"I CANNOT WANT A MUSE, WHO WRITE TO YOU": THE MULTIPLICITY OF RHETORICAL STYLES IN BEHN'S *THE UNFORTUNATE BRIDE: OR, THE BLIND LADY A BEAUTY. A NOVEL*

JUAN DE DIOS TORRALBO CABALLERO

University of Córdoba

Abstract: This paper demonstrates that The Unfortunate Bride: or, The Blind Lady a Beauty. A Novel *(1698) reflects a shift from the romance tradition towards the more 'realistic' genre of the novel, tracing this change through the work's stylistic features. Classical rhetoric theory will be applied for the identification of rhetorical styles, in order to achieve a detailed analysis on the linguistic level. It starts from the premise proposed by Michael McKeon that the novel developed in a dialectical relationship with the romance genre, arising from a profound epistemological crisis that occurred towards the end of the 17th century. These observations are presented as an example of the gradual metamorphosis toward the rise of the new genre, while the contemporary scientific context, which Rose Zimbardo (1998) has termed "Zero Point", will also be considered as a point of departure. First, the textual elements that contribute to the sublime style of the writing and enhance the complexity of the narrative will be cited and catalogued. Next, a rhetorical underpinning will be offered for Ian Watt's influential concept of "formal realism", which is identifiable in the text.*
Keywords: Aphra Behn, styles, rhetorics, novelistic realism, short fiction

1. Introduction

This essay aims to illustrate the employment of a multiplicity of stylistic modes in *The Unfortunate Bride* (1698) by Aphra Behn. The conclusion reached is that the story contains more than two rhetorical styles, exemplifying what Ross Ballaster (2017: 386) conceptualises as "linguistic facility", when she is describing her estimation of Aphra Behn (1640-1689) as "the most consistently intelligent writer to experiment with the varieties of fictional voice and style […]".

In order to achieve this, a methodology is proposed as a means to confront and transcend the 'novel-romance' distinction. A detailed analysis based on classical rhetoric theory of styles will be performed on the linguistic and rhetorical levels. The blend of styles evident within the narrative reflects this period of transition and development in the English literature, from the Restoration to the 18th century and the birth of the modern novel. The editor of the novel, Samuel Briscoe (Behn 1995c: 321), who is named on the cover, states in his dedication to Richard Norton that the edition is a posthumous publication, referring to "[…] my presumption in prefixing your name [Richard Norton] to a posthumous piece of hers [Behn's]".

The Unfortunate Bride was printed posthumously, but not published in 1698 along with *The Unfortunate Happy Lady* and *The Dumb Virgin*, which were

published in 1700 in *Histories, Novels and Translations, Written by the Most Ingenious Aphra Behn*. Moreover, this book included the pieces *The Wandering Beauty* and *The Unhappy Mistake*. It may be that *Histories, Novels, and Translations* was produced as a companion volume to the fourth edition of *All the Histories and Novels*, published twice in 1696 – with third and fourth editions in 1698 and 1700, respectively (O'Donnell 2004: xxii). Huntington Library (San Marino, California) holds a copy of the story, though they have no other similar titles. The title pages of their copy date from 1698 and 1700. O'Donnell (2016: 165-170) considers it an "ideal" copy, since no other one has been located.

Janet Todd (1995: ix-x, 1996: 317) questions the authorship of several posthumously published stories under the name of Aphra Behn, as do Germaine Greer (1995a: 196, 1995b: 33-47) and Leah Orr (2013: 30). Ross Ballaster (2017: 386) doubts the "provenance" of the nine short fiction tales which "followed after her [Behn's] death". Maureen Bell (2020: 284) infers that "[…] the main charge against Briscoe: [is] that of unscrupulous […]", adding that "[t]ogether, Briscoe and Gildon [another editor] are accused of attributing to Behn works they knew full well were not by her. Their principal offence is in constructing for profit a fictional oeuvre fraught […] with numerous problems of attribution". Today, the field of computational stylistics is able to shed light on this issue, as we eagerly look forward to the first volume of *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Aphra Behn* in the coming months, whose general editors are Claire Bowditch, Mel Evans, Elaine Hobby, and Gillian Wright. *The Unfortunate Bride* will appear in volume VII of the edition, and the work itself is co-edited by Leah Orr and Paul Salzman. I consider that *The Unfortunate Bride* is not by Aphra Behn, although it was published and circulated under her name for a very long time. It should be borne in mind that a literary work's association with the name of Aphra Behn entailed, at the end of the 17th century, its correlation with a successfully published female author. Aphra Behn is considered England's first professional woman writer, notable for her varied, wide-ranging literary career, including numerous plays, a good number of poems, ground-breaking translations from French, as well as pieces of short fiction, like *The History of the Nun* (1689).

