FICTIONS OF MATERIALITY IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation arises from current debates around survivor agency that have often resulted in a critical impasse: how might agency be afforded to survivors when the aftermath of rape centrally involves the silencing of its record? This project finds historical footing in answering present-day questions of gendered violence in the Transatlantic eighteenth century, a period and geography that saw the explosive rise of print and female literacy. It investigates the intimate connection between female literacy and writing and gendered violence in three major texts of the period: Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748), Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778), and Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1798).

Central to the project is the idea of "fictions of materiality," which form around the heightened engagement of writers, fictional and historical, with the physicality of writing in the epistolary genre. These texts' longing for the lost imprints of the human in letter-writing attests to the tectonic shifts in dominant media forms—from manuscript to print—with which we can view our own transition to a digital ecosystem. The fact that these traces and imprints arise in the aftermath of gendered violence, such as rape and abduction, genders this critical account and points toward

female literacy and authorship as a means to respond to and challenge patriarchal discursive and physical control—both of women and of the writing that they produce.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Pichaya Damrongpiwat is an incoming Lecturer in the Department of English at University of California, Irvine and a Diamonstein-Spielvogel Fellow at the New York Public Library. She was born on March 28, 1991, in Bangkok, Thailand. She received her B.A. in English with Distinction in the Major from Yale University in 2014, where her undergraduate thesis was awarded the John Hubbard Curtis Prize. She also received an M.A. and Ph.D. in English Language and Literature from Cornell University. Her interests include British, Transatlantic, and global eighteenth-century literature, early American literature, gender studies, postcolonial studies, theories of materialism, and critical theory. She has taught courses on multiethnic contemporary American literature, postcolonial studies, and experimental poetry.

Pichaya has published a portion of this dissertation in *The Eighteenth-Century: Theory and Interpretation* and another essay is forthcoming at *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*.

for my mother

in loving memory

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INTRODUCTION

"Go, get me hither paper, ink, and pen"
—Shakespeare, *The Rape of Lucrece*

Unlike most major accounts of the legend of Lucretia, the Roman noblewoman whose rape and suicide spurred the founding of the Roman Republic, Shakespeare's poetical account, *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594), depicts in slow and emphatic detail the action and circumstances of Lucretia the morning after her rape. It depicts Lucretia as she pens a letter to her husband, Collatinus, informing him of her rape by Tarquin, the son of Lucius Tarquinius Superbus, the tyrannical king of the Roman kingdom. Although the numerous literary-historical accounts of the legend vary in detail, the consequences of Lucretia's letter remain the same. When the letter summons Collatinus back to Rome from a distant military campaign, Lucretia tells Collatinus, her father, and the statesman Brutus of the rape and commits suicide by stabbing herself. Previous to Shakespeare, major sources of Lucretia's story make no mention of the letter-writing in Shakespeare's poem. The earliest accounts of the legend, those in Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita* (c. 27 B.C.) and Ovid's *Fasti* (8 A.D.), depict little of the morning after the rape except that Lucretia summoned her husband and father. Subsequent accounts by Boccaccio, Chaucer, and Christine de Pizan similarly do not mention any act of writing.[1]

[1] See for instance, Giovanni Boccaccio, *Concerning Famous Women* (*De Mulieribus Claris*; 1374*)*, Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Legend of Good Women*, Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of the Ladies* (1405). Augustine's *City of God* contains the third and final common source for the legend of Lucretia in antiquity.

In its depiction of this moment for arguably the first time in the legend's history, *The Rape of Lucrece* suggests, though perhaps inadvertently, that this seemingly small and insignificant action—writing a letter—may hold serious, political, and even revolutionary consequences. It is the decision to summon Collatinus in order to reveal her rape to him that sets in motion a sequence of events that would ultimately lead the Roman citizen uprising against the tyrannical and corrupt Tarquin dynasty and the subsequent founding of the Roman Republic. We may ascribe to Lucretia's letter, then, a form of diffused agency derived from both the action of Lucretia writing and the contents of her letter—an agency derived from both women's writing and *women writing*, or female literacy, in a scenario wherein writer and letter become intertwined. As this study will show, the entwinement between female writers and their writing comes with myriad consequences; while some are empowering, others precede and potentially justify violence in life as in death.

This dissertation argues for the agential power of female literacy in the context of gendered violence and its aftermath, primarily via the heightened engagement of literary texts with the physical instruments and materials of writing. For Lucretia and her many kinswomen, these instruments are often simply "paper, ink, and pen." The fictions and historical practices that form around a writer's encounter with the vibrant and especial materiality of writing, which I call "fictions of materiality," are the different ways in which agential power may be ascribed to female literacy. In the chapters that follow, I show that female writers, both fictional and historical, resisted and challenged male-dominated discursive control, a mode of resistance that more often than not also generates physical, real world consequences. Insofar as this writing

may serve as a witness record of the violence committed against the writer, its presence and function as testimony intervenes in male-dominated efforts at silencing, suppression, or erasure of the record of rape often seen in its wake. Here, I use the term "witness" as a proxy for truth-telling, rather than as evidence in legal or judicial proceeding, invoking the word's original association with knowledge, understanding, or wisdom, rather than its legal function as proof of innocence or guilt, or grounds for punishment.

