor seeks death with eagerness:

Il ne songea plus qu'a mourir, & mourir d'un mort lente, afin qu'en souffrant davantage, il satisfit mieux à sa passion...il fit bastir ce superbe tombeau que tu verras en L'Isle de fer, si jamais le souvenir de ce Prince te fait donner quelques larmes à ses cendres.34

He thought of nothing but to dye, and to dye lingering and slowly, that by his more suffering, he might the more satisfie his passion...He caused to be built that brave Monument which thou seest in the Island of Fer, if ever the remembrance of that Prince hath made thee bestow any teares on his ashes. 35

Almanzor's hyperbolic desire brings about his doom. He must die for his love. Without Alcidiane's love, his life is worthless. Witness his exclamation to Alcidiane before his death:

Tourne donc les yeux sur Almanzor, & recou pour marque de son eternelle fidelite,

33 Since this romance possesses characters named Almanzor, Alcidiana, and a tomb, and Osborne, in another letter, briefly mentions that she has seen a translation of this work into English, it seems reasonable to make this identification.


la vie qu'il abandonne sans regret, puis que c'est a toy seule qu'elle est sacrifie.\textsuperscript{36}

Turne then thine eyes upon Almanzor, and receive as a pledge of his perpetual fidelity, the life which he leaves without sorrow, since to thee alone it is sacrificed.\textsuperscript{37}

Almanzor's death teaches Osborne that romantic loss necessitates renunciation of worldly existence. She is highly receptive to this lesson, and remembers her mourning for Almanzor well, even though it has been several years. Like Amestris, Almanzor is real to Osborne.

Edward Baron Turk comments that the characters in \textit{Polexander} are "so completely unidimensional as to be, at bottom, inscrutable."\textsuperscript{38} Turk is right, but I would in fact argue that Osborne uses such flatness as an invitation to indulge her emotions. I would suggest that the mythic–even pseudo-allegorical–quality of the characters makes it more rather than less possible for Osborne to import the experience of a character like Almanzor onto her own situation. Though she often likes to read because the stories remind her of her own life, she is also capable of responding to the general feeling of loss rather than specific events. Whether it is Amestris or Almanzor, the facilitation of grief is central to the cultural work of the romances.

There is, however, something quite specific in Osborne's interest in Almanzor. Why would Osborne empathize with, even seek out, a character whose intense and thwarted desire leads to death? Osborne might well have identified with the beautiful heroine Alcidiana,

\textsuperscript{36} Gomberville, \textit{Polexander}, 135.

\textsuperscript{37} Gomberville, Translated by Browne, 22.

since she was herself so imperious with suitors, but Almanzor's anguish captured her attention more compellingly. And why, confronted with a romance where Polexandre wins his forbidden beloved (precisely as William Temple was later to do) does Osborne fix on the "only significant character who does not attain his prize...the only hero who dies ignominiously"? Osborne is indulging in a modicum of weepy self-pity in her imaginary visits to Almanzor's tomb, as would befit a woman whose courtship is not progressing well. The sadness of those characters might be comforting insofar as they reflect the suffering of others, and allow for a vicarious companionship of misery. However, her concern for defeat is out of step with the ethos of the romances, the way that the heroes of these works, in the words of Jusserand, "defy earth and heaven." Osborne invests her emotions in a character who chooses to die of injured sentiment rather than combat obstacles, as Polexander does when he seeks and wins Alcidiana. Almanzor's decision about his death is, in a figurative sense, the same as the decision Osborne must make about her courtship. Faced with a set of obstacles, she must decide whether to fight or become resigned—to combat her discouragement, or to force a wrenching parting.

Sometimes reading becomes a painful experience, one Osborne would like to bring to a halt. When reading, for example, about the doomed Mademoiselle de Tournon, a historical figure from the memoirs of Margaret of Valois, she explains that this story was "soe sad that when I had read it I was able to goe noe further, and was faine to take up somthing else to divert my self withall" (21). Mademoiselle de Tournon, whose story Moore

39 Turk, 123.

40 Jusserand, 353.
Smith remarks "recalls that of Ophelia" dies of grief at the indifference of a lover, the Marquis de Varanbon. Varanbon then finds that his feelings are restored to their original intensity. He comes back to Mademoiselle de Tournon to declare his love, only to find her dead. The situation demonstrates the vagaries of desire and the fragility of communication. Its traditional tragic structure is, to some degree, the source of Osborne's anxiety. Just as Samuel Johnson declared he could not bear to read *King Lear* to the end, Osborne cannot bear the unfortunate tragic consequences she encountered in this story. Once again, the story is concerned with the capricious nature of desire, its disturbing ebbs and flows.

Avoiding reading is one means of dealing with the difficult lessons of the romances. Crying (and telling Temple she has cried) is another. It is obvious that the experience of reading often provokes a heavy *tristesse*. Osborne may relish stories about contented individuals, but she dwells on discontented lovers in her letters. Individuals, often of great worth, are denied what they desire, either through the cruelty of others or purely circumstantial conflict. Part of this breakdown can be traced to a natural tendency for love relationships to falter; some of this deterioration is specifically related to the problems attendant on marriage.42


42 The romances, in fact, do not necessarily act to advocate marital union, although this seems to be the overwhelming message of a story where a hero and heroine manage to surmount almost unbeatable odds to achieve union. These romances provided romantic models but also models for women's lives and paradigms for female desire "unconstrained by marriage" (DeJean, 10). In the final volume, Sapho rejects marriage and requires her beloved to retire with her to the land of Sauromantes (according to Herodotus the home of Amazons). Their union, while strong, does not take place within the confines of marriage. Sapho in fact, affirms that marriage is a "long slavery" for women: "in order to love each other forever with no loss of ardor, it is necessary never to marry" (Cit. In DeJean, 49).
For Osborne, there is significant overlap between the romances and the real-life situations she sees. If Osborne is discouraged by what she encountered in romances (as I have been arguing), the unions she witnesses around her lead to even more negative conclusions. The romances gesture to thwarted love. Then Osborne looks around her and notices people who marry only for mercenary motives, or who visit their grotesque demands and caprices on their spouses or lovers. Osborne goes so far as to speculate about whether unions based on genuine love are possible:

> there are such Multitudes that Abuse the names of Love and friendship, and soe very few, that either understand or practice it in reality, that it may raise great doubt's whither there is any such thing in the world or not (96).

Asymmetrical power relationships are an enduring problem in the unions she sees around her. Osborne describes a set of relationships where the woman is more powerful than the male partner; Mrs. Sunderlane ("Sacharissa") haughtily receives her husband Mr. Smith "like a Gracious Princes" (21); a previously sensible man is transformed after his marriage "into the direct shape of a great Boy newly come from scoole" (71); another displays excessive fondness for his wife (95). Women are also blatantly abused by men. There is, for example, the particularly unhappy example of a "kinswoman" of Osborne's

...that had a husband whoe was not alway's him self, and when hee was otherwise, his humor was to rise in the night, and with two bedstaves tabour upon the table an houre together, shee took care every night to lay a great Cushen upon the table for him to strike on that nobody might heer him and soe discover his madnesse. but tis a sad thing when all on's happinesse is only that y' world dos not know you are miserable... (101-102).

Osborne is torn between her horror of the woman's experience and her belief that the onus is on the wife to prevent her misery being generally known. She is keenly aware of the
woman's misery, and the fact that she could not have suspected how bad her husband's behaviour was before they were married (although the lead-in to this story is a moment where Osborne stresses the culpability of women, noting "I am affrayde much of the fault lyes in us" [101]). Events seem to progress inexorably, as they do in the tragic literary examples.

After describing such madness and caprice, and reading about it in romances, Osborne advances her claim that those who desire to marry should live in the same house together (by which she doubtless means under the same roof in an extended family situation). Osborne proposes this as a solution for the uncertainty of the beloved's character. On the other hand, if one was to procure such information, it would prove discouraging: "if in all that time they never disagreed they should then bee permitted to marry if they pleas'd. but how few would doe it then!" (102). Knowledge about one's romantic object reveals the difficulty of concord. Once again, Osborne is faced with the cultural evidence that marriage will often result in friction or sorrow.

Osborne acknowledges that she expects difficulties in her own love and marriage, interrupting her speculations about the continued existence of love after marriage to admit she may not be able to speak authoritatively about the issue:

it is very posible I may talke ignorantly of Marriage; When I come to make sad experiments on't in my owne Person, I shall know more, and say lesse, for feare of disheartning other's, (since tis no advantage to forknow a misfortune that cannot bee avoyded) and for feare of being Pittyed, which of all things I hate (12).

A great deal of this statement, of course, is ironic whimsy. Osborne is not entirely serious when she links misfortune and marriage, but her repeated implication that she lacks encouragement from positive models from fiction and life invests this statement with an
underlying seriousness. The "experiments" of marriage (with their connotation of empirical observation) are, in an unexpected adjectival connection, "sad." As well, given her interest in models of behaviour, her statement that she will not act as an example herself is poignant. She will not be able to help others when they face the challenges of their own unions.

Osborne sometimes strikes a tone which is both lighthearted and stoic:

> if People proceeded with this caution the world would End sooner then is Expected I believe, and because with all my Warinesse tis not imposible but I may bee caught, nor likely, that I should bee wiser then Every body Else, twere best I think that I sayed noe more in this point (102).

Osborne's resignation to being "caught" is expressed in terms of the biological imperative of reproduction. In her distress and confusion over the negative examples she resorts to the typical life patterns she sees around her. Although she knows that disastrous unhappiness might await, she allows herself to be swept away by events.

The fact that Osborne felt compelled to cease reading the tragic story of Mlle. de Tournon shows that she is at least somewhat afraid of the "sad experiments" of love. Her reading and observations lead her to a crux in interpretation where outward signals and fondest hopes are at odds. Reading and social interactions have provided new knowledge, but not necessarily granted her the tools to cope with her discoveries. In some ways, the criticism of romance in terms of its inability to transform women's lives was—and is—just; the romances do not provide all of the means for complete self-transformation. However, for Osborne, they are one means of discovering the challenges and discoveries of affective relationships. They facilitate a dialogue with Temple about issues of importance in the courtship. The romances point to the vagaries of desire and the variability of the human
temperament, and these are the example Osborne finds most pressing as she writes to Temple.

Osborne found herself in a situation where there were few positive models in either literary or real-life terms. Many of the examples she was most interested in highlighted renunciatory desire, and showed the connection between loss (whether literal or romantic) and desire. Osborne was able to use these examples with Temple. They were potentially able to function as both a positive force in the courtship, a means of strengthening desire against the pressures of renunciation. However, the mere fact that Osborne was confronted with so many negative models in both fiction and real-life might have proven a profoundly discouraging force in the courtship.
Chapter Five
The Importunity of My Brothers, Sweet Juell Jane: Meddling Others in the Osborne-Temple Courtship

You are born at the same time with a lui of other people, all mixed up with them, like trying to, having to, move your arms and legs with strings only the same strings are hitched to all the other arms and legs and the others all trying and they dont know why either except that the strings are all in one another's way like five or six people all trying to make a rug on the same loom only each one wants to weave his own pattern into the rug...

-Judith, in Faulkner’s Absalom, Absalom

In my last chapter, I was concerned with the way negative portrayals of desire might have discouraged Osborne from pursuing a love union. In the following three chapters, I will be considering the interference of other people in the courtship, shifting the focus somewhat from cultural influences on the courtship to the biographical and historical forces which bore on the courtship. Involved in this investigation is a consideration of what Osborne needs in order to achieve the union she desires. Osborne seems to yearn to be left alone with Temple: to block out the myriad voices which surround her and listen to his voice alone. Her courtship hangs on the ability to establish a space where she can interact privately with Temple, and be free of the wishes and interventions of others. Part of the reason why she makes a gesture to renounce the courtship is that she is exhausted from mediating between her own desires and those of other people.

On the other hand, Osborne's attempt to disentangle herself from the voices and volition of people other than Temple is by no means unequivocal. Although other people impose their desires on her, she restlessly flirts with other relational possibilities: perspectives, attitudes, and subjectivities which threaten the closed system of exchange with
Temple for which she seems to be striving. She has a contradictory attitude towards other people in the courtship. She is rivetted by the vagaries of human folly and delighted by gossip but also finds such tomfoolery threatening. She is wary of her waiting woman Jane's interest in Temple, but drawn to her company; she is nonplussed by her brother's inordinate protectiveness and his overwrought attachment to her, but is drawn into dialogue with him. She would like to be exclusively devoted to Temple but sends him animated descriptions of other people who compel her attention, including her erotic attention. I will be considering the role triangulated desire plays in Osborne's willingness to dissolve her courtship and her anxieties about romantic union in general.

There are two major emotional triangles in Dorothy Osborne's letters, though others emerge briefly in the correspondence. One triangle involves Jane Wright, Osborne's waiting woman; the other involves her brother Henry Osborne. In both cases, Osborne's desires and volitions compete with the desires of others. The main plot of desire between Osborne and Temple is supplanted by another plot, however briefly. Jane Wright seems to be the heroine of her own courtship narrative with William Temple. Henry Osborne's narrative seems to advance a plot of exclusive brother-sister devotion. Just as Judith in Faulkner's novel expresses her bewilderment at her inability to weave her own pattern when other individuals are determined to weave in other directions, so Osborne is confused by the narratives that others advance.

Osborne's presentation of triangular desire is reminiscent of structures found in some novels. René Girard suggests that triangularity is a catalyst for love plots, and, furthermore,
desire cannot exist without a rival: "in the birth of desire, the third person is always present." While it is likely an overstatement to describe the Osborne-Temple courtship as predicated on the existence of rivalry or triangular desire, the romance is enlivened by various erotic and affectional permutations. More importantly, triangles are part of the complications that turn the romance into a plot, playing a role in the courtship akin to that of financial obstacles.

Osborne learns a great deal about herself and the courtship from the triangular plots she negotiates. In the words of Eve Sedgwick, such erotic triangles are "a sensitive register precisely for delineating relationships of power and meaning, and for making graphically intelligible the play of desire and identification by which individuals negotiate with their societies for empowerment." Sedgwick's focus on empowerment is resonant for Osborne's letters, as are her remarks about the interplay of "desire and identification." Osborne must situate herself in reference to others in order to discover her own voice. Since she links her empowerment to her courtship with Temple, she must establish her primacy with her lover, and try to accord Temple similar importance in her life. The love triangles add urgency to Osborne's desire for isolation with Temple. The "importunities" of others bring her wish for autonomy into sharp definition.

Osborne was courted by multiple suitors: Sir Justinian Isham, James Beverley, Henry

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Cromwell, and so on. Henry Osborne, her brother, was a particularly unwelcome source of attention both in terms of the kind of control he exerted over the courtship, and through the intensity of his attachment to her. She explains that she receives letters from her brother whose amorous valences she found at least mildly disconcerting:

seriously I many times receive letters from him that were they seen without an adresse to mee, or his Name, noe body would believe they were from a brother, & I cannot but tell him sometimes that sure hee mistakes and sends mee letters that were meant to his Mistresse, till hee swear's to mee that hee has none (47-48).

Osborne hints at the events of the scene but leaves out many salient details. The contents of the letter Henry Osborne sends and the details of the conversation are left unclear. More fundamentally, Henry Osborne's motivation for sending such letters is left unexplained (perhaps because Dorothy Osborne never understood it herself). Nor can we ascertain what Osborne tries to achieve when she confronted her brother. Does she expect him to confess to his unorthodox emotions, or be cowed into more appropriate behaviour? It is particularly difficult to picture what the pair must have said to each other immediately after Henry Osborne "swore" he had no mistress. Surely at this point in the conversation there must have been an awkward moment; in saying he had no mistress, Henry was admitting that his desirous letters were aimed at his sister.

Once Osborne speaks (or half-vocalizes) her mock-suspicion that Henry Osborne's letters are meant for a "Mistresse," it is difficult to shake the conviction that the letters are amorous in tone, regardless of what they were meant to achieve. Osborne's description is almost legalistic, establishing the fact that the signature is Henry Osborne's, and that Dorothy Osborne is undeniably the addressee. The Henry/Dorothy correspondence (all of which, to
the best of my knowledge, has been lost) forms a darkly parodic contrast to the Osborne-Temple letters. Dorothy Osborne explicitly compares Temple's letters with her brother's: "would you saw what Letters my Brother writes mee, you are not halfe soe kinde, well hee is alway's in the Extream's" (148). Literally speaking, her brother's missives are more passionate than those of her lover, though Osborne's comparison here must be in some way ironic. Henry Osborne's missives cross the boundaries of acceptability; they are not sought by the recipient; they estrange rather than seduce.

Osborne's assertion that Henry Osborne is, by nature, extreme seems like a denial of the specifically sexual desire in these letters. The question of whether Henry Osborne's desires are incestuous is a difficult one to answer given the limited information available from Osborne's letters— and, for that matter, a paucity of documentary information about brother-sister incest in the period. F.L. Lucas, a critic of the letters from the 1930s, senses an inordinate, romanticized attachment in Henry Osborne's letters. Weighing out the conflicting reasons for Henry Osborne's dislike of Temple, he explains that the Osborne family ostensibly despised Temple for "being an adventurer and an atheist" but concludes that her brother's motive was, in fact, a "passionate jealousy." Lucas associates Osborne's experience with drama that explores incestuous attachment, remarking that if Osborne was familiar with The Duchess of Malfi, "she must have found the relations of the Duchess of

While there is very little historical information about brother-sister incest in the period, there is material on the incest in drama by playwrights like John Ford and John Webster. See, for example, Lisa Hopkins, "A Source for John Ford's Tis Pity She's a Whore," Notes and Queries 41, 4, (December 1994) 520-21. See also Frank Whigham, "Sexual and Social Mobility in The Duchess of Malfi." PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America 100, 2 (March 1985), 167-186.
Malfi with her brother, Duke Ferdinand, painfully like her own." Webster's play and Osborne's letters both display a brother's inordinate concern with the sexuality of his sister.

While Henry's zeal is undoubtedly unorthodox, his diary makes it clear that he was trying to match his sister outside of the family. He did not feel it was possible for Dorothy to remain unmarried or uninvolved with other men. On the other hand, Henry clings to Dorothy, and in fact expects to live in her house after she marries. She remarks: "my B. will never bee at quiet till hee sees mee disposed of, but hee do's not mean to loose mee by it" (47). Henry Osborne does not expect marriage to bring Dorothy Osborne into a separate household. His eagerness to settle Osborne's affairs derives from his wish to ensure his own future in his sister's household:

"hee knows that if I were married at this present, I should not bee perswaded to leave my father, as long as hee lives, and when this house break's up, hee is resolved to follow mee if hee can, which hee thinks hee might better doe to a house where I had some power, then where I am but upon Courtesy my self, besydes that hee thinks it would bee to my advantage to bee well bestow'd, and by that hee understands Richly. hee is much of your Sisters humor, and many times wishes mee a husband that loved mee as well as hee do's, (though hee seem's to doubt the posibility ont) (47).

The mercenary concern her brother has previously expressed is operative here. To be "well" bestowed means to be "Richly" bestowed. However, Henry Osborne's unwillingness to "loose" Osborne extends beyond mere financial concern, or the imperative to find a marital home where she can use her influence to allow for her brother's presence. As Osborne puts

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5 One need go no further than Henry Osborne's diary entry (written in cipher) for July 28th, 1652: "I vowed a vow to God to say a prayer everie day for my sister and when shee was married to giue God thanks that day every yeere so long as I lived." See G.C. Moore Smith, "Henry Osborne's Diary," *Notes and Queries*, 12th Series, Vol. VII (16 October 1920), 305. The excerpts from the diaries continued in this series on Oct. 23rd, Oct. 30th, and Nov. 13th.
it, her brother "doubts the possibility" that she can find an affective relationship outside of the family unit comparable to what she receives from him. He claims that his love is superior even to that of people he has not yet met. There is something very inward-looking about this attitude. Lois E. Bueler remarks that, in Renaissance drama, incest is often portrayed as the result of "a perverse sort of family pride or solidarity," as characters affirm the exclusive attractiveness and worth of their own families.\(^6\) Part of Henry Osborne's rejection of Temple is directed towards his ostensible inferiority to the Osborne family: a kind of spiritual or psychological incest is at work here, even if literal incest is not.

Osborne's remarks about her brother's unwillingness to "loose" her resonate well with Claude Levi-Strauss's discussion of the incest tabu in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. According to Levi-Strauss, exogamous marriage is based on a set of exchanges between men where, to engage in a sexual relationship with a woman, a man must give up one of his kinswomen to marriage. Trapped within this relentless cycle of exchange, men have a persistent (albeit utopian) fantasy of "seizing and fixing that fleeting moment when it was permissible to believe that the law of exchange could be evaded, that one could gain without losing, enjoy without sharing."\(^7\) Regardless of the historical, sociological, or psychological verity of his assertion (and Levi-Strauss's ideas on kinship and his structuralist methodology have been widely and persuasively criticized),\(^8\) Osborne's remark that Henry Osborne does

\(^{6}\) Bueler, 130..


\(^{8}\) For a critique of gender bias in Levi-Strauss's ideas, see Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna
not wish to "loose" her is suggestive of the sort of failed exchange of which Levi-Strauss speaks. Dorothy Osborne's description of Henry Osborne's letter may be a calculated signal to Temple that she needs his help to open up cycles of exchange, cycles which might otherwise be too constricted.9

Dorothy could be using the letters to demonstrate her resourcefulness, showing Temple that she can cope with these ambiguous, discomfiting letters. Osborne's spirited repartee with her brother demonstrates her ability to confront a potentially disturbing situation (even a tabu one) with frankness; perhaps she wishes to highlight her ability to cope with this manner of pressure. Perhaps Osborne simply wishes to embolden William Temple in his courtship by portraying Henry, his opponent and unlikely rival, as a buffoon. Henry Osborne is unable to control his emotions (they burst out in embarrassing missives) or to direct his desires to a proper object choice.

More darkly, Osborne may be employing Temple as a witness to her uncomfortable situation, so that he could intervene on her behalf if necessary. Although she states explicitly


9 Lois E. Bueler has remarked on the link between incest and tragedy, since (in the terms of Levi-Strauss) the necessary societal and martial exchange does not take place, or takes place only in part. Conversely, "the moment when, unwitting incest having been revealed, the affected characters turn their attentions outward to establish bonds beyond themselves is the culturally stabilizing moment" (126).
that she is not concerned about her brother's letters, if Osborne did not want Temple to react with suspicion, she was ill-advised to offer him such an incriminating description of the letters. Osborne and Temple do mount a small debate about whether Henry Osborne's missive expresses unorthodox desire or not. Temple is worried but Osborne retorts:

You think him kinde from a letter that you mett with of his, Sure there was very little of any thing in that, or else I should not have imploied it to wrap a Book up (47). "Kindness" in the early modern period had connotations of sexual willingness or interest. Even so, Osborne tries to defuse the potentially explosive situation, exclaiming "I cannot agree with you that my Brothers kindnesse to mee has any thing of trouble int." (50). The word "trouble" weighs heavily here. In using her brother's letter to "wrap a Book up," she treats it as a trivial object, relegating it to a purely practical use. Though less dramatic than Samuel Pepys' burning of the plaintive letter of his longsuffering wife Elizabeth, Osborne's treatment of the letter is also an attempt to forestall negative and destructive feelings.