The present paper draws on the argument by Michael McKeon (1987: 37-23) that connects "the questions of truth" with the "destabilisation of generic categories" "occasioned by the challenge presented by 'naïve empiricism' to 'romance idealism'". McKeon refers to the capacity of the 18th century novel to mediate the interrelated epistemological and ideological "contradictions of the early modern age" (Hudson 2017: 330) and studies the "epistemological crisis" in the emergence of the new genre (McKeon 2005: 70-71).

My contention is therefore that *The Unfortunate Bride* reflects the gradual shift from romance literature towards the novelistic genre, in alignment with the cultural transition that occurred during the Restoration. Rose Zimbardo (1998: 39-42) explains this as "the aesthetics and discourse of the 'Zero Point' journey from the Restoration to the eighteenth century," entailing the collapse of an epistemology under the weight of questions it has itself raised. *The Unfortunate Bride* presents a shift from linguistic complexity to "simple pattern" and "a movement from romance to novelistic principles of topical, domestic, bourgeois frames of reference" (Pearson 2004: 189). In this respect, it places Behn at the forefront of a cultural innovation. Considering these claims, this assertion will be made through an examination of the function of classical rhetoric in Behn's innovatory practice and the application and function of various literary devices.

Jacqueline Pearson derives the term "simple pattern" from Jane Spencer (2000: 126). The idea of a change from "novelistic principles" towards new "frames of references" is taken up by Helen Hackett (2000: 188). Pearson makes particular reference to another story, "Memoirs of the Court of the King of Bantam" (1697) (Behn 1995a: 271-291) and part of the "Advertisement to the Reader", most likely written by Charles Gidon, which notes the novelty of this writing style: "The Stile [sic] of the Court of the King of Bantam, being so different from Mrs. Behn's usual way of Writing, […]" (Behn 1995a: 272).

Rose Zimbardo (1998: 2) compares "two dominant competing discourses [...] at a period of radical epistemological break", which she names "Restoration Zero Point". "This is a period which, by the simultaneous operation of its constructive and deconstructive thrusts, can be understood epistemologically as two periods – one looking backwards to Renaissance models, the other looking forward to eighteenth-century Enlightenment models" (ibid.). She applies her theory to *Oroonoko* (1688), observing: "the novel reveals two important changes that occurred in the movement from seventeenth – to eighteenth-century practice: its combination of the old 'discourse of patterning' and the new analytico-referential 'discourse of modernism' (Reiss 1982: 50) with its 'naturalizing' of experience by creating interiority in character and realism in setting" (Zimbardo 2014: 39). She even postulates that "Behn's novel [*Oroonoko*] can be used to demonstrate […] a key transition in poetic mimesis, marking the transformation of a closed classical form – the romance or the prose epic – into the first novel in English" (ibid.).

2. Mapping the plot

The Unfortunate Bride: Or The Blind Lady a Beauty. A Novel has three settings (Staffordshire – mentioned in passing at the start of the tale, and then London and Cambridge) and six characters: Frankwit and Wildvill (two friends who grow up together in Staffordshire), Belvira (who is sent to London when her mother dies), Celesia, Moorea, and the narrator ("I", 333). Frankwit and Belvira, enamoured of each other since childhood, confess their love and Belvira asks her cousin Celesia (daughter of a Turkish merchant, who is blind) whether she should consummate their love in order to keep her beloved forever. Celesia recommends a spiritual or Platonic love, as opposed to a carnal one, in order to perpetuate happiness, with the dialogue delving into concepts such as how to nourish love, the definition of pleasure, the definition of "Women enjoy'd" (328) and expectation, everything being expressed with a striking series of metaphors and similes.

Frankwit must travel to Cambridgeshire to collect a pending debt, "a small concern as yet unmortgaged […] a brace of thousand pounds" (329). He plans to use the money for his wedding to Belvira, with all the pageantry that their mutual love deserves, with their separation paining the lovers greatly. The same summer night on which Frankwit arrives from London to Cambridge, he writes a poem to his beloved, thus compensating for the "dull prose company of his servant" (ibid.), whose verses sprouted "as naturally and anartificially, as his love or his breath" (ibid.). Belvira, who "resolved not to be at all behind hand with him" (330), writes another letter/poem to her beloved. The harmony of this plot is shattered by two key developments: first, when Moorea, a widow who is staying in the same house as Frankwit, falls in love with him and gets her maid to steal the letter from Frankwit's pocket; and, second, when Frankwit contracts a "violent fever" (332). Moorea then steals and hides the letters that Belvira sends him, and sends a misleading letter to Belvira convincing her that her lover is dead.

