

Sensory Signs:
Perception and Passion in Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina*

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I. Introduction

Beginning in the late seventeenth century, philosophical debates about sensory perception, imagination, and the formation of knowledge often referenced a thought experiment known as the Molyneux problem, proposed by Irish writer William Molyneux in correspondence with John Locke. Locke first refers to Molyneux's philosophical question when explaining his theory of perception in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690)¹:

Suppose a man born blind, and now adult, and taught by his touch to distinguish between a cube, and a sphere of the same metal, and nighly of the same bigness, so as to tell, when he felt one and t'other, which is the cube, which the sphere. Suppose then the cube and sphere placed on a table, and the blind man to be made to see: Quære, whether by his sight, before he touched them, he could now distinguish, and tell, which is the globe, which the cube. (144)

Philosophers, psychologists, and cognitive scientists have continued to debate this question in the centuries since Molyneux first posed it. However, Locke records Molyneux's proposed solution simultaneously with the thought experiment: Molyneux claims to know that the hypothetical blind man would not be able to identify the items based solely on sight because he lacks experience with the visual stimuli of the sphere and cube and would not be able to translate a perception of sight into his knowledge of the way that the cube or sphere felt to the touch. Locke agrees with Molyneux's assessment and expands upon its significance in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.

Most of the other writers and thinkers who have invoked Molyneux's question since it appeared in Locke's work have also agreed that the answer to the problem is a negative one. That is to say, most philosophers agree that the hypothetical blind man will not correctly identify the

1. The first edition of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* appeared in 1690, but the account of the Molyneux problem was introduced in the second edition (1694) and expanded in the fourth edition (1700). I cite Roger Woolhouse's critical edition of the text, which relies upon the fifth edition (1706).

sphere and cube without touching them. However, many of these philosophers disagree with Molyneux's and Locke's reasoning. Among these critics, for example, is Denis Diderot, whose "Letter on the Blind for the Use of Those Who See" (1749) delves much more deeply into the issue than Locke and other early respondents to Molyneux. Diderot's letter concludes by offering a correction to Molyneux's question: he proposes two additional scenarios that feature hypothetical sensory deprivation in order to more thoroughly interrogate the relationship between sight and touch. In this paper, I will examine several prominent seventeenth- and eighteenth-century responses to Molyneux's problem, and I will argue that Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina* (1725) demonstrates yet another scenario of sensory deprivation – one that neither Molyneux nor Diderot address. Additionally, I want to suggest that Haywood's engagement in this philosophical debate complicates the relationship between the senses of sight and touch as they were understood in contemporary philosophy, and that Haywood's text locates personal identity in the joint activity of those two senses.

Eliza Haywood's fiction has recently experienced a critical resurgence.² According to Jonathan Kramnick, this renewed interest in Haywood may be because "her fiction is concerned with strong feelings without having a concern for individual persons" (176). Kramnick draws a

2. For example, see Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684-1740*. New York: Oxford U P, 1992; Margaret Case Croskery, "Masquing Desire: The Politics of Passion in Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina*" in *The Passionate Fictions of Eliza Haywood: Essays on her Life and Work*, ed. Kirsten T. Saxton and Rebecca P. Bocchicchio. Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 2000, 69-94; Juliette Merritt, *Beyond Spectacle: Eliza Haywood's Female Spectators*, Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2004; Earla Wilputte's *Passion and Language in Eighteenth-Century Literature: The Aesthetic Sublime in the Work of Eliza Haywood, Aaron Hill, and Martha Fowke*, New York: Palgrave, 2014; Eve Tavor Bannet, "Haywood's Spectator and the Female World" in *Eliza Haywood and the Female Spectator*, ed. Lynn Marie Wright and Donald J. Newman. Lewisburg: Bucknell U P, 2006. 82-103; and Felicity Nussbaum, "Speechless: Haywood's Deaf and Dumb Projector." *The Passionate Fictions of Eliza Haywood: Essays on her Life and Work*. Ed. Kirsten T. Saxton and Rebecca P. Bocchicchio. Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 2000. 194-216.

connection between Haywood's fiction and the philosophy of John Locke and notes that Haywood's distinctive third person narration is "a kind of turning of thought outward into the external world where it can be observed by the narrator" (177). Kramnick recognizes that Haywood's work participates in contemporary philosophical debates while also demonstrating a clear concern with sensation, thought, and cognition. Helen Thompson makes a similar argument about Haywood's exposure of interior identity, suggesting that Haywood's *Lasselia* and *Fantomina* present an empiricist worldview compatible with those of Locke and French philosophers René Descartes and Antoine Arnauld. According to Thompson, *Fantomina* "produces a plot in which [the unnamed protagonist] exists in [her lover Beauplaisir]" (239). For Thompson, Haywood's relationship with Locke's philosophical theories is evident in the way that she disinvests the interiority of personhood within her texts, making it available for examination by the narrator and reader. Patricia Comitini also recognizes Haywood's interaction with interiority and thought, although she aligns Haywood with Joseph Addison's theory of imagination and pleasure in *The Spectator* (1712). Comitini argues that through imagination – which she claims is most evident in *Fantomina* in the unnamed Lady's many aliases – and through aesthetic pleasure, *Fantomina* echoes Addison's theory (71). Although they disagree on various points, all three of these critics contend that Haywood's fiction reflects the philosophy of prominent eighteenth-century theorists.