Osborne glances slyly at the fluidity of her brother's desires. Dorothy Osborne remarks ironically and tartly about her brother's esteem for her suitor Sir Justinian Isham: "one above all the rest I think hee is in love with himself, and may marry him too, if hee pleases, I shall not hinder him" (54). Henry's desire for Dorothy is either connected to or reflected in his interest in her male suitors: if not a literally sexual interest, then a desire for close association with admiration at its root. Henry Osborne's closeness to these prospective

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10 Samuel Pepys writes "I would not read" a written complaint of Elizabeths but "burned" it. When she presents him with another copy on January 9th, 1663, and he finds another bundle of papers, he writes, "I pulled them out one by one and tore them all before her face, though it went against my heart to do it, she crying and desiring me not to do it." See *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, eds. Robert Latham and William Matthews (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1970-1983), 4:9.
suitors throws a wrench into the machinery of the Osborne-Temple courtship; it creates a set of desirous relationships that Osborne did not choose and that she does not wish to engage with.

Osborne's situation as a powerless sister is part of the reason she is plunged into relational structures which cause her pain. After Peter Osborne died, Henry Osborne was essentially a surrogate father. Negotiations about Dorothy Osborne's fate took place between men, and she was not involved in many of the negotiations which take place. Eve Sedgewick notes that "in any male-dominated society, there is a special relationship between male homosocial (including homosexual) desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power: a relationship founded on an inherent and potentially active structural congruence."\(^{11}\) This structure is established because women, in the words of Levi-Strauss, are figured as "objects in the exchange," not as "one of the partners.\(^{12}\)

While Osborne is not legally a player in the negotiations, she tries to influence the courtship itself. Since she cannot act in a fully autonomous manner, Osborne's task is to establish a relationship between her family and Temple. The existence of such heavily mediated relationships is at least a partial explanation for the difficulties that Osborne and Temple had in pressing forward their courtship. Along with the active opposition Osborne's family mounted to the courtship, the fact that Henry Osborne and William Temple rarely

\(^{11}\) Sedgwick, 25.

\(^{12}\) Cited in Sedgwick, 26. For a discussion of the way that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century drama highlighted the problems caused by women being used as objects of exchange between men, see Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity & Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London and New York: Routledge, 1985), 202-206.
speak to each other makes it difficult for them to establish a dynamic of any kind, much less one which will allow for the exchange of women. Dorothy Osborne emphasizes the distance between Temple and Henry Osborne when she describes her brother as "my freind, that is not your's" (27). With no friendship between Henry Osborne and William Temple, there can be no union between Temple and Dorothy Osborne.

Dorothy Osborne's cultural and literary influences led her to expect behaviour unlike Henry Osborne's. In Cowley's *Davideis*, a poem which Osborne read in manuscript, Jonathan is an essential player in the marriage negotiations of David and his sister Michol, and an extremely helpful force. Because Michol is prevented by her modesty from acting on her inclinations and pursuing David, her brother Jonathan must negotiate on her behalf:

> But Jonathan, to whom both hearts were known
> With a concernment equal to their own,
> Joyful that Heav'en with his sworn love comply'd
> To draw that know more fast which he had ty'd,
> With well-tim'ed zeal, and with an artful care,
> Restor'ed, and better'd soon the nice affaire.
> With ease a Brothers lawful power orecame
> The formal decencies of virgin-shame

(3. 835-842).

The comparison between Michol and Dorothy Osborne holds true only to a certain degree. One obvious difference between them is that Osborne is fully capable of expressing her attachment to Temple. While modest, Osborne can speak to Temple directly. However, she did require help from her brother in every legal and financial sense. A good brother

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13 Cowley's verses were published in 1656. Therefore, as G.C. Moore Smith explains, "the verses [Osborne] sends Temple must have been in MS," *The Letters of Dorothy Osborne*, n. 286. All quotations from the poem are taken from Abraham Cowley, *Davideis*, ed. Gayle Shadduck (New York: Garland Publishers, 1987).
encourages communication between lovers, clearing away impediments to union, especially if they are ridiculous or petty. In Cowley's poem, Jonathan is favorably compared to his gloomy, selfish father Saul because he is able to recognize other people's concerns and desires. Jonathan has an interest in the well-being of the lovers; his stake or "concernment" in the outcome of the plot is literally "equal" to their own. In one sense, such "concernment" is an echo of the kind of passion Osborne and Temple ascribe to Henry Osborne, but Jonathan's emotions matched Michol and David's passions and were therefore helpful rather than complicating feelings. The example of Jonathan shows Osborne that it is possible for an individual to be engaged with the affairs of one's family without lapsing into inappropriate or meddlesome behavior. Jonathan helps the couple attain a desire dyad; the triangular structure of his involvement is explicitly temporary.

Henry Osborne does end up bringing his wishes in line with those of Osborne and Temple, though (as we will see) there were always tensions between the married couple and the embittered bachelor brother. However, as events in the courtship change, there is a visible softening in her attitude towards her brother. Osborne describes a scene of rapprochement between brother and sister. This scene of agreement is preceded by an account of Osborne's defiance of Henry Osborne's badgering: "hee renounced mee againe and I defyed him" (139). The scene of reconciliation vividly incorporates Henry Osborne's words:

there hee sate halfe an hower and sayde not one word nor I to him, at Last in a pittifull Tone, Sister say's hee, I have heard you say that when any thing troubles you, of all things you apprehend going to bed, because there it increases upon you and you lye at the mercy of all your sad thoughts which y\(^2\) silence and darknesse of y\(^2\) night adds a horror to; I am at that passe now, I vow to God I would not indure another night like the last to gaine a Crowne. I whoe resolved to take noe notice what ayled him, sayd twas a knoledge I had raised from my Spleen only; and soe fell into a
discourse of Melancholy and ye Causes, and from that (I know not how) into Religion, and wee talked so long of it and soe devoutely that it layed all our anger, wee grew to a calme and peace with all the world; two hermits conversing in a Cell they Equaly inhabitt, never Expressed more humble Charritable Kindenesse one towards another then wee...(139-140).

A discussion of melancholy and religion, for whatever reason, facilitates agreement and diffuses anger. Their new understanding takes on the qualities of religious quiescence: they are too devout to argue. It also seems to stem from their recognition of an underlying sympathy of temperament, a unity of melancholic suffering that may be a function of consanguinuity. The pair come to an agreement that Henry will not speak to Osborne about her marriage. After the marriage "hee shall leave mee, hee say's, not out of want of Kindenesse to mee, but because hee cannot see the Ruine of a Person that hee lov's soe passionatly and in whose happinesse hee had layed up all his" (140). Osborne finds herself released from the burdens of her brother's passion, though paradoxically he expresses his desire to leave Osborne to her own devices in terms of passionate attachment. The fact that he is overly solicitous of her fate becomes the point of departure for her release.

Osborne lays the rivalry between Temple and her brother to rest explicitly:

though hee should break his promise hee should never make mee break mine; noe let mee assure you, this Rivall nor any other shall Ever Alter mee. Therfor spare your Jelousy or turne it all into Kindenesse (140).

Some of this softening is derived from her need to utilize her brother in the marriage

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14 Henry Osborne's sprawling, unseemly emotion for Osborne is ironic given his earlier claim that "all passions, have more of trouble then satisfaction in them and therfore they are happiest that have Least of them" (Osborne 47). This is reminiscent of Seneca's appraisal of the Epicurean school which rivalled his own stoicism: "our wise man feels his troubles but overcomes them, while their wise man does not even feel them." See Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Letters from a Stoic: Epistulae morales ad Lucilium*, trans. Robin Campbell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 48.
negotiations. As Fitzmaurice and Rey comment, "It is no small irony that Osborne had to rely on her once-reviled brother to make the formal arrangements." Osborne insists that her brother must "treat" for her in the marriage negotiations:

if I did say once that my B should have nothing to doe int, twas when his Carriage towards mee gave mee such an occasion as I could justify the Keeping that distance wth him, but now it would Look Extrearnly unhandsome in mee (180).

Her concern not to appear "unhandsome" relates to her persistent concern about how people perceive her, a concern I will discuss in my next chapter. She is (justifiably) worried about the reaction of the wider community should she spurn her brother. She is also well aware of the fragile state of the negotiations, and the need to avoid antagonizing either side. She notes perceptively, "if your father out of humor shall refuse to treate wth such friends as I have, let them bee what they will, it must End hear" (179). Osborne must have found such firmness necessary for the smoothness of the negotiations, and for her own peace of mind. Despite the irony of her proviso "let them bee what they will," Osborne is firm not only with Temple but with his father. She uses her own family as a means to achieve his goal rather


15 Kenneth Parker explains that her brother-in-law Thomas Peyton was the sole official representative of the Osborne family in the negotiations but that he "would not agree any (sic) details in the marriage contract without the participation of Henry Osborne, even if the latter was not officially one of the negotiators." See Letters to Sir William Temple, n. 378. Henry Osborne's signature appears on the agreement between Sir John Temple and the Osborne family that Dorothy Temple will be paid 500 pounds should she survive William Temple or in trust for her children. This bond is dated 1655. See Osborn of Chicksands: A Catalogue of the Family and Estate Papers of the Osborn Family of Chicksands (Unpublished catalogue, Bedford County Record Office, 1994), 0/35/A.

than a hindrance. Osborne's pleas for Temple's patience and flexibility reveal her as a kind of seventeenth-century "peace weaver." Her ability to smooth over disputes makes the union of two families possible. She must manage a great deal of the delicate diplomacy involved. If this demanding negotiation cannot be achieved, Osborne will be forced to renounce treasured desires.

At times, the demands of mediating provoke a painfully divided loyalty. However, even in the most troubled stages of the courtship, Osborne expresses confidence in her ability to cope with competing claims: "I may bee Just to you and [my brother] both, and to bee a kinde sister, will take nothing from my being a Perfect ffriende" (50). Instead of a pseudo-love triangle where her brother places emotional demands on her, or a young couple's rebellion against the rigid demands of a surrogate father, Osborne envisions a harmonious trio where she acts as a contented mediator. Again, she must deny the explosive components of the interaction within the group.

Osborne's strong tendency to bridge seemingly incompatible desires brings to mind feminist theory (particularly cultural and psychoanalytical feminism) which claims that women tend to seek self-definition in relation to others. Osborne relished her ability to heal

17 Freudian revisionist Nancy Chodorow argues that young girls negotiate the Oedipal complex differently than their male counterparts, resulting in less distinct ego boundaries and a relational subjectivity. See The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978). Carol Gilligan discussed women's moral choices as more intersubjective and based on social configurations rather than discourses of rights and freedoms. See In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982). Sidonie Smith challenges the potential essentialism of such views: "Is female preoccupation with the other an essential dynamic of female psychobiography or a culturally conditioned manifestation of the ideology of gender that associates female difference with attentiveness to the other?" See A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation (Bloomington: Indiana
the rifts between other people and reconcile herself to the demands of others, yet there is a palpable sense that she feels that such emotional labour is imposed on her rather than chosen by her. There is also a sense that Osborne has particular difficulty maintaining autonomy when manipulation is cloaked in kindness and civility:

I feare nobody's Anger, I am proofe against all Violence, but when People haunt mee with reasonings and Entreaty's, when they looke sadly and pretend kindenesse, when they begg upon that score, tis a strange paine to mee to deny; when hee raunt's and renounces mee I can dispise him, but when hee askes my pardon wth tear's, pleades to mee the long and constant friendship between us and call's heaven to witnesse that nothing upon earth is dear to him in comparison of mee, then I confesse I feel a strange unquietnesse within mee, and I would doe any thing to avoyde his importunity (133).

There is a sense in the above passage that Osborne is constantly forced to bolster her emotional defenses and that she is aware that her emotional resources are being stretched to the limit. Worried about what Temple's sister Martha (later Lady Giffard) might think of her opposition to her brother, Osborne notes: "I am affrayde shee will not think mee a fitt Person to choose for a friend that cannot agree with my owne Brother" (156). Since women were judged in terms of their participation in the family unit, Osborne was right to be concerned. The best Osborne can hope for is to have Temple's help when dealing with Henry Osborne, and to hold Henry Osborne's energetic intervention at bay—to control the unfolding of her own marital plot as much as possible, even when others are busily plotting in another direction.

Control over the desires of others as they bear on her courtship underlies Osborne's relationship to her companion Jane Wright, often mentioned as Temple's "fellow servant."

Jane was the daughter of Thomas Wright, a Guernseyman. Jane was primarily engaged to keep Osborne company. She is mentioned as a participant in social situations even after the marriage.

Jane Wright's presence is both a blessing and a curse to Osborne. Osborne is irritated by Jane's familiar attitude toward Temple, and her tendency to report Osborne's state of mind back to him. Early in the courtship, when Jane tells Temple she is melancholic, Osborne exclaims with exasperation: "Your fellow servant is a sweet Juell to tell tales of mee" (33). However, Jane also fulfills useful functions in the courtship. She ensures that Osborne's letters are properly sent. In a poignant moment of female solidarity, Jane supports Osborne when the volatile and persistent James Beverley presses his suit: "I to prevent his makeing discourses to mee made M[a] Gouldsmith and Jane sitt by all the while" (145). Jane is not the only woman who acts a buffer between Osborne and unwelcome suitors, but her presence is certainly of value. As well, Osborne can talk about Temple to Jane:

I cannot say but I have wanted Jane, but it has bin rather to have sombody to talk with of you, then that I needed any body to put mee in minde of you, and with all her dilligence I should have often prevented her in that discourse (69).

Jane is useful. We see here, however, that she is also a threat. Osborne stakes her romantic claim on Temple against the figure of Jane. Osborne's attitude is defensive, especially in the subsequent description of their conversation to Temple. Osborne rushes to speak of Temple

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18 A letter from Thomas Wright to Peter Osborne is printed in Ferdinand Brock Tupper in *The Chronicles of Castle Cornet, Guernsey, with Details of the Nine Years' Siege During the Civil War* (Guernsey: Stephen Barbet, 1851), 124-25. Tupper describes "Tom Wright" as a "very illiterate man" and adds, "we cannot discover what post he occupied under Sir Peter Osborne" (125).

19 Dorothy Osborne had Jane with her when she was expecting her first child (Osborne 197).
before Jane does; she ensures that Temple knows that she was "in mind" of him first. Here it seems as though Osborne would be happiest if Jane were a purely passive partner in the conversation, a receptacle for Osborne's rhapsodic musings.

Osborne becomes at least somewhat alarmed when it appears that Jane is communicating with Temple directly. Jane receives separate letters from Temple (28; 118). It is even possible that Temple and Jane have met on their own. When Jane is away from Chicksands, Osborne notes that she has not seen Jane since she left, but Temple might have: "if your fellow servant has bin with you, she has tolde you that I part wth her but for her advantage" (30). Osborne is mildly irritated at their separate communication:

I had a letter from her the other day, she desyred mee to present her humble service to her Master, she did mean you sure, for she named every body else that she ow's any Service to, and bid mee say that she would keep her worde with him, god knows what you have agreed on together (63-64).

Osborne dutifully passes on Jane's message, but she is bothered by the telling vagueness of Jane's description of her unnamed "Master." Her exclamation "god knows what you have agreed on together" manifests more than a hint of snappishness. In many ways, the discourse of being a fellow "servant" is purely convention but it can change into an appellation loaded with romantic significance, as it does in the Osborne-Temple courtship.

Osborne finds it particularly vexing when Jane sends Temple a present, later revealed to be "Marmelade of Quince" (99). Sending Temple a present is a strong move for Jane because presents have been such an important part of the courtship. Osborne questions the liberty Jane takes:

Jane presents her humble service to you and has sent you somthing in a boxe, tis hard to imagin what shee can finde heer to present you withall, and I am much in doubt
whither you will not pay to dear if you discharge the Carriage, tis a pritty freedom she takes but you may thank your selfe, shee thinks because you call her fellow Servant she may use you accordingly, I bred her better, but you have spoyled her (86).

Osborne's wish to subdue the socially inferior Jane is as much an expression of her class solidarity as an attempt to control Jane's desire, which Temple's acquiescence fosters.⁰

Osborne later breaks into open jealousy:

Jane kisses your hands and say's she will bee redy in all places to doe you service; but i'le prevent her, now you have put mee into a Jealous humor i'le keep her in chains before she shall quit scores with mee (167).

Osborne is making a joke, with her melodramatic images of chains and her mock-villainous "Jealous humor." But this remark possesses an edge of seriousness, especially given the images of getting revenge, and "quitting scores" with Jane. Osborne sees Jane as a convenient vessel for her courtship, but finds herself a conduit for Jane's wishes.

Love triangles invite sudden and unexpected role reversals. They displace Osborne from the narrative she desires and for which she strives. Jane Wright and Henry Osborne both intervene in the Osborne-Temple courtship. Despite the differences in the interventions of her brother and Jane, they both challenge Osborne's desired scenario of an unimpeded progress toward union.

On the other hand, love triangles also fuel the courtship to some degree, investing it with energy, inspiring both Osborne and Temple to increase their efforts in the courtship. Osborne's brother acts as a facilitator for the relationship when Temple becomes determined to contest her brother's claims on Osborne. Osborne becomes increasingly determined to

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⁰ Osborne makes her own involvement in the present clear when she explains that she gathered the moss for the box it was packed in (102).
affirm her exclusive devotion to Temple, and her willingness to step out of the destructive brother-sister-suitor triangle. Likewise, Jane provides a spark of interest in the courtship, and a rival for Osborne to vanquish.

Despite her irritation and despair at the way that Jane Wright and her brother Henry hindered the Osborne-Temple relationship, Osborne toys with romantic relations outside of her primary bond with Temple. Osborne suggests a great many unions for Temple of varying credibility, including (in a flippant mood) aged widows. Osborne and Temple have other serious romantic possibilities, including the wealthy Mrs. Cl—favoured by Temple's family and Henry Cromwell, who ardently courted Osborne. Osborne frequently speculates about what other romantic unions would be like. Such mental experimentation muddies the dyad the two lovers have formed as much as the triads that are imposed on her by the caprice of others. She is fascinated, for example, by kinship relationships she missed because of her refusal of some of her suitors. For example, she says that she might have been powerful if she had married Henry Cromwell (38). Osborne's speculations about being married to or involved with other people result from her fascination with contingency, fortune and fate. Osborne oscillates between a conviction that she is meant for Temple and her perception that circumstances could be different. When she reminds Temple that she gave up Henry Cromwell for his sake, there is both implicit affirmation of her choice of Temple and an acknowledgement of other possibilities. Her arch remark about intending Temple to marry one of her stepdaughters should she have been forced to marry Sir Justinian Isham is another reminder that it was possible to form liaisons outside of her relationship.

Even beyond her (occasionally flippant) role-playing and speculation about other
forms of attachment, Osborne is compelled by women as romantic, and erotic, objects. In Letter 21, she speaks of her esteem for her beloved Lady Diana Rich:

if marriage agrees noe better with other People then it do's wth [my older brother], I shall pray that all my freinds may scape it.

Yet if I were my Cousin H: Davers, my Lady Diana should not if I could help it, as well as I love her. I would try if ten thousand pound a yeer with a husband that doated on her, as I should doe, could not keep her from being unhappy. well in Earnest if I were a Prince that Lady should bee my Mistresse but I can give noe rule to any body else, and perhaps those that are in noe danger of loosing theire hearts to her, may bee infinitely taken with one I should not vallewy at all (44).

Osborne displays her affection for Lady Diana to Temple, declaring that she would marry her if she were a man. Osborne seems to assume some form of male identity, although these declarations are couched in a hypothetical tone ("if I were my Cousin H: Davers...if I were a Prince") and the focus remains a possible union between Diana and H. Davers.

A more explicit appreciation of a woman's physical beauty is found in Osborne's description of Lady Grey de Ruthin. Osborne begins by describing an area near her house where several people in the neighbourhood gather ("tis our Hide Parke") and an attractive woman she sees:

every fine Evening any body that wanted a Mistresse might bee sure to finde one

21 Osborne seems to have been an appealing figure in the eyes of her female contemporaries. Julia Longe reproduces an admiring letter from Katherine Philips, with the following comment: "Lady Temple was one of those women, less rare than novelists would have us believe, who are equally attractive to men and women." See Julia Longe, *Martha, Lady Giffard, Her Life and Correspondence, 1664-1722: A Sequel to the Letters of Dorothy Osborne* (London: G. Allen, 1911), 37. I have read Philips’s letter in manuscript at the Harvard Theatre Collection (it is uncatalogued). There is continued debate about whether Philips' poetry aimed at women is specifically erotic. See, for example, Arlene Stiebel, "Not Since Sappho: The Erotic in Poems of Katherine Philips and Aphra Behn," in *Homosexuality in Renaissance and Enlightenment England: Literary Representations in Historical Context*, ed. Claude J. Summers (New York: Harrington Park, 1992), 153-171.
there, I have wondered often to meet my faire Lady Ruthin there alone, mee thinks it should bee dangerous for an heire, I could finde in my heart to steale her away my self, but it should bee rather for her person then her fortune (53-54).

Her direct admission that it is Lady Ruthin's "person" that interests her locates Osborne's regard in the realm of the physical rather than that of neoplatonic abstraction. It is difficult to ascertain whether Osborne's regard for Ruthin is a substantial threat to the Osborne-Temple dyad, but it is undoubtedly a distraction of some kind from the courtship. Instead of articulating desire for Temple alone, Osborne is in the process of weighing, balancing and controlling desires in conflict.

Given that Osborne is trying to strengthen the exclusivity of her bond with William Temple, why does she show him how fascinated and distracted she is by other people? To be sure, Osborne's enjoyment of Ruthin is light, ludic, and tongue-in-cheek. There are, however, some darker overtones in the kind of language she uses. The possibility remains, for example, that Osborne may be trying to make Temple jealous. She is willing to be the active agent of desire: the pursuer, the initiatory woman, even the abductor. Even if Osborne has no real designs on Lady Grey de Ruthin, or if her desire for Ruthin cannot be described as lesbian (I am not sure), Temple would certainly get some idea of the untamed elements of her sexuality from her remarks.

