
FORCE *or* FRAUD

BRITISH SEDUCTION STORIES AND
THE PROBLEM OF RESISTANCE

1660–1760

TONI BOWERS



OXFORD

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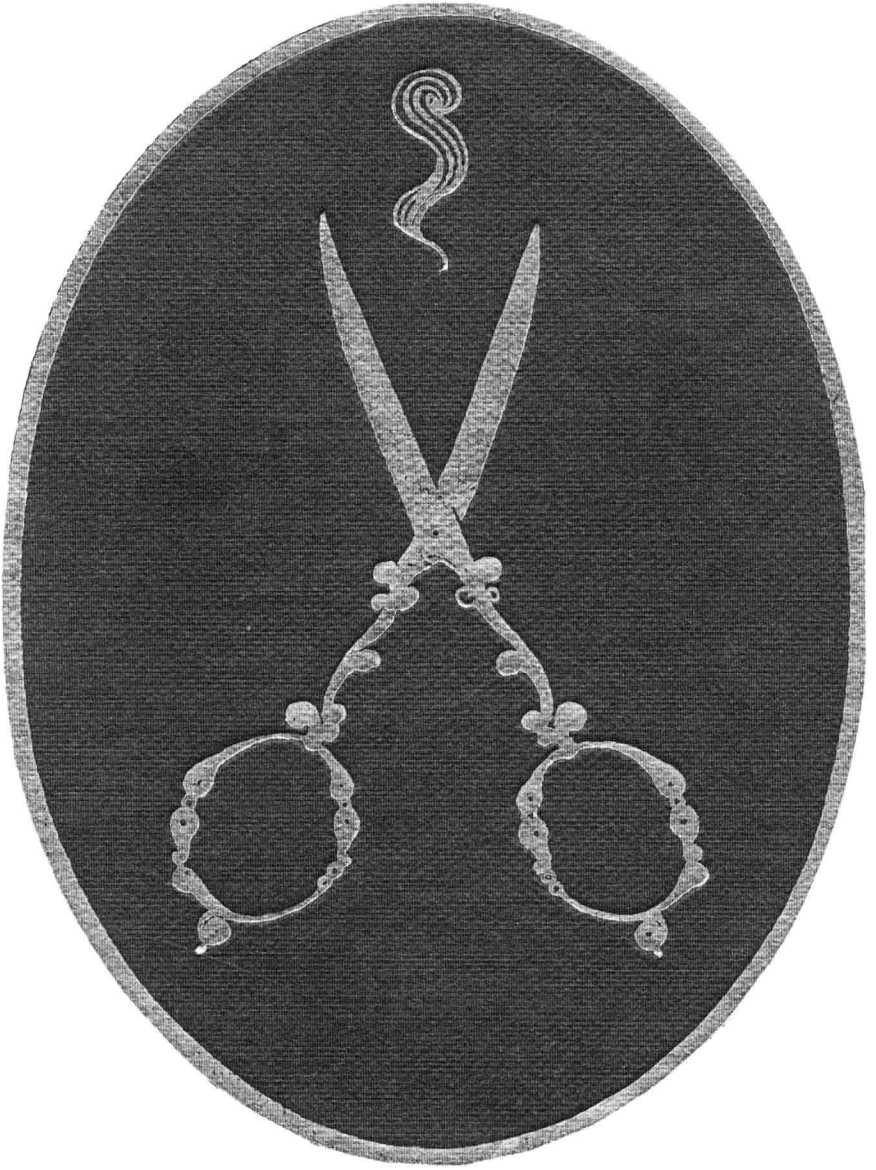
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for Tom
my first gift and my last, to you

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Philadelphia
June, 2010

List of Illustrations

COVER William Hogarth, *Before* (1730–1731, oil on canvas, 38.7 × 33.7 cm). (The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. Used with permission.)