The various acts of witness facilitated via female literacy in this dissertation range from a close friend's observation of staggered handwriting in Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa; or, the History of a Young Lady* (1748), to Frances Burney's feigned handwriting, designed to conceal the secret writing of her novel *Evelina; or, The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778), to a recuperation of narrative authority long withheld from epistolary heroine Clara Wieland in Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland; or, The Transformation: An American Tale* (1798), the latter read as in part a redaction of *Clarissa*. Spanning the latter half of the eighteenth century and reaching across the Atlantic, these texts, each with their own extra-ordinary history of publication, criticism, and reception, provide their own kind of witness record to the changing socio-political, cultural, and material conditions of their time, including eighteenth-century audiences' fascination with the ever-evolving tropes and forms of female tragedy; the rise of female literacy and increasing possibility of public authorship for women; and the proliferation of seduction narratives in pre- and post-Revolutionary America that indexed the ways that civic

duty became entangled with female sexuality during and after political turmoil in the newly-founded American republic, as it did in Rome.

Chapter One, "'In Her Sense of the Word': Fictions of Materiality in *Clarissa*," lays the dissertation's theoretical and methodological foundation by developing the idea of "fictions of materiality." In the context of the eighteenth-century novel, specifically the epistolary novel, fictions of materiality arise from a broad and shared understanding of what it means to read, write, exchange, and circulate familiar letters, as situated within and against the tectonic shifts in media forms of the period, that from handwritten manuscript to print. These fictions pervade literary and intimate spheres of influence, while the epistolary novel as a genre renders public—via publication—the private exchange of familiar correspondence. Fictions of materiality gesture towards the complex interactions between writer, letter, and reader. In *Clarissa*, Clarissa Harlowe and Anna Howe, her friend and intimate, get their messages and accompanying affect across not only by writing, but also via the unique imprints of the human on the paper "body" of the letter. Whether it be Clarissa's staggered writing produced during her fatal illness, a stray blot of ink, or torn and crumpled up paper tossed underneath the table, fictions of materiality, in the context of rape, crucially supply one way to circumvent Robert Lovelace, Clarissa's abductor and rapist, and his schemes for domination and control—as we shall see, not only of Clarissa's physical person, but also of her writing.

Chapter Two, "Material Revisions: Repurposing the Rape Plot in *Evelina*," argues that Burney practiced particularly efficacious forms of "repurposing," which ranges from the literary recycling of old plots and characters to the literal re-use of

discarded paper. These repurposing practices inhabit Burney's fiction as they did her actual life, creating a unique opportunity to read *Evelina* alongside evidence from Burney's archive, including draft manuscripts of the novel. Further, the story of how *Evelina* came to be published itself also reveals the strong presence of gender—and gendered violence—in Burney's life. The fictions of materiality in Chapter Two, those that form around "silence," pertain to the erasure and re-surfacing of literary works in Burney's writing career against the gendered pressures that actively discouraged or in other cases prevented entirely female authorship and publication. In the fiction of *Evelina*, silence becomes a crux for reading gendered violence in the novel, specifically the repurposing of the tragic female plot of the titular Evelina Anville's mother and the rape plot that underlies the courtship and marriage plot in Evelina's own narrative.

Chapter Three, "Failures of Transformation in *Wieland*," returns to the problems of representation and ethical reading posed in Chapter One, specifically by reading *Wieland* as a redaction of *Clarissa*. The chapter begins by exploring Brown's connection to Richardson. Within Brown's corpus of writings, several references to Richardson and *Clarissa* indicate a concerted awareness of Richardson and active efforts on Brown's part to model his own works on Richardson's. Both authors shared similar aims for their novels, which is that of moral instruction, particularly directed towards young women. The chapter also traces the circulation and reception of Richardson's novels in the British colonies and, later, in the newfound American republic, situating Brown's attitudes within this larger context.

In this chapter, the fiction of "failure" operates as its heuristic in accounting for the stark difference in popular and critical success that Richardson's novels received in Britain vs. abroad. Upon the first publication of *Pamela* in America in the 1740's, the novel failed to captivate American critics and readers, as it spectacularly did in Britain. Yet this failure is productive as it makes visible divergent attitudes across the Atlantic, ranging from debates about female education to the role of women in public life after the Revolutionary War. This is just one among many other "failures" that mark *Clarissa*'s entrance into America and its "transformation" into *Wieland*.