I will also draw connections between the philosophical views in Locke's and Addison's work and those in Haywood's. However, I differ from previous scholars regarding the particular nature of these connections. Kramnick locates the intersection of Locke's and Haywood's writings in their views about the projection of thought outside the mind, and Thompson argues that the Locke-Haywood relationship lies in their entirely interior and empiricist ideas regarding

personhood. In contrast, I see the connections between Locke and Haywood manifesting in the ways in which Haywood's characters perceive and know their external surroundings. Comitini posits that *Fantomina* mimics Addison's theory of aesthetic pleasure by producing certain responses in the titular character and reader. Instead, I contend that *Fantomina*'s connections to Addison's theory are clearest through Haywood's use of Addison's "double principle" and in the effects of this projected aestheticism on the character of Beauplaisir (285).³ Because Haywood aligns identity with the exterior signs of her titular character's undisclosed name and face in *Fantomina*, my argument concentrates on the relationship of her characters – particularly Beauplaisir – with external stimuli and the production of knowledge. I will argue that the Lady's final charade as the masked Incognita – in a room so dark that Beauplaisir cannot tell night from day – recalls Molyneux's problem and places Haywood in conversation with other interlocutors in a tradition of philosophical debate regarding sensory perception.

By reading *Fantomina* through the lens of the Molyneux problem, this paper complicates other scholars' interpretations of Haywood's connection to contemporary philosophers. I will suggest that Haywood's engagement in this cognitive philosophical debate concerning cognition is manifest in her conviction that faces and names together form the locus of personal identity. In other words, Haywood's investment in the Molyneux question and the issue of visual perception is particularly motivated by her view that a person's face and name are synonymous with that person's identity. Further, in *Fantomina*, Haywood engages with these trends in aesthetic and

3. The double principle suggests that reproductions of a pleasurable sensation are even more pleasant than the original sensation because they offer the receiver both beauty and reflection: in the case of landscape reproductions, for example, viewers can enjoy looking at them and considering them as "either ... Copies or Originals" (Addison 285). I am interested in reading the Lady's many disguises as copies of herself and her many trysts with Beauplaisir as copies of their original encounter.

cognitive philosophy and reframes them within a female character in a way that affords some agency to women.⁴ I will argue that Haywood establishes a clear distinction between different types of sensory perception in *Fantomina*, echoing philosophers like George Berkeley. Haywood takes this distinction further, though, when she insists upon the inefficacy of the individual senses to transmit knowledge reliably. Additionally, Haywood's text maintains a level of skepticism regarding the reliability of the combination of the senses to afford an observer understanding of an object. For example, Beauplaisir is unable to detect the protagonist's identity through touch alone, but he also misunderstands the sensory signals he receives from combined sight and touch. Haywood connects these sensory signals to the signifiers of a person's face and name. She presents Beauplaisir as an unreliable spectator whose investment in sensory excitement renders him unable to discern the suspicious similarities among his lovers. He accepts his superficial perceptions uncritically, and in doing so, he emphasizes the correlation between passion and immediate perception. The Lady, however, preserves a distance from her own

4. Felicity Nussbaum's "Speechless: Haywood's Deaf and Dumb Projector" similarly connects Haywood's interest in sensory perception to female agency. Nussbaum examines two pamphlets published by Haywood within a year of *Fantomina*'s publication that deal with sensory deprivation. As Nussbaum notes, Haywood's *The Dumb Projector: Or, a Trip to Holland Made by Duncan Campbell* (1725) and *A Spy Upon the Conjuror* (1724) chronicle various aspects of the life of Duncan Campbell, a deaf-mute travelling psychic. Nussbaum argues that Haywood's interpretation of Campbell "blurs the boundaries between the mysterious and the perverse, and his differences, like those represented more generally by the 'defective,' are a cultural means of locating the universal, the dominant, the metropolitan, the national, and the present through the aberrant and strange" (Nussbaum 196). In other words, Nussbaum suggests that Haywood uses Campbell's disabilities to understand the world more generally. Further, Nussbaum argues that "Haywood ... connect[s] implicitly Campbell's predicament to that of early eighteenth-century women writers," linking them through what she sees as similar difficulties communicating (197). Nussbaum notes that Campbell is able to transform his disability from a potentially emasculating defect into an asset by making his living with it; she claims that Haywood "found in his condition an emblem of women writers' struggles to be heard and their difficulty in articulating that condition" (209). I will suggest that Haywood takes a more subtle approach to linking the senses and identity in *Fantomina* in order to offer a form of agency to her female protagonist.

passion by seizing control of her romantic entanglements with Beauplaisir. Especially in the final passionate scene between Incognita and Beauplaisir, the Lady dictates the terms of the rendezvous in a usurpation of gender roles. Haywood investigates the connections between the senses of touch and sight in *Fantomina* in order to enter into contemporary philosophical debates and, in doing so, claim a form of female agency and identity that transcends the limits of masculine passion.

II. Sensory Perception in Eighteenth-Century Philosophy

Writing about sense perception in the mid-eighteenth century, Diderot extends the Molyneux problem in a way that echoes Haywood's inversion of it in *Fantomina*. In his *Letter on the Blind for the Use of Those Who See*, Diderot agrees with Locke's and Molyneux's assertions that the hypothetical blind man in the Molyneux problem will not be able to tell the sphere from the cube – but Diderot offers a different reason. Diderot argues, like Locke and Molyneux, that sight must be learned before visual perception can mean anything to the blind man. He notes that “it is by experience alone that we learn to compare our sensations with what occasions them; [and] sensations having no essential resemblance with their objects, it is from experience that we are to inform ourselves concerning analogies which seem to be merely positive” (Diderot 127). However, Diderot argues that the hypothetical blind man will not see anything *at all* initially and must learn to use his eyes gradually.⁵ This, according to Diderot,