Meanwhile, Wildvill visits Belvira and asks her about her friend Frankwit. She responds that a black lady has bewitched him. Wildvill, consequently, concludes that Frankwit has given up Belvira's *purity* for the *blackness* of the widow Moorea. Wildvill courts Belvira who, convinced of Frankwit's death, accepts him.

After the wedding of Wildvill and Belvira has been held, Frankwit returns to London and arrives at what is, presumably, Belvira's house, where he is flabbergasted to find that his beloved has married his best friend. Frankwit draws his sword, ready to kill himself in front of his beloved, but Belvira, thinking that she is seeing Frankwit's ghost, screams and faints. Frankwit takes her in his arms to revive her. Wildvill, searching for his bride, and surprised by her screams, finds her in Frankwit's arms. He then accuses his friend Frankwit of being a traitor. Wildvill draws his sword, snapping at Frankwit: "have you kept that Strumpet all this while […], and now think fit to put your damn'd cast Mistress upon me" (334). A tragic ending unwinds: Wildvill slashes Belvira's arm with his sword by mistake, leaving her mortally wounded. Frankwit reacts by stabbing Wildvill – all due to a "misunderstanding" (334). Wildvill dies. A fading Belvira asks Frankwit to marry her friend Celesia in her memory, joining the hands of Celesia and Frankwit before she expires. He fulfils his promise a few months after the burial.

3. The theory of styles: a rhetorical foundation

This investigation, which goes beyond an exploration of the parodic use of romance language, is based on a rhetorical foundation of the multiplicity of styles that coexist within the text. It demonstrates that the story reflects a shift from the tradition of the romance towards the more 'realistic' genre of the novel, a shift that can be traced through the writer's employment of determined stylistic features. A parodic use of 'romance language' has been identified in many early novels. It is a hallmark of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, as well as of several English texts of the quixotic tradition, such as Charlotte Lennox' (2006) *The Female Quixote*. Satire on romance is almost as old as romance itself. *Don Quixote* is only the most obvious example. In *The Female Quixote* (1752), Charlotte Lennox depicts the protagonist Arabella as acting in a quixotic, irrational manner, caused by having read the many books she had collected in her bedroom, a "great Store of Romances. […] The surprising Adventures with which they were filled, proved a most pleasing Entertainment to a young Lady, who was wholly secluded from the World" (Lennox 2006: 19), but it corrupts her judgement and frequently imperils her. Jonathan Swift (1985: 91), in the fifth chapter of Gulliver's voyage to Lilliput, has the protagonist urinating on "The Empress's apartment", to put out the fire set by "a Maid of Honour, who fell asleep while she was reading a romance."

The different styles outlined within classical rhetoric theory permit the definition of two types of discourse and the application of these definitions to the work in question. According to Aristotle (1990: 115) in *Peri lexeōs*, the correct *elocutio* depends on the qualities of each character, that is, a particular character must be accompanied by an appropriate manner of speaking. Cicero's *De Oratore* offers an interesting taxonomy of styles: "iudico formam summissi oratoris" (1967: 28). He states that "Tertius est ille amplus, copiosus, grauis, ornatus" (idem: 38). Cicero presents the functions of the orator as given by Aristotle (*muovere, conciliare, docere*), as well as the three styles as defined by Theophrastus (*sublimis, mediocris, tenuis*) (Douglas 1957: 18-20). These styles are outlined by

classical tradition through the writers cited above, as well as by others, such as Demetrius of Phalerum (*On Style*) and Longinus, whose influence on the literary territory of England during the time of Aphra Behn was considerable (Leitch 2018: 145).

Indeed, the influence of Cassius Longinus' *Treatise on the Sublime* on the English authors at the end of the 17th century is evident from the fact that it was edited in 1636 by G. Langbain and translated into English in 1680 by J. Pemberton, and again anonymously in 1698 (Kilburn 1912: 3). The first English translation, carried out by John Hall, dates from 1562. The influence of Longinus' work, as well as that of Boileau, is evident on contemporary critics, such as John Dryden (Habib 2005: 284-298). Longinus distinguishes between artificiality – which he considers to be of little value - and simplicity, which he deems more powerful than the bombastic style (section IX). He cites Homer as the epitome of this sublime style of writing.