Apart from the significance of her act of writing, Lucretia also serves as a crux for this dissertation's methodology, specifically the reconceptualization of "form," broadly construed, its relationship to "matter," both literal and metaphorical, and the application of these concepts to critical reading. This study's methodological aims are two-fold: to develop a mode of critical reading attentive to the materiality of writing, and to actively practice theory in the archive without making the archive a means to a predetermined end. The epistolary novel, as a prominent sub-genre of eighteenth-century literature in Britain as well as America, is particularly suited to the study of female literacy and fictions of materiality due to the genre's explicit reliance upon letter-writing as its basic premise. In this period, letter-writing was a major form of correspondence and sociality that shaped individual conceptions of the self and the ways that people, through this medium, may relate to one another. Further, the epistolary genre's representation of letter-writing is often gendered. While this gendering works both ways, this study will focus on the female gendering of the practice.

The key hermeneutic maneuver in my reading of *Lucrece*—to make visible the connection, hitherto unexamined, between a fictional piece of seemingly insignificant writing and its revolutionary effect(s)—is carried forward in Chapter One's juxtaposition of the representation of rape and female literacy in *Clarissa*. Lovelace writes to his confidante John Belford that "women, and women's words, fill my mind,"[2] thereby marking the important distinction between "women" and "women's words" that I referred to earlier. Lovelace does so with the addition of a single word, whose power cannot be underestimated, even when it belongs to the proliferation of words that comprise the longest novel in the English language. This separation, rather than conflation, of women and women's writing attests to the seismic shift in the eighteenth-century media environment that was well under way by the middle of the century, when *Clarissa* was first published in 1748. The meteoric rise of print met with an ever-expanding audience of enthusiastic readers, due to increased rates of literacy, particularly among middle- and upper-class women, and the increasing popularity of leisure reading.

Over the course of the eighteenth century, female characterological interiority became one of the dominant interests of the novel genre, featured prominently in the sub-genre of the epistolary novel. The rise and popularity of the epistolary novel was in many ways the literary corollary of the increasing presence and importance of familiar letter-writing in eighteenth-century life. Readers of the genre were themselves writers, and letters real and fictional populated homes, bookshelves, and rapidly

[2] Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa; or, the History of a Young Lady*, ed. Angus Ross (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England; New York: Penguin Classics, 1986), Letter 242; 818.

expanding postal routes. One of the pioneers of this genre is none other than Richardson, whose novels *Pamela* and *Clarissa* became popular models for decades following their publication.

Alongside Richardson's fashioning of the genre was a deeply vested interest in the problem of female interiority. That is, how may we know, via reading, what it is that a woman is thinking and feeling? This question might seem innocuous, yet it contains a certain violence beneath its surface. The pursuit of knowing and understanding—whether it be a person's innermost thoughts and feelings, "true" affect and intention, or secret, hidden desires—belies the fact that such knowledge seems best gathered under circumstances of crisis or duress. For the fictional women at the heart of the epistolary novel genre, whose readers are privy to their letters, female fear and distress actually served as one marker of truthful revelation, particularly of feeling. Further, violence against women in the form of rape, abduction, threats of physical, sexual, and social violence, social pressures against disclosure constituting a form of silencing, and so forth was thought to generate added pathos, often moving the novel's reader—perhaps a young woman not so different from its epistolary heroine—to tears.

Richardson's first novel, *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740), is a first-person, epistolary narrative of the titular character, Pamela Andrews, a young maidservant whose employer, the rakish Mr. B., makes unwanted sexual advances towards her, yet later becomes reformed and marries her. The novel's readers are privy to, but also confined within the perspective of, a series of letters that Pamela sends to her parents. Upon its publication, the novel captivated a wide and enthusiastic

audience of readers and critics and generated an unprecedented public and literary debate about the sexual mores of its time; the novel's seeming disregard for breaking class confines by marrying the working-class Pamela and the wealthy, upper-class Mr. B.; and the epistolary novel genre's claims to authenticity of both sentiment and affect. So great was the debate that the phenomenon was termed "the Pamela craze," and so polarizing its effects that audiences would identify themselves as either "Pamelists" or "Anti-Pamelists." Writ large, Pamelists read the novel's depiction of Pamela's virtue and its reward as sincere, while Anti-Pamelists pointed out how Pamela's innocence and chastity were merely performed, disingenuous, or even cynical and manipulative.

Following the success of *Pamela*, Richardson's second novel and the subject of the dissertation's first chapter, *Clarissa; or, the History of a Young Lady* (1748), portrays an equally virtuous young heroine, Clarissa Harlowe, who is abducted and raped by the rake Robert Lovelace. Her virtue, instead of being "rewarded," only serves to further Lovelace's desires. After her rape, Clarissa tragically dies of illness and grief, as if dying "from a broken heart," and Lovelace later dies in a duel with Clarissa's cousin, Colonel Morden. *Clarissa* certainly moved its audience to tears. Early readers of the novel in Richardson's circle of correspondence such as sisters Lady Elizabeth Echlin and Lady Dorothy Bradshaigh sought to alleviate the tragedy by first appealing to Richardson himself and, when met with no success, set out to write their own alternative endings to the novel. Indeed, all of four alternate endings by Ladies Echlin and Bradshaigh imagine far better fates and futures for both Clarissa

and Lovelace.[3] The turn to tragedy in *Clarissa* only heightened the focus and interest on female interiority, such that critics of the novel commonly identify the novel as a major and influential example of the technique.