5. In this regard, Diderot differs from a materialist tradition that understands visual perception as a physical interaction with objects of sight. For example, Lucretius in *De Rerum Natura* (56 BC) and Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan* (1651) both describe sight as the result of miniscule particles emanating from the object and literally hitting the observer's eye. Specifically, Hobbes claims that “all which qualities called sensible, are in the object that causeth them ... And as pressing, rubbing, or striking the eye, makes us fancy a light; and pressing the ear, produceth a dinne; so do the bodies also we see, or hear, produce the same by their strong,

negates the specific question posed by Molyneux. Instead, Diderot claims that “the foregoing supposition of one born blind suggests two others: firstly, of a man who had always seen, but was devoid of the sense of touch; secondly, of a man in whom the senses of sight and touch were mutually contradictory” (139). Diderot’s answer is that neither of these men, like Molyneux’s blind man, could identify external objects if their situations were reversed. However, he fails to address perhaps the most probable situation: if a man who can both see and touch suddenly loses the ability to see, will he immediately be able to discern objects by touch alone, or must he gradually build tactile experience independent of visual perception? This is precisely the situation into which Incognita temporarily plunges Beauplaisir in her darkened room, and Haywood’s answer to the problem is that, as in the other Molyneux-like situations considered by Locke and Diderot, Beauplaisir cannot automatically navigate his altered sensory state to recognize the Lady.

Diderot’s primary subject in *Letter on the Blind for the Use of Those Who See* is a congenitally blind man who defines sight as “a kind of touch which extends to distant objects and is not applied to our face” (Diderot 72). Since touch “gives him only an idea of relief, ... he concludes a mirror is an instrument that represents us in relief outside ourselves” (Diderot 72). Diderot dismisses this definition as “erroneous,” and he also seems reluctant to consider sight and touch to be connected senses in other sections of the letter (72).⁶ For example, he juxtaposes the perception processes of blind and seeing people by dividing touch and sight between those

though unobserved action” (86). By claiming that the hypothetical blind man would initially see nothing at all, Diderot implicitly refutes this theory.

6. Here, Diderot’s disregard for the blind man’s understanding of mirror images as “represent[at]ions] ... in relief” more explicitly disagrees with the materialist tradition of sense perception.

groups: “[seeing people] only distinguish the presence of external things from their picture in our imagination by the strength or weakness of the impression; and similarly, the blind only distinguish the sensation from the actual presence of an object at their fingers’ ends, by the strength or weakness of that sensation” (Diderot 86). In fact, Diderot notes that busts and statues probably offer “a keener pleasure” for the blind than for seeing people, since the tactile sensation of “a passionate lover ... draw[ing] his hands over beauties which he would know again ... would act more potently on the blind than on those who see” (106). According to Diderot, the ability to see deadens the sense of touch in seeing people, so seeing people don’t have an *additional* way of interacting with external impressions – just a *different* one than the blind.

Diderot’s division between the methods by which blind and seeing people perceive external stimuli offers an additional bridge between Haywood’s version of the Molyneux problem and Locke’s. Beauplaisir’s inability to see Incognita in the dark is similar to the inability of Molyneux’s blind man to touch the sphere and cube across the table. Beauplaisir still has his sense of touch, and Molyneux’s blind man can suddenly see, yet Diderot’s division suggests that both men will be unused to exercising the senses they have available in these situations. Because they lack the sensory experience that Locke claims is so crucial to processing perception, neither man can identify the objects of their attention. Usually relying upon his visual judgments of the various incarnations of the Lady, Beauplaisir has not stored any reliable knowledge of her face, let alone produced any recognizable tactile impressions of her body.

George Berkeley also responds directly to the Molyneux question in *An Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709). Berkeley considers the thought experiment as Locke presents it and concludes that “a man born blind, and made to see, would, at the first opening of his eyes, make a very different judgment of the magnitude of objects intromitted by them, from what

others do” (89). Unlike Diderot, Berkeley argues that the blind man would be capable of processing sight immediately after gaining vision for the first time, but Berkeley suggests that the man would fail to make the necessary cognitive connections between what he saw and what he already knew about the world. Berkeley likens the process to language: “a man born blind from his birth would not, at first sight, denominate any thing he saw by the names, he had been used to appropriate to the ideas of touch” (157). Berkeley notes that the previously blind man would not know to connect the signifier “cube” to the object signified by his visual perception: “cube, sphere, and table are words he has known applied to things perceivable by touch, but to things perfectly intangible he never knew them applied” (157-58). This description demonstrates one of the most important aspects of Berkeley’s theory – that the different senses are distinct from each other and transmit information to the mind in discrete ways,

Berkeley’s emphasis on the distinction between senses reveals what he perceives to be a common problem of sensory equivocation. Berkeley points out that a distorted understanding of the senses can lead one to conclude, falsely, that each sense provides the same information to the mind. For example, he explains that hearing a coach’s wheels outside of one’s window, seeing the coach approaching, and touching it as it passes might lead one to assume that each sense is contributing the same sensory information about the object, since “having been observed constantly to go together, [the senses] are spoken of as one and the same thing” (51-52). Yet Berkeley notes that each sense actually contributes different information about the coach: hearing reveals its relative distance from the hearer, sight reveals color and size, and touch reveals the material with which it is constructed. Only by associating those disparate pieces of information with one object does the observer arrive at the false conclusion that the senses are providing a unified version of the object. According to Berkeley, only “some labour and striving

of thought” can “extricate” an observer from the “customary and close connection that has grown up in our minds between the objects of sight and touch, whereby the very different and distinct ideas of those two senses are so blended and confounded together, as to be mistaken for one and the same thing” (90-91). Achieving this understanding, for Berkeley, is the key to mastering the senses and gaining better control over our perceptions.