The following excerpt, from a poem by George Granville (Baron Lansdowne), entitled "Essay upon Unnatural Flights in Poetry", reveals the clear delineation between styles in the time of Aphra Behn. It describes the attributes of the natural (or plain) style in contrast to elements typical of the "unnatural" style, such as metaphor, hyperbole and excessive ornamentation in general:

> Words are the paint by which their thoughts are shown,
> And Nature is their Object to be drawn;
> The written picture we applaud or blame.
> But as the just proportions are the same,
> Who driven with ungovernable fire.
> Or void of art, beyond these bonds aspire,
> Gigantic forms and monstrous Births alone.
> Produce, which Nature shock'd disdains to own;
> By true reflection I would see my face;
> Thy bring the fool a magnifying Glass?
> But poetry in fiction takes delight,
> And mounting up in figures out of sight.
> Leaves Truth behind in her audacious flight;
> Fables and Metaphors that always lie.
> And rash Hyperboles, that soar so high.
> And every Ornament of Verse, must die. (Granville 1701: 312-313)

In 1668, John Dryden wrote in "An Essay on Dramatic Poesy" that the role of the poet is to "affect the soul, and excite the passions" in order to elicit "admiration" (Dryden 1961: 113). In so doing, he advocated the use of the elevated style. In "An Essay on Criticism" published in 1711, Alexander Pope described the importance of the organic unity maintained between style and subject matter. In line 365, he argues that "The Sound must seem an Echo to the Sense" (Pope 1968: 155).

It may be concluded from the above treatises and theories that elevated style is characterized primarily by the presentation of images, be it through metaphor, simile, personification, comparison or hyperbole (Demetrius 1902: 110-114), among other devices and tropes. Elevated style therefore requires a degree of engagement from the reader in decoding imagery and rhetorical devices. Its objective is to elevate thought (*dianoia*), subject matter (*pragmata*), diction (*lexis*) and composition (*181ynthesis*) (García 1996: 12).

Plain style, on the other hand, aims to explore subjects with clarity, applying a standard use of language that is easily and immediately comprehensible. It avoids the oblique or unusual use of language as well as stylistic devices such as metaphor. The plain style makes use of the short form (*kommata*) and of aphorism (Demetrius 1902: 159), avoiding lengthy phrases in favour of brevity: "Long members must be particularly avoided in composition of this type [in the plain style]. Length always tends to elevation" (idem: 165). The plain style rejects idiosyncrasy in favour of clarity, employing – among other devices – the repetition of words and phrases: "[f]or the sake of clearness, the same thing must often be said twice over" (idem: 161). It makes use of various forms of repetition, such as *epanalepsis*: "[c]lear writing should also shun ambiguities and make use of the figure termed '*epanalepsis*'. *Epanalepsis* is the repetition of the same particle in the course of a long sustained outburst" (ibid.).

4. The sublime style: "the dull prose"

The use of the sublime style is evident in the tropes applied by the unknown author of this short fiction. Such stylistic features – including, but not limited to – metaphor, metonymy, and comparison, embellish the text and increase its complexity through the rhetorical elaboration of the content.

Metaphors "provide a mapping across two concepts, one of which contains features that are mapped onto corresponding features of the other concept" (Adamson 2019: 54). Some examples from *The Unfortunate Bride* are: "As every other Nymph admired him […]" (325), where the noun refers to women in general while also characterising the protagonist Belvira; and "[…] with all the Wings of Love […]" (326), indicating the superlative nature of love. Love is also depicted through an imagery of fire in various phrases: "[…] their Flames now joyned, grew more and more […]" (ibid.). Another example is the propensity towards circumlocution with regard to sexual relationships or the consummation of love: "[…] therefore he sollicits with more impatience, the consumation of their joys […]" (327). The phrase "Phrebus rushes radiant, and unsullied into a gilded Cloud" (329) employs images of light in order to reflect the joy that Belvira experiences on seeing Frankwit. References to the blindness of Celesia provide a broad semantic field ("blind", "view", "gazed" and "eyes"), such as the metaphor "if your night had such Stars" (328), which simultaneously illustrates the character's lack of sight and her remarkable beauty. These metaphors develop a semantic field of passion, desire, pleasure and romantic love.