In the American context, however, the popular and critical reception of Richardson's novels was more complicated. As the third chapter of this dissertation shows, over the course of the eighteenth century, the fluidity of this reception, which begins with the flop of Benjamin Franklin's first printing of *Pamela* in the 1740's, indexes shifting American tastes in both literature and morality that were largely governed by the shock and violence of the Revolutionary War. In the 1780's, Richardson's novels were revived in abridged versions, ushering in a Richardson "boom" after which *Pamela* and *Clarissa* became familiar cultural touchstones.

Yet the textual forms by which these heroines were known in America were drastically different from those that originally moved British readers. One of the most popular titles was *The paths of virtue delineated: Or, The history in miniature of the celebrated Pamela, Clarissa Harlowe, and Sir Charles Grandison* (1756), a single text that combined heavily-redacted abridgements of Richardson's three novels, *Pamela*, *Clarissa*, and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753). This text essentially Americanized Richardson, in part so as to increase his commercial appeal by reflecting readerly tastes that favored shorter texts, among other preferences. *The paths of virtue delineated* also eschewed the epistolary format altogether for a third-person narrator

[3] See Peter Sabor, "Rewriting *Clarissa*: Alternative Endings by Lady Echlin, Lady Bradshaigh, and Samuel Richardson," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, December 16, 2016, https://doi.org/10.3138/ecf.29.2.131. Note that while Lady Bradshaigh was part of Richardson's inner circle of correspondence, Lady Echlin was not.

who recounts the bare-bones plots of the novels, valorizing the importance of female sexual virtue in the family and nation-building of the new American republic.

With the Richardsonian tradition of the epistolary novel in mind, this dissertation aims to situate the problem of rape at the heart of *Clarissa*—as a novel, cultural phenomenon, and literary legacy all combined—within recent studies of rape in critical discourse, on the one hand, as well as the theoretical contexts of gender and materiality, on the other. At the nexus of these literary-critical currents is the dissertation's titular "fictions of materiality," fictions with which critics and everyday readers alike have historically engaged, and continue to do so, with gendered violence in the epistolary novel.

In the history of the epistolary genre, fictions of materiality often involve the unique traces, accidents, idiosyncrasies, or otherwise human imprints on the paper "body" of the fictional letter. The tear stains, inky blots, and staggered handwriting across the page all indicate a concerted awareness of and heightened literary and readerly engagement with the materiality of writing, specifically letter-writing. One fiction of materiality that is as compelling as it is unconvincing is the trope of the tear-stained letter, which combines the eighteenth-century cult of sensibility with the intimacy of female-gendered practices of reading and writing. This trope returns us to the gendering of letter-writing practices itself, whereby (female) affect is transferred discursively to a reader, more often than not also female, via the materiality of a fictional handwritten letter. This transference occurs discursively and only discursively, being "materially inaccessible" to the reader. That is, whatever traces or stains that were fictionally once visible on the letter in question would have long been

fictionally erased, or rendered uniform, in this letter's transformation into printed type, which refers to the larger and perhaps the most all-encompassing fiction that epistolary novels typically adopt, which is that these novels are a collection of *real letters*, written by *real people*.

In *Clarissa*, for instance, Clarissa bequeaths a trove of her papers and personal letters to Belford, Lovelace's friend and confidante, letters that were, in the fiction of the novel, later transcribed and printed into *Clarissa*. The inaccessible materiality of Clarissa's letters accompanies the novel from its very beginning yet becomes most visible in the immediate aftermath of her rape. In her distress, Clarissa produces what is often called the "mad papers," a series of letter fragments that lie at the limits of the novel form, exposing the ways that standardized typography characteristic of the print medium cannot fully and faithfully render the material and materially affective specificities of the letters. In particular, "Paper X" and its exposure of the limits of print is the most acute instance in the novel. In the fiction of *Clarissa*, this fragment contains a series of disorganized, randomly oriented lines of writing. Translated via Richardson's printing practice in the novel, Paper X consists of lines of type unusually arranged at odd angles, which remains one of the most famous experiments in eighteenth-century print typography.