FRONTISPIECE Front cover detail from *The Rape of the Lock, an Heroic-Comical Poem in Five Cantos*, written by Alexander Pope; embroidered with nine drawings by Aubrey Beardsley (London, L. Smithers, 1896). (Special Collections, Carnegie Mellon University Libraries, Pittsburgh, PA)

Note on the Text and Abbreviations

The publication place of primary texts is London unless otherwise noted. First editions are used whenever possible. Biblical citations are to the 1611 Authorized Version (AV) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966, 2008).

The following titles are abbreviated:

<i>BJECS</i>	<i>British Journal of Eighteenth-Century Studies</i>
<i>ECF</i>	<i>Eighteenth-Century Fiction</i>
<i>ECL</i>	<i>Eighteenth-Century Life</i>
<i>ECS</i>	<i>Eighteenth-Century Studies</i>
<i>ECTI</i>	<i>The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation</i>
<i>ELH</i>	<i>English Literary History</i>
<i>HLQ</i>	<i>Huntington Library Quarterly</i>
<i>JBH</i>	<i>Journal of British History</i>
<i>JBS</i>	<i>Journal of British Studies</i>
<i>MLN</i>	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>
<i>N&Q</i>	<i>Notes and Queries</i>
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
<i>PBSA</i>	<i>Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America</i>
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</i>
<i>SECC</i>	<i>Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture</i>
<i>SEL</i>	<i>Studies in English Literature</i>

Preface

Over the past 30 years, literary historians have labored to bring once-neglected writers of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century seduction stories to the attention of scholars and students. That undertaking has been a resounding success. Today, it is widely recognized that the work of the pioneering writers considered here—Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, Eliza Haywood, and Samuel Richardson—constitutes a generative tradition within the history of British prose fiction. Seduction stories produced between 1680 and 1750 (in imperfect but long-standing and convenient literary-historical shorthand, the “Augustan” age) developed powerful narrative rubrics that would govern prose fiction far beyond their own time, despite later authors’ frequent denials of these discomfiting forerunners. This book aims to specify and examine those rubrics and to contribute toward the effort to understand their power. *Force or Fraud* joins a conversation already going on, in other words, one that will continue beyond the claims put forward here. I offer its arguments as a closely focused (both historically and generically), suggestive set of explanations of what it was that made late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century seduction stories so powerfully influential in their day, and what keeps them resonant even now.

Force or Fraud focuses on a triple subject. First, it considers ideological, rhetorical, moral, ethical, and spiritual dilemmas that confronted late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century subjects of what I call “tory sensibility”: an alignment of assumptions and values, a world view at once broader and more oblique than political partisanship per se. Second, it looks closely at some of the best-selling stories of seduction of the time, arguing that they illuminate pressing late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century ideological and spiritual dilemmas and, in their day, offered ideologically inflected models—at times, deeply ambivalent ones—for the virtuous negotiation of change. Third, this book examines the idea of seduction itself. It traces the eighteenth-century development of peculiarly modern ways of distinguishing between seduction and rape and argues that that development took place, in significant part, in imaginative writing.

Each of the primary texts considered here consciously attempts to distinguish between seduction and rape; yet residual, troubled overlaps between the two also keep emerging—moments when the attempt at distinction falters. That faltering, that moment when it is difficult for a narrative to sustain a clearly discernible, stable difference *of kind* between seduction and rape, is linked to other, similarly illuminating, moments of dissonance. For instance, though eighteenth-century seduction narratives often make reference to “natural” distinctions between the sexual agency of women (supposedly passive, responsive, accountable) and of men (active, initiatory, irrepressible), the language of particular tales often

undermines that reductive taxonomy.¹ *Force or Fraud* considers such moments, when seduction stories subvert their own organizing rubrics, less as aesthetic failures than as glimmerings of dissent, indications of a struggle to reimagine behaviors traditionally coded as unnatural or transgressive as, instead, instances of complex virtue.