Osborne may not be in control of the triangular structures she creates, or even of her own desires. Despite her unhappiness about the threat other people's intervention poses to the courtship (her possessive brother, other women favoured by the Temple family, her bold waiting woman), Osborne enjoys the thoughts of other unions, almost as if the Temple-Osborne relationship will not satisfy an imagination which thrives on ever-deepening and
complex connections to other people.

Osborne's letters show us that it is not possible (in literature or life) to construct a narrative of desire independent of the desires of others. Her expressions of curiosity about other unions raise the question of whether one would really want to achieve such autonomy, since it could easily become sterile and uninteresting. It is difficult to find the right balance between enough intervention in the courtship and not enough. If emotional isolation with Temple does not give her adequate scope for her imagination, erotic possibilities which complicate this relationship threaten her repose. Being in a situation of triangulated desire might necessitate renunciation in the courtship, as the romantic claims of others wear Osborne down. Such a triangular structure certainly threatens the integrity of the dyadic relationship between Osborne and Temple.

I will be continuing my consideration of the effects of other peoples' desires, with particular attention to the effect of surveillance on Osborne's ability to conduct the courtship. This will reveal Osborne's sensitivity towards social judgement, and expand on concerns about balancing the demands of people who claim her attention.
Chapter Six
All People Seen and Known: Surveillance in the Letters

"We should, indeed, live as if we were in public view, and think, too, as if someone could peer into the inmost recesses of our hearts..."
—Seneca, "Letters to a Stoic"

"It is a very great safeguard to learn by heart instead of writing. It is impossible for what is written not to be disclosed"
—Plato, "Letters"

I have been tracing the factors which discouraged Osborne in her union with Temple. In discussing the way that other individuals, most notably her brother and Jane, meddled in the courtship, I have demonstrated that the autonomy of the couple was frequently undermined by the actions of others, and that this lack of autonomy was a significant force in Osborne's renunciatory act.

Another noteworthy factor figures in Osborne's desire to renounce the courtship: fear of scrutiny by people in her general community including, but not restricted to, her family. Osborne's desire to establish a space for amorous communion is sharpened by the fact that she is closely watched. The private, inward quality of the letters is constructed against a background of intrusion into privacy. The threat of being watched compromised the lover's confidence to act as they wished, especially since Osborne worried about what people would think of her actions. Any public links to Temple while her family opposed the union renders Osborne vulnerable to calumny. As a consequence, she sometimes paints her central dilemma in her courtship as a choice between maintenance of a spotless reputation (one she values highly) and her devotion to Temple. Virginia Woolf dramatically portrayed
Osborne’s fear about the opinions of others: “She dreaded with a shrinking that was scarcely sane the ridicule of the world...a word of gossip about her own behaviour would set her in a quiver.”

Osborne’s letters can shed light on privacy in the early modern period because she comments so trenchantly on its violation. Many critics have discussed women’s anxiety about public visibility in the period as a function of their feminine gender, and considered women’s need for modesty, especially given the normative of the “chaste, silent and obedient” wife of the conduct books. Dorothy Osborne’s letters are useful in analysing pressures which bore on women specifically, but they also shed light on early modern surveillance in general. Osborne’s environment, which she terms “the world,” appears rife with rumour, insinuation, and judgement:

if one could bee invisible I should choose that, but since all people are seen and knowne, and shall bee talked of in spight of theire Teeth's, whoe is it that do's not desyre at least that nothing of ill may bee sayed of them whither Justly, or Otherwise? I never knew any soe sattisfied with theire owne innocence as to bee content the worlde should think them Guilty; some out of pride have seem’d to contemme ill reports when they have founde they could not avoyde them; but none out of strengh of reason though many have pretended to it... (138).

Osborne sets up a marked contrast between the invisibility she desires, and the scrutiny she expects to experience: “if I might bee allowed to choose my happinesse, part of it should consist in concealment, there should not above two persons in the worlde know that there


were such a one in it as/ Your faithfull” (134). However, there is no escape from examination: “all people are seen and known.” Since they are so significantly scrutinized, individuals must invest significant energy in the public presentation of character. Earlier in the letter sequence, when she contemplates the nature of her public persona, Osborne both combats and accepts the pressures brought to bear on her:

I confesse I doe naturaly hate the noise and talk of the worlde, and should bee best pleased never to bee knowne int upon any occasion whatsoever, yet since it can never bee wholly aveyded one must sattisfye on’s selfe by doeing nothing that one need care whoe know’s (58).

The judgement of others is particularly keen because any scandal present in the general society will be “magnified”:

if an Action take a little in the worlde it shall bee magnified and brought into Comparison wth what the Hero’s, or Senatours of Rome perform’d, but on the Contery if it bee once condemned nothing can bee founde ill enough to compare it with, and People are in Paine till they finde out some Extravagant Expression to represent the ffolly on’t; only there is this difference that as all are more forcibly inclined to ill then good, they are much apter to Exceede in detraction then in praises (136-7).

Osborne speaks of “People” who judge and condemn. Everyone in the community is involved in censorious behaviour. The tendency to magnify indiscretion is described as a basic, universal human trait; it is possible that individuals will be praised, but it is somewhat unlikely. Furthermore, the negative impact of judgement cannot be mitigated by “praise,” since it is not as powerful as denigration. Scandal has its own momentum. As Osborne’s discussion of two “fallen women” will underline, the initial experience of scandal will lead

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3 Osborne has something in common with Clarissa Harlowe, who is described by her friend Anna Howe as being "desirous, as you always said, of sliding through life to the end of it unnoted." Cited in Rachel Brownstein, *Becoming a Heroine: Reading About Women in Novels* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 44.
to its proliferation.

Osborne's insistence that there is no way to escape the scrutiny of others is reminiscent in some ways of Foucault's use of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon. Foucault used the panopticon to explore disciplinary pressures which construct the subject in modernity. To be sure, the Foucauldian theoretical model differs from Osborne's remarks in many ways, not the least being that Osborne's remarks were not intended as a theory about modernity but as a response to her specific situation, and an unsystematic response at that. Osborne, speaking of the "noise and talk" of the world, refers to gossip and social judgements transmitted through informal social networks. Foucault's model of surveillance envelops the construction of discipline in modernity through the agency of several formal institutions: hospitals, workhouses, armies and prisons.

In Foucault's formulation, industrial-age institutions mold individuals according to the greater societal pressures of modernity; Osborne's situation is explicitly pre-industrial. Despite these differences, Foucault's ideas about the remorseless construction of the individual within surveillance resonate intriguingly with Osborne's remarks about the inescapable nature of scrutiny. In particular, her belief that she must act in an outwardly irreproachable fashion to avoid negative judgements invites a Foucauldian perspective.

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5 Despite the fact that Foucault sets the rise of the disciplinary society later, his general claims about the linkage between epistemic change and the disciplinary society, "the passage from the epic to the novel, from the noble deed to the secret singularity," are deeply resonant for Osborne's letters. Osborne and Temple are historically located on the cusp of the shift from epic to romance, and their letters betray a private sensibility. See Foucault, 193.
Foucault's model stresses complete construction of the individual rather than repression:

Our society is one not of spectacle, but of surveillance; under the surface of images, one invests bodies in depth...it is not that the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated in it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies.6

Foucault's description of the "forces and bodies" which fabricate an individual rings true for Osborne. She seems resigned to the judgement being levelled at her, and vows to behave without reproach. As she says herself, no individual should perform any action "that one need care whoe know's" (58). Her reaction is almost instinctual; she realizes that members of her society are watching her and conforms to this pressure. On the other hand, she possesses enough resistance to the scrutiny of the "world" to realize that the keen scrutiny of others curtails her actions. She is capable of tracing the imperative to avoid scandal to an external source, the "noise and talk of the world," which demonstrates that she sees the possibility, even the desirability, of being free from such pressures. Osborne's concern about the way she was viewed points to powerful discipline of interpersonal behaviour in the mid-seventeenth century.

One way of understanding Osborne's attitude towards the "noise and talk of the world" is to compare her with other writers of her period who address the question of privacy either directly or through veiled allusions. Questions of privacy were widely present in the culture, in both secular and religious circles.

Religious writers repeatedly affirm that it is impossible to be truly alone in the

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6 Foucault, 217.
presence of an all-seeing God. Surveillance was a ubiquitous part of daily religious life, especially in the dissenting tradition. Church congregations required believers to conduct their life in the purview of others, under the rubric of church discipline. Close examination was an essential component of Calvinist doctrine, as members of a community attempted to ascertain who was a member of the Elect. Even an Independent like John Milton remarked on the value of church discipline in improving the individual. Congregational discipline was a means of enforcing certain behaviours and using the life experience of others for self-patterning. We have already seen how susceptible Osborne is to the influence of others, seeking fictional and real-life models to emulate. Osborne's concern about outward behaviour is indebted to Christian belief and practises, as filtered through the lens of Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living*. Not unlike Calvin, Taylor emphasized questions of hygiene or habit readily examinable by outward observers. For Taylor, Christian belief was manifested in

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8 Calvin remarks: "The elect cannot be recognized by us with assurance of faith, yet Scripture describes certain sure marks to us, as has previously been said, by which we may distinguish the elect and the children of God from the reprobate and the alien, insofar as He wills us so to recognize them" (61). See the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), trans. Ford Lewis Battles (London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1986), 61. There is also more than a sprinkling of surveillance writ large: "God judges not according to appearance, nor highly esteems outward splendor, but gazes upon the secrets of the heart" [I Sam. 16:7; Jer. 17:10] (16).

9 Milton was to grow increasingly resistant to all forms of church discipline throughout his career, but in 1642, he noted that church government was salient for the individual, although he was opposed to the form it took in prelacy. See "The Reason of Church Government Urged Against Prelacy," *Complete Poems and Major Prose* (1957), ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1985), 683. For a detailed consideration of Milton's relationship to nonconformity, see Arthur Barker, *Milton and the Puritan Dilemma 1641-1660* (1942) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976).
outward forms of righteous behaviour.\textsuperscript{10}

In her remarks that all people will be “seen and known,” Osborne responds to an element of scrutiny abundantly present in the secular and the religious cultures which surround her. However, general cultural influences can only account for so much: the unique biographical contingencies of Osborne’s situation are possibly more important. Osborne speaks about her awareness that she will be “seen and known” not only because she is aware of a societal trend towards scrutiny but because she is closely watched in her daily life. Her family monitors her because she is on the marriage market. They scrutinize her more intensely when she becomes involved with Temple because this association represents a marked threat to their wishes and authority. At times, the scrutiny of Osborne’s family takes on the qualities of a trial or religious examination:

Would you had heard how I have bin Chatechised for you, and seen how soberly I sitt and answer to interrogatory’s! would you think, that upon Examination it is founde that you are not an indifferent person to mee, but the mischeif is, that what my intentions or resolutions are, is not to bee discoverd, though much pain’s has bin taken to collect all scattering Circumstances, and all the probable conjectur’s that can bee raised from thence has bin urged, to see if any thing would bee confessed. And all this done with soe much Ceremony and complement, soe many pardon’s asked for undertakeing to councell, or inquire, and soe great kindenesse and passion for all my interest’s proffessed, that I cannot but take it well, though I am very weary on’t (26-27).

They question Osborne for the information she will reveal, and to ascertain whether she will conform to their demands. The language here is both judicial and religious, with references to catechism and confession mingled with the language of evidence ("all scattering

\textsuperscript{10} On the other hand, Taylor is also clear that it is wrong to be overly concerned with the opinions of others: “It is likely our hearts are pure, and our intentions spotlesse, when we are not solicitous of the opinion and censures of men; but onely that we do our duty, and be accepted of God.” See \textit{Holy Living}, ed. P.G. Stanwood (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 32.
Circumstances”). In its mixture of religious and judicial discipline, there is even a hint of an inquisition-like mentality, where interlocutors conflate religious and social control. Osborne’s family wants to probe her inner self and piece together her projected actions. She is willing to reveal her feelings partially, showing that Temple is not “indifferent” to her. However, she does not intend to betray her “intentions and resolutions,” or expose what she will do next. Despite her resolution to reserve some portion of her soul unexamined, she does not rebel outright at being questioned. In fact, she takes it as a sign of her family’s care and interest. Though this attention is negative, it is nonetheless attention, a manifestation of concern. The experience of being watched functions as both violation and protection. Discipline is mixed with scrutiny, expressed and experienced as care.

Osborne might speak of scrutiny in such hyperbolic terms because she is aware of being perceived as a sexual object by unwelcome suitors. Osborne was clearly a magnet for male attention; unwelcome men, with the encouragement of her brother, often paid court to her in an aggressive fashion. Her strongly expressed desire for concealment, then, is a means of preserving autonomy against possibly disconcerting sexual interest expressed by men. Osborne’s experience resonates with that of her female contemporaries, for whom public visibility underscored their vulnerability to male power. Margaret Blagge Godolphin literally hid her charms to make herself less prone to the dangers of male attention. John Evelyn described Blagge’s lack of comfort with the impact she had on her social circle:

her Beauty & her Wit was so extraordinarily Improvd; as there had been nothing ben scene more surprizeing, & full of Charmes: Every body was in Love with, & some almost dying for her: whilst (with all the Modesty, & Circumspection imaginable) she strove to Eclipse the Luster which it gave, and would often checq the Vivacity which was Naturall (innocent, & perfectly became her) for feare of giving Occasion
to those who Lay in waite to Deceive.\textsuperscript{11}

Blagge (or perhaps Evelyn) was sensitive to the possibility that being visible on the public stage will lead to notice from male admirers. While Blagge was conspicuously pious, and concerned to appear so, more than mere prudery is at work here. A hint of unpleasantness hovers around the beauty of Blagge, as witnessed by the reference to those who, like the Luciferean serpent, "lay in waite to deceive." Evelyn describes her "Vivacity" as "Natural." Curtailment of "vivacity" represents a serious concession to societal pressures. Vulnerability to male attention is not limited to questions of physical beauty. Exceptional behaviour of any kind invites scrutiny. Mary Mollineux, the Quaker poet, thought her poetry would provoke scrutiny from men, as her friend Tryal Ryder explains:

I remember, that several Years ago, when she was a single Woman, upon the Perusal of some Copies of her Verses, which she gave me, I felt such Unity of Spirit with them, that I said, I thought they might be of Service, if made publick in Print; but she was not then free, that her Name should be exposed; she not seeking Praise amongst Men, but to communicate the Exercise of peculiar Gifts amongst her near Friends and Acquaintance.\textsuperscript{12}

In both cases, the women attempt to veil ability, "vivacity" and physical attractiveness because such qualities lead to unwanted attention.\textsuperscript{13} It is possible that Mollineux's anxiety


\textsuperscript{13} In some senses, these women are early practitioners of "non-adornment feminism," which seeks to free women not merely from male attention but from the impositions of the ideals of femininity. See, for example, Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (New York: Norton, 1963). For an eighteenth-century defence of literal concealment, see Anita Desai's remarks on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's occasional adoption of the veil in her Turkish Embassy Letters, ed.
about the publication of her verses extends further than the specific threat of sexual attention. It is significant that Ryder emphasizes that Mollineux was single when she first saw the poems, and that she shied away from making them public at that time particularly.

Mollineux and Blagge—so distant in class and political affiliation—are both aware that they make strong impressions. Osborne’s concern about being surveyed, for example, unites with the intuition that she startles her suitors with her dignified, grave mien. She asks Temple whether she looks “stately”:

let mee aske you one question seriously, and pray resolve mee truely; doe I look soe stately as People apprehende? I vowe to you I made nothing on’t when S’ Emperour sayed soe, because I had noe great opinion of his Judgment, but M’ Freeman makes mee mistruste my self Extreamly (not that I am sorry I did apeare soe to him since it kept mee from the displeasure of refuseing an offer w’th I doe not perhaps deserve) but that it is a scurvy quality in it self, and I am affrayed I have it in great measure if I showed any of it to him, for whome I have soe much of respect and Esteem. if it bee soe, you must need’s know it, for though my kindnesse will not let mee look soe upon you, you can see what I doe to other People, and besydes there was a time when wee our selves were indifferent to one another, did I doe soe then, or have I learn’t it since? for god sake tell mee that I may try to mend it (60).

While she is glad to be free from unwelcome attention, she is aware of her strong effect on others (literally “what I doe to other People”) and wonders if she should change her demeanor. More importantly, she wishes to find out whether Temple objects to anything in her demeanor. If he has no objection to her stateliness, it will not trouble her. Osborne’s greatest hope is that the couple will enjoy a pleasing mutual regard in complete privacy. Concealment would have been an appealing possibility for Osborne even if her family did not oppose the romance. Osborne sees involvement with others as a great hindrance to happiness, both in her current state and—she fears—after marriage. Margaret Blagge

Godolphin also described her participation in worldly existence as a hindrance to the achievement of a good marital relationship. People who wanted to sustain an intimate relationship often perceived their social surroundings as a threat to their felicity.

Lawrence Stone, among others, has commented on the way that extreme scrutiny worked in opposition to the development of intimate bonds in early seventeenth-century communities. Due to their class status, Osborne and Temple's case was more complicated: they were immune to many pressures of village existence. Temple was travelling for part of the courtship; Osborne found herself in the relative seclusion of Chicksands. However, her privacy depended on the willingness of relatives to restrain their curiosity, and her family's ability to keep away prying strangers. Lawrence Klein aptly describes the fluidity of the public/private distinction in eighteenth-century literature: "even if...women spent more time at home, they were not necessarily spending more time in private." Osborne herself is very sensitive to fluctuation in her level of privacy, explaining that she may enjoy privacy sometimes but cannot take it for granted. For example, she is more prone to scrutiny in an urban setting:

I am heer much more out of Peoples way then in Towne, where my Aunte and such

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14 Evelyn, Life of Mrs. Godolphin, 56.

15 Stone explains, "Domestic life in the village was conducted in a blaze of publicity." Stone argues that an increase in personal privacy was a contributing factor to the rise of the companionate marriage. See The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800 (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 144; 253-256.

as pretend an interest in mee and a power over mee, doe soo persecute mee with theire good motions, and take it soo ill that they are not accepted; as I would live in a hollow Tree, to avoyde them. heer I have noe body but my Brother to Torment mee, whome I can take the liberty to dispute with, and whome I have prevailed with hitherto, to bring none of his pretenders to this place, because of the noyse all such People make in a Country & the tittle tattle it breed's amongst neighbours that have nothing to doe but to inquire whooe marry's and who makes love (43).

For the moment, Osborne can avoid unwanted scrutiny (although many of Osborne's later comments reveal that her relationship with Temple has provoked ample comment). The lack of resentment towards her brother here contrasts with other moments where she is furious with him. In these remarks, she is reassured by her ability to control him more than she controls her aunt. On the other hand, compelling her brother to protect her privacy takes significant effort; she must "prevail" with him. Osborne displays considerable resentment over the power others might have to scrutinize and control her. Depending on her physical situation, Osborne finds herself either catapulted onto the public stage, or hovering uncomfortably nearby. Later, Osborne grumbles about her brother Peyton's house where she lives as a dependent relation:

never trust mee if I write more then you, that live in a desolated Country where you might ffinish a Romance of ten Tomes before any body interrupted you; I that live in a house the most filled of any since y' Arke, and where I can assure [you?] one has hardly time for the most necessary occasion's (172).

The crowding makes her "weary as a dog" (171). It detracts from her ability to perform basic, necessary tasks, also making contemplation and the all-important letter-writing impossible.

Physical crowding distresses Osborne, and she worries about what others might say about her. But what does she believe that people will object to? Osborne was apprehensive
about the censure which would ensue if she married Temple without proper material means.

Significantly (though not surprisingly) she links rational behaviour with the assurance of a material standard of living:

I would not bee thought soe inconsiderat a person as not remember that it is Expected from all people that have sence that they should act with reason, that to all persons some proportion of fortune is necessarry according to theire several qualities (179).

In short, the courtship revolves around a nexus of familial and societal needs Osborne and Temple must meet before they can marry, to please themselves and to fulfill the standards of their class. Osborne is concerned that, in failing to strike the proper balance between personal desire and societal demands, she will be widely exposed and scorned.

During their courtship, the couple finds it necessary to maintain a high level of discretion so that they do not lose the freedom to conduct the courtship. Osborne and Temple are cautious not to reveal their attachment too openly. Osborne dances around these delicate issues in Letter 27:

I doe not think it (a propos) to tell any body that you and I are very good friends, and it were better sure, if nobody knew it but wee our selves, but if in spight of all our Caution it bee discoverd, tis no Treason, nor any thing else that's ill, and if any body should tell mee that I had a greater Kindenesse and Esteem for you, then for any one besydes, I doe not think I should deny it (58).

This is a delicately calibrated mixture of frankness and duplicity. If directly challenged, she will not lie about her attachment to Temple, because she is not ashamed of it. However, she has no desire to publicize it widely either. With an odd combination of grace and awkwardness, Osborne thanks Temple for concealing the engagement because it leaves her the "Liberty" to withdraw from the compact, "though I am never likely to make use on't" (59). When their acquaintance Tom Cheke finds out about the partnership, Osborne finds
herself mildly disturbed and puzzled as to how he got his “intelligence”: “the best on’t is the matter is not great, for though I confesse I had rather nobody knew it, yet tis that I shall never bee ashamed to owne” (97). Osborne is not content until people in her community conclude that she has behaved properly. Even after they have triumphed over all familial objections and financial barriers, Osborne insists that Temple publicize the fact that he has adequate money to support her so that no one can object to the marriage (136).

While Osborne capitulates to many of the pressures of gossip and calumny, she seeks to combat them insofar as she is able. Despite her advocacy of complete frankness, she conducts the courtship in private. She is vexed when her letters, the tangible symbol and vehicle of the courtship, are opened. As in the eighteenth-century novel, exposed letters become a means to reveal intimate secrets, to Osborne’s dismay. Witness Osborne’s horror when she realizes that a letter from Temple has been opened, possibly by a letter-carrier:

> when hee gave mee your letter I found the uper seale broake open, and underneath, where it uses to bee only Closed with a little waxe, there was a seale, wth though it were an Anchor & a heart, mee thoughts it did not looke like yours, but lesse, and much worse cutt. this Suspition was soe stronge upon mee, that I chid till the Poore fellow was redy to crye, and swore to mee that it had never bin Touched since hee had it, and that hee was soe carefull of it, as hee never putt it with his other letters, but by it self, and that now it cam amongst his mony, wth perhaps might break the seale, and least I should think it was his Curiosity, hee tolde mee very ingenuously hee could not reade and soe wee parted for the present (48).