Controlling perception is a key element in many of the aesthetic theories of the eighteenth century. For example, Joseph Addison’s concept of the “double principle,” which he proposes in *The Spectator* “No. 414” (1712) offers a particularly interesting way of understanding this connection. Addison argues that “we may be sure that artificial Works receive a greater Advantage from their Resemblance of such as are natural; because here the similitude is not only pleasant, but the Pattern more perfect” (Addison 285). Addison values the controlled aesthetic quality and regularity of artificial copies as long as they closely resemble their beautiful originals. However, acknowledging the difference between perception and reality is also key to Addison’s understanding of aesthetic pleasure. He agrees with the empiricist view that the senses offer only “a pleasing delusion” of the world around us (282). Beauty and pleasure, for Addison, are the effects of unreliable perception: “light and colours, as apprehended by the imagination, are only ideas in the mind, and not qualities that have any existence in matter” (283). This deception is different from the carefully reproduced copies of the double principle, but both concepts demonstrate the artifice at work in sensory perception.

III. Art and Sensory Perception in Whore Dialogues

Although I argue that Haywood engages issues of sense perception in importantly distinct ways in *Fantomina*, she was not the first author to address the senses in fiction – nor was she

particularly unique in exploring sense and aesthetic judgment through sex or romance. For example, a number of texts published in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries claimed to be educational materials on the subject of whoredom, and these traditionally took the form of dialogues that satirically aligned the practice of prostitution with rhetoric and art. For example, these included Pietro Aretino's *Ragionamenti* (1534), Michel Millot's and Jean L'Ange's *L'Ecole des Filles* (1655), and Nicolas Chorier's *The Dialogues of Aloisa Sigea* (1660). One of the best known of these texts is the anonymous *Whore's Rhetorick* (1683), which scholars often attribute as an English translation of Ferrante Pallavicino's *La Retorica delle Puttane* (1643). Pallavicino's text, like many of these dialogues, features an old woman retired from a long and successful career as a whore and madam. Pallavicino's version of this character calls herself Madame Cresswell, and she directs her instructions at a young woman named Dorothea who has decided to turn to whoredom in order to overcome poverty. Before Pallavicino even begins his dialogue, he points to the connections between whores and artists. The full title of the English version reads *The Whore's Rhetorick, Calculated to the Meridian of London; And Conformed to the Rules of Art*, highlighting the author's concern both with art itself and with the ability of whores – or perhaps all women – to *conform* to aesthetic guidelines artificially. Pallavicino emphasizes the connection even further in the dedication to “the most famous university of London-Courtezans” by flattering the ability of the whores of London to “ever prove exquisite artists in [their] own profession, and ... with great dexterity varnish over [their] imperfections, whether natural, or casually acquired in the exercise of [their] vocation” (A1-A2). In this way, Pallavicino's text presages Haywood's engagement with the senses: both writers align women's bodies with the ability to craft particular aesthetic responses by manipulating the senses.

Madame Cresswell continues to draw connections between art and whoredom as she dispenses her advice to Dorothea in the dialogue itself. She notes that young women are like works of art and should display themselves to the public for everyone's benefit: "The same guilt does a fair virgin incur, in an equal degree does she injure the public, who being mistress of large possessions of wit and beauty, does hide those precious talents, and conceals that inestimable treasure, from whence the principal part of mankind might probably expect such infinite satisfactions" (14). In other words, Cresswell suggests that young women have a duty to display their bodies ("beauty") and minds ("wit") for the public's satisfaction. It follows that this sort of display should be as aesthetically pleasing as possible, so Cresswell's advice translates to an edict that Dorothea should present herself as a work of art. Similarly, Cresswell advises Dorothea to surround herself with literal works of art in order to enhance her success in the profession. The most important of these works of art is to be the image of a beautiful young man:

When you are detained in ugly, sordid, or ungrateful embraces, it would be difficult without the artificial aid of a picture to counterfeit those ecstasies which every comer may expect for his money. Therefore on these occasions you must frame in your mind the idea of some comely youth who pleases you best, whose shadow will create a greater gust than could be raised by a nauseous though real enjoyment. The picture of this charming boy may very fitly be placed near your bed, to imprint the fancy deeper in your imagination, and enable you to fall into those sweet transports, which do gratify the enjoyer's heart. (166-67)

This suggestion unites the visual and tactile senses in order to help Dorothea convincingly produce "those ecstasies which every comer may expect for his money;" Dorothea can substitute the reproduced image of the "charming boy" for the actual image of the man in her bed, and the combination of that image with the physical embrace of her less charming real lover will allow Dorothea to imagine the presence of the "comely youth." Madame Cresswell also commands Dorothea to keep images of "the best draughts of men and women naked, in sweet caresses, and dying postures" hung about her home "to operate on your visitants more effectually than the

similitude of your Ganymede could affect yourself” (168-69). This practice will entice visitors to compare the images they see with the physical experience they anticipate sharing with Dorothea, and they will serve to heighten the pleasure of the visitors when they reflect on the images later – these images, then, also unite copied visual stimuli with original tactile stimuli to produce higher sensual pleasure. This union of a copied image and original touch also presents a version of Addison’s “pleasing delusion”: Dorothea manufactures pleasure for herself and her lovers by altering their environment (282).

Cresswell’s advice regarding the reproduction of these images for the pleasure of Dorothea and her clients also echoes Addison’s description of his experience with a camera obscura. In *The Spectator*, he professes that the “prettiest landscape [he] ever saw” was one projected onto a wall by a camera obscura, a simple optical device that can reproduce an image by refracting light through a pinhole in a box, cabinet, or room (285). The camera obscura captures a reproduction of the image it projects in a manner similar to modern photography, but it also reproduces motion because it operates by collecting refracted light in real time. For example, Addison’s example of a camera obscura is a dark room in which he stands and observes the image of the park outside projected onto one of the walls through a pinhole; he marvels at the deer that prance across the wall and the boat that drifts across the room as its real counterpart navigates the river outside. He admits that “the novelty of such a sight may be one occasion of its pleasantness to the imagination, but certainly the chief reason is its near resemblance to nature, as it does not only, like other pictures, give the colour and figure, but the motion of the things it represents” (285). The ability of the camera obscura’s reproduced image to move in imitation of its original landscape heightens the pleasure of the viewer. Similarly, it is important for Dorothea to embed the image of her “charming boy” into her memory so that she

can apply her imagination to him, just as Addison applies his camera obscura to the landscape. According to Addison's logic, reflecting on a static image is nice, but the addition of motion – something that Dorothea can accomplish only through the operation of her imagination – creates a much more striking experience.