The use of metonymy also requires a degree of interpretation on the part of the reader: "a meto-nymical expression (or metonym) uses one aspect of a conceptual domain to stand for another aspect within the same domain" (Adamson 2019: 77). Some examples are: "[…] every Virgin that had Eyes, knew too she had a Heart" (325), where "Heart" represents feelings; or "the fresh spring of young virginity […]" (326), where "Spring" signifies youth and evokes the nature of the person to whom it refers. Another example is "Tears for his loss as might in the least quench the Fires, which he received from his Belvira's Eyes" (ibid.), where "Fire" indicates passion, forming part of a cause-effect relationship between both elements. In "[…] he fancied little of Heaven dwelt in his yellow Angels" (327), the noun "Heaven" is used to signify a place of peace and joy, while "yellow angels" refers to the happy inhabitants of such a place. Another notable example of metonymy is to be found in the following extract: "We are a sort of airy Clouds,

whose lightning flash out one way, and the Thunder another" (ibid.). Here, the phrase "airy Clouds" represents women in general, while the attributes of "lightning" and "Thunder" reveal certain specific qualities typical of their sex.

Comparisons are yet another characteristic of this sublime language whose correct interpretation requires a degree of collaboration on the part of the receiver, since the qualities of a certain term "is like or resembles" (Adamson 2019: 54) another. One example is "We are all like perfumes" (327), a simile that refers to the qualities of women as perceived by Belvira. Later we find "Pleasure is but a Dream" (328), a sentence that, by means of a complement, emphatically underscores the ephemeral nature of pleasure. We later find the simile "[You are] Like the Angelick off-spring of the skies" (330), which Frankwit uses to describe Belvira.

Other devices appear in the text, such as adjectivisation and the use of superlatives, which emphasise a situation or a specific attribute of a character, as in the following: "Wildvill was of the richest Family, but Frankwit of the noblest" (325). Examples of comparatives of superiority include "Frankwit for a much softer beauty" (ibid.) and "Belvira now grown fit for riper joys" (326), which contribute to the elevated style of the discourse. Other comparative phrases are "With a motion as unconstrained as his body" (325), "As naturally and unartificially, as his love or his breath" (329), "Given her clear sight as perfect as thy own" (331) and "So fast as I shall wait in readiness to pay them" (329), whereby an adjective or an adverb is employed to produce the desired effect. Other phrases are constructed around a noun or pronoun, as in "Like the ravished Prophet, I saw his Deity" (326), "I have though his Estate like his passion, was a sort of a Pontick Ocean" (327), "Both might go like the martyrs for their flames immediately to Heaven" (ibid.), "Ah! My dear Belvira, I replyed, that one, like Manna,' has the taste of all" (ibid.).

Lastly, there are examples of hypothetical comparisons (Sweet 1892: 149), modulated through conjunctions, as in: "so contradictory are we to ourselves, as if the Deity had made us with a seeming reluctancy to his own designs" (327); "her eyes flow'd more bright with the lustrous beams, as if they were to shine out" (331); "the Knight soon marry'd her, as if there were not hell enough in Matrimony" (ibid.); "from their Childhood they felt mutual Love, as if their Eyes at their first meeting had struck out such glances as had kindled into am'rous flame" (326), and "he fancied little of Heaven dwelt in his yellow Angels, but let them fly away as it were on their own Golden wings" (327).

The imagery and the expressions used point to the strong influence of the Romance genre and of chivalric language. This is evident in the phrase "he was Conqueror, and therefore felt a triumph in her yielding" (326), as well as in references to high society such as "Frankwit and Wildvill were two young Gentlemen" (325), "but Frankwit [was] of the noblest [family]" (ibid.). This is also revealed through the hyperbolic description of beauty and other positive attributes: "Wildvill was admired for outward qualifications, as strength, and manly proportions" (ibid.). Other terms belonging to the semantic field of nobility and sublimity are "Virgin", "goodness" (ibid.) and "beauteous Image" (326). Another example of chivalric language is found in Frankwit's response to Celesia, which includes a notable use of lexical elements of the elevated style: "[…] a charming blindness, reply'd Frankwit and the fancy of your sight excels the certainty of ours" [...] "you, fair Maid, require not Eyes to conquer, if your night has such Stars, what Sunshine would your day of sight have, if ever you should see?" (328).

In many cases, the author generates a lexical field of mythology typical of the Renaissance, which therefore requires a certain understanding of classical culture in order to be fully comprehended. References to classical divinities include the description of Celesia as "another Off-spring of bright Venus" (ibid.), Celesia's response "that Cupid [...] I am afraid has shot me" (ibid.) and the following reference to Frankwit: "therefore, finding his Pegasus was no way tir'd with his land travel, takes a short journey thro the air, and writes as follows" (329). The description of Frankwit's passion is filled with mythological and classical rhetorical elements (Apollo, springs, Helicon and Parnassus) applied through hyperbolic language. The love between Belvira and Frankwit is also elevated through the use of a rhetorical style loaded with ornate expressions such as "the fire of love", "wings of love deployed", "Hades would ignite Hymenaeus", "nations", "little sky with its golden angels", "like Manna", "Sun of Love", "Phoebus", "a great many soft Vows, and Promises of an inviolable Faith".