Two mysteries remain unsolved. Who broke the seal of the letters? Who owns the unfamiliar seal whose imprint the letter now bears? The character of the letter-carrier is also subject to doubt although he does not possess the sophistication to carry out the act of which they accuse him: “hee could not reade” (48). It is not to the letter-carrier’s credit that the only thing preventing him from spying on Osborne is his illiteracy. His main excuse is not
lack of guile but lack of capacity (although illiteracy is, indeed, a foolproof excuse here). Osborne infers that the letter-carrier did indeed commit the crime. It is only her displeasure that will deter him from further spying: "in grace of god this shall bee a warning to him as longe as hee lives" (49). Osborne's firm, even grim, tone shows that her anger at this violation has translated into concrete action. However, her resolution to discipline the letter-carrier with her displeasure seems a stopgap measure. The letter-carrier, a mere servant, is humbled, yet he is one of many possible culpable agents. As Osborne has insisted, escaping scrutiny is impossible. Even lowly letter-carriers are treacherous.17

Another situation of exposure related to a letter-carrier follows, showing that such violations of privacy crop up everywhere. This second situation is different from the incident with the letter-carrier because it involves Osborne’s brother rather than a shadowy figure who has mysteriously opened her letters. Her brother badgers a letter-carrier to see if he has been carrying love letters to Temple:

my B. comeing from London, mett him goeing up & cald to him, & asked what letters hee had of mine, the fellow sayed none, I did not use to send by him. my B. sayed I tolde him hee had and bid him call for them, hee sayed there was some mistake int for hee had none, and soe they Parted for a while. but my B. not sattisfied with this rides after him, and in some anger threatened the Poore fellow, whoe would not bee frighted out of his letter, but looked very simply and sayed now hee rememberd himselfe hee had carried a letter for mee aboute a fortnight or three weeks agon, to my Lady D.R. but hee was sure hee had none now; my B. smiled at his innocence and left him, and I was hugely pleased to heare, how hee had bin defeated (65).

17 Some element of class snobbery lurks behind Osborne's reaction here. The sharp discipline she visits on someone not her social equal shows that Osborne can prevent spying when she can control her inferiors, but she cannot eradicate the surveillance that social equals impose on her. It seems as though part of Osborne’s vexation here is derived from the fact that it is a servant who spies.
Henry Osborne does not try to hide his strongarm tactics from Osborne, virtually declaring to her that he intends to read her letters to Temple. Osborne watches the confrontation unfold and thus her narrative has the quality of eyewitness reportage. In a scene worthy of a novel, Osborne's brother allows the letter-carrier to leave, then impetuously pursues him. This time, the naivete of the letter-carrier protects Osborne; he "simply" says that he has carried letters for her, but to friends, not a lover. This scene is ample demonstration of how tangled the web of concealment and deception can be. There are two distinct moments of deceit in the letters. The brother tells the letter-carrier a lie and is told a lie himself.

Osborne has several motivations to relate scenes like this one to Temple. First of all, she uses the events of these scenes to illustrate the extreme nature of the scrutiny brought to bear on her, whether it is the anonymous breaking of a seal, or the heavy-handed outbursts of Henry Osborne. Furthermore, she wishes to engage Temple in the fight for privacy as a means of strengthening the bond between them and moving the courtship forward.

Although there is little chance that the letters will remain private, Osborne is nonetheless solicitous of their safety. Sheila Ottway characterizes the Osborne-Temple correspondence as "clandestine," a description which aptly captures the forbidden flavour of the letters. Like spies, Osborne and Temple try various techniques to assure that their letters do not fall into the wrong hands. For example, Osborne advises Temple to redirect and disguise his letters:

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lett yours bee made up in some other forme then usuall, and directed to M' Ed: Gibson at Ch: in some od hande, and bee at the Charge pray of buyeing a twopeny seale a purpos for these letters (65).

The concealment involves three elements: manipulating the address, disguising the handwriting, and increasing the strength of the seal. This is the second time Osborne has advocated increasing the security of the letters, having previously written to Temple: "seale your letters soe as the difficulty of opening them may dishearten any body from attempting it" (49). The couple must take action in opposition to the relentless scrutiny of the outside world, relying on mere sealing wax to hold firm against persistant curiosity.

The exposure of letters in the Interregnum period was a frequent occurrence. For example, the exposure of his personal correspondence had important political ramifications for Charles I.19 The exposure of letters is a typical literary framing device, right through to the eighteenth century. Early epistolary miscellanies used the accidental coming to light of letters of intrigue or scandal as a narrative frame. The exposure of Osborne's letters also foreshadows Richardsonian heroines (especially Clarissa).20

Letters are effective literary framing devices because they destabilize the opposition between public and private space. The epistolary novel plays with the frisson of a private  

19 The exposure of Charles I's personal correspondence was, in the words of Maurice Ashley, one of the most "serious consequences" of the defeat at Naseby. Their publication as The King's Cabinet Opened damaged his case significantly. See Maurice Ashley, The Battle of Naseby and the Fall of King Charles I. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 90; 100.

20 See Christina Marsden Gillis's The Paradox of Privacy: Epistolary Form in Clarissa (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1984) for a masterful discussion of privacy and its violation in Clarissa. Gillis's discussion is particularly valuable in linking Clarissa's privacy with her subjectivity, as well as addressing many of the issues about the connection between private life and the rise of the novel.
language rendered public. Jürgen Habermas points to this aspect of epistolarity when he describes the epistolary novel as the natural outgrowth of the "directly or indirectly audience-oriented subjectivity of the letter exchange."\textsuperscript{21} The letter form, unlike the diary, always assumes some audience, and is therefore more vulnerable to exposure. When Osborne tries to prevent the disclosure of her writing, she seeks to prevent her letters being cut off from their original intent or taken out of context. Any reader but Temple will mangle them. To take one extreme example, Osborne’s brother is anything but an ideal reader. He will not understand or respect her words, but regard them with hostility because they go against his purposes. As someone who attempts to exert control over a written product (one that leaves her hands for those of a letter-carrier), Osborne tries to control the elusive nature of writing itself, the phenomenon Plato describes in the epigraph to this chapter: "It is impossible for what is written not to be disclosed."\textsuperscript{22}

Scrutiny is blatantly imposed on Osborne, but she also has a tendency to reveal herself inadvertently to others. In company, she blushes at the letter she has received from Temple. The incident reads as if it were a scene from a novel where a torrid romance is being concealed:

if you could have seen how woddenly I entertain’d the widdow whoe came hither the day before, and surprised mee very much; Not being able to say any thing, I gott her to Card’s, and there with a great deal of patience lost my mony to her, or rather I gave it as my Ransome. In the middest of our Play in comes my blessed Boy with your letter, and in Earnest I was not able to disguise ye Joy it gave mee, though one was

\textsuperscript{21} Jürgen Habermas, \textit{The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society} (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994), 49.

by that is not much your freind, and took notice of a blush that for my life I could not keep back. I putt up the letter in my Pockett, and made what hast I could to loose the mony I had left, that I might take occasion to goe fetch some more, but I did not make such hast back againe I can assure you, I took time enough to have Coyned my self some mony if I had had the Art on’t (22-23).

Osborne isolates herself so that she can enjoy Temple’s letter without displaying her feelings.

The scene employs irony for comic effect, but the communication of the need for privacy, and the pleasure of privacy, is serious.

In another letter, Osborne confesses the habitual nature of her inability to control her blushes:

what would I give I could avoyde it when People speak of you? in Earnest I doe prepare my self all that is posible to heare it spoken of and yet for my life I cannot hear your name without discovering that I am more then ordinarily concerned int. A blush is the foolishest thing that can bee and betray’s one more then a red nose dos a drunkerd, and yet I would not soe wholy have lost them as some women that I know has, as much injury as they doe mee (164).

Unwelcome blushes are another sign that there is no purely private space in which to experience desire: intense emotion will spill out. Osborne cannot control entrance onto the public stage, although she craves to do so. Although Osborne happily unfolds her mind to Temple (without fear of vulnerability) her unwitting revelation to others rankles her. On the other hand, Osborne’s eagerness to speak of her blushes could be a self-conscious attempt to draw Temple’s attention to a fetching combination of modesty and immodesty.

Worse than blushing is acting illicitly and failing to blush. Osborne explicitly contrasts herself with women whose calculating or passionate nature is matched by an unblushing brazenness. She discusses Isabella Thynne’s loveless and mercenary marriage
to a cruel man, Sir James Thynne,²³ noting derisively: "she had better have marryed a begger, then that beast with all his Estate" (100). Osborne cannot imagine how Thynne can maintain her dignity when her motivations are clearly those of greed. Osborne’s revulsion is even more complex because she finds Thynne physically beautiful. This contrast occasions a thoughtful distinction between inner and outer selfhood:

O tis ten thousand pitty’s. I remember she was the first woman that ever I took notice of for Extreamly handsom, and in Earnest shee was then the Lovlyest thing that could bee lookt on I think, but what should she doe with beauty now? were I as shee I would hide my self from all the world, I should think all people that Looked on mee read it in my face and dispisèd mee in theire hearts, and at y’ same time they made mee a leg or spoke Civily to mee I should beleeve they did not think I deserved theire respect (100).

Thynne is no longer worthy of being looked upon because of her avarice. She can expect chastisement from Osborne as severe as if she had committed some outrageous sexual sin. Again, truth about the inner person spills out even when it is desirable to keep it under wraps. The attempts of Thynne’s acquaintances to conceal disrespect are as fruitless as her initial attempts to control her baseness.

Osborne also discusses the case of Lady Anne Blount, remarking about “the noise my Lady Anne Blunt has made with her marryeng” (117). Osborne believes that Blount is particularly culpable since she has displayed inordinate passion. During the letters of renunciation, as she condemns passionate willfulness, Osborne adds:

²³ G.C. Moore Smith provides information about Thynne’s situation in his edition of Osborne’s letters, 258. Thynne is mentioned in Aubrey’s Lives as a social presence at Balliol College: she “would make her entry with Theorbo or Lute played before her.” Aubrey remarks on the wildness that surrounded Thynne: “She was most beautifull, most humble, charitable, etc., but she could not subdue one thing” (186). See John Aubrey, Aubrey’s Brief Lives (1942), ed. Oliver Lawson-Dick (London: Mandarin Paperbacks, 1992), 186.
What has [passion] not brought my Poore Lady Anne Blunt to, she is the talk of all the footmen and Boy’s in the street, and will bee company for them shortly, who yet is soe blinded by her passion as not at all to perceave the misery shee has brought her self to (118).

Blount was on view because she petitioned Cromwell, claiming that she was forced to marry Sir William Blount (no relation). Osborne alleges that Anne Blount was, contrary to her claim, carried away with passion for her suitor and being dishonest about her true feelings. Blount, in essence, draws unnecessary attention to herself. As we have seen before in the fears of Margaret Blagge Godolphin, public visibility is attached to deep danger. “All the footmen and Boy’s in the street” talk about Blount, portending her doom. Blount will be pulled into their base circle; the soiling of her reputation will result in a loss of honour.

How does Osborne feel about these “fallen women?” Does she have any sympathy for them? Osborne’s lament that there is no immunity from the gaze of others takes an interesting form with these women; she seems to believe (at least partially) that they deserve whatever negative judgement they attract. G.C. Moore Smith notes that Osborne “grieves over women who yield to passion and forfeit all title to respect.” However, much of Osborne’s disdain or disapproval of these notorious women stems from pure conservatism, or snobbery about her own comparative circumspection. Nowhere is this more apparent than

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24 G.C. Moore Smith discusses the case of Lady Anne Blount and finds documents from the State Papers Domestic related to her. See his Notes to his edition of the Letters, 264-265.

25 There is a great deal of cultural evidence about the link between lost honour and a drop in socioeconomic status. One of the most clear-cut cases of this was Delarivier Manley, whose seduction by a bigamist who was also her guardian placed her in a situation of financial destitution. See Janet Todd, “Life After Sex: Delarivier Manley,” The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800 (London: Virago, 1989), 84-101.

in her remarks about the flamboyant and publicly visible Margaret Cavendish. Cavendish’s self-portrayal was eccentric, to put it mildly, to the extent that Samuel Pepys made a special effort to gawk at her when she visited London. Cavendish’s copious publication drew a great deal of attention from a society shocked by her foray into print. Osborne particularly objected to Cavendish’s publication of her Poems and Fancies. After seeing it, she famously remarked: “You need not send mee my Lady Newcastles book at all for I have seen it, and am sattisfyed that there are many soberer People in Bedlam, i’le swear her friends are much to blame to let her goe abroad” (41). As we have seen in Osborne’s remarks about fallen women, extreme self-display justifies the removal of autonomy and respect.

One of Osborne’s tasks in navigating her fragile courtship is to avoid the fate of women she despises or pities because of their transgressions. Osborne is unlikely to reach Cavendish’s level of self-display, and she confidently notes of Cavendish’s publication of her wildly eccentric poems: “If I should not sleep this fortnight I should not come to that” (37). To avoid Isabella Thynne’s fate of base behaviour, Osborne will make strenuous efforts not to marry for wealth alone, as she repeatedly remarks.

The case of Anne Blount may hit closer to home for Osborne, since her mistake was extreme passion. Avoiding the destructive effects of passion of this nature was, as I have argued, one of Osborne’s greatest struggles. The letters of renunciation, revolving as they do around the control of passion, can be read not only as expressions of anxiety about inordinate passions but, more specifically, as worries that these passions will be exposed. Osborne expresses her wish that Temple refrain from seeing her as a function of her desire to retain privacy: "I have still some sence of my reputation left in mee, I finde that to my last
I shall attempt to preserve it as Cleer as I can" (120). Osborne cannot bear the scandal sparked by visits from a man who will never marry her.

There is significant evidence that Osborne was in fact the victim of wagging tongues. Many strangers kept track of her courtship, leading her to confide miserably to Temple: "I hear from all people that I know part of my unhappy Story and from some that I doe not know. A Lady whose face I never saw sent it mee as news she had out of Ireland" (124). The fact that the news actually comes from a distant place, and from a stranger, exacerbates the pain of revelation.

It is difficult for Osborne to struggle for what she desires and maintain a persona beyond reproach. At times, it seems that she must choose between continuing her relationship with Temple, and facing exposure, or severing it in order to maintain a protected obscurity. Even the prospect of a wedding ceremony terrifies her:

I could not indure to bee M" Bride in a Publick wedding to bee made y^e happiest person on Earth. doe not take it ill, for I would indure it if I could rather then faile, but in Earnest I doe not think it were posible for mee (169). She has confidence that she will face this unpleasant ordeal if necessary, but a strong countervailing sense that she cannot. Osborne admires the wedding ceremony of a couple who had "noebody to please int but themselves" and who thus avoided scrutiny:

hee came downe into the Country where she was upon a Visett and one morning married her, as soone as they cam out of the Church they took coach and cam for the Towne, dined at an Inne by the way and at night cam into Lodgings that were provided for them, where nobody knew them and where they passed for married People of seven years standing... (169).

Speaking in purely strategic terms, these remarks were meant to influence Temple. Osborne
did not, in fact, have to undergo a public wedding (the couple was married in seclusion at St. Giles' Church in Holborn). However, Osborne did struggle with her hatred of unwelcome attention when the courtship came into public view during the negotiations.

To reach the negotiating stage, Osborne violates her own ideals of perfect frankness at least somewhat. In theory, Osborne wishes to avoid outright duplicity as she pursues union with Temple. Even the mild equivocation necessary to advance the courtship offends her finicky sensibilities. She feels regrettable differences between the paragon she would like to be and the creature of contingencies she actually is. She is undeniably fond of making lofty statements about her own honesty. When her brother is absent, Temple asks if he should visit, and Osborne concludes that he should not: "your comeing in his absence should bee thought a concealment" (57). She concludes resoundingly: "I am not for disguises, it looks like Guilt, and I would not doe a thing I durst not owne" (56-57). She lacks guile and the ability to wear a "mask." Temple also has an honest nature: "I did not lay it as a fault to your charge, that you were not good at disguise; if it bee one, I am too guilty on't my selfe, to accuse another" (70). Osborne repeatedly claims that she does not connect her hope of avoiding surveillance to a desire to dissemble or deceive: she has a great deal of "franchise" in her character. If she had been to court, she might have learned to "disguise handsomely." However, she lacks worldly experience; she associates herself not with the veiled daggers of the sophisticated court but with the fresh-faced charms of rustic culture. Anyone virtuous shares the same frankness, as when she praises Temple’s father for his natural style in writing letters: "all that hee say's is soe kinde and soe Obligeing, soe Naturall and soe Easy that one may see tis perfectly his disposition and has nothing of disguise int" (97-98).
Osborne’s remarks anticipate the Restoration period’s fascination with disguises and masks, although Osborne lacks the latter period's fascination with the ability of disguise to reveal the true self. For Osborne, the difference between the mask and the self is an unhealthy state of affairs.

For all of her earnest desire to uphold frankness, Osborne employs a falsehood in her courtship at least once, allowing her brother to believe that she and Temple have broken their engagement. Osborne reveals herself as an accomplished plotter, able to answer her brother’s machinations with efforts of her own, though not without regret:

god forgive mee and you too, you made mee tell a great lye, I was faine to say You came only to take your leave before you went abroade and all this nott only to keep quiett but to keep him from playeing the mad man, for when hee has the least suspition hee carry's it soe strangely that all the worlde takes notice on't and often Guesse at the reason or else hee tel's it (129).

Osborne soothes her conscience, assuring herself that the couple did not lie outright. Much of the deception resided in Temple's demeanor: "a sadnesse that hee discoverd at your going away inclined him to beleve You were ill sattisfyyed, and made him Creditt what I sayed" (130). Her lie is one of expediency: if she does not stem her blabbing brother’s revelations, the outcome will be disastrous. Osborne tries to rationalize her own behaviour by arguing that the situation is desparate, urgently requiring decisive action.

The relationship between truth and virtuous appearance is strong in the letters. Osborne desires freedom from guilt, a secular variation of the absolution sought by religious writers. Osborne’s struggle to present an unspotted reputation fits in well with the enormous body of literature, from the Commonwealth period onwards, concerned with self-vindication. Religious and secular writers alike attempted to clear their reputation in print. Dissenters
sought to justify their faith in public, translating the private experience of religious revelation into a form that was acceptable for the entire congregation. Royalists like Margaret Cavendish sought to justify their actions during the war and bolster their posthumous reputation. One intriguing product of the Civil War and Restoration concern with impunity was *A Narrative of the Persecution of Agnes Beaumont* (1674). Agnes Beaumont was a member of John Bunyan’s church; she was forced to defend herself against a charge of parricide when her elderly father died shortly after an impassioned quarrel. Beaumont’s narrative is both an attempt to clear her name, and an illustration of how the process of self-vindication functioned in practice. She describes the inquisitive crowds that gathered in the court room:

Soe the roome, where we was, was very full of people, and it seemses greate observation was made of my Countenance, As I heard afterwards. Some gentlemen that was vpon the Jewry said, they should never forget mee, to see wth what A Cheerfull Countenance I stood before them all. They said I did not looke like one that was gilty. I know not how I Lookt, but I know my heart was full of peace and Comfort.

Unlike Isabella Thynne, who should be ashamed, Agnes Beaumont’s inner serenity matches

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27 Patricia Caldwell’s book, one of the best studies of the conversion narrative, focuses on its American origins, although some attention is paid to British narrative. Caldwell addresses many of the issues raised when a narrative of personal faith is offered for public scrutiny. See *The Puritan Conversion Narrative: The Beginnings of American Expression* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge, University Press, 1983).


her outer calm. Not everyone shared Beaumont’s assurance. Other cultural evidence shows that individuals were often confused or troubled by the boundary between their thoughts and their public personae. One frequently encounters the sentiment (across gender and class lines) that individuals believe their inner and outer selves to be in conflict. In *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, for example, John Bunyan draws a strong contrast between his serenity as he preached to his congregation, and his inward torment. Even a figure like Margaret Cavendish, who seemed to thrive on flamboyant self-display, felt a certain tension about issues of private conscience and public stability. In later political theory, much of this tension was slowly resolved as John Locke asserted the value of private conscience as long as it did not interfere with the workings of public life.

Unlike these thinkers, Osborne was not primarily grappling with issues of religious or personal conscience in a religious or political sense, despite a few (jocoserious) comments about her need to break off from potentially seditious commentary when describing events like Cromwell’s coup d’etat. For Osborne, the conflict between public and private resides most strongly in the freedom to conduct her personal life. If she cannot attain privacy, she


33 Osborne stops herself when she speaks of Cromwell’s *coup d’etat*: “I shall talk treason by and by if I doe not look to my self, tis saffer talking of the Oringe flower water you sent mee” (39).
will be forced to renounce treasured desires. However, she is not entirely willing to escape the pressures which bear on her because, to some degree, she sees them as culturally necessary.

Osborne's predicament, and her attitude towards it, can shed light on the relationship between autonomy and privacy in early modern England; it is a particularly valuable test case because questions of privacy are, in Osborne's letters, specifically related to the realm of private, interpersonal relationships. The current interest in early modern women writers has centered on those women who sought to gain a public voice for women, especially those writers who might be termed "protofeminist." To focus on Osborne's perception of scrutiny, and an accompanying desire for retreat, might seem yet another relegation of a timid female writer to the private sphere, replicating the ideological structures which kept women from public view in the first place. I would argue, however, that a focus on Osborne's desires for privacy and retreat reflects the urgency of these concerns in the letters.

Surveillance is both a practical challenge to the courtship, a literal impediment to communication, and a force which shakes Osborne's confidence in her ability to pursue the courtship. The close scrutiny of her society encourages renunciation of desires in favour of acquiescence with societal norms.

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35 See, for example, Domna Stanton's dismissal of the preconception that the female writer "could not transcend, but only record, the concerns of the private self" in "Autogynography: Is the Subject Different?" *The Female Autograph*, ed. Domna C. Stanton (New York: New York Literary Forum, 1984), 8-9.
Dorothy Osborne’s fight for privacy is a fight for freedom, and the widest possible personal development of the self. It does seem at times that the dark forces of familial pressure and surveillance propel Osborne toward retreat. However, Osborne is not simply giving in to the pressures of scrutiny; hers is not a purely reactive manner. Just because she is not completely free in her choices and actions, it does not mean she is not free at all. In the next chapter, I will consider Osborne’s utopian vision, her remarks about retreat, and the privacy she hopes to achieve with Temple as her answer to extreme scrutiny.
Chapter Seven
Out of the Worlde: Osborne and the Dream of Retreat

"Tout notre mal vient de ne pouvoir être seuls"—La Bruyère

In the previous chapter, I have described how the pressures of surveillance make Osborne’s environment unsatisfactory. In this chapter, I will describe how Osborne translates the privacy for which she yearns into an ideal of mutual retreat. The retreat ideal serves as an echo of Osborne's wish to renounce the world in the wake of possible romantic disappointment. However, Osborne also modifies the retreat tradition, using it to woo Temple to a vision of a shared existence, with the ability to shape their world in accordance with their mutual desires.