Madame Cresswell also warns Dorothea that memory is “necessary in a whore” (160). Cresswell explains that this is so that the successful whore can “hinder tripping and contradiction, which would detect the falsehood of her intentions, no less than the sophistry of her words” (161). Cresswell is concerned here primarily with the memory of the whore rather than the memory of her client; she stresses that Dorothea must “remember ... what form of treatment may best comport with every person, according to the variety of his humour and quality” (161). In other words, whores must be able to remember and present particular versions of themselves to different lovers. Cresswell understands memory as a tool with which whores can regulate their conformity to particular aesthetic molds. That is to say, given Pallavicino's emphasis on whores' abilities to manipulate their bodies and surroundings to create the most beautiful and pleasurable experiences for their clients and for themselves, Cresswell presents memory as the most important tool in accomplishing that conformity.⁷ However, she understands memory quite differently from the way that contemporary philosophers like Locke describe it. Locke describes memory as “the power to revive again in our minds those ideas, which after imprinting have disappeared, or have been as it were laid aside out of sight; and thus we do,

7. In addition to Pallavicino's references in the title and dedication to the way that whores can conform to art, Madame Cresswell urges Dorothea early in the dialogue to separate herself from other women – who are all “naturally inclined to weave fraudulent webs” – by “be[ing] furnished with a great variety of words, and even those that are most familiar and trivial, to enable you to entertain your Lovers on all subjects: still complying in the choice of the matter with their various tempers” (42-43).

when we conceive heat or light, yellow or sweet, the object being removed” (147). Whereas Locke presents memory as a simple storehouse for the senses, Cresswell argues that memory is more useful for cataloguing the artificial creations of one’s imagination than for storing straightforward information from the external world:

The memory which belongs properly to you, is not so much an immense capacity, qualified to receive and retain all objects represented to the exterior, and thence introduced to the general and interior sense; as an artificial ready remembrance of all points necessary in your own trade, and the persuading power of your eloquence, which consists in timing your words and actions with a seasonable discretion, assigning every part of your art its proper place, and feeding you lover with a real, or at least an imaginary pleasure” (164-65)

According to Cresswell, then, memory is a crucial element for the whore to master in her own mind, and it functions to improve the whore’s ability to conform herself to her lovers’ desires. For Cresswell, a whore’s *own* memory is important to control, but the old woman pays little attention to the memories of Dorothea’s future lovers.

Yet Pallavicino also demonstrates an awareness of the way that memory can work against a whore’s agenda. A short “Epistle to the Reader” follows the dedication of *The Whore’s Rhetorick*, and in it Pallavicino reminds the reader that anyone who peruses his text without the goal of learning and exercising the arts of whoredom can use the information presented in it to see through the arts of whores: “Remember,” he advises, “if the Whores are hence taught to exercise their talents with some dexterity; you are the same time instructed to detect and avoid the cheat” (B1). If readers of *The Whore’s Rhetorick* and other whore dialogues apply their own memories of the texts to their interactions with whores, they can guard against trickery by evaluating the women’s actions and manipulations. Further, this guidance signals an important aspect of whore dialogues that Haywood later takes advantage of in *Fantomina* by focusing on the effects of “the cheat” on the whores’ potential lovers; the unnamed Lady in Haywood’s text

surpasses the manipulative advice that Madame Cresswell offers in the dialogue by incorporating Pallavicino's paratextual awareness of the whores' lovers. That is to say, whereas Cresswell advises that Dorothea focus on her own memory, mind, and agency, and Pallavicino urges readers to exercise their own senses and memories to "avoid the cheat," Haywood's Lady improves the cheat by taking advantage of her lover's memory and sensory perception.

IV. Bodies and Minds in *Fantomina*

The empiricist emphasis on sensory perception and experience as the only means of knowledge offers a productive model for understanding Beauplaisir's predicament in *Fantomina*'s final seduction scene. Specifically, Locke's delineation between primary and secondary qualities illuminates Beauplaisir's inability to recognize the unnamed Lady. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke theorizes two types of qualities that an observer can identify in an external object, and these qualities are integral to his study of sensory perception. First, Locke establishes the difference between an idea in the mind and the process by which that idea enters the mind: "whatsoever the mind perceives in itself, or is the immediate object of perception, thought, or understanding, that I call *idea*; and the power to produce any idea in our mind, I call *quality* of the subject wherein that power is" (134, emphasis original). Locke then divides these qualities into two types. Primary qualities "are utterly inseparable from the body, in what estate soever it be," and they "produce simple ideas in us, *viz.*, solidity, extension, figure, motion, or rest, and number" (135). Secondary qualities "are nothing in the objects themselves, but powers to produce various sensations in us by their *primary qualities*, *i.e.*, by the bulk, figure, texture, and motion of their insensible parts, as colours, sounds, tastes, etc." (135, emphasis original). In other words, primary qualities are stable and unchanging

aspects of the object and are essential to it, whereas secondary qualities are the unreliable sensory experiences we have when we engage with the object.