It should be added that the ending is not less rhetorical but differently rhetorical. There may be no more references to mythological gods, but ghosts and devils are repeatedly invoked: "she took him for the Ghost of Frankwit; he looked so pale, […] and like a Ghost indeed, […]. At last, he draws his Sword, designing there to fall upon it in her Presence; she then imagining it his Ghost too sure, and come to kill her, shrieks out and Swoons" (333-4). The mode shifts from amorous romance to a more Gothic mode.

5. The plain style: "naturally and unartificially"

The subtitle of the story is "A Novel", indicating the author's awareness of the innovative nature of the text from the outset. Samuel Briscoe's dedication of this posthumous publication to Richard Norton points to this same fact, noting also the significance of the novel's realism, when he says of Aphra Behn "and in none of her Performances has she shew'd so great a Mastery as in her Novels, where Nature always prevails; and if they are not true, they are so like it, that they do the business every jot as well" (Briscoe 1995: 323).

The plain style is associated both linguistically and rhetorically with "formal realism". In the words of Ian Watt (1974: 23), it is a "primary convention" whereby "the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience, and is therefore under the obligation to satisfy its reader with such details of the story as the individuality of the actors concerned". According to Watt, these realistic features and aspects of individualism appear clearly in certain later texts (for example in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*); however, in this tale, examples of these novelistic features also appear, lending weight to the argument that her writing was an early advance towards the development of the novel.

On two occasions the narrator declares "'tis the humour of our Sex" (327), an expression of realism which points to the female experience and tendencies in matters of love. The statement is an example of aphorism: a brief, clear statement. In one case it is completed by a final clause ("tis the Humour of our Sex, to deny most eagerly those Grants to Lovers"); in the other it appears by way of a clarifying comment ("as 'tis the Humour of our Sex" (332)).

When Frankwit explains that he must travel to Cambridge on a business matter, the plain style emerges once more through his direct speech, on both the semantic and the syntactic levels: "I must retire into Cambridgeshire, where I have a small concern as yet unmortgaged" (329). His reference to commerce reflects the

capitalist, mercantile society of the time, his objective being to conclude certain transactions valuing a thousand pounds, a sum that he hopes will allow them to celebrate their wedding appropriately. Economic, commercial, and patrimonial matters are also represented in the story through the reference to the inheritance which Celesia received from her father, a Turkish merchant: "Fifty thousand Pound in Money, and some Estate in Land" (327). The narrator also cites the inheritance which Moorea had received from her husband. It is striking that the reference to financial matters is articulated through the plain rhetorical style.

When Frankwit arrives in Cambridge, he decides to write to his beloved in verse rather than in prose, which he succeeds in doing naturally and without much affectation although with a sublime imagery. The very act of letter writing within the fictional discourse introduces a new modality, a new vehicle of expression, denoting intimacy and clarity. The description offered by the omniscient voice of the narrator emphasises the contrast between the elevated and the plain styles: "he thought fit to refresh himself by writing some few Lines to his belov'd Belvira; for a little Verse after the dull Prose Company of his Servant" (329). The distinction is further stressed by means of the descriptive complement "was as great an Ease to him, (from whom it flow'd as naturally and unartificially, as his Love or his Breath) as a Pace or Hand-gallop, after a hard, uncouth, and rugged Trot" (ibid.).

The Unfortunate Bride emphasises the fusion of styles and the contrast between fiction in prose and in verse. For example, when Belvira decides to respond to the letter from Frankwit in a way that shows her ability to match Frankwit's verse, writing: "[Belvira] resolv'd not to be at all behind-hand with him, and so writ as follows", she mentions explicitly "I find, methinks, in Verse some Pleasure too, / I cannot want a Muse, who write to you" (330), which I interpret as an explicit claim for plainness. Before including Belvira's response, the narrator notes the positive reaction to Frankwit's decision to write in verse: "[Belvira was] wonderfully pleas'd with his Humour of writing Verse" (ibid.).

The transition from prose to verse is striking, and may be considered a third style of discourse in the narrative, a 'middle ground' between the two styles, since it has the structure and artificial rhyming devices of an elevated style, but lacks literary devices such as exuberant imagery. In general, the letter uses a plain linguistic style; it is intimate and familiar, employing a simple and clear semantics. The two letters included in the story generate a direct use of language, establishing a semantic wordplay in the use of first- and second-person singular pronouns: "You knew my soul […] / I told it all […]" (in Frankwit's letter), "You knew before […] / I find, methinks […]". The first letter includes a considerable amount of lexical repetition and lots of triplets, with the subject pronoun or possessive adjective of the second person singular appearing eight times, while those of the first person singular ("I", "my") appear ten times. In Belvira's letter to Frankwit, which contains fewer triplets, the subject pronoun or possessive adjective of the second person singular ("you", "your") are repeated nine times, while those of the first person singular appear ten times. With regard to imagery, it is interesting to note that exuberant mythological language and symbolism do not appear in either of the letters.

The letters contain a striking amount of repetition. In Frankwit's letter, the verb "knew" is repeated twice in the first line, while the adjective "charming" is repeated in line 8. An example of *epixeusis* (Puttenham 2007: 285, Leech 1969: 73) is observed in the reiteration of the lexical root, with "heavenly" and "heavens" appearing in lines 8 and 14, and later "heaven" and "heavens" appearing in line 17.

The repetition of "Short" at the beginning of lines 24 and 25 is yet another example, while the triple *epixeusis* of "fly", "flight" and "flew" in the penultimate line is further emphasised by the earlier appearance of the verb "fly" in line 23.

In Belvira's letter, the noun "Love" is repeated in lines 1 and 4; the verb "return" is repeated in line 8; the lexical root of "charm" appears four times (in the salutation and again in lines 8, 10 and 12); lastly, the adverb "gladly" appears twice in the final section of the poem, in lines 17 and 18. Many of these reiterations are examples of *epanalepsis* (Puttenham 2007: 284, Leech 1969: 82), a rhetorical device that enhances the clarity of the discourse.

The description of Moorea is another clear display of the plain semantic style, characterised by the use of short phrases intended to ensure intelligibility. The narrator describes her as a "Blackamoor Lady, then a Widower" (331), lodging in the house of Frankwit's cousin, where Frankwit is also staying. Moorea is the archetypal devil woman, repeatedly identified with evil and corruption. She is defined principally by the inheritance she received from her late husband (six thousand pounds per annum) and by the "foul play" (333) that she engages in. Her depiction intertwines her dark physical appearance with her devious nature to the point that the two are inextricably linked: "The same Blackmoor Devil" (332). In direct contrast to Belvira's idealized and virtuous love for Frankwit, Moorea appears in the narrative as an antagonist. The love she seeks is purely carnal, a satiation of sexual desire. This is paralleled on the semantic level, where Belvira's idealised and sublime language is set in contrast to the plain, brief linguistic style that the narrator employs with regard to Belvira. Moorea tries to steal Frankwit's letters in order to win him through "foul play" (333), as the narrator eventually discovers.

In the final section of the narrative, another character emerges who expresses herself with clarity and directness: the narrator herself who, being an acquaintance of Moorea, discovers the "bundle of Papers which she had gathered up, as I suppose, to burn, since now they grew but useless, she having no further hopes of him" (333). The narrator discovers Moorea's deception upon finding the letters, a series of lies that the antagonist had hoped would help her achieve her objectives. It is the narrator who communicates to Belvira that Frankwit is still alive, after Moorea had falsely made her believe he had died by means of a forged letter: "[…] in point of justice I was bound, and sent them [the bunble of papers] to Belvira by that night's Post; so that they came to her hands soon after the minute of her Marriage" (ibid.). Not only is Moorea's character diabolic, her name itself is semantically associated with blackness.

The *dispositio* by which the author presents the two linguistic choices is of great importance. The sublime style prevails in the first half of the *The Unfortunate Bride*, whereas the second part of the narration is predominantly characterised by a less sublime discourse. The inclusion of the letter-poems and the arrival of Moorea mark the turning-point for this transition, as well as being the embodiment of an unartificial style; although the writing of letters in verse form is by its very nature artificial in style.

6. The mixture of styles as a reflection of the epistemological crisis and a shift towards the novelistic genre

An abundance of mythological references and ornate stylistic adornments characterising the elevated rhetorical tradition eventually gave way to a new period in English literature marked by narrative realism; nevertheless, it was not a sudden

shift. The romance style arguably endured in writers such as Manley, Haywood and Behn, as well as in *The Unfortunate Bride*. The verse sections embedded in the narrative may be interpreted as a still more plain and intimate communicative style, arguably even a third type of discourse consisting of letters made of poetry.