In *The Rape of Lucrece*, the inaccessible materiality of Lucretia's "paper, ink, and pen" similarly situates the poem's fictions of materiality in its enmeshment of female literacy with sexual virtue, which returns us to the problem of rape. Prior to writing her letter summoning Collatinus, Lucretia reflects on how her rape will be revealed by the "tell-tale Day," never to be concealed:

‘Make me not object to the tell-tale Day!
The light will show, charactered in my brow,
The story of sweet chastity’s decay,
The impious breach of holy wedlock vow.
Yea, the illiterate, that know not how
To cipher what is writ in learned books,
Will quote my loathsome trespass in my looks.[4]

In relaying the “story of sweet chastity’s decay,” Lucretia’s lament combines a perverse blazon of the sexually ruined woman with stories in “learned books” and its opposite, illiteracy. The poem imagines both learned books and Lucretia’s “looks” as “ciphers” of rape. That a woman’s violation may be “charactered in [her] brow” and that others may know of the “loathsome trespass” in her “looks” would remain one of the most potent markers of rape in the centuries to come. For instance, a raped woman’s appearance indicates her condition no less often in the eighteenth-century dramatic sub-genre of the she-tragedy, to which *Clarissa*’s plot is partly indebted, which I will examine at length in Chapter One.

In this stanza, Lucretia offers this study yet another methodological crux, here in her opening plea to “Make me not object to the tell-tale Day!” Specifically, the close connection between “object” and ideas of public sight or spectacle in Shakespeare’s parlance, as I shall argue, constitutes one claim to ethicality attributable to studying the literary representation of rape, rather than a literal account. The study of rape is one discourse that directly benefits from fictionality, which accomplishes the dual function of protecting real survivors’ physical and mental well-being, even as the fictionality of rape in a novel like *Clarissa* facilitates active engagement with the

[4] William Shakespeare, "The Rape of Lucrece," in *Shakespeare’s Poems: Venus and Adonis, The Rape of Lucrece, and the Shorter Poems*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones and H. R. Woudhuysen (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2007), ll. 806-812 (pp. 819-20).

discursive violence of rape, which easily exceeds the single, finite action of physical sexual violence.

Indeed, Lucretia herself—or rather, her dead body—will become *the* spectacle that moves the patrons and citizens of Rome towards political action. After her death by suicide, Collatinus, her father, and Brutus display her body to the Roman public as testament—or, perhaps, a cipher—to the corruption of the Tarquin dynasty; the tyranny of the father Superbus is superseded by Tarquin's sexual crime, committed within and against the very heart of the Roman family. On the contrary, the turn towards fictionality in the study of rape rejects rendering rape a spectacle, specifically as a means of political liberation. Similarly, rape's trauma should not be rendered an academic spectacle, used as a means to a critical or argumentative end. In Lucretia's words, rape does not inherently "make" women "object to the tell-tale Day." Rather, it is the coming to "light" of rape, to follow Lucretia's metaphor of daylight as revelation, that characterizes its violent aftermath.

I. Gender & Materiality in the Eighteenth-Century Novel

The new materialism's theory of "vibrant matter," which affords matter its own kind of agency independent from the human subject, provides a set of useful terms for examining how fictions of materiality operate in the eighteenth-century epistolary novel. It is this reconfiguration that permits this study to read fictions of materiality in texts such as *Clarissa* as producing certain types of material and discursive effects not limited to those associated with conventional ideas of action or plot. When applied to the novel, this expanded notion of agency encompasses not only Lovelace's clearly visible, concrete acts of plotting around other characters in the

novel, but also Clarissa's and other characters' words as separate from their characterological interiority. Since critical accounts of *Clarissa* often focus on Clarissa's lack of power or agency, such as her status as a daughter at Harlowe Place, her abduction by Lovelace, and her subsequent physical confinement at Mrs. Sinclair's brothel, this idea of agency allows for new possibilities of witness and resistance.

This is not to say that Richardson was not concerned with representing interiority, insofar as it is mutually constituted with human character. On the contrary, non-discursive, affective states and material traces can be situated within discussions of interiority by appending affect—defined as non-discursive, bodily capacity—to the ongoing construction and *constructedness* of interiority. Indeed, the representation of feeling is conventionally one of the hallmarks of interiority, always implying human subjectivity. For eighteenth-century readers, it is precisely the existence of feeling that affirms the existence of the individual self, one that Richardson's strain of psychological realism sought to capture.

Modern critical accounts of *Clarissa*, beginning in the mid-twentieth century, must contend with, and stake their claim upon, the crucial transaction at the heart of the novel—the so-called "black transaction"—in which Clarissa Harlowe's rape constitutes a transference of power. Whether sexual, literary, social, or authorial, "power" and its proximation, "agency," are the terms by which modern criticism of the novel seems to operate: who possesses power? How is power manifest? Who stands to gain, or to lose? Chapter One argues for an expanded, capacious notion of power, via the proxy of agency, as inherent in Clarissa's epistolary practice, which reconfigures critical accounts of the novel as more than a zero-sum game. I argue that

the fictions of materiality generated by rape and gendered violence enable the representation of rape via agential forms that exceed discursive expression. I develop a notion of agency inherent in writing that relies on the materiality of the letter, as physical, "vibrant" matter, to convey and authenticate affect associated with, and material traces of, rape's violence. This materiality confronts gendered violence by endowing forms of writing with an alternate, agential force that is able to concretely affect plot and critical interpretation; this is the agency writ in the women's words that fill Lovelace's mind, an agency that complicates his conventional role as the sole purveyor of power in the novel.

In many ways, this study calls for renewed attention to, and critical reevaluation of, the tradition of feminist scholarship on *Clarissa* that emerged, in the 1980's and 90's, after the turn to poststructuralism. Foundational studies of rape and its literary representation in *Clarissa* such as Terry Castle's *Clarissa's Ciphers: Meaning and Disruption in Richardson's "Clarissa"* (1982), Terry Eagleton's *The Rape of Clarissa* (1982), and Frances Ferguson's essay "Rape and the Rise of the Novel" (1987) reveal and affirm the discursivity of rape, or the idea that rape's violent consequences exceed the physical act of sexual violation committed against the body.

In *Clarissa's Ciphers*, Castle begins with Clarissa's paradigmatic formulation of herself as a "cipher," one subject to Lovelace's violence: "I am but a *cypher*, to give *him* significance, and *myself* pain."[5] That Castle must point out that these words "mark the fact of pain"[6] serves as a reminder of how women's pain often goes

[5] Terry Castle, *Clarissa's Ciphers: Meaning & Disruption in Richardson's "Clarissa"* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 15.
[6] Castle, 15.

unacknowledged in the literary-fictional context of *Clarissa*, even when the culprit—displayed in plain view—is, according to Castle and many others in the feminist tradition, patriarchal violence. In order to begin, Castle must gloss what has been endlessly glossed over in the prior generation of Anglo-American criticism of the novel. As Castle points out, previous criticism of the novel, "from Diderot to Dorothy van Ghent," eschew "meaning" in favor of form, narrative, genre, and the history of the novel. Castle's task in this study, then, is to "[investigate] the basic link between 'inside' and 'outside' in *Clarissa*, between story and shape: the matter of interpretation itself."[7] Reconceptualized as such, interpretation or exegesis, another term offered by Castle, serves as a crucial link between inside and outside for the novel and becomes "a mode of human contact" that is simultaneously, or perhaps necessarily, "a mode of violence."[8] To state in plain terms, the "link between inside and outside" itself is violence.

While *Clarissa's Ciphers* and other feminist studies accomplished their critical intervention by raising hermeneutic questions and positing discursive forms, Chapter One takes a closer look at the "matter" in Castle's key formulation of "the matter of interpretation." My aim is to continue this work by focusing not on meaning and form as binary antitheses, but on long-ignored "matter," a term that registers both the materiality inherent in fictional and historical eighteenth-century epistolary practices, as well as its meaningful force and presence not only in the fictional world of the novel *Clarissa*, but also our own.

[7] Castle, 17-18.
[8] Castle, 16.

II. Vibrant Matters

What does it mean for matter to be "vibrant"? In *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2010), Jane Bennett begins by offering the term "vitality," from which Bennett derives later formulations such as "vital materialism" and "vitality intrinsic to materiality":

> By "vitality" I mean the capacity of things…not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own.[9]

Bennett's definition contains two core components that are each translated differently in the context of this study. The first involves a kind of "negative" power attributable to matter. In the context of *Clarissa* and the eighteenth-century novel, Clarissa's specific writing as well as the larger phenomenon of female literacy often "impede or block" Lovelace's many plots of control and domination. The second component posits that matter may act as "quasi agents" for or against (in Bennett's terms, a "positive ontology") a particular cause. Similarly, in *Clarissa* it is neither Clarissa's characterological interiority nor any of its conventional attributes—which might include intent, volition, self-consciousness, or "mind"—that agitates Lovelace in Letter 242.

When Lovelace writes, "thou seest how women, and women's words, fill my mind," Clarissa is nowhere to be found. Instead, Lovelace invokes "women" and "women's words," both of which I read as abstractions rather than references to specific women or texts. In the framework of this study, then, "women's words" exert

[9] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), viii.

a quasi-agential force, as they are the source of Lovelace's frustration. In a striking, grammatical parallel, "women's words" are configured as the subject of this clause, their action being the verb "to fill." In this way, Lovelace's own writing inadvertently empowers the women's words that he condescendingly calls "figaries" and "tostications."[10] As Chapter One will demonstrate, both of these terms reveal a conventionally male discourse that predetermines women's words as whimsical or trivial, and reveal the low currency of female testimony and witness—all distinctive markers of the discursive violence of rape advanced by feminist critics.

For Bennett, the stakes of advocating for the vitality of matter are expansive but primarily political. Bennett writes that "the image of dead or thoroughly instrumentalized matter feeds human hubris and our earth-destroying fantasies of conquest and consumption."[11] Further, the reconfiguration of matter is necessary for re-establishing a more equitable balance of power between humans and non-human matter. Specifically, the quasi-agential "movements and effectivity" of matter are often subsumed under, and re-ascribed to, human thought, action, and/or feeling. In the context of the eighteenth-century novel, this tendency surfaces most clearly in the problem of characterological interiority and the ways in which the quasi-agency of matter, specifically of writing and its vibrant materiality, are similarly ascribed ultimately to a human source, often the human character or subject to whom the interiority inevitably belongs.

[10] Richardson, *Clarissa*, Letter 242; 818.
[11] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, ix.

As with ideas of passive or "dead matter," Bennett sets "materiality" apart from its common association with Marx's idea of materiality as a set of "material constraints" that furnish larger economic structures.[12] In the context of vibrant matter, materiality also possesses vitality insofar as it is a property of matter to affect or be affected, recalling Spinoza's *affectus*. While Bennett argues that recognizing the vitality of matter is crucial to political life, this study applies this initial formulation in the literary-critical context so as to argue that the recognition of the vibrant materiality of writing is critical to eighteenth-century practices of letter-writing and the literary project of epistolary fiction.

Building upon existing methodologies of the new materialism, this dissertation presents the witness record made possible by female literacy as a form of diffused, quasi-agency capable of disrupting male solipsism, discursive control, and finally circumvents some of the most potent forms of silencing in the aftermath of rape.

[12] Bennett, xvi.

CHAPTER 1

"IN HER SENSE OF THE WORD": FICTIONS OF MATERIALITY IN *CLARISSA*

> Be honest to her, then, in her sense of the word
>
> —John Belford to Robert Lovelace, Letter 143

It only takes a small conceptual leap to draw parallels between the scenario of female writing in *Clarissa* with Frances Ferguson's claims, albeit on a broader scale, around gender's role in legal discourse in "Rape and the Rise of the Novel." Surveying the history of the various treatments of and approaches to rape, fictional and otherwise, Ferguson writes,

> First, there is a formal stipulation of truthfulness by gender, so that all men always mistrust all women's charges of rape, and thereby relegate them to the status of the merely fictitious.[13]

First among Ferguson's three claims is the "formal stipulation of truthfulness by gender," the low or non-currency of women's words formally implied by Lovelace's language, which does indeed relegate any claims by women as fundamentally, if not ironically, "fictitious." "Formal" is a key term for Ferguson, which registers the systematic nature of discrediting women and foregrounds the essay's later discussion of "the primacy of forms" in *Clarissa*.[14] Ferguson's idea of form revises the prevailing narrative of the novel that prefers the "primacy of the psychological." Here, I read "psychological" as a loose index of characterological interiority, in order to illustrate

[13] Frances Ferguson, "Rape and the Rise of the Novel," *Representations*, no. 20 (1987): 88–112; 97-98, https://doi.org/10.2307/2928503.
[14] Ferguson, 100.

that Ferguson's claims around *Clarissa* and the psychological novel rely on non-discursivity and its accompanying forms of resistance.

In reevaluating both rape law and its feminist critique, Ferguson's formulation brings together the idea of consent at the heart of any rape accusation, on the one hand, and crucially, a set of contradictions based on Ferguson's revised notion of form, on the other. The problem of consent is that "one might never consent even if one wanted to consent, that the form might itself oppose the very mental state it was designed to represent."[15] In the context of *Clarissa*, Ferguson writes,

> What Clarissa's unconsciousness establishes for the psychological novel, then, is a pattern of psychological complexity that does not at all directly express mental states but rather relies on the contradiction built into the formal stipulation of them. Psychological complexity, that is, pits the stipulated mental state against one's actual mental state, so that one is able to resist without resisting, can have a mental state even in unconsciousness, and is unable to consent even if one wants to.[16]

According to Ferguson, the "psychological complexity" attributed to the novel actually relies upon the "contradiction built into the formal stipulation of [mental states]." Reconfigured in the theoretical framework of this chapter, "contradiction" functions as a fiction that enables interiority by engaging conflicting accounts of mental states, by creating what might be characterized as disruptive, discursive pressure. Further, Ferguson seems skeptical of mental states that are "directly [expressed]," indicating that they are "not at all" involved in the construction of psychological complexity. In a similar vein, this chapter argues that fictions of materiality and their accompanying material and discursive consequences allow for

[15] Ferguson, 100-101.
[16] Ferguson, 101.

Clarissa to "resist without resisting," via the presence and force of her writing as separate from her interiority.

The findings of this first chapter intervene in critical discourse on *Clarissa* in three major ways: 1) this chapter argues against readings that deny Clarissa all forms of agency, shifting the conversation away from an assumed lack or loss of agency towards generative forms of resistance; 2) in order to advance renewed forms of agency for Clarissa, this chapter makes the case for a mode of reading that disengages affect from human subjectivity, which reflects the theoretical commitments of the new materialism; 3) lastly, this chapter suggests that fictions of materiality, in enabling the representation of rape, entwine form and meaning in innovative ways that attest to the role—perhaps even primacy—of women's literacy in the literary discourse on rape in this period.

I. Disruption, or, The Persistence of Women's Words

> Thou seest how women, and women's words, fill my mind
>
> —Robert Lovelace to John Belford, Letter 242

Indeed, the term "disruption" that I use here is not entirely unfamiliar. Disruption, as a fiction of materiality, shares an affinity with the titular "interruption" of Terry Castle's *Clarissa's Ciphers*. Yet while Castle's term is a movement towards victimization that is nonetheless intertwined with hermeneutic reading—Castle calls Clarissa a "hermeneutic casualty," for instance—disruption instead challenges the idea of Clarissa's lack of power, specifically when that power is constituted via acts of writing. This conceptual difference allows for reading moments of disruption as

exerting a reconceptualized notion of agency, drawn from ideas put forth by the new materialism.

As a fiction of materiality, disruption disallows continuity, broadly conceived as apt to describe various discursive formations, such as the cogency of ideas, the reconciliation of opposite or dichotomous halves, or a linear trajectory or genealogy. Yet this chapter suggests that material forms can be equally disruptive, whether in the form of Richardson's experiments with typography; via physical, embodied practices of reading and writing, fictional and otherwise; and even via the blank space of paper between rows of neatly printed type on the pages of the novel *Clarissa*. Not only is continuity denied by disruption, the effecting of this denial is also often, or perhaps always, violent. To disrupt, in eighteenth-century parlance, is to "rend," "burst asunder," or "forcibly sever" continuity, descriptors that endure to the present day.[17] The connotations of violence and forcefulness capture both the destructive power of disruption but also, as I shall argue, the reconstitution of disruptive force as literary expression, witness, and ultimately a form of agency mutually constituted with gendered violence in the novel.

With this framework in mind, I now return to Letter 242 as an exemplary moment of the fiction of disruption at work. To Belford, Lovelace writes,

> After all, methinks I want those tostications [thou seest how women, and women's words, fill my mind] to be over, happily over, that I may sit down

[17] For example, Samuel Johnson's 1768 *A Dictionary of the English Language* and modern editions of the Oxford English Dictionary define disruption in the senses given above. Johnson's definition of "disruption" is "the act of breaking asunder; a breach; rent." Similarly, the OED's definition is "the action of rending or busting asunder."

> quietly, and reflect upon the dangers I have passed through, and the troubles I have undergone.[18]

Lovelace's frustrated aside, the "women's words" rendered in parentheticals, formally intrudes upon Lovelace's sentence in much the same way that Clarissa and her writing have come to occupy not only this particular train of thought, but his thoughts more generally. That this aside is cordoned off from the rest of the sentence, circumscribed by the parentheticals, seems fitting, too; the parentheses are a superficial effort, in Lovelace's writing, to prevent the "tostications" from disquieting his mind. And "women's words" emerge, mid-phrase, as if to remind us that although the latter is the product of the former, "women" are distinct from "women's words."

More fundamentally, the separate articulation of "women" and "women's words" affirms the latter's very existence, made possible by the rise of female literacy and women's active participation in epistolary culture by the mid-eighteenth century. It would have been easy to conceive of a time when there were none, at least in pen, ink, and paper. The simple "and" that separates women from their writing, then, registers the transformative social changes that were taking place at this historical juncture and makes possible the separation of person from writing, which foregrounds the reconceptualization of agency, similarly gendered, posed by this chapter.

Yet, as Anna Howe reminds us, women's words nonetheless amounted to low currency. She writes, "words leave no traces; they pass as breath; and mingle with air […] But the pen is a witness on record."[19] Literacy provides the pen, which transforms

[18] Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa; or, the History of a Young Lady*, ed. Angus Ross (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England; New York: Penguin Classics, 1986), Letter 242; 818.
[19] Richardson, Letter 183; 588.

speech—breath mingled with air—into a "record." In her letter, Anna cautions against replying to Lovelace's coercions in writing, an activity forbidden by the Harlowe family. She advises using spoken "words," which "may be explained with latitude," to communicate. Simultaneously, however, Anna also urges Clarissa, "Yet write you should, I think, if you cannot speak."[20] At once acknowledging the low currency of female speech, specifically as proof or evidence, and harnessing that opportune weakness to Clarissa's advantage—to allow secret communication with Lovelace, thereby avoiding exposure to her family—Anna's advice reveals, perhaps inadvertently, a productive consequence central to modern feminist discourse on rape: the ability of women's words to generate substantial and substantive testimony and bear witness. In other words, Anna's advice reconstitutes the force of rape and silencing's violence into a form of expressive power, paving the way for alternate forms