The divisions between ideas and qualities and between primary and secondary qualities reflect a larger tendency toward dualism among the empiricists, especially concerning perception. For example, Locke notes that “the ideas of primary qualities of bodies are *resemblances* of them, and their patterns do really exist in the bodies themselves, but the ideas, *produced* in us *by* these *secondary qualities*, *have no resemblance* of them at all” (136, emphasis original). He also argues that observers frequently conflate the two types of qualities, assigning the status of secondary qualities to ideas derived from secondary qualities through sensory perception. This is one of the mistakes that Beauplaisir makes in failing to recognize his many lovers as the same woman: although her primary qualities remain the same, he incorrectly perceives subtle changes in her hair, clothing, and carriage to be markers of different women’s primary qualities. Locke discusses this type of perceptive mistake at length, and he immediately transitions from his theory of primary and secondary qualities to a section on perception that begins with the Molyneux problem, suggesting a strong association between the unreliability of perceiving secondary qualities and errors in sense-based knowledge formation.

The importance of Molyneux’s question and its solution, for Locke, is that the experiment demonstrates the process by which Locke explains sensory perception of an object’s qualities and the subsequent knowledge formation that takes place in the observer’s mind. Locke notes this about the Molyneux problem’s appearance in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*: “this [thought experiment] I have set down, and leave with my reader, as an occasion for him to consider, how much he may be beholding to experience, improvement, and acquired notions” (144). By recognizing the need to develop “experience, improvement, and

acquired notions” before utilizing even basic sense functions like sight, the Molyneux problem (in conjunction with Molyneux’s proposed solution as outlined in Locke’s text) lays the groundwork for the development of Locke’s theory of sense perception and its relationship to knowledge (144). Locke’s theory of perception states that sensation can be conflated easily in the mind with judgment about what one senses, since visual stimuli translate “so constantly, and so quick” into ideas in our minds: it is “not so strange, that our mind should often change the idea of its sensation, into that of its judgment” (145). In other words, one may not be aware of the sensation of seeing something. A person may judge what an object is according to its perceived form or color without realizing this process is taking place. Among all of Locke’s theories of mind, however, perhaps the claim that is most relevant to a discussion of Beauplaisir’s apparently unobservant trysts with the protagonist of *Fantomina* is this assertion: “The pictures drawn in our minds, are laid in fading colours; and if not sometimes refreshed, vanish and disappear” (148). Proceeding from the importance of acquiring experience that the Molyneux example establishes, Locke thus demonstrates that perception is a fickle process: it can be conflated with judgment, and its effects are impermanent.

The unnamed protagonist of *Fantomina* spends most of the novella trading one performed identity for another as she repeatedly ensnares her hapless lover, Beauplaisir, and he repeatedly grows tired of her performances. First as the titular prostitute, then as a country maid named Celia, as the allegedly grief-stricken Widow Bloomer, and finally as the mysterious Incognita, Haywood’s Lady repeats the following pattern: first, she seduces Beauplaisir using her assumed identity; next, she carries on a brief affair with him; then, he grows tired of her; and,

finally, she must concoct a new identity with which to interest him again.⁸ The protagonist's final pseudonym is actually a performed erasure of identity: as "Incognita," she masks her face and darkens her bedroom with shades so that Beauplaisir cannot discern who she is. Although Beauplaisir should be amply familiar with her body after months of contrived rendezvous – they have had "a thousand" trysts even before the Lady abandons her first disguise as Fantomina – these tactile signals don't give her away (Haywood 50). Without uninterrupted visual access to her face, which the Lady tells him is the marker of her identity, Beauplaisir repeatedly fails to recognize his serial lover in each of her new disguises despite engaging in the same physical act(s) with her and despite his unmediated tactile access to her body on each occasion.

Haywood's unnamed Lady seems to both seek and present herself as a sort of artificial copy in the sense that Addison addresses with his double principle. For example, the Lady flaunts her real identity in front of Beauplaisir by meeting him for a rendezvous as Fantomina "a thousand Times" before appearing an hour later as herself "at the Royal Chapel, the Palace Gardens, Drawing-Room, Opera, or Play," and she later teases him with Incognita's mask and drawn shades (Haywood 50). In the first example, Beauplaisir explicitly tells Fantomina that he derives pleasure from the fact that "his little mistress" looks so much like a great "Court beauty" (Haywood 50). In the case of Incognita's coyness, withholding visual access to the Lady's face reproduces the couple's first encounter, in which the Lady attempted to withhold sex from Beauplaisir and maintain her virtue. The contrived chastity of Celia and the Widow Bloomer also seem to contribute to the couple's pleasure and the prolonged time before Beauplaisir grows

8. The problem of maintaining a lover's attention echoes one of Madame Cresswell's warnings to Dorothea: "A long acquaintance will create a fatal familiarity, and that embolden him to deny you possibly, not only your modest requests, but to raise his dominion over you to such a height, as to tread you under his cruel Feet, and with severe blows command you to bury all your demands" (Pallavicino 55-56).

bored with the Lady's characters. In these cases, as an accessible body that resembles the "celebrated Lady" Beauplaisir has seen in London, the Lady reproduces "more perfect" copies of herself for her lover (Haywood 50, Addison 285).⁹

Addison's double principle is also at work in the Lady's decision to keep many of her aliases in play at the same time. She continues to contact Beauplaisir as Fantomina, for example, even as she arranges rendezvous as Celia, the Widow Bloomer, and Incognita, and she takes pleasure in teasing him by appearing in court as herself hours before meeting him in disguise. Addison addresses this impulse when he describes the imagination's preference for nature's expanses over confined gardens:

The beauties of the most stately garden or palace lie in a narrow compass, the imagination immediately runs them over, and requires something else to gratify her; but, in the wide fields of nature, the sight wanders up and down without confinement, and is fed with an infinite variety of images, without any certain stint or number. For this reason we always find the poet in love with a country-life, where nature appears in the greatest perfection, and furnishes out all those scenes that are most apt to delight the imagination. (Addison 284)

By reproducing her own natural appearance in a series of seemingly coexistent and sometimes competing versions of herself, the Lady widens the scope of her beauty and Beauplaisir's pleasure. She overcomes her physical confinement to a single beautiful body in a single monogamous relationship by infiltrating Beauplaisir's life in multiple forms and surrounding him with her doppelgangers; she seeks to offer an "infinite variety of images, without any certain

9. Fantomina's tactics echo Madame Cresswell's advice for aspiring whores to surround themselves with beautiful and sensual images in order to increase the pleasure of both parties. Further, Madame Cresswell also asserts that "in a change and variety of lovers, [whores] will find occasion to improve [their] skill . . . , which in the center of one man's breast, in the continual handling one particular matter, would become trite, lose its efficacy, and yield [them] neither profit nor even pleasure itself" (56). Fantomina deploys a similar strategy to keep Beauplaisir's interest, although she continually changes herself, not her lovers. Thus, she improves upon Cresswell's "cheat" by keeping herself attractive to the same man.

stint or number,” like Addison’s perfect natural landscape. However, she reverses Addison’s formula when she expands the scope of her beauty artificially rather than retreating into the natural world. In doing so, she introduces an element of control over her imagination and pleasure – and Beauplaisir’s.

The Lady also seems to seek for herself a reproduction of her first exciting encounter with Beauplaisir, but in this endeavor, too, she turns to a reversal of values. Although her virtue is unrecoverable, she can repeatedly recreate similar encounters through artifice. Carefully planned and executed scenes between Beauplaisir and the Lady as Celia and the Widow Bloomer allow the Lady to facilitate the particular experiences they both desire while recreating the approximate details of her first encounter. That is to say, the Lady recreates and re-performs the act of abandoning her virtue in every passionate encounter with Beauplaisir. Several of her constructed situations offer a slightly different version of her original seduction, as she artfully resists Beauplaisir’s advances first as the shy Celia and then as the respectable Mrs. Bloomer. The last narrated encounter between Incognita and Beauplaisir further compounds this sense of an “artificial Work” (Addison 285). In depriving Beauplaisir of visual sense, which previously constituted much of her reproduction of herself for Beauplaisir, the Lady creates a “Resemblance” of the original encounter that functions within a visual void (Addison 285). This is the ultimate inversion of her initial seduction. The Lady exercises complete control over Beauplaisir, seducing him despite his frustration at the situation and leaving him overwhelmed.

This shift makes the encounter less about pleasing Beauplaisir – although he is enthralled by the mystery of it – and more about the Lady’s own desire to reproduce the original encounter than any of their previous trysts have been. This pivotal scene also allows Haywood to engage with multiple cognitive theories at once: she repurposes Addison’s double principle to function

without visual stimulus and also presents an alternative version of the Molyneux's and Locke's sensory thought experiment. This scene also confirms Berkeley's assertion that the senses operate differently from one another and provides the clearest example of the way that Haywood understands the relationship between sight and touch. Berkeley claims that there is no connection "between that certain variety and disposition of colours, which constitute the visible man, or picture of a man, and that other combination of far different ideas, sensible by touch, which compose the tangible man," and Beauplaisir's inability to unite the senses during his encounters with the Lady's disguises confirm this theory (135). Yet his inability to know her even without the confusing signals of a costume – that is, his inability to identify her through an undisguised tactile interaction – reveal Haywood's most important contribution to the debate about sense perception: the sense of touch alone is not enough to know her.

For the unnamed Lady in *Fantomina*, these elements of sense perception are easy to manipulate in order to ensure that Beauplaisir's attentions always stay focused on one – any – of her performed selves. For example, the Lady's thin disguises continue to fool her lover for months despite the fact that each costume (with the important exception of Incognita) is comprised only of small changes to her hair and/or wardrobe without altering the constant factor of her face. As Fantomina, she "dress[es] herself as near as she cou'd in the Fashion of those Women who make sale of their Favours" (Haywood 42). As Celia, she darkens her hair and dons a maid's clothing. As the Widow Bloomer, she relies on mourning clothes and a severely pinned hairstyle to fool the object of her desire. In each of these scenarios, the Lady's face is exposed to Beauplaisir's gaze, yet he allows judgment to obscure visual perception. Although he does on occasion remark upon the familiarity of her countenance, he allows his judgments of her secondary qualities like hair color and dress style to preclude his recognition of the Lady. For

example, he briefly “suppos[es] his Mind had been deluded by an Idea of some other, whom [the Widow Bloomer] might have a Resemblance of,” but the Lady’s assurances that they have not previously met and the signals of her severe hair and dark clothing convince him otherwise (Haywood 57). In fact, the “Idea” of the Widow Bloomer is the actual delusion he experiences, and this idea interferes with his perception of the Lady (Haywood 57).

In these scenes, Haywood echoes Berkeley’s and Locke’s insistence that sight alone can be an unreliable method of knowing an object. For example, Berkeley compares sight to language by referring to appearance as a potentially misunderstandable signifier of the object of sight:

[Confused visual signals are] much the same, as if we should suppose an Englishman to meet a foreigner, who used the same words as in the English, but with a direct contrary signification. The Englishman would not fail to make a wrong judgment, of the ideas annexed to those sounds, in the mind of him that used them. Just so, in the present case the object speaks (if I may say so) with words that the eye is well acquainted with, viz. confusions of appearance; but whereas heretofore the greater confusions were always wont to signify near distances, they have in this case a direct, contrary signification, being connected with the greater distances. Whence it follows, that the eye must unavoidably be mistaken, since it will take the confusions in the sense it has been used to, which is directly opposed to the true. (31-32)

He clarifies this point further by offering the example of interpreting emotion based on facial coloring: “Moreover it is evident, that no idea which is not itself perceived, can be to me the means of perceiving any other idea. If I do not perceive the redness or paleness of a man’s face themselves, it is impossible I should perceive by them the passions of his mind” (6). In other words, although a red face can be a signal of embarrassment, for example, it is a mistake to make that interpretive jump without recognizing that one is making a judgment in addition to perceiving impartial sensory data.

Despite Beauplaisir’s many encounters with the Lady over the course of several months, he never manages to form any lasting knowledge of her. Stripped of the material accessories of

her varied disguises, the Lady's body must look and feel the same, whether she is Fantomina, Celia, the Widow Bloomer, or Incognita. However, since Beauplaisir "varie[s] not so much from his Sex as to be able to prolong Desire, to any great Length after Possession," the narrator makes it clear that the Lady wears out each of her characters quickly (Haywood 50). Presumably because Beauplaisir does not spend enough time with any of the Lady's false aliases to form a lasting impression, "the picture drawn in [his] mind . . . vanish[es] and disappear[s]" before it becomes knowledge (Locke 148). However, Locke's theory suggests that repetition can cause even faded ideas to become more permanent. By the time Beauplaisir thinks he recognizes the Widow Bloomer, the Lady realizes that her reliance on judgment to distort perception is not enough. She then must resort to the faceless Incognita, whose sensory deprivation techniques invert the Molyneux problem: rather than offering a congenitally blind man with newfound sight a sphere and cube, Haywood's Lady offers Beauplaisir blind access to a body that he has both seen and touched many times before.

Although other critics, including Thompson, have pointed out that Haywood's conception of personhood generally follows Locke's empiricist model, the unnamed Lady and her aliases deal in a different type of self: the Lady prizes her name, reputation, and public identity above all else. For the unnamed Lady, face and name are inextricably intertwined to form her identity, which she guards closely throughout *Fantomina* – even from the reader – despite the fact that she offers Beauplaisir uninhibited access to her body and abandons her virtue. Writing to Beauplaisir as Incognita, she explicitly acknowledges this connection between face and name: "There is but one Thing in my Power to refuse you, which is the Knowledge of my Name, which believing the Sight of my Face will render no Secret, you must not take it ill that I conceal from you" (Haywood 63). The Lady guards her name even from the reader throughout *Fantomina*, but as

Incognita she finally articulates the feeling of ownership she has over that one piece of herself that she can keep from others.

The fact that Incognita cannot refuse to give anything but her name and a glimpse of her face to Beauplaisir has many implications for scholars of consent in Haywood's work, such as Kramnick, but I am more interested in Haywood's alignment of name, face, and identity in Incognita's letter because of the implications that alignment has on Haywood's philosophical viewpoints. In *Fantomina*, Haywood engages with a wide range of eighteenth-century philosophers on the subjects of sensory perception and knowledge formation through her inversion of the Molyneux problem, and that version of the Molyneux problem takes the particular form of a woman's obscured face. Perhaps because of her history as an actress and experience with public opinion, Haywood locates ownership of identity in names and faces, which allots her character a sort of agency and power that is otherwise unthinkable in her relationship with Beauplaisir. Names can be as arbitrary as secondary visual characteristics, and the Lady actually manipulates that fact by attaching pseudonyms to each of her visual disguises; Beauplaisir can no more rely on the signifier of her name to know her true identity than he can rely on her clothing or hair. Haywood's experience with the stage would have made her amply familiar with the ease with which a woman can don a costume and false name to become someone else.

Yet, importantly, the Lady's true name is not reliably available to Beauplaisir through any means other than her own disclosure of it. Despite the fact that he can see and interpret her face and body for himself, Beauplaisir can only gain knowledge of her name if she chooses to share it. This offers the Lady a degree of agency, and it also reflects the larger philosophical questions of knowledge formation through sensory perception that Haywood incorporates into

the text: just as Beauplaisir's sense of touch fails to reveal his lover's identity to him when he is stripped of his sight, the Lady's face does not give her away without her true name. Haywood's text concludes with the unnamed protagonist delivering one final lady for Beauplaisir – in the form of an infant daughter – and then swiftly losing her lover, her child, her reputation, and her home as her mother ships her off to a nunnery. Yet, despite the fact that she cannot conceal her face from her angry mother and confused lover at the story's conclusion, the Lady never does disclose her name to the reader, and so Haywood preserves for her protagonist the only feature of herself that she cared to keep secret. Haywood's *Fantomina* thus thwarts its own prescriptive ending, offering instead an open-ended series of possibilities.

The text's resistance to ultimately assigning the Lady a fixed identity elevates her beyond a simple sign of passion in her encounters with Beauplaisir. As Haywood repeatedly demonstrates, committing to a fixed identity as associated with name and face depletes the Lady's control in her relationship(s). Her power is in the control she wields over Beauplaisir during her initial seductions of him, but he regains his masculine authority after he attains knowledge of her as Fantomina, Celia, and the Widow Bloomer. That is, once he can recognize her aliases according to the sensory perceptions that he associates with each disguise and false name, he has the authority to dictate the terms, and even termination, of their relationships. As Incognita, however, the Lady finally embodies passion itself by concealing the identifying signs of her body and name. Although this last charade ends with the Lady's advanced pregnancy – a sign she cannot conceal – Haywood ultimately maintains the Lady's anonymity in the text, where mediated perception is entirely and perpetually possible. In doing so, Haywood asserts herself as an important interlocutor in eighteenth-century debates about perception, and she underscores the agency available to contemporary female writers.

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