Directly after an account of Lady Grey de Ruthin’s mercenary marriage, Osborne expresses the desire to retreat from her unsavoury social surroundings:

...this is the worlde. would you and I were out on't, for sure wee were not made to live in it; doe you remember Arme and the litle house there? shall wee goe thither? that's next to being out of the worlde. there wee might live like Baucis and Philemon, grow old together in our litle Cottage and for our Charrity to some shipwrakt stranger obtaine the blessing of dyeing both at the same time (131).

This is a vision of a desirable way of living, and combines a negative reaction to base social attitudes with a vision of positive alternatives. As is typical in utopian thought, Osborne feels estranged from the dominant culture, characterizing herself and Temple as out of place in the "world": the social whir of gossip and intrigue that surrounds her. Osborne's reference to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is another example of her instinctual incorporation of literary texts
into her daily life\textsuperscript{1} and an application of that text to a hopeful vision of her future with Temple.

Ovid recounts the transformation of two humble cottagers, the couple Baucis and Philemon, whom Jove and Hermes visit in disguise. Unlike their affluent neighbors in the village, who turn the deities away, Baucis and Philemon offer warm hospitality:

Iove hither came, with his Cyllenian mate;  
And stooping, enters at the humble gate.  
Sit downe, and take your ease, Philemon said.  
While busie Baucis straw-stuften cushions layd. \textsuperscript{2}

Pleased with the generosity of the cottagers, the gods bless them with miracles. Cups and bowls magically fill when they are emptied; the humble dwelling is transformed into a temple, with the couple as its votaries. Finally, the gods grant Baucis and Philemon their most treasured wish: to die at the same time. At the end of the story, Hermes and Jove transform the couple into trees which, in fact, never do die. The trees can still be found, entangled together:

I saw their boughs with garlands hung:  
And hanging fresher, said; Who Gods before  
Receiu’d, be such: adorers, we adore. \textsuperscript{3}

\textsuperscript{1} G.C. Moore Smith agrees with Edward Abbott Parry that Osborne must have used George Sandys' translation of Ovid's \textit{Metamorphoses}, offering as further proof the information that his friend S. J. Crawford had purchased a copy of Sandys' translation bearing Osborne's signature and a dedication from the author. See \textit{The Letters of Dorothy Osborne}, n. 269-270. For a modern facsimile, see \textit{Ovid's Metamorphosis Englished, Mythologized and Represented in Figures}, by George Sandys, ed. Karl K. Hulley and Stanley T. Vandersal (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970). All quotations from the \textit{Metamorphoses} are from that edition.

\textsuperscript{2} Sandys, 279.

\textsuperscript{3} Sandys, 280.
It is notable that Osborne is intrigued with this story, since it represents a domestic, humble piety which rarely figures elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses*. The power-driven relationships, violations, and erotic torments which fill Ovid's collection give way to a world of generosity and self-sacrifice.

The story of Baucis and Philemon touches on Osborne's craving for a fully-achieved domesticity, and a marriage union. The Ovidian pair is an old, established couple, no longer tormented by the uncertainties of being young. Their cottage is notable for its humble happiness. Osborne explicitly comments on Baucis and Philemon's scorn for worldly goods. Baucis and Philemon, explains Osborne, "were the perfectest Characters of a con[ten]ted marriage where Piety and Love were all there wealth and in theire poverty feastd the Gods, where rich men shutt them out" (131). In Osborne's thinking, there seems to be a rough equation between humble means and virtue. This connection of modesty and virtue is likely related to her sense that inordinate passion is undesirable; individuals should try to achieve a modest contentment rather than seek worldly status.

Osborne's hopes in her fantasy about retreat with Temple do seem modest. She sets her own imaginative reenactment of this tender, understated story on the obscure island of Herm ("Arme"), a tiny and—in the seventeenth century—barely inhabited, island.  

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4 The tiny island, only .5 kilometres by 1.5 kilometres, is still a place of retreat. Radios and cars are banned on the island; planes do not fly overhead. S.K. Kellett Smith indicates that only pheasants and a gamekeeper lived on the island in the seventeenth century in "Notes on Herm and Jethou Islands." Unpublished typescript, (1977?). Jenny Wood, whose family has owned the island for forty years, seems to have lived a twentieth-century version of Osborne's fantasy. Wood describes her experiences in *Herm: Our Island Home* (Guernsey, Channel Islands: The Guernsey Press, 1994), and cites Osborne (who she terms "Lady Dorothy Osbourne") as one of the many people who have loved the island over the centuries. I am grateful to the staff of the Priaulx library, St. Peter's Port, Guernsey, for allowing me to see their extensive files of press clippings and
modest, even naïve, goals Osborne expresses may not seem to go very far as the expression of an ideal way of life, or to represent complex thinking. However, as in any dream of retreat, a nexus of influences lurk behind apparent simplicity. Literary and cultural conventions of retreat, including religious tradition and royalist commonplaces, play a strong role.

Furthermore, the ideals Osborne spins in her letters were substantial enough to become part of the enduring historical legacy of the couple. We could view Temple's construction of Moor Park (in Surrey) as a response to the ideals Osborne first broached in her letters, and that the couple shared early in their union. Osborne is explicit in her description of what she yearns for: "a faithfull friend, a Moderate fortune and a retired life" (86). She articulates her ideals specifically so that it is clear to Temple that he fits them.

At another point in the letters, she uses the same formula:

what is contentment must bee left to every particular person to Judge for themself's, since they only know what is soe to them, w'th differs in all according to there several humors; only you and I agree tis to bee found by us in a True friend, a moderat fortune, and a retired life. The last I thank god I have in perfection, my cell is almost finishd and when you come back you'le finde mee in it and bring mee both the rest, I hope (147).

Many of her needs are already in her possession. Located in the serene isolation of the Chicksands estate, Osborne seems enmeshed in a bucolic fantasy even before she begins to describe her dream of Baucis and Philemon to her lover. Osborne describes the pastoral beauty of her surroundings, showing herself in a fluid and pleasing dialogue with her miscellaneous typescripts regarding Hem.

5 It is particularly interesting, then, that Macaulay based his castigation of Temple on his tendency toward retreat.
environment.

Osborne's home, Chicksands, has many features which made it an ideal pastoral milieu, an environment she can draw on in her letters to Temple. I have described the way in which Osborne's privacy fluctuated. Chicksands often appears as the epitome of pastoral isolation; it functions as a place apart from the bustle of the world, due in part to its history as a Gilbertine priory. Gilbert of Sempringham, who founded the Gilbertine order, advocated the sequestration of individuals from the temptation and pain of the outside world. Although Chicksands became secular (like Nun Appleton), after the dissolution of the monasteries, the architecture itself retained a religious tone. Even today, despite modifications made in the eighteenth century, the low ceilings and wide rooms seem to provide a space as much for isolated reflection as social interaction.

Class imperatives were a large part of the pastoral realm of Chicksands. The estate was a symbol of the prestige of the Osborne family although the estate was sequestered during the Civil War. Kenneth Parker describes the country-house culture in which Osborne

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circulated as one which resisted the political flux of the commonwealth years. The country house possessed a "cohesive sense of community which could withstand new pressures and new ideas." The country house preserved established values and hierarchies. Attachment to country house ideals lacked the revolutionary fervour showed by political radicals like the Digger Gerrard Winstanley, who insisted that social justice resided in the collective cultivation of the land. Owners of country houses favoured an ethic of private cultivation and domestic management which, in its ideal form, would culminate in charitable action in the greater community. Country estates were microcosms for the state: harmonious, peaceful, and organized hierarchically. Despite its conformity to class structures, the country house could oppose the dominant culture. As Virginia Kenny has shown, the modest ethic of personal cultivation within the country estate often formed a contrast to the

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9 According to Parker, the conservative aspects of the house were an appealing part of the letters for Victorian critics. Osborne represents an unbroken continuity between the pre-war years and the Restoration; the charming woman and her family lodged in a quaint country manor ensures that the Civil War did not represent a major rupture in royalist culture. See Letters to Sir William Temple, 23.


11 For information about the ideology and social function of the country house, see Virginia C. Kenny, The Country-House Ethos in English Literature, 1688-1750: Themes of Personal Retreat and Expansion (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1984). Jane Austen's Mr. Knightley is a later version of this phenomenon; in his charity towards the poorer members of the community, he seeks to better their lot with personal compassion, but by no means does he challenge the social hierarchy. For more information on English Country Houses as they figure in English literature, see M.M. Kelsall, The Great Good Place: The Country House and English Literature (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993).
expansionist world of politics or commerce, a stability which could, almost paradoxically, take on a subversive quality.

Osborne’s enthusiastic espousal of the country house ethos is not surprising. Women of her class were strong figures in both the adornment and management of the country house.\textsuperscript{12} Recent critics have credited Aemilia Lanyer with the first country house poem, “The Description of Cooke-ham,” with its portrayal of the locus amoenus whose nature pays tribute to the mistress of the estate, the Countess of Cumberland.\textsuperscript{13}

Given that Osborne was so deeply immersed in the expectations of country house culture, it is not surprising that her thoughts on retreat take the form of a fantasy built around elite familial bonds. These bonds are typical of the culture from which Osborne emerged: domestic enclosure was highly desirable.

On the other hand, Osborne departs from the model of the noble family seat, modifying the country house ideal to emphasize its homely domesticity. The Baucis and Philemon story is notable for emphasizing the couple’s powerless but virtuous poverty. However, class imperatives still lurk, even in Osborne’s choice of the island of Herm: the amenities of the island were perquisites of Peter Osborne’s Governorship of Guernsey. Herm, stocked with exotic game, was “a private pleasure ground and game reserve for those

\textsuperscript{12} Nicole Pohl traces women’s participation and appropriation of the country house tradition through to the eighteenth century novel. See “‘Sweet place, where virtue then did rest’: The Appropriation of the Country-House Ethos in Sarah Scott’s Millenium Hall,” Utopian Studies 7, 1(1996), 49-60.

wealthy, well connected Governors who took to sailing over to the island for hunting, shooting and fishing." Expectations about class privilege accompany the humble innocence of Osborne's fantasy of retreat. This is not to disparage Osborne's fantasy, or to argue that maintenance of class privilege alone drives her hopes. Osborne's fantasy of living like Baucis and Philemon is simultaneously the guileless exclamation of a young woman who yearns to be alone with her lover, and an engagement with a sophisticated culture of privilege.

Another major force in the search for retreat is Osborne's intense relationship to the natural world, which seems to unfold on an almost intuitive, pre-cognitive level. Osborne contrasts the pleasure of nature with the ritualized constraints of the interior of her estate, describing the unstructured pleasures of her perambulations:

about sixe or seven a Clock, I walke out into a Common that lyes hard by the


16 In fact, it may have been quite common for a country house to be reasonably formal in character. Christine Marsden Gillis remarks of Mark Girouard's book on the country house, that it draws attention to the "ritualistic character" of life in the country house. See *The Paradox of Privacy* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1984), 63.
house where a great many wenches keep Sheep and Cow's and sitt in the shade singing of Ballads; I goe to them and compare theire voyces and Beauty's to some Ancient Shepherdesses that I have read of and finde a vaste difference there, but truste mee I think these are as innocent as those could bee. I talke to them, and finde they want nothing to make them the happiest People in the world, but the knowlege that they are soe (51-52).

The disjuncture between the voices of the shepherdesses and the literary works Osborne reads is the source of the humour here.17 However, while their singing voices do not pass muster, the shepherdesses have a pleasing innocence well in keeping with the role of the pastoral. Douglas Chambers appreciates the gentle humour of Osborne's response to the shepherdesses, enjoying its earthy realism. He points out that a more unadulterated "Watteau-pastoralism" had "nothing to do with the Virgilian original, where only one of the Eclogues was set in Arcadia, and all of them resonate with the life of a fallen world."18

Osborne is aware of the Virgillian pastoral tradition as she writes this passage; she may have even been consciously echoing Virgil's "O fortunatos nimium sua si bona norint

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17 Susan Stewart describes idealization in reference to Pope's A Discourse on Pastoral Poetry: "the pastoral figures of Pope and his predecessors are more like wind-up toys than the shepherds of romantic pastorals, who sweat and become lonely." See On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 65. By Osborne's time, the pastoral was in crisis. Jonathan Crewe, for example, describes the way in which the "neoclassical pastoral tradition" was in crisis due to a variety of political uprootings, most notably "the vexed political economy of land enclosure." See "The Garden State: Marvell's Poetics of Enclosure." Enclosure Acts: Sexuality, Property, and Culture in Early Modern England, eds. Richard Burt and John Michael Archer (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 271.

18 See Douglas Chambers, The Reinvention of the World: English Writing 1650-1750 (London: Arnold, 1996), 82. Osborne asked Temple to translate some verses out of Virgil, as well as other pastoral poetry with pastoral inspiration. One poem appears in a unique volume of Temple's self-published poems held in the British Library. This poem is titled: "Virgil's/ O Fortunati, &c./Translated./or Rather./Imitated, upon the Desire/ of/ My Lady Temple." See Poems by Sir W.T. [i.e. Sir William Temple] [1670?] British library shelfmark G11457.
Agricolas" (Georgics ii. 458) when she remarks that the shepherdesses have “nothing to make them the happiest People in the world, but the knoledge that they are soe” (51-52).\(^9\)

In Temple’s later translation, undertaken at Dorothy Temple’s request, Virgil’s stanza reads as follows:

O Happy swains, if their own good they knew!
Whom far from jarring Arms the just and due
Returns of well fraught fields, with easie fare
Supply, and chearfull Heavens with healthy air \(^20\)

Despite the pleasure she takes in the shepherdesses, the difference between Osborne, a sedentary gentlewoman, and the shepherdesses can be painful. For example, Osborne cannot share the shepherdesses’ labour as they scramble after their wayward cows:

most comonly when wee are in the middest of our discourse one looks aboute her and spyes her Cow's going into the Corne and then away they all run, as if they had wing's at theire heels. I that am not soe nimble stay behinde, & when I see them driveing home theire Cattle I think tis time for mee to retyre too (52).

Again, Osborne idealizes her setting. She describes the distressing chase of the cow as charming play rather than arduous endeavour. Scrambling after the cow interrupts a discussion that has taken place, causing a rupture in the dreamy mood Osborne has established. She is a solitary figure, viewing the pastoral scene, but unable to participate fully.

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\(^20\) See William Temple, Poems, 4.
Besides mingling with the shepherds and shepherdesses near her house, Osborne describes solitary rambles in the garden after dinner:

I goe into the Garden and soe to the syde of a small River that runs by it where I sitt downe and wish you with mee...in Earnest tis a pleasant place and would bee much more soe to mee if I had your company. I sitt there sometimes till I am lost with thinking, and were it not for some cruell thoughts of the Crossenesse of our fortun's that will not lett mee sleep there, I should forgett there were such a thing to bee don as going to bed (52).

Osborne, as she has in the past, uses a couple to figure blissful retreat. The solitary garden (much vaunted by Marvell) is less desirable than a shared space. The Renaissance garden is a place where lovers meet, as Ronald Huebert points out when he remarks on the exceptional privacy of Marvell's garden.²¹

On the other hand, the solitary garden offers certain pleasures. Osborne's description of the way she sits until she is "lost with thinking" codes this space as a contemplative garden, such as the garden famously kept by Mary Rich.²² As well, the solitude of the garden makes the absence of the beloved more sweet. The garden has a proverbial function as a reminder of the loved one, as in Marcus Piso's remark (cited by Cicero) that Plato's garden "seems to bring the actual man before [their] eyes."²³

In claiming that she wishes to fall asleep in nature, Osborne displays her yearning to


merge with her pastoral environment. Her wish that Temple will join her in the garden is coyly seductive; she has just remarked that she does not want to sleep there alone. Rebuffing Temple’s earlier accusation of coldness, she archly and parenthetically comments: "(You had best say this is not kinde neither)" (52). The garden becomes a site where Osborne can express her “kindness” while portraying herself as isolated and in need of Temple’s company. She is halfway to the ideal of Baucis and Philemon; she has achieved the isolation which characterizes their life on Herm and the beauty of the pastoral setting. But Temple’s presence is necessary to achieve this ideal.

Osborne’s ideal of a couple who retreat together differs significantly from other utopian fantasies from the period, many of which portray a community of virginal women. Many female writers of Osborne’s period (or shortly after) described virginity as the best way of retreating from the world.24 There were significant advantages to remaining unmarried, especially if one wished to be removed from the social pressures Osborne found so oppressive. John Rogers has described virginity as the life course which, for women, "provided the image for privacy par excellence" during the English Civil War.25 Even thinkers who did not share the Catholic tradition sometimes idealized virginity, as did Jeremy Taylor when he praised the unmarried state in hyperbolic terms:

*Virginit*y is the life of Angels, the enamel of the soul, the huge advantage of religion, the great opportunity for the retirements of devotion…the most extasied order of holy

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and unpolluted Spirits.\textsuperscript{26} This elevated ideal would be of little interest to Osborne, but Taylor saw the virginal life as particularly worthy of commendation.\textsuperscript{27} Jean DeJean contends that, in the seventeenth century, a noblewoman’s "retirement" and "repos" was assured "only if she refuses marriage and a place in the landed order."\textsuperscript{28} While DeJean is likely overgeneralizing, she articulates one way women of the period might cope with the competing demands of self and society. From her reading of French romance, Osborne would have been aware of fictional or historical communities where women sequestered themselves away from male-dominated culture. For example, both Herodotus and Scudéry mention communities of Amazonian women. Osborne assumes that she will marry at some point, although she states that, when offered a repulsive husband, she would prefer "a handsome Chain to Leade my Apes in": a single life with a comfortable financial settlement (84). As well, when the vagaries of the courtship discourage her, she takes grim solace in the idea that she will not marry anyone.\textsuperscript{29} However, for the most part she thinks that, even if she cannot marry Temple, she will


\textsuperscript{27} For a discussion of Taylor’s stance on virginity, see Rogers, 236.


\textsuperscript{29} Sara Heller Mendelson intriguingly places this impulse in a general cultural context: “The female threat not to marry recurs in seventeenth-century struggles between daughters and their families. Like female fantasies of suicide as a form of revenge, the refusal to marry was a form of feminine passivity made active. Sometimes it served as a private consolatory fantasy, as in Dorothy Osborne’s darkest moods.” See \textit{The Mental World of Stuart Women}, 75.
somewhere marry. There are significant differences between Osborne and women writers who espouse virginal retreat.

Despite their differences, Osborne and other women writers all stress connections between autonomy, virtue, and retirement. Robert W. Uphaus and Gretchen M. Foster describe early modern women's wish for retreat as "an expression of female freedom" and a critique of "men at court, where the integrity of self is sacrificed to public persona and ambition."³⁰ Uphaus and Foster posit a critique of power that is specifically gendered as female. This is not to say that only women took part in the critique of power (clearly male poets like Donne took part as well) but in the hands of women, the ethic of retreat took on a particular meaning where the refusal of dominant power structures was a means of gaining autonomy, whether (as in the model of virginal retreat) through a refusal of traditional marital structures or, as in Osborne's dream about Baucis and Philemon, a transformation of existing marital structures in a utopian space of marital equality.

In "A retir'd Friendship: to Ardelia,"³¹ Katherine Philips invites her friend to a "Bower" free from "quarrelling for Crowns" and "trembling at the great ones Frowns" (6, 8). Mary Lady Chudleigh offered a similar statement of retreat in "To Clorissa,"³² where the speaker situates herself "all alone in some belov'd Retreat,/ Remote from Noise, from


Bus’ness, and from Strife” (20-21). Philips echoes the concerns of a poem like John Donne's "The Canonization," where the private joys of lovers stand in contrast to a care laden, mercenary world. Ruth Perry, drawing on Maren-Sofie Røstig’s work, describes the association between rural felicity and happiness in the poems of the Platonists and in Herrick, Denham, and Waller. She also notes that Abraham Cowley “did the most to popularize these themes, and he gave them their purest expression.” Osborne read many of these writers (certainly Cowley) and participated in the same élite, royalist culture. Osborne shares with Donne, Philips and Chudleigh the belief that successful human bonds (and particularly love relationships) can only be found in a natural world removed from urban care; they certainly cannot be found in the crowded court.

Osborne’s exclamation that she would like to escape from the world and live on an island with her beloved might seem unrealistic, or purely fanciful. However, she advances several ideas with extreme seriousness. The success of the courtship hinges on the ability of the couple to achieve a type of pastoral fantasy in their formation of a new family unit. They will not literally live as Baucis and Philemon did, but they will achieve privacy and independence, transforming the solitary beauty in which Osborne currently finds herself into a shared garden. The letters end with the possibility of achieving contentment in a nuclear family, if not the Ovidian, picturesque enjoyment of a Baucis and Philemon.

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33 Perry adds a fascinating materialist twist to the interest of the female poets in the retreat tradition. Due to losses in the Civil War, women were required to hold together the rural estate in the absence of their men; they tended to seek seclusion on their estates. The poems of Abraham Cowley were resonant for these reasons: “Cowley was a great favorite with women of Astell’s generation, possibly because these themes adapted so readily to a woman’s lot.” See *The Celebrated Mary Astell: An Early English Feminist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 126.
Jürgen Habermas has commented on the primacy of emotional ties as the nuclear family emerges. In the nuclear family, the private life of the home stands in contrast to the harsher realities of work and politics. Although Habermas claims that the emergence of these structures was an eighteenth-century phenomenon, Osborne's musings about leaving the world with Temple establishes an opposition between a harsh, corrupted society, teeming with both petty and grand evil, and the virtuously enclosed couple. Because there is no one around on the island of Herm, the couple would be able to commune with each other unimpeded; an ongoing concern given the level of scrutiny the couple experienced. The poverty of the couple is an important component of the development of the enclosed family unit; since the couple are contented with their basic needs, they are not engaged in the trying process of trying to gain and maintain wealth. Their energy goes into the "rich content" of their domestic life. Habermas remarks that, "privatized individuals viewed themselves as independent even from the private sphere of their economic activity—as persons capable of entering into 'purely human' relations with one another."  

One of the fascinating aspects of the Ovidian fantasy is that the doors of the couple are opened to charitable acts. The privacy of the couple is broken for higher calls of duty; perhaps Osborne choose to fix on the story of Baucis and Philemon precisely because it does not represent an isolation of the couple away from their general environment. However, the Herm setting, with its stunning remoteness, makes it likely that Osborne was mainly interested in seeing the couple removed from circulation.

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Osborne's appreciation of Baucis and Philemon also includes appreciation of their egalitarian love, and she echoes the line from Sandy's Ovid: "wee must both comand & both obay alike" (60). What Osborne is reaching for is not just a type of geographical isolation, but a life philosophy, a way that human relationships should be conducted. In describing her fantasy of Baucis and Philemon, Osborne is likely signalling her wish to form the consummately private family. Osborne favours a life not where the home represents the occasional escape from a harsh environment, but a world where the only relationships are the "purely human," one where Christian charity is the normal mode of economic exchange. As well, Osborne seems to be insisting that the serenity of the couple hangs on their ability to separate themselves from the clamour of social interaction.