During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, that “extraordinary moment in the history of English women’s writing [...] when party politics, fiction, the literary marketplace, and feminine sexuality became intricately entangled,”² the plot of seduction and betrayal was, so to speak, a language that everyone understood, a point of convergence for popular fantasies. This book will focus on prose fiction, but plots featuring coercive and fraudulent heterosexual relations, where questions about coercion and complicity loom large, recurred constantly in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century British writing—in poetry, folk songs, ballads, and drama, in sermons and advice literature, political debate, historical writing, and children’s stories—not to mention visual art. So fascinating were tales of seduction, so popular with both sexes, in all genres, and across social divides, that it became routine to encounter seduction/rape stories in any number of contexts, and to understand them as speaking to matters far beyond their ostensible purview, sexual relations. So by 1681, John Dryden could take it for granted that *Absalom and Achitophel*, a seduction tale in verse, would be readily legible as a parable restating urgent questions about monarchical inheritance and legitimacy.³ And in 1731, George Lillo used a reverse seduction story, where a naïve young man is victimized by a predatory older woman, approvingly to dramatize the (stereotypically whig-oriented) virtues of trade and industry.⁴ Thomas Otway’s *Venice Preserv’d*

¹ I use “agency” to refer to the capacity to choose one’s behaviors and affect their outcomes. Cf. the arguments Quentin Skinner has developed about seventeenth-century notions of political “liberty,” where “unfreedom”—what I would call a lack or denial of agency—results from being in a structural position of dependence just as much as from specific acts of impediment. See, e.g., *Liberty Before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), chs. 1 and 2, 113–119; *Hobbes and Republican Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), x–xiii. Skinner’s analysis of coercive structures is suggestive insofar as it attempts to outline a seventeenth-century way of thinking beyond the assumptions of liberalism and monarchism. But perhaps more notable is Skinner’s insistence on a narrowly defined “strictly political” context (17); “the dimensions of freedom and oppression inherent in such institutions as the family” are explicitly omitted from consideration. This book, by contrast, takes seriously the sexual and domestic metaphors that so many of the most-read writers of prose fiction used when they tried to think through and respond to the structures of dominance, subordination, and coercion that pervaded their lives. Focusing on the productions of tory-oriented writers, it argues that seduction stories were an epitomizing site of political struggle.

² Catherine Gallagher, “Political Crimes and Fictional Alibis: The Case of Delarivier Manley,” *ECS* 23/4 (Summer 1990): 502–521, 504.

³ Phillip Harth, *Pen for a Party: Dryden’s Tory Propaganda and Its Contexts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). Dryden’s poem exploits seduction tropes but does not focus on sex.

⁴ Other “reverse seduction stories” include Henry Fielding’s *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and Mary Davys’s *Accomplish’d Rake* (1727) and *Reform’d Coquet* (1724). Both, like *The London Merchant*, were written by authors known for whiggish sensibilities. Those sensibilities were, of course, far

(1682) and Nicholas Rowe's *Fair Penitent* (1703), among other seduction-themed plays with political overtones, enjoyed continued popularity on the early eighteenth-century stage. As these examples only begin to suggest, plots of sexual "force or fraud" were everywhere, including in works long coded as more whig than tory.⁵

The torrent of seduction plots in all varieties of genres notwithstanding, the most powerful and memorable late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century British seduction stories appeared in prose fiction, where inner motivation and conflict could be represented in detail, in ordinary language, by non-elite writers (including women), and in something approaching, or at least mimicking, real time.⁶ Accordingly, prose fiction will be this book's focus, though seduction and rape were also central themes just about everywhere else. My purpose is to discover what tory-oriented writers of prose fiction had to gain, at that particular time and place, by telling and retelling narratives of sexual pursuit, resistance, and capitulation. For the moment, it is worth noting just one reason for the ubiquity of seduction plots at the time: because these tales dealt with intimate relations between men and women, they could seem far-removed from public political affairs.⁷ This was an attraction for all sorts of writers, of course. But for reasons we shall consider, writers of prose fiction with tory-oriented sensibilities exploited seduction's apparent distance from public concerns most vigorously and, in the process, aired some of the most troubling moral and ideological dilemmas of their day.

The book is in nine chapters. The first four show how what I call "old tory" assumptions were worked out in seduction writing before the so-called "Glorious Revolution" of 1688–1689.⁸ The last four examine post-1689 "new tory"

more layered than this book, with its emphasis on the complexities of tory-oriented sensibilities, can suggest. The most nuanced discussion remains Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725–1742* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); see, e.g., 10–18. See n. 24 and n. 366, below.