The primacy of facts, narrated in a plain style, reflects the emerging philosophical empiricism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the tenets of natural philosophy, and the scientific approach of the Royal Society, "England's first organization devoted to the advancement of science and Baconian experimentation" (Herman 2011: 245-246), as typified by its motto, '*nullius in verba*'. Al Coppola (2016: 3) claims that "when Charles II chartered the Royal Society of London for the Improvement of Natural Knowledge in 1662, he institutionalized natural philosophy and gave it unprecedented visibility and status […] experimental science was erected as a key pillar of support for the stable, harmonious civil society"). In *History of the Royal Society*, Thomas Sprat (1667: 40) argues for the rejection of all superfluity in writing, proposing that clarity and brevity are the key to good expression: "Whereas the intention of ours, being not the Artifice of Words, but a bare knowledge of things; […] without any ornament of Eloquence". The following year, John Wilkins (1668: 411) made a case for the simple, unadorned style in *An Essay Towards a Real Character, and a Philosophical Language***,** arguing "they [the Qualifications desirable in a Language] should be plain and facil to be taught and learnt".

John Locke (2009: 106) presents a similar argument in *Of the Abuse of Words*, citing the need "to do it with as much ease and quickness, as is possible; and […] to convey the knowledge of things". The unartificial and empirical style is related to the observational method and inductive inquiry devised by Bacon in *The Advancement of Learning* (1605). This is supported by the scientific method, which was presented eighteen years later, in the foundational text of the new science *De dignitate et augmentis scientiarum* (1623). In 1689, John Locke (2000: 67) wrote in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* that ideas are derived from experience and that they must be clearly expressed:

> Besides the imperfection that is naturally in language, and the obscurity and confusion that is so hard to be avoided in the use of words, there are several wilful faults and neglects, which men are guilty of, in this way of communication, whereby they render these sings less clear and distinct in their signification, than naturally they need to be. (Locke 2000: 67)

Other similar postulates are to be found dating from the middle of the same century, such as Thomas Hobbes' *Answer to Davenant's Preface to Bondibert* (1650). *Thomas* Blount's *The Academy of Eloquence*, which has much of Bacon's scientific approach, proposes four elements that all good writing must possess: brevity, perspicuity, ingenuity and decorum (Hernández, García 2009: 448).

The intellectual and linguistic *debate* I find in *The Unfortunate Bride* keeps pace with the emergence of modern philosophy, of "modern world, and with a new science based on experimentation". Stephen Greenblatt (2011: 20-22) proposes this idea in his book on the transition towards modernity. Paul Hazard (2013: 8-10) had explored this topic half a century earlier. Opposing the absolutes of the old tradition, the new mode of writing lies in certainty and accuracy, in line with empiricism. Both the style (*verba*) and the subject matter (*res*) re-materialise and re-naturalise the fictional universe. Just as scientific understanding is built on

evidence, natural style originates from human experiences. It can be concluded thus far that *The Unfortunate Bride* paves the way for a new form of literary fiction, reflecting the author's inclination for a transparent style in consonance with the emergent epistemology of the period. Belvira herself says it: "I cannot want a Muse, who write to you" (330).

7. Conclusion

The sublime style is reflected in the imagery of a text, recreated through metaphor, metonymy, simile and comparison. In the present text, these are employed to illustrate the idealization of friendship and romantic love through metaphysical and mythological imagery. The ornate rhetoric is supported by the use of chivalric language and devices that complement the aforementioned tropes, generating an elevated semantic style. In contrast, the plain style is employed for straightforward communication between the protagonist lovers by way of letters, with economic and mercantile references as well as physical love being the predominant subject matter. The use of verse raises further questions as to genre and vehicles of expression, serving as contrast to the fictional prose.

The Unfortunate Bride contains a multiplicity of styles: one plain and another more sublime; of themselves, these alternative styles succinctly reflect the metamorphosis occurring in English literature at that time. This narrative is a tale divided between two literary traditions, modelled on the co-existence of at least two distinct styles, of two different plot lines, two sets of literary images and two discrete groups of characters. The parodic intentionality of the work, achieved through the exaggeration of the characters' features and emotions, contrasts strongly with the inclusion of elements that disrupt the traditional romance style of bombastic and hyperbolic rhetoric. Within the text, realism and clarity stand in opposition to elevated language and superlative imagery. Such intentional parody also erupts in a clash between tradition and modernity. The unknown author of this tale developed a range of comparisons in order to define the tradition that she herself helped to demystify, while, at the same time, conceiving powerful metaphors to describe a new style that was emerging in the 1680s, heralding the coming of a more realistic form narrative: the English novel.

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