The fact that the fantasy of living on a small island is so unrealistic is worthy of comment. The fantasy is not all that it seems to be, since Hem continues to be connected to the realm of power politics. The fact that Osborne wishes to see the world outside of the framework of power politics is poignant, and shows that this kind of purity is a precondition for her happiness. Her utopianism comes out of a need to dream, since the reality of domestic enclosure seems very difficult to achieve.

When she remarks on the vexing intrusions of the public sphere into her own private life, Osborne underscores how difficult the establishment of true privacy will be. In fact, she seems to lament her inability to create such a privileged space. If she can manage to escape scrutiny and achieve privacy, she will have successfully navigated another of the pressures of the courtship. If she does not, there will be yet another element which will push her toward renunciation of her union with Temple.
Chapter Eight
“Dearer to mee than the whole world besy’ds:” Illness and Emotional Attachment in Osborne's Letters

si vous souhaitez mon repos vous aurez soin de votre santé
-eighteenth-century posy ring inscription

In the country of pain we are each alone.
-May Sarton, "The Country of Pain"

If I love you
Your life instantly becomes
More fragile than my own,
Your body more frail
Each cough or minor pain
A symptom of some dread
Disease or other

-Catherine Lucy Czerkawska, "Thread"

Dorothy Osborne's letters are fretted with references to her illness and that of William Temple. These references to illness may seem like mere social commonplaces, but questions of wellness are, in fact, a significant element in the courtship. Illness and wellness bear heavily on Osborne’s dilemma of whether to pursue union with Temple, or to renounce her desire for him. The experience of illness has a strong impact on Osborne’s inner dialogue.

about the need to control desire; it is a constant reminder to moderate her hopes. Illness can be a forceful challenge to the security of the lovers to act as they wish. The effect of illness, however, cannot be pinpointed easily, except to say that it has complicated, and sometimes contradictory, effects. Illness simultaneously pushes Osborne to renounce her courtship for melancholy isolation, and provokes an increased desire for union with Temple. Osborne's predicament acts as a test case for the relationship between attachment and illness in the seventeenth century.

Various critics have linked illness and emotional attachment, most notably Lawrence Stone, who contests that the comparative unwillingness of individuals to invest in affective partnerships was due to the threat of early truncation of such unions: "It is impossible to stress too heavily the impermanence of the Early Modern family, whether from the point of view of husbands and wives, or parents and children. None could reasonably expect to remain together for very long, a fact which fundamentally affected all human relationships."² Stone's remarks about attachment have been widely challenged.³ There is certainly a great deal of evidence that many unions in the early modern period were ones of deep attachment.


³ Ralph Houlbrooke comments that "much evidence of love, affection and the bitterness of loss dating from the first half of Stone's period has simply been ignored." See The English Family, 1450-1700 (London: Longman, 1984), 15.
This is not to say, however, that Stone's connection between illness and emotional attachment is not worth investigating. Quite the contrary: in Osborne's letters, illness has a strong impact on how the lovers view themselves, showing that Stone was correct to focus on the linkage between emotional investment and physical health, no matter how mistaken his conclusions.

Osborne's letters can help critics revise Stone's model. Any individual faced with illness might experience contradictory emotions about his or her ability to engage in romantic partnerships such as the one Osborne earnestly desired with Temple. Osborne alternates between hysterical worry about the negative impact of illness, and optimism about her ability to combat either symptoms or root causes. Illness is mysterious and eludes control: its indeterminacy is part of the source of its peculiar power.

Readers share Osborne's confusion about the nature of her illness. Lucinda Beier draws on Osborne's letters for her study on seventeenth-century illness but affirms that they are, like most seventeenth-century letters and diaries, "too short, too intermittent, or too much devoted to other matters to yield much medical evidence." Osborne does, however, provide some description of her illness. Early in the letters, she remarks that she suffers from an "extreame cold" that "lyes soe in my head, and makes it Ake so violently, that I hardly see what I doe" (18). Later, she notes, "I have gotten an Ague that with two fitts has made mee soe very weak that I doubted Extreamly yesterday whether I should bee able to sitt up to day to write to you" (40). In theory, Osborne does not find agues particularly disturbing. When her father is ill, she notes that it is "but an Ague," that will only prove dangerous due to his

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4 Beier, 150-151.
already weakened state (39). When she undergoes fevers and trembling herself, she takes her ague seriously, emphasizing, for example, that she doubts she can sit upright. In speaking of “ague,” Osborne could be referring to influenza, or any number of infectious diseases, but her representation of the fits is more likely to imply malaria, which involves successive fits or paroxysms consisting of a cold, hot, and sweating stage. Malarial attacks were (and continue to be) classified according to the frequency of their fits, i.e. whether they are quartan or tertian. Osborne’s attack of malaria lasted about two weeks. She notes with relief on May 14th that her bout with the disease seems to have come to an end: “I have missed 4 fits, and had but 5” (43). Though her encounter with malaria has been intense, and shaken her sense of physical wellbeing, it was nonetheless an experience which was contained within a certain time span.

Melancholy, however, is a more persistent—and arguably more significant—problem for Osborne. She brings up her "Scurvy Spleen" as early as her third letter (7). Once again, it is never entirely clear to what Osborne is referring. Although melancholy is associated with a set of emotional effects (antisocial behaviour, pessimism, fearfulness), its symptoms vary widely within these general parameters. In Osborne’s letters, melancholy takes on

various guises. Melancholy is solitary at times, unifying at others. Likewise, the disease is alternatively deemed to be curable and chronic. It is not surprising that melancholy displays so much variation given that the disease has been present from antiquity and has never been fully defined. G.S. Rousseau recently commented that each generation articulates what it means by melancholy, "redefining for itself the essential features of its diverse forms." As a source of speculation and study for thousands of years, the one determining feature of the disease may be its elusiveness, the inability of sufferers and diagnosticians to pin down the experience. Stanley Jackson begins his study *Melancholia and Depression* by noting:

In the terms melancholia and depression and their cognates, we have well over two millenia of the Western world's way of referring to a goodly number of different dejected states. At any particular time during these many centuries the term that was in common use might have denoted a disease, a troublesome condition of sufficient severity to be conceived of as a clinical entity; or it might have referred to one of a cluster of symptoms that was thought to constitute a disease.

Osborne describes her melancholy in several ways, betraying her uncertainty about the illness. However, she self-diagnoses her condition using the term "spleen." Spleen was an increasingly fashionable term for a melancholic condition, linking it with an earlier subdivision of melancholy known as hypochondriacal. In the original medical theory of the four humours, the spleen and other hypochondrial organs are "supposed to absorb all superfluous black bile from the liver and blood." By Osborne's time, such a humoral model

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was no longer taken literally, but Osborne is clearly indebted to it to some degree when she describes her condition as "spleen."9

Even though Osborne's physical experience can only be "hazily conceptualized," her detailed portrayals of the social and psychological impact of illness more than compensate for a comparative lack of clinical detail. In particular, the claustrophobia of being confined by illness and subjected to disconcerting cures emerges vividly.

Since Osborne sought a cure for her spleen by "drinking the waters" at spas like Epsom, Tunbridge and Barnet, her letters provide an early glimpse into the social life surrounding the British spa, and some of the discomfort of the spa as well.10 Epsom was first visited by Henrietta Maria in 1630. The Queen's presence was to transform the wells into a major social and cultural site for royalist partisans. By the time of Shadwell's comedy Epsom Wells (1673), the wells were a mixing ground for all manner of riffraff, which was certainly their appeal for a robust dramatist like Shadwell,11 but during the Interregnum, a more refined aristocratic culture of going to Epsom was in full force. Osborne provides a


fascinating glimpse of the process of drinking the waters when she asks Temple if he drank the waters directly from the well:

I remember I was forbid it, and mee thought with a great deal of reason, for (Especially at this time of the yeare) the well is soe low, and there is such a multitude to bee served out on't, that you can hardly get any but what is thick, and troubled; and I have marked that when it had stood all night (for that was my dirrection) the bottom of y* Vessell it stood in, would bee coverd an inch thick, with a white clay, which sure has noe great vertue int, and is not very pleasant to drink (70-71).

As well as capturing something of the social experience of spa culture, the letters provide a glimpse into an individual’s experience of illness in the seventeenth century. In particular, the letters provide some sense of the phenomenology of melancholy, the experience of such dark states. For Osborne, the approach of melancholy is often terrifying; she can never predict when she will be besieged by dark apprehensions. "Somthing that I cannot discribe draw's a cloude over all the light my fancy discovers somtimes" (130), she remarks to Temple, and the vagueness of Osborne’s remarks about "something" which she "cannot discribe" and the equally vague temporal indication "somtimes" hints at the indeterminacy of her experience. Osborne is often left without words when she tries to describe her experience to Temple.

The uncertainty attendant upon melancholy Osborne feels is not surprising given the multiple sources of melancholy accounted for by Robert Burton in The Anatomy of

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12 John Owen King draws a distinction between Puritan definitions of melancholy, and perceptions of the romantic period: "for nineteenth-century romantic poets, melancholy fell from a weeping cloud. For seventeenth-century physicians and divines, however, melancholy sat in the bowels or perhaps in the spleen." See The Iron of Melancholy: Structures of Spiritual Conversion in America from the Puritan Conscience to Victorian Neurosis (Middleton, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1983), 24. Osborne seems to partake of both discourses.
Melancholy. In Burton’s text, melancholy is revealed to possess a complexity which lends itself well to literary analysis. This inability to identify a single cause of melancholy continues into the twentieth century. For Freud, melancholy’s defining feature is its lack of definite cause, making a distinction between grief motivated by a specific loss (death or disappointment) and melancholy, which presents itself as an unmoored sadness without reference to any particular event or set of circumstances. Applying Freud’s provocative distinction to Osborne’s situation, it is necessary to distinguish moments of unhappiness traceable to certain circumstances and those which are not triggered by any external event. Osborne experiences both a sudden, capricious sadness (as when melancholy descends like a cloud) and a sadness motivated by specific events (like separation from Temple). Osborne herself does not seem to distinguish between melancholy which is caused by specific forces and that which simply descends, but the fact that Osborne had to deal both with grief whose source she could identify, and a generalized sadness, made her experience more overwhelming.

Melancholy is not only confusing. It involves a loss of dignity, especially with regards to the search for a cure. Osborne makes bitter remarks about the discomfort of a cure which involves soaking steel in white wine:

I drink your health every morning in a drench that would Poyson a horse I beleeve,


and 'tis the only way I have to perswade my self to take it, 'tis the infusion of steell, and makes mee soe horridly sick that every day at ten a clock I am makeing my will, and takeing leave of all my freind's, you will beleevve you are not forgot then: They tell mee I must take this ugly drink a fortnight, and then begin another as Bad, but unlesse you say soe too I doe not thinke I shall, 'tis worse then dyeing, by the halfe (23).

She avoids taking the more dangerous dry powder of steel: "I am confident that I take it the safest way, for I doe not take the powder, as many doe" (25). Nevertheless, the infusion has formidable effects: "'tis not to bee imagin'd how sick it makes mee for an hower or two" (25).

The details she offers go far to establish a genuine claim for sympathy. She explains that she is forced to exercise while coping with her disorientating cure. Her waiting woman Jane is enlisted to play shuttlecock with her, to their mutual consternation:

she is the veryest bungler at it that ever you saw, then am I ready to beate her with the batledore, and grow soe peevish as I grow sick, that i'le undertake she wishes there were noe steel in Englande (25-26).

The cure is likely to seem both foreign and disturbing to modern readers. However, despite her objections to the cure, Osborne's family was by no means unusual or barbaric in imposing it on her. First of all, it would not have been considered unpleasant by seventeenth-century standards. In fact, sufferers from illness associated pain with efficacy, and "the more suffering illness caused, the stronger were the measures needed to combat it." Osborne shares this mentality to some degree, and she braces herself for the necessary treatment.

The steel cure was also a standard cure for many diseases. Although it is not among the detailed, myriad cures mentioned in the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, it surfaces in other

15 Beier, 95.
documents of the period and earlier. Kenneth Parker remarks that the steel cure was "one of several remedies fashionable at that time."\textsuperscript{16} In his \textit{Essays} (published in 1597) Francis Bacon mentions "steele" as a remedy to "open the spleene."\textsuperscript{17} There is some tradition of the use of steel in the Bedfordshire area.\textsuperscript{18} Osborne's ingestion of steel and her visits to the mineral waters are similar remedies, since Barnet and Tunbridge waters both have chalybeate springs.\textsuperscript{19} Lord North, commonly held to have discovered Tunbridge, found iron and other medicinal ingredients in the waters.\textsuperscript{20} Seventeenth-century physician Dr. Madan opined that Epsom waters were effective for "hypochondrical" and "hysterick"fits.\textsuperscript{21} John Finch wrote his sister Anne Conway that the steel cure might cure the splitting headaches that persistently dogged her.\textsuperscript{22} Obviously, the steel cure was thought to have a wide range of medicinal

\textsuperscript{16} Letters to Sir William Temple, ed. Kenneth Parker, n. 282. Inorganic materials were associated with Paracelsus, who used inorganic compounds to combat imbalances in body chemistry. The dissolution in white wine may seem particularly striking, but Michael MacDonald describes Richard Napier's dissolution of various substances in white wine. See Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 190. For another curative use of an inorganic substance, see Anna K. Nardo, "'Here's to Thy Health': The Pearl in Hamlet's Wine," English Language Notes 23, 2 (December 1985): 36-45.

\textsuperscript{17} Francis Bacon, \textit{Essayes: Counsels Civill & Morall} (1625) (Norwalk, Connecticut: The Heritage Press, 1972), 84.

\textsuperscript{18} See F.W. Marsom, "County Cures" Bedfordshire Magazine 2,13 (1950): 182-84.

\textsuperscript{19} See The Letters of Dorothy Osborne, ed. G.C. Moore Smith, 247.


\textsuperscript{22} "Ottho Tackenius writes me now he hath a medicine made up of a volatile salt of vipers and extract of [steel] which hath cured hundreds of headaches thought incurable." See The Conway
effects, and it was considered helpful in combatting the anemia or listlessness which might manifest itself in melancholy symptoms. Dr. Thomas Sydenham (1624-1689) prescribed steel pills or powder for female anemia (green sickness or amenorrheic young women). Dr. Thomas Sydenham (1624-1689) prescribed steel pills or powder for female anemia (green sickness or amenorrheic young women). Elizabeth Grey, Countess of Kent, prescribed "filing of steel or iron" (one ounce and a quarter) mixed with cloves for a similar purpose in 1651. Her treatise went through nineteen editions over thirty-four years, so it was obviously of some interest to people.

Swift describes the steel cure in the Journal to Stella as effective for splenetic melancholy: "the Doctor tells me I must go into a Course of Steel, tho I have not the Spleen; for that they can never give me thô I have as much Provocation to it as any man alive." Besides the interest inherent in watching Swift's derisive attitude towards the medical profession, and the delightful melodrama of "provocations" to spleen, it is intriguing to see the persistence of the steel cure.

Although the steel cure was presented to Osborne as a common cure, she ultimately deems it unsatisfactory, as Temple had before her: "I am partly of your opinion, that 'tis an ill kinde of Phisick" (25). She is angry at her family's control of her actions, in a pattern we have previously witnessed in her reaction to Henry Osborne's officious behavior. Their care becomes constraint, usurping her right to autonomous control, to the extent that the

Letters, 89.


mechanisms of basic survival are resigned to their judgement. "I am neither to eate drink nor sleep without theire leave," she remarks sarcastically (40). Osborne's rebellion against her unwelcome treatment illustrates that patients' wishes to control their treatment are by no means a contemporary phenomenon, although she also feels that, if successful, the pain of the cure will be worth it. Her remarks illustrate that control over her situation is of extreme importance to her. The need for such autonomy plays a strong role as she tries to act on her desires.

Control is precisely what Osborne lacks when she undertakes the steel cure. The experience of the cure is traumatic, and spirals into reflections on the nature of life and death. Although her remarks about making a will and being on the verge of death are to some degree proverbial, her metaphors are not entirely accidental. Figuratively speaking, Osborne is trapped in the liminal space between death and life. Taking this infusion, in fact, is "worse then dyeing" (23). It is neither living nor dying. The composition of a will is usually conceived as a single action, or an occasional one, but for her it is quotidian ("every day at ten a clock"). She expects death, finds herself pulled back into life, and must repeat the process all over again.

Osborne's remarks about the daily cycle of suffering echo other portrayals of illness in the period. Richard Baxter used similar words to describe the vulnerability of his body: "As waves follow waves in the tempestuous seas, so one pain and danger followeth another in this sinful, miserable flesh. I die daily, and yet remain alive."26 Baxter feels surprise that

he continues to live, and weary of such repetitive pseudo-deaths. Osborne and Baxter view
death as an augmentation of miseries rather than a completely novel state, though the
permeability of the boundaries between life and death is disconcerting. Baxter’s exclamation
echoes 1 Corinthians 15: 31, where St. Paul writes: “I protest by your rejoicing which I have
in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.” Statements of this nature, though conventional, were
intended as a brave assertion of power over death. Bishop Duppa, for example, wrote in a
letter to Sir Justinian Isham (at one time Osborne’s suitor): “there is no such charm against
the fear of death as to be able to say in earnest Quotidie morior.”27 The emphasis here is on
learning to live with the awareness of death.

In Osborne’s remarks, that sanguine acceptance of death found in her peers is belied
by the frustration of her uncertain state. Her own experiences do not match Christian
paradigms, with their emphasis on the spiritual rewards of dwelling close to death. Illness
in the period often becomes a catalyst for reflections about one’s spiritual state, as seen, for
example, in John Donne’s Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions. Osborne’s meditations are
exclusively focused on Temple. While Donne might reflect on the nature of his faith and his
hope of salvation, Osborne finds herself drinking Temple’s health with her dreadful steel
cure. Osborne and Donne share the mechanism by which physical symptoms are transmuted
into spiritual or mental reflection. Her metaphors of living or dying are as poignant as any
Christian thinking on the topic, yet her thinking takes a different direction from reflections
like Donne’s. I will be returning to the way in which Osborne tends to resolve potentially

27 Gyles Isham, ed. The Correspondence of Bishop Brian Duppa and Sir Justinian Isham
1650-1660 (Lamport Hall, Northamptonshire: The Northamptonshire Record Society, 1951), 40.
religious struggles into concerns about her courtship. At this juncture, it is important to note that the presence of illness in Osborne's life raises questions about the impact suffering had on her life in spiritual or psychological terms.

Illness's impact is by no means limited to subjectivity; it has an impact on the way the courtship negotiations proceed (or fail to proceed). The search for the cause of the disturbingly elusive melancholy is often laden with negative emotions. At times, Osborne herself is identified as the cause of Temple's melancholy. "Why are you so sullen, and why am I the cause?" she queries urgently (103). The implication here, in fact, is that, although Osborne might be the cause of Temple's melancholy, he is ungracious to sustain negative emotion. She is implicated in his melancholy, and he is in hers. Since she met him, she has been miserable:

I may own my ill humor to you that cause it, tis the discontents my Crosses in this buisnes has given mee, makes mee thus Peevish. though I say't my self, before I knew you I was thought as well an humord Younge Person as most in England, Nothing displeased, nothing troubled mee. when I cam out of France nobody knew mee againe, I was soe alterd, from a Cheerful humor that was alway's alike, never over merry but always pleased, I was growne heavy, and sullen, froward and discomposed...(137).

Osborne does not claim, of course, that Temple himself provokes melancholy, but that his absence is insupportable. Yet some of his actions, or potential actions, can be a catalyst for her unhappiness. When Temple plans to take an extended trip to Sweden, Osborne remarks that if the voyage takes as long as his previous journey (a separation of several years), she will experience a "stronge spleenatick fancy that I shall never see you more in this world." It will be such a spleen as "all the water's in England will not cure" (15). The couple's association can and does cause the mental harm of melancholy, as Osborne notes when she
describes herself as “sullen, froward and discomposed.” Melancholy is both mysterious and tied to negative feelings about a love object.

Before coming to terms with the ambiguous and troubling nature of melancholy, the lovers must resolve an even more fundamental point. Are either or both of the lovers melancholic? The lovers—at least Osborne—are for the most part not shy about admitting that they suffer from spleen, even if they find it a disconcerting experience. Yet Osborne sometimes vehemently denies that she is melancholic. For example, Jane Wright’s depiction of her as mired in sorrow is entirely incorrect: "she thinks noebody in good humor unlesse they Laugh perpetually as Nan and she do's" (33). Osborne may be trying to reassure Temple that he need not worry about her, giving him as much assurance as possible. Alternatively, Osborne might not picture her suffering as a continuous process. Any moment she does not experience the symptoms of her illness is comparatively free from melancholy.

Temple also denies that he is melancholic, although he has described his symptoms in great detail. His moments of denial are perhaps motivated by a desire to portray himself in the best light and assure Osborne that he is in good spirits. She is given the strange task of determining whether Temple is melancholy before she can comprehend the importance of melancholy for the courtship or appraise Temple as a husband. At first, Temple’s melancholy is comprehensible because it is similar to hers: "whilst I read the discription on’t I could not believe but y’I had writt it my self, it was soe much my owne" (39). Temple begins with frankness about his symptoms. Later, however, he downplays his illness. Osborne is suspicious: "did ever any body forget themself’s to that degree that was not melancholy in Extreamity? good God how are you Alter’d! and what is it that has don it?"
Osborne has the tenacity of a lawyer cross-examining a witness, using exclamations and interlocutions. To Osborne's mind, Temple's self-neglect may well be evidence of the root cause of melancholy.

Wrangling over Temple's melancholy is rendered more complicated by the involvement of Osborne's waiting woman Jane Wright. We have already seen Jane Wright's capacity to muddy the waters of the courtship; her representation of the couple's illnesses to each other adds another confusing layer of interpretative complexity. Jane insists that Temple is dying from melancholy (103). Jane is the primary source of information about Temple, and her voice takes on a shrill urgency when she exhorts Osborne to visit Temple:

if you saw how she baites mee Every day to goe to London, all that I can say will not sattisfye her. when'I urge (as tis true) that there is a necessity of my stay heer, she grow's furious, cry's you will dye with melancholy and confounds mee soe with Storry's of your ill humor that i'le swere I think I should goe, meery to bee at quiett, if it were posible, though there were noe other reason for it; but I hope tis not soe ill as she would have mee beleive it though I know your humor is strangely Alterd from what it was, and am sorry to see it (102-103).

Jane's histrionics, as opposed to Temple's condition, become the main focus. The possibility that Temple is concealing his melancholy upsets Osborne, who demands, "You say I abuse you, and Jane say's you abuse mee when you say you are not melancholy, wch is to bee beleev'd?" (107). Her reference to "abuse" ushers in the language of deception and untruth. In asking Temple "wch is to be believ'd" Osborne (none too subtly) implies that she does not believe him. She literally asks Temple if he is speaking the truth to her: "I hope you deal truely with mee too in sayeing that you are not melancholy (though she dos not beleeve it)" (107). However, Osborne tries to think through Temple's situation using her own experience, as she often does, and thinks that Temple might be experiencing an inward state different
from melancholia. She explains that people sometimes falsely accuse her of being melancholic when she is not:

how often doe I sitt in company a whole day and when they are gon am not able to give an account of sixe words that was sayd, and many times could bee soe much better pleased with the Entertainment my owne thoughts give mee, that tis all I can doe to bee soe civill as not to let them see they trouble mee, this may bee your disease (107-108).

She follows this description by urging that, even if Temple is not suffering from melancholy, he should take the utmost care of himself. Osborne ultimately decides that Temple is indeed ill, though not as ill as Jane says.

The lovers' sporadic attempts to conceal their melancholy from each other might be an attempt to prove that the experience of illness does not daunt them, a show of bravado.

Although we have seen Osborne buffeted about by painful cures and beset by uncertainty, she hints that illness can be fought and transcended. Osborne gives the example of Lady Talmach\(^\text{28}\) who avoids smallpox by virtue of sheer will:

tis not unpleasant mee thinks to hear her talke how at such a Time she was sick and the Phisitians tolde her she would have the small Poxe and shewed her where they were coming out upon her, but she bethought her self that it was not at all convenient for her to have them at that time; some businesse she had that required her going abroade, and soe shee resolved shee would not bee sick; nor was not (168).

The offhand tone here is part of the charm of the story, reflecting Lady Talmach's lack of fear about smallpox; it is not dangerous, merely inconvenient for her "businesse." Osborne's

\(^{28}\) Lady Talmach (or "Tollemache") was Elizabeth Murray (c. 1628-98), the Countess of Dysart, who married Sir Lionel Tollemache in 1647 and lived at Ham House, Petersham. She was clearly a spirited, strong-willed, intelligent woman. For more on Lady Tollemache, see Julia Anne Elizabeth Tollemache Roundell. *Ham House, its History and Art Treasures* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1904).
warm interest in the indomitable Talmach's narrative ('tis not unpleasant"), and apparent willingness to believe her claim shows a measure of optimism about the ability of individuals, including the lovers themselves, to control their illness. In the case of Lady Talmach, there is physical proof that she is about to be ill. Her doctors have shown her the signs of her illness. Emotional resolve, however, is more than enough to counteract discouraging bodily signs. On the other hand, the fact that Osborne makes special note of this case may mean she views it as a unique instance.

Reflection on Talmach's gutsy denial (and thus escape) from illness might illustrate Osborne's awareness of what the lovers might do if they devise a strategy to fight their illness. She also implies that much of illness is sheer valetudinarianism. It is certainly possible to prolong illness if desired, a theme which later appears in Molière's *Le Malade Imaginaire* and in Aphra Behn's *Sir Patient Fancy*. Osborne's Cousin Molle, she remarks, retains his ague because it permits him the leisure of illness (41).

If the mind can dictate to the body, as it did in Lady Talmach's case, and if some people can literally choose to be ill, surely illness is not an inescapable pressure, but one which can be manipulated or even avoided by potential sufferers?

When Temple plans to go to Epsom, where Osborne visited the previous year, she comments with familiarity on the spa waters (68). Temple's interest in such a cure is by no means surprising since Epsom was an obvious place to go for a cure of melancholy. As the cure is broached, however, it seems that Temple might emulate Osborne's experience and

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thereby experience greater closeness to her. At the very least, Osborne would like to interpret the visit in this manner, although she ruefully admits that Temple might not share her reaction to the mineral water cure:

> if you are come back from Epsum, I may aske you how you like drinking water. I have wished it might agree as well with you as it did with mee and if it were as certaine that the same things would doe us good, as tis that the same things would please us I should not need to doubt it, Otherwise my Wishes doe not signifie much (68-69).

The couple might react differently to the mineral cure. Mutual healing might well be mere wishful thinking. Osborne seems constantly to be questioning whether the lovers are indeed similar. Osborne makes reference to events and phenomena that "please" both of them, but it is impossible to ascertain whether the things that “please” the lovers extend beyond literary and cultural tastes to include fundamental beliefs and ideas. Osborne establishes a clear division between internal experiences and external practises here, voicing concern that the internal might not be communicable. This theme will appear later in the courtship.

The lovers frequently articulate their dissimilar experiences of melancholy rather than pinpoint symptoms and experiences they have in common. In fact, Osborne often seems to exacerbate such differences, making stagy remarks about the way her longstanding melancholy renders her less susceptible to the ravages of the disease than Temple: “Melancholy must needs doe you more hurt then to another to whome it may bee Naturall, as I think it is to mee” (103). Temple has a claim to sharper suffering due to the novelty of the experience, but Osborne has a greater ability to suffer. Gender has a clear role to play in differentiating the experience of the lovers. Although Osborne is willing, even eager, to believe that Temple suffers from the spleen, she ascribes his unwillingness to speak about
it to an inability to admit to a disease: "I foresaw you would not be willing to own a disease, that the severe part of the world holde to bee meerly imaginary and affected, and therfore proper only to women" (70). The ostensible message of Osborne's remark is that spleen is neither imaginary, nor an exclusively female complaint. Furthermore, she goes on to describe how Temple should take advantage of the healing waters at the spa: "I cannot but wish you had stay'd longer at Epsum, and drunk the waters with more order, though in a lesse proportion" (70). However, while the opinions of "the severe part of the worlde" are refuted, such a refutation does not reverse the estranging power of Osborne's initial articulation. Osborne stakes her claim on the territory of melancholy since, as a man, Temple should not surrender to the disease. The articulation of difference, along with interpretive wrangling over who is melancholic, has a sad or hostile edge to it. The lovers are separate in their humours, and unable to communicate with each other.

Osborne hopes to establish a relationship not of similitude, but complete identification. The separation of humours and different reactions to melancholy experienced by Osborne and Temple is, at least to some degree, a threat to this kind of union. While the seventeenth century had very different conventions around illness and death from the

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30 Osborne's remark about the association of melancholy with women is borne out by cultural commonplaces. Burton remarks that melancholy's victims were "Of sexes both, but men more often, yet women misaffected are far more violent and grievously troubled," cit. in MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, 33. One of the most obvious linkages between women and the spleen is John Lyly's *The Woman in the Moone*, which portrays women as extremely susceptible to planetary influence, including the Saturnine influence which causes melancholy ([London]: Imprinted at London for William Jones, 1597). Michael MacDonald discusses the domestic stresses women were subject to, which often made them particularly prone to melancholy, 33-40.
teenth century, where sufferers likely feel isolation, it is unclear whether individuals in the seventeenth century could fully share their illnesses.

To be sure, the experience of illness in the seventeenth century allowed for at least some measure of social interaction:

In an age where illness and death took place at home, suffering cemented relationships between people. Visitors, confronted with the truth of their own mortality, were both comforted by the assurance that they also would have social support during their own crises and taught behavior which they might themselves employ.

It is obvious that Osborne herself is deeply imbricated in the social fabric surrounding illness. She nurses her father diligently, for example, until his death, and refuses to leave the house while he is confined there. “Many reasons” oblige her to stay at Chicksands: “that which I most owne, is my fathers ill health, which though it bee not in that Extreamity it has bin, yet keeps him still a Prisoner to his Chamber and for the most part to his bed” (43). Even though her father is recovering, she is not yet free from her obligations. As well, when her beloved Diana Rich is in convalescence for her sore eyes, Osborne is unwilling to leave her side (10). For Osborne, such vigilance is both a curtailment of freedom, and the ultimate expression of love and care. When she is ill during a trip to London, Osborne hopes to be


32 Beier, 248.

33 In her involvement with the health of family and friends, Osborne was almost certainly responding to the expectations of her culture. Many books about seventeenth-century medicine emphasize the significant role of women in the care of others. Charlotte Otten includes remarks about the role of women in medicine, providing other primary sources in her collection, _English Women's Voices 1540-1700_ (Miami: Florida International University Press), 173-217.
the object of such attention from Temple: "I sent to your lodging to tell you that Vissetting the Sick was part of the worke of ye day" (19). Osborne playfully transforms herself into an object of Christian charity and of soliciitude. She expects her condition to bring them closer together, not further apart.

Osborne repeatedly affirms her receptivity to Temple's suffering. When Temple contracts a cold, Osborne notes: "I am the more sencible of your trouble, by my owne" (8). She is speaking literally here: her misery makes her more prone to think of his. Her experience illuminates his. He has a corresponding responsibility to be receptive to her suffering. She inscribes their mutual responsibility in the realm of the physical body and in emotional well-being. Despite Osborne's claims to feel Temple's suffering (to be "sensible" of it), the realm of illness may be the least promising venue in which to form social bonds and to exercise empathy. The mere presence of others is not enough to alleviate suffering. Furthermore, other people cannot literally live within the suffering of another person. Whether it takes the form of pain or disconcerting, undecipherable symptoms (or some combination), illness is solitary, unique and uncommunicable. Beier pinpoints how imaginative engagement has its limitations: "although one can sympathise, or even empathise, with a sufferer's complaints, much of illness is a lonely business."34

Despite social conventions designed to bring sufferers together, Osborne's letters display a palpable skepticism that, despite the vast social resources expended on suffering individuals, it may not be possible to ease their pain and solitude. Susan Sontag's distinction between the kingdom of the "ill" and the "well" is a contemporary articulation of this

34 Beier, 242.
phenomenon: to fall ill is to enter an entirely different "kingdom" of experience. Sontag describes how, in our century, illness has proved an isolating experience due to the use of metaphors which tend to stigmatize the ill (she has discussed, in her two books about illness, the metaphors used to describe cancer and HIV infection). Osborne, several hundred years earlier, struggles for metaphors for illness which unify rather than isolate the lovers.

Osborne's letters include mournful meditations on the solitude of illness as well as affirmations of the social fabric surrounding illness. Part of her fear of mournful isolation derives from the fact that melancholia has both medical and cultural associations with solitude: the brooding malcontent all dressed in black, or Democritus Junior's declaration of solitude: "Tis my desire to be alone; Ne're well but when my thoughts and I/ Doe domineir in privacie" (28-30). In accordance with stereotypes of melancholic solitude, including the Renaissance "malcontent," Osborne indulges in small outbursts of anti-social behaviour. She characterizes her demeanor at a dinner with Henry Osborne and Lady Gargrave as "ill humord" and explains that the assembled party sensed her dejection: "they all agreed to say that I spoyled theire Jollity by wearing the most unseasonable look's that could bee put on for such an occasion" (168). There is a striking frankness between Osborne and her hosts, and the bitter humour at which she excels: she notes that she "could have told them that my looks were suitable to my fortune, though not to a feast" (168). Using a medical metaphor, she notes that she remarked that there was no "remedy" to the situation but

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36 Burton, I.lxx.
"leaving mee behinde next time" (168).

Osborne has become an unwelcome guest, one whose infectious sadness casts a shadow over the pleasure of others. Her melancholy extends further than the occasional fit of ill-temper. She often seems to struggle with the containment of her sorrow, so that it does not impinge on others, or sway them towards sorrow. "I am perhaps too unhappy my self ever to make any body else happy," she speculates fretfully, but adds "yet sure I shall take heed that my misfortun's may not prove infectious to my freinds" (40). Melancholy dissolves human bonds, even when individuals display a keen willingness to preserve their amity. For example, Margaret Blagge remarks to John Evelyn that their friendship is unshakeable except if she becomes "Old, and forgetfull, and Melancholy or stupid; and in that Case, will no more answer for myselfe than for a stranger."

Blagge portrays herself as fragile and vulnerable to a wide variety of stresses, but melancholy alone would be enough to destroy her connection to Evelyn.

Melancholy not only destroys unions through solipsistic brooding; it poses a challenge to rationality itself. The disease is associated, in both medicine and literature, with delusionary visions and the breakdown of rational subjectivity. Osborne's family fears such


38 Michael MacDonald notes that melancholy, as opposed to insanity, was noted for its distortions of perception: "delusions, which are today regarded as the token of the worst kinds of insanity, were considered to be symptoms of melancholy rather than madness." See Mystical Bedlam, 170. One example (among many) of the association between melancholy and impaired perception is Samuel Butler's portrayal of the melancholy man: "The Fumes and Vapours that rise from his Spleen and Hypocondries have so smutched and sullied his Brain (like a Room that smoaks) that his Understanding is bleary'd, and has no right Perception of any Thing." See Characters, ed. Charles W. Daves (Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1970), 97. For a
emotional disintegration:

they doe soe fright mee with strange Story's of what the Spleen will bring mee to in
time, that I am kept in awe with them like a Childe. they tell mee 'twill not leave mee
common sence, that I shall hardly bee fitt company for my owne dog's, and that it
will ende, either in a Stupidnesse that will make mee uncapable of any thing, or fill
my head with such whim's as will make mee, rediculous; to prevent this, whoe would
not take steel or any thing? (25).

These are hardly minor apprehensions. Spleen will remove Osborne from the realm of
humanity, strip her of rational capacity and expose her to scorn. The threat of being
"rediculous" is a particularly powerful negative sanction for Osborne given her wish to
maintain a public persona beyond reproach, impeccably controlled. As she admits, the twin
threats of dullness and uncontrolled whimsy are more than ample motivations to conform
with the steel cure, at least' at first.

Osborne’s goal is both to retain her selfhood and bind that selfhood to Temple. After
a rough trip to London, where she has been ill most of the time, Osborne pushes herself
through weariness to write and think of Temple:

I am soe perfectly dosed with my Colde and m[y] Joury together that all I can say
is, that I am heer and that I have only soe much sence left as to wish you were soe
too. when that Leaves mee you may conclude mee past all (20).

Osborne’s link to Temple is her minimum standard of engagement and interaction with the
world. Similarly, she exclaims that “nothing but death or a dead palsy in my hands” will
prevent her from writing him (87). It is certainly possible that illness will take away all sense
of union from the lovers—that the dead palsy in her hands will actually prevent her from

lively account of a common melancholic delusion, see Gill Speak, “An Odd Kind of Melancholy:
Reflections on the Glass Delusion in Europe (1440-1680),” History of Psychiatry I (June 1990), 191-
206.
writing—but on the other hand Osborne has established that she considers union with Temple to be the foundation of wellness itself.

I would now like to consider the way in which Osborne, who earnestly seeks union in sickness, translates these concerns into matters of practical care. In many ways, a wish to fight illness, whether ague, colds or melancholy, is a strike against the hopelessness that melancholy engenders. Foucault has written eloquently about the connection between conjugal union and the concern for well-being. He describes, with the broad brush strokes characteristic of him, the Roman concern to preserve mental and physical well-being as a catalyst for the development of companionate heterosexual marriage, an affective shift from the love of boys into the comparative security of the marital unit. Osborne, likewise, draws Temple into the realm of care, trying to establish the unit of the couple as a haven from a single life of self-abuse.

Sometimes Osborne’s hopes for the mutual wellness of the couple soars with exalted, stirring rhetoric. Just as often, Osborne resorts to sound scoldings and vigorous naggings, chiding Temple for "being soe idle as to run out of your bed to catch such a Colde" (181) and declaring that she "will noe longer bee a freind to one that's none to himself nor apprehend the losse of what you hazard every day at Tennis" (13). As she tries to change Temple’s negative habits, she stresses that his well-being is of prime importance to her own: "can you beleeve that you are dearer to mee then the whole world besyd's and yet necglect yourself?" (103). She is willing to resort to such forms of emotional blackmail in order to improve

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Temple's health: "if you loved mee you would not give your self over to that which will infallibly kill you if it continue" (73). She considers his suffering—or potential suffering—as having a direct (even unmediated) impact on her. This relates back to Osborne’s attempt to describe their bodily experience as identical, despite the fact that she is not always successful in doing so.

Osborne may have been responding to the post-Reformational cultural pressures on women to minister to their husbands physically and spiritually.40 At one point, she literally sends him a remedy for his cold:

I will send you that Wch uses to cure mee, 'tis like the rest of my medicens, if it doe noe good 'twill bee sure to doe noe harme, and 'twill bee noe great trouble to you to eate a little on't now and then, for the taste, as it is not Exelent, soe 'tis not very ill (8).

By proposing and sending various remedies for Temple's illnesses, she tends to the needs of his body as befits a wife; by expressing her interest in his melancholic state, she displays the range of her wifely solicitude. Temple may have been particularly responsive to this kind of care. If we believe Macaulay's claim that Temple tended towards "valetudinarian effeminacy," a "habit of coddling himself,"41 Osborne's impulse to minister to his physical and emotional needs would presumably be necessary qualities in his prospective wife. However, she also articulates concern for health as a shared task. Interdependence is

40 For example, Milton’s divorce tracts emphasize psychological compatibility as well as physical pleasure. Mary Nyquist does not see Milton’s tract as advocating an egalitarian companionate marriage; the discourse of the divorce tracts stresses the psychological needs of the male partner in marriage. See “The Genesis of Gendered Subjectivity in the Divorce Tracts and in Paradise Lost” in Re-Membering Milton: Essays on the Texts and Traditions, ed. Mary Nyquist and Margaret W. Ferguson (New York: Methuen, 1987), 117-119.

41 Thomas Babington Macaulay, Literary Essays Contributed to the Edinburgh Review (London: Oxford University Press, 1913), 424
necessary because society is indifferent to their well-being: "if wee doe not take care of our selv's I finde nobody else will" (114). Osborne describes her relationship to Temple in terms of her hope of self-preservation and mutual discipline; she expresses her wishes not as mere ideals but as issues which cut to the heart of survival.

In a remarkable discussion of the perils of overeating, she enjoins him to "lay your commands on mee to forebeare fruite" (60). Such guidance, Osborne claims, is not merely desirable but a necessary precondition for health: "nothing but your power can secure mee" (60). At first, it seems as though Osborne is relinquishing control of what she takes into her body to Temple, an emphasis on food that touches, for example, on many current feminist concerns. However, Osborne is explicitly choosing the type of control to which she will be subjected, asking Temple to focus on fruit. When Temple scolds her too vigorously, she reacts with anger, stating that she does not need such chastisement:

Yet what reason have I to furnish you with a stick to beat my selfe withall or desyre you should comande, that doe it soe severly? I must Eate fruite noe longer then I could bee content you should bee in a feavor; is not that an absolute forbiding it mee? (60-61).

This is a matter in which, Osborne argues, "wee must both comande & both obay alike" (60). Osborne's model of commanding and obeying possesses intriguing implications for feminist appraisals of Osborne (at least those which focus on equality and conjugal power relations). It is also a striking way of viewing health. This discourse of commanding and obeying is the *sine qua non* of the emotional and physical symbiosis espoused by the scriptural vision of

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marriage. William Gouge's *Of Domestical Duties* (1622) described by Kate Aughterson as "one of the most comprehensive of Renaissance marriage guides," approvingly cites 1 Corinthians 7:4:

so as neither the man is without the woman, nor the woman without the man: yea as the wife hath not power of her own body but the husband, so the husband hath not power of his own body but the wife.43

The passage from Corinthians, like Osborne's letters, inscribes the flow of commanding and obeying at the level of the body, so that Osborne's thinking on this matter is at least somewhat conventional. On the other hand, Osborne's concern is too charged with specific reference to the bodies of the lovers to remain entirely on the level of the conventional. Osborne intervenes in Temple's health, at least in part, because she has shed her own self-destructive tendencies under his influence. Early in the courtship, she emphasizes that she is concerned to preserve herself because of Temple:

the truth is I cannot deny but that I have bin very carelesse of my self but alas whoe would have bin other? I never thought my life a thing worth my care whilst nobody was concern'd in't but my self, now I shall looke upon't as somthing that you would not loose, and therfore shall indeavor to keep it for you (33).

She makes a similar claim later in the correspondence:

I know nothing in the world that gives mee the least desyr of preserving my self but the opinion I have you would not bee willing to loose mee, and yet if you saw with what Caution I live, (at least to what I did befor) you would reproach it to your self somtim's, and might grant perhaps that you have not gott the advantage of mee in

43 Cit. in Kate Aughterson, ed. *Renaissance Women: A Sourcebook* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 89. This passage, however, is not typical of William Gouge's attitude towards the male-female relationship. For the most part, Gouge re-enforces the hierarchical model where man is trooped as the head, and woman as the irrational body. See Hilary Hinds, *God's Englishwomen: Seventeenth-Century Radical Sectarian Writing and Feminist Criticism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 26.
friendship soe much as you imagin (88).

She has been conscientious and cautious. Temple is the source of her new resolution. Osborne energetically establishes the cycle of mutual preservation she wishes the lovers to undertake. Her remarks contain a negative component; her indifference towards her previous well-being is undeniably disturbing. Naturally, these protestations are somewhat disingenuous, amplifying both her previous indifference and her current commitment. There is an edge of competitiveness when they wrangle over the “advantage” of friendship they each wish to claim. Osborne’s claim that she takes care of herself for Temple’s sake seems strangely divided, an attempt both to develop a mutual ethic of care and an affirmation of superior commitment.

Osborne’s argument that she does not live for herself alone was by no means unique. The idea that initial indifference to preservation must give way to the external observances of self-maintenance is found in both classical sources and in Christian thought. Socrates, for example, explains in Plato’s *Phaedo* that one must not give into the temptation of suicide because human beings are obliged to remain alive for the sake of the gods. In Roman times, Seneca affirmed, as Marcus Aurelius was to do later, that a moral individual had a duty to attend to the health of the body only insofar as it was necessary, and otherwise to

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44 “The allegory which the mystics tell us—that we men are put in a sort of guard post, from which one must not release oneself or run away—seems to me to be a high doctrine with difficult implications. All the same, Cebes, I believe that this much is true, that the gods are our keepers, and we men are one of their possessions...I suppose it is not unreasonable to say that we must not put an end to ourselves until God sends some compulsion like the one which we are facing now” (62c). See *Phaedo*, trans. Hugh Tredennick, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 45.
concentrate on the spirit. This mixture of indifference to the body, combined with a sense of responsibility to care for the physical self, was attractive to Christian thinkers of the period, including the Cambridge Platonists. Henry More remarked to Anne Conway that he was "obstinately and sullenly" resolved to disregard his health, and that he was not concerned with his bodily existence in "this present world," yet softly added: "I do not neglect to do something in reference to it."

When Osborne seeks the health of her body, struggling against a native indifference to it, she differs from classical paradigms, and from More's formulation of the question. She is not committed to an abstract moral or Christian duty but a specific individual. By articulating the love relationship as the highest good for which to preserve the self, Osborne makes the relationship itself more powerful than sacred forces; love keeps the couple alive. Love intensifies in accordance with the imperative to stay alive.

The secular nature of Osborne's emphasis on mutual health is typical for her. Osborne does not hold up Christian faith as the cure for melancholy, as many thinkers of the time did. An Collins, for example, praised Christ as a force to revitalize the sufferer of melancholy. Patricia Vicari has persuasively argued that Robert Burton's purpose in his exposition of


46 *The Letters of Anne Conway*, 100.

melancholy was to show that "human ingenuity alone is insufficient for a complete cure" and that human agency must yield to divine intervention:

Melancholy is first felt as a natural disease, and assumed to be susceptible to mundane remedies—change of air, diet, exercise, or drugs—the remedies that Burton himself probably tried first... For a perfect cure his readers would have to look beyond Robertus expertus; he advised them to turn to God—while at the same time doing all they could for themselves with worldly remedies.

Osborne resists such a God-driven cure for melancholy, because she has no real interest in any cure but marriage with Temple. If a cure is found through transcendence, it is transcendent romantic love, not religious awakening. As well, Osborne may even possess a residual unwillingness to be cured. While she may seek the cure for melancholy, as well as other illnesses, Osborne cherishes the possibility that melancholy can bring the couple together in the erotic thrill of sadness. If empathy can be sustained, despite all threats of division, if the couple can fight together for health, the illness will be worth any suffering they might experience.

Despite the fact that many of the letters tend to cast melancholy in a negative light, there is the possibility that melancholy might turn around to become a positive force in the courtship so that melancholy is not virulent but positive, with the potential to bind the lovers in a pleasing sadness. From the medieval period onwards, several commentators made a firm distinction between love sickness and melancholy itself. Some thinkers, like Robert Burton,


49 Vicari, 6-7.

50 Beier speaks of the differences between secular and religious approaches to illness. See Sufferers and Healers, 154.
or Jacques Ferrand, thought of love sickness as a form of melancholy.\textsuperscript{51} Others considered love sickness much less damaging than melancholy itself, and a great deal more transitory. The complexity of love-melancholy underscores the fluidity of emotions in Renaissance culture, the mixture of pain and pleasure which love engendered.\textsuperscript{52} Osborne displays her melancholy as a function of her desire, and she exploits her low spirits not only for sympathy but to heighten her romantic appeal.

For all of the frightening aspects of melancholy, there is also a certain thrill in the experience, perhaps connected to the proverbial association of melancholy with states of heightened intensity. Sadness has long been associated with erotic power, the romantic sway of sadness. When Temple argues that Osborne’s eyes act as an antidote to melancholy, she argues (to the contrary) that her eyes are sad:

\begin{quote}
Would you could make your words good, that my Ey's can dispell all mellancholy Clouded humors, I would looke in the glasse all day longe but I would cleare up my owne. Allasse they are soe farr from that, they would teach one to bee sad, that knew nothing on't, for in other peoples opinions as well as my owne they have the most of it in them that Ey's can have; My Mother (I remember) used to say I needed noe tear's to perswade my trouble, and that I had lookes soe farr beyonde them, that were all the friends I had in the world, dead, more could not be Expected then such a sadnesse in my Ey's, this indeed I think is naturall to them, or at least long custome has made it soe (65-66).
\end{quote}

Melancholy is no longer cast as an affliction; it is a conduit to a heightened emotion which

\textsuperscript{51} For a consideration of the physical basis (or lack thereof) of love melancholy, see D.A. Beecher, “The Lover’s Body: The Somatogenesis of Love in Renaissance Medical Treatises.” \textit{Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme} 24, 1 (1988), 1-13.

\textsuperscript{52} For a fascinating article on the connection between pain and pleasure in Renaissance love lyric, see Elizabeth Harris Sagaser, “Shakespeare’s Sweet Leaves: Mourning, Pleasure, and the Triumph of Thought in the Renaissance Love Lyric,” \textit{English Literary History} 61, 1 (1994), 1-26.
Osborne strategically displays. Osborne rejects Temple's original compliment that her eyes are merry in order to elicit a more powerful form of admiration. In the process, Osborne reveals the limitations of Temple's vision of melancholy; he has failed to recognize the melancholy in her eyes as the seductive force it can be (that is what eyes and melancholy are for). In displaying her sadness as communicable, Osborne exploits the medical and literary traditions of melancholy self-consciously. Osborne's assertion that her wistful eyes will teach Temple to be sad echoes the traditional discourse of love melancholy, which is said to enter through the eyes of the sufferer, as Burton knew when he cited Ficinus: "Mortall men are then especially bewitched, when as by gazing one on the other, they direct sight to sight, joine eye to eye, and so drinke and sucke in love betweene them, for the beginning of this disease is the Eye."53

Osborne draws on the romantic image of the woman enveloped in sadness, as expressed, for example, in John Dowland's bittersweet, "I Saw My Lady Weep,": "Her face was full of woe./ But such a woe (believe me) as wins more hearts, Than Mirth can do with her enticing parts."54 Osborne exploits the advantages of character associated with melancholy which, as Michael MacDonald notes, "became a badge of fashion during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries."55

Melancholy is not simply fashionable; it can reveal real virtues of character.

53 Burton, 3.88.

54 Dowland does, however, remark, "your joyful look excels...O strive not to be excellent in woe,/ Which only breeds your beauty's overthrow" See brochure notes for John Dowland, Second Booke of Songs (1600). Anthony Rooley, L'Oiseau-Lyre compact disk 423 889-2 (12).

55 MacDonald, Mystical Bedlam, 135.
Aristotle believed that melancholy could be a sign of genius, although Galen later conceived of the condition as a miserable condition of mind.⁵⁶ Although these benefits of melancholy may not have been the ones Osborne was seeking, her sad eyes lend her romantic credibility. She is capable of great emotional depth; her charismatic sadness leads others to feel the same way. Tears are too vulgar to express her sadness; she need not cry because the sadness of her eyes is already so eloquent. She displays a plenitude of character, imagination and complexity. Her "long custome" of melancholy reveals her fortitude. The habitual melancholy to which she draws attention is not only a call for sympathy but for admiration as well.

Melancholy makes Osborne appear both untrammelled and controlled. The experience of illness, with its confusion and proximity to death, mingles with the limit experience of love and creates a personality at fever pitch. To be sure, it is possible to overstate the case when arguing that any humoral imbalance was acceptable to the Renaissance mind. Humoral imbalance would certainly have been considered pathological. However, what should be apparent here is that Osborne is able to manipulate her melancholy so that it is no longer threatening to the courtship, but enhances her relationship to Temple.

Osborne predicates her health and happiness on Temple's intervention. It is difficult to appraise whether Osborne's desire to overcome melancholy with Temple’s help was successful by the end of the letters. While references to illness and the pangs of melancholy seem to decrease as the letters progress, it seems as though illness and wellness remain

⁵⁶ See, for example, Babb's remarks on the dual perception of melancholy in the Renaissance: "the melancholy man is likely to be ridiculously irrational, yet...melancholy often engenders intellectual and artistic powers of the highest order," The Elizabethan Malady, 72.
tensely poised. As well, the uncertainty about melancholy's apparent causelessness and its connection to external events is never resolved by the letters.

If Osborne's melancholy were purely love-melancholy, it should have disappeared with the conclusion of the courtship. Included in the many cures of melancholy circulating in the culture is one that stresses the removal of adverse external circumstances as a curative. As we have seen many times before, melancholy might not be cured with recourse to external circumstances alone, yet Robert Burton cites several cases of this nature. The recovery of one woman from melancholy, he notes, was brought about by the return of her husband from a long absence. "Many are instantly cured, when their mindes are satisfied" concludes Burton resoundingly. In many ways, this dissolution of the strain of melancholy shows that it is merely conventional, a typical part of the life cycle of an individual moving into maturity. Polonius, for example, reflects on the distressed Hamlet with the remark, "and truly in my youth I suffered much extremity for love; very near this."

Osborne experienced significant emotional strain during the rigours of her courtship. It was not uncommon for young people to seek out medical treatment while dealing with the physical and mental stress of finding a mate and seeking closure for complicated courtship negotiations. Seventeenth-century physician Richard Napier treated men and women for emotional distress during courtship. One example of a woman who shed her melancholy after marriage was Margaret Charleton, who abandoned her habits of tortured self-

57 Burton, 2.107.
58 Hamlet, Act II, Scene II.
59 MacDonald, Mystical Bedlam, 88-98.
examination after wedding Richard Baxter. Baxter (with a palpable aura of satisfaction) explains that the melancholy of his wife Margaret Charleton "vanished" once they were married: "counsel did something to it, and contentment something; and being taken up with our household affairs did somewhat."^{60} Charleton's experience resonates with Burton's final dictum: "Be not solitary, be not idle."^{61}

John Ford's *The Lover's Melancholy*, which was inspired by Burton's *Anatomy*, enacts the cure of melancholy in literary form.^{62} At the beginning of the play, Palador, Prince of Cyprus, is pining for his lost love Eroclea. A scholar named Corax (a thinly disguised Burton) proposes various remedies, but Palador is only cured when Eroclea reappears and they are married. Until the comic ending, the melancholy of the characters has had its source in an unsatisfactory set of events and separations. Melancholy is cured through the typical working-through of a comic plot. The melancholia of a play, of course, is a great deal easier to cure than the real melancholy Osborne and Temple experience. In Ford's play, melancholy is the result of uncongenial circumstances and thwarted love.

It is possible to conceive of Osborne's melancholia as simultaneously subject to correction once her situation was improved, and unresponsive to changes in her environment. In many ways, to judge the freedom of Osborne and Temple from melancholy and other

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^{61} Burton, 3.445.

illnesses is a misguided and hopeless endeavour (not to mention the inherent presumption of considering the mental health of long-dead individuals). However, some vestige of melancholy seems to have remained with Osborne and Temple. Although there is no record for Osborne of melancholy per se, or much knowledge about her mental state after the letters cease, from the thin evidence which remains, it seems that she was not very happy in the years after her marriage, in large part due to the significant personal tragedy that befell her after her marriage. Rosalind Wade, in an article avowedly written to explode the myth of the Temple's happy marriage, describes Osborne's palpable sadness in portraits of her later life: "it is not a happy portrait, for the general air of detachment and disdain suggests a withdrawal from the warmth of personal involvement which for most people makes life tolerable."63 Consider as well the remarks of Martha, Lady Giffard, who describes Temple's humour as

...naturally gay, but a great deal unequal, sometimes by cruel fits of spleen and melancholy, often upon great damps in the weather, but most from the cross & surprising turns in his business, & cruel disappointments he met with soe often in (what nobody ever had more at heart) the contributing to the honnour and service of his country.64

Here we see that melancholy does not or cannot go away with the removal of suspense about romantic matters. Another scrap of evidence for the persistence of Temple's melancholy is found in Swift's Journal to Stella where he asked her if she remembered how William


Temple "would look cold and out of humour for three or four days, and I used to suspect a hundred reasons."65

Osborne's ultimate task, in her letters and her subsequent life, was to acknowledge that complete wellness—mental and physical—was never fully attainable, and to accommodate herself to living within the constraints of disease and the uncertainty that illness brings. Jacques Ferrand, in the midst of his discussion of the myriad effects of lovesickness, notes that it is impossible to achieve a balanced state of health in this mortal world: "scarcely is there an hour in a lifetime when our judgment finds itself in its proper estate." Ferrand makes an even more radical assertion: "every man from the time of his birth is inclined not only to disease, but he himself is the disease."66

Part of the task, then, in a world where illness is ubiquitous and mysterious, is not to allow a sense of futility to engulf the soul, or forestall the fight for health which will become such a major part of the discourse of the relationship. Lucinda Beier, in her medical history of the seventeenth century, chose to emphasize not the diseases from which people died, but the illnesses with which they managed to live. If Osborne was never sure what she or Temple were suffering from, and if they were equally unsure of how to remove such difficulties, it is certain that Osborne sought to cope with these difficulties to the best of her ability.

65 Swift, Journal to Stella, 231.

66 Ferrand 305; 281.
Afterword

Osborne renounces her courtship with Temple, but he intervenes and coaxes her back into hope. Osborne's fears are assuaged and her marriage settlement is arranged. Throughout the courtship, Osborne had expressed her hopes about marriage, attempting to establish the complex balances between herself, her lover, her family, and the expectations of her general society. Osborne was not forced to renounce her desire, as she was willing to do. The social forces which beset Osborne in her courtship, and her own misgivings about giving into passion, did not discourage her in the final analysis.

What makes Osborne a comic rather than tragic heroine? What seems to keep Osborne engaged with the courtship is her vaunted practicality, the fact that she can be carried away by romantic feelings, but is not, ultimately, destroyed by romantic excesses. Osborne's ability to cope with less-than-ideal circumstances prevents her from the kind of self-immolation that the tragic heroines of the period and afterwards experience. Osborne, though filled to the brim with the high-flying rhetoric of French romance, ultimately steers a steady and sensible course. In a way, as I have argued, this steadiness is precisely what Osborne was arguing in favour of when she asked Temple to moderate his passions.

The conclusion of the letters also demonstrates how, when desire is achieved, writing

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itself comes to an end. Virginia Woolf, in her essay on Osborne in *The Common Reader*, laments the fact that, with the successful end of the courtship, the letters cease:

Married to Temple, she wrote to him no longer. The letters almost immediately cease. The whole world that Dorothy had bought into existence is extinguished. It is then that we realize how round and populous and stirring that world has become...we are deep in this world, seizing its hints and suggestions when, in the moment, the scene is blotted out...

The sense of loss here is palpable, the imagery mildly apocalyptic. Woolf finds the abrupt cessation of the letters disturbing. The ending is loss, creating the opportunity to reflect on what the letters have meant to her. The ending illuminates the body of the letters, and reveals their significance. If a ‘whole world’ is gone, and you suddenly realize that you miss it, it is the end that has provided that revelation.

Woolf’s remarks touch on the fundamental nature of the letters themselves, the way that they serve as a conduit for the courtship rather than autonomous art objects. Genie Lerch-Davis, as I have noted, describes the utilitarian purpose of the letters in similar ways. The letters “reflect, without contrivance, the vicissitudes in her relationship with her correspondent—in fact, the series ends when the wedding date is set.” In many senses, it is

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2 Peter Brooks described a situation where readers both yearned for and dreaded the ending of a novelistic work, and related this ambiguity to ambivalence over the death drive. Readers both yearn for an ending of a text and dread it. See *Reading for the Plot* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1984).


4 As I remarked in my consideration of the narrative qualities of the letters, the ending gives the letters a sense of shape and gives them more of a "literary" feel.

contrary to the purpose of the letters to wish them to continue, since they are so obviously crafted for a purpose, and Osborne did not want to continue writing love letters after her marriage. The end of the courtship signifies the end of the letters.

It is tempting, however, to lament the end of the sequence, especially if you are attached to a personality as well as an art object, as Woolf so palpably was. The few letters which survive from after the marriage underscore the break in Osborne's life between her courtship and marriage. Temple himself lamented the fact that Osborne's letter-writing changed so drastically after the marriage. Osborne did indeed write letters, but they seem almost as if they were written by another person. They are practical, concerning household details, often expressing fondness, but basically devoid of the wit for which Osborne's letters are so famous. As Rosalind Wade notes, "the apt phrase and incisive judgement have given way to a mundane recitation of domestic cares." Temple once chastized her for the change in the tone and content of the letters. Osborne replied:

Tis mighty well too that I have satt upon thornes these two houres for this sweet scrip full of reproaches. Pray what did you Expect I should have writt, tell me that I may know how to please you next time. But now I remember mee you would have such letters as I used to write before we were married, there are a great many such in y' cabinnett y' I can send you if you please; but none in my head I can assure you. Tis not the great aboundance of diversion I finde heer though, nor want of any kindnesse (I think) that hinders mee from being Just what I was then, but a dullnesse y' I can give no accounte of and that I am not displeased with but for your sake and because it is many times an occasion of the makeing good one of my Brothers prophesy's whoe

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6 There is certainly a contrast to be made between Lady Dorothy Temple and Lady Rachel Russell, since the latter wrote love letters throughout her life. See Lois Schwoerer, Lady Rachel Russell: "One of the Best of Women" (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 56-59.

used to tell mee often I had more kindnesse for you then became mee, and that I
might assure myselfe if I ever came to bee your wife you would reproach mee wth it
(199-200).

She acknowledges that she has changed, and that they are both aware of it. There is a notable
gap between Osborne’s own complacency as regards her “dullnesse” and her anxiety over
her husband’s possible dismay. It is fascinating to view Osborne facetiously offer her
husband not current letters, but letters from the courtship. It is almost as if she were
affirming that she had nothing new to offer and, speaking literally, no new text. In some
ways, Osborne’s early persona as an epistolary wit is used against her, to prove that she has
not fulfilled a form of promise, or kept up that level of intensity which drew Temple to her
in the first place.8 She says this herself, referring to internal debates about what level of
passion she should allow herself. Here she rues the intensity of her desire during the
courtship because she is unable to sustain such intensity. Osborne was at least somewhat
aware of an economy of desire, and the way that the deprivations of the courtship helped
sustain the courtship. In the middle of the courtship, she notes wryly in reference to the
fulfillment of her desire: "Tis most true that our friendship has bin brought up hardly enough,
and posibly it thrives the better for’t, tis observed that surfetts kill more then fasting do's; but
ours is in noe danger of that" (66).

Since the courtship letters are the main record of Osborne’s life, and the letters end,
it seems as though Osborne literally disappears. Frances Harris has described Lady Temple

8 I am indebted to Marjorie Garson for this insight.
in later life as a “shadowy figure.” On the other hand, Lady Temple’s visibility after she married Temple grew. In fact, Rosalind Wade suggests that Osborne’s profile may have been too high even for her own comfort: the quiet life she was seeking as she wrote Temple about the beauties of the Island of Herm and the delight she took in the story of Baucis and Philemon was to prove unhappily elusive.¹⁰

The letters give us the pleasure of a happy ending. Osborne’s life is less susceptible to such analysis. One of the most liberating and useful aspects of feminist theory is that it addresses the interaction of literary texts and women’s lives, a useful intersection in life writing like Osborne’s, where the text seems to invite an analysis of the life as well as the text. Carolyn Heilbrun notes: “Safety and closure, which have always been held out to women as the ideals of female destiny, are not places of adventure, or experience, or life.”

Perhaps the ending of the letters does not represent real closure, but rather a set of fresh

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⁹ In conversation, July 23rd, 1996. Some of this gap in our understanding of Osborne’s later life derives from the fact that no one has really researched the later life. For example, there has been very little investigation of archives in the Netherlands and continental Europe for papers relating to Lady Temple. It is impossible to know if there is a treasure trove of letters Lady Temple wrote in later life. The Osborn family, with whom I am in communication, may have some materials relating to Osborne’s later life. I am intrigued by the fact that creative responses to Osborne tend to focus on her later life. The musical response to Osborne, “The Voice of Love,” is based on a series of poems by Peter Porter which describe the older Lady Temple looking back ruefully on her life. See Nicholas Maw, The Voice of Love: Song Cycle. Poems by Peter Porter (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1968). Rosalind Wade’s fictionalization of Osborne’s later life describes William Temple’s infidelities, his fathering of the love child Stella with Bridget More, but the endurance of the Temple marriage despite all hardships (this is a bodice ripper, though a bodice ripper with an historical basis). See The Golden Bowl (London: Hale, 1971).

experiences, albeit experiences which fall outside the perimeter of the letters. As I continue researching Osborne’s later life, I expect that I will develop more of a sense of whether she experienced closure or an opening out of horizons. Heilbrun has a strong opinion on this matter: “For women, the only sane way to live through a romance is to live through it without closure.” Osborne certainly had closure in her courtship, and consummation of her marriage; there is at least some evidence that she experienced great disappointment as well. The combination of the cessation of the letters and Osborne’s unhappy later life proves that the fulfillment of a desire is not always desirable. Osborne may indeed have gotten her wish, but lived to regret it.

In this dissertation, I have been concerned with the traces of Osborne’s struggle with passion, a concern which is historically inflected but with transhistorical significance. Antonia Fraser, with her gift for popularizing history, frames Osborne’s inner debate as follows:

Throughout the whole of Dorothy’s correspondence, one detects a wistful hankering that Temple himself should somehow represent the settled convenient match of her family’s desires. He did not. He represented something more dangerous. And in the

11 To wish to know what happens after the letters end is like the proverbial concern over what happens “next” in the story.


13 Wade’s interpretation of the unhappiness of the Temple marriage is certainly very powerful; however, it can also be roundly questioned on the grounds that she has not dug up enough conclusive evidence to prove that there were significant tensions in the marriage, or that Temple was unfaithful. It is undeniably true, however, that Osborne suffered significant personal losses with the deaths of her children. Wade—and all subsequent biographers—are trading on thin ice as they try to ascertain the happiness of a figure long dead.
end she married him.¹⁴

Fraser casts Osborne’s choice to marry Temple as a leap into an unknown with which she was not really comfortable. Fraser cites Osborne’s fantasy of a peaceful life on Herm as a counterpoint to the danger that Temple actually did represent, and her remarks ring true to at least some degree. In my chapter, “Conducting the Romance,” I suggested that Osborne, despite poor models of marriage, was resigned to the possibility of an unhappy marriage, because everyone else was following the same path. In my considerations of privacy and surveillance in the letters, and her responses to others who meddle in her courtship, I consider the way in which Osborne might want to establish an exclusive channel of communication with Temple, and the way in which their union serves to counteract the oppressive aspects of being continuously watched and monitored. Osborne may have been seeking a victory over forces which threatened to curtail her freedom. In my chapter on illness in the courtship, I suggested that Osborne might have been able to use her courtship as a means to ensure mutual wellness.

In prosaic terms, Osborne married Temple because it was her wish to do so, and his wish as well, and because the material and cultural constraints which prevented the match came to an end. But the ending of the letters seems more than prosaic. The happy turn of events seems, first of all, like a respite from renunciation, the transformation of a possible loss into the ultimate gain. The fact that Osborne’s gain translates into ultimate loss for the reader—loss of text at the very least—is an enduring irony of the letters.

The letters do not present a smooth surface of untroubled self-presentation. They

represent at least a partial glimpse into a difficult internal struggle between desire and renunciation. Osborne seems to have wished to share her fears with Temple, as well as tell him of his importance to her. The fact that she shared her fears so fully is a vote of confidence in their bond, and a means for readers of the letters to reinvest women's lives with complexity, and to see a variety of historical forces at work. Osborne's narrative is one of triumph over external factors, but one which inscribes traces of the difficulty of the triumph, and the uncertainty of the happy ending.
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