⁵ When familiar partisan-cultural labels ("tory") appear in lower-case type, I mean to distinguish them as ideologically laden *sensibilities* from the more direct partisan alignments with which they may or may not overlap. When (less frequently) I refer to conscious partisanship, I use the traditional forms "Whig," "Tory," and "Jacobite." See pp. 5–8.

⁶ Cf. John Richetti, *Popular Fiction Before Richardson: Narrative Patterns 1700–1739* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969, 1992), 125; Susan Staves, "British Seduced Maidens," *ECS* 14; 2 (Winter 1980–1981): 109–134; Jean B. Kern, "The Fallen Woman, from the Perspective of Five Early Eighteenth-Century Women Novelists," *SECC* 10 (1981): 457–468; Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), ch. 3, 58–59; Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 77–78.

⁷ See Richard Braverman, *Plots and Counterplots: Sexual Politics and the Body Politic in English Literature, 1660–1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁸ I put "Glorious Revolution" in quotes because the label itself is a debatable and still largely partisan construction. For a recent entry in the centuries-old debate over what to call the events that resulted in the overthrow of James II and the establishment of William and Mary on the English throne, see Steven Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), esp. 119–124. Pincus argues that the overthrow of 1688–1689 "does indeed meet the theoretical standard of revolution" (223). See n. 310, below.

revisions of received seduction paradigms. In the center of the book, Chapter 5 forms a “bridge,” as in music, enacting a change of key within a song. It marks a transitional moment early in the eighteenth century, when old and new tory-oriented discourses came into conflict around the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance. A brief and comparatively speculative coda brings *Force or Fraud* to a close at another period of transition, between the 1746 massacre of Stuart loyalists at Culloden, Scotland, and the lifting of Tory-party proscription in 1760. The long-term results of the Jacobite defeat, I will suggest, not only signaled a revision of partisan agendas, but also marked shifts in sensibilities that opened new functions for seduction stories and provoked decisive developments in the history of prose fiction.

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Introduction: “Force or Fraud”?

Th’ Adventrous *Baron* the bright Locks admir’d,
He saw, he wish’d, and to the Prize aspir’d:
Resolv’d to win, he meditates the way,
By Force to ravish, or by Fraud betray;
For when Success a Lover’s Toil attends,
Few ask, if Fraud or Force attain’d his Ends.⁹

Force or fraud? When Pope’s scheming Baron ponders his strategy for obtaining the “prize” of Belinda’s curl, the poet draws on a formula familiar to his readers, one that went back at least to Cicero’s *De Officiis* and influenced the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries especially through Machiavelli.¹⁰ Versions of the phrase appear in Robert Filmer’s *Patriarcha* (MS 1630s; 1680), which asks whether it is lawful for a king to take subjects’ lands “by force or fraud”; in *Eikon Basilike* (1648), where Charles I argues that he fought the parliamentary army to “defend My good Subjects from those mens [*sic*] violence and fraud”; and in Hobbes’s *Leviathan* (1651), where to want “another mans [*sic*] goods, servants, or wife, without any intention to take them from him by force, or fraud, is no breach of the Law.”¹¹ A 30-page quarto ironically dedicated “to his Highness Oliver Cromwell” in 1657 (reprinted 1689) notes that “[t]yrants

⁹ Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock: An Heroi-Comical Poem* (1712, 1714), in *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt, 6 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940, 1962), 2: 129–212; Canto II: ll. 29–34. Subsequent citations to this edition and volume.

¹⁰ See Cicero, *De Officiis* (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1947), I. 13. 41; Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield, 2nd edn. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 7. 32, 18. 69) and *Discourses on Livy*, trans. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 2. 13. 1. See also Tom Keymer, “Fielding’s Machiavellian Moment,” *Henry Fielding (1707–1754): Novelist, Playwright, Journalist, Magistrate*, ed. Claude Rawson (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008), 70. Cf. J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 423–505.

¹¹ *Two Treatises of Government by John Locke with [...] Patriarcha by Robert Filmer*, ed. Thomas I. Cook (New York: Hafner Press, 1947), 283; *Eikon Basilike*, ed. Edward Almack (London: Chatto and Windus, 1907), 72; *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 1996), 201; cf. 90, 235. On Hobbes’s use of the phrase, see Vickie B. Sullivan, *Machiavelli, Hobbes, and the Formation of a Liberal Republicanism in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 80–81; Paul A. Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern: Classical Republicanism and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 982 n. 103.

accomplish their Ends much more by Fraud than Force"; in Katherine Philips's *A Friend* (1664), "Force or Design Matches to pass may bring"; while John Milton's *Paradise Regain'd* (1671) depicts Satan planning to oppose Christ with "Not force, but well couch't fraud."¹² In *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), John Dryden describes the efforts of the "Jebusites" (i.e., Roman Catholics) to impose their religious rites on the "Israelites" (i.e., Protestants): "By force they could not Introduce these Gods; / [...] So Fraud was us'd."¹³ In Behn's *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* (1684–1687), Prince Cesario resolves to "put in Practice all the Arts and Stratagems of Cunning, as well as Force" in order "to be a King or Nothing."¹⁴ In the anonymous *Sylvia's Complaint* (1692), a seducer falsely swears "with horrid Oaths" that neither "open force nor Undermining Art" can make him reveal a lady's secret.¹⁵ In short, by 1712 when the phrase "force or fraud" appeared in *The Rape of the Lock*, it already functioned as ubiquitous shorthand for the opposition between seduction—"fraud," a "leading away" that succeeds by exploiting another's desire and dependence—and rape—"force," the quintessential act of prerogative and domination.

Force or fraud? Rape or seduction?—which will the Baron choose? Pope no sooner poses the question than he dismantles it *as* a question: few will ask which method prevailed in any case. When the Baron hesitates about whether to "ravish" or "betray" Belinda, the poet implies, he ponders a distinction without much difference: either way, the Baron triumphs and Belinda mourns. Force and fraud become interchangeable at the very moment the Baron pauses to choose between them. What might be the point of positing an opposition between force and fraud at all, then, since Pope only proceeds immediately to show how little there is to choose between the two?

¹² William Allen, *Killing No Murder: Briefly Discoursed in Three Questions* (1657, 1689), 6; Katherine Philips, *Poems by the Incomparable Mrs K. P.* (1664), 190; John Milton, *Paradise Regain'd* [...] to which is added *Samson Agonistes* (1671), 6. Keymer quotes Algernon Sidney in the 1660s: "You may easily reduce all your ways [...] unto two heads upon which your master Machiavelli does so much insist, force and fraud" (*Court Maxims*, ed. Hans W. Blom, Eco Haitsma Mulier, and Ronald Janse [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 92; quoted in Keymer, "Fielding's Machiavellian Moment" 87 n. 46).

¹³ *The Works of John Dryden*, eds. E. Niles Hooker, H. T. Swedenberg, et al., 20 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956–2000), 2: 9, ll. 122, 124. Subsequent citations will be to this volume and edition.

¹⁴ Behn, *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*, in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, ed. Janet Todd, 7 vols. (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1993), 2: 327. Subsequent citations are to this edition and volume.

¹⁵ Anon. [attrib. Richard Ames], *Sylvia's Complaint, OF HER Sexes Unhappiness* (1692), 9. Cf. Daniel Defoe's exhortation of forced marriages, "which I take to be the worst kind of Rape; whether the Violence be the Violence of Perswasion or of [...] Paternal Authority" (*Conjugal Lewdness; or, Matrimonial Whoredom* [1727; rpt. Gainesville, FL: Scholars' Facsimiles, 1967], 166), and a rakish nobleman's confidence, in Eliza Haywood's *Love in Excess*, that "all women may be won by force or stratagem" (Haywood, *Love in Excess; or, The Fatal Enquiry 1719–20*, ed. David Oakleaf [Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1994, 2000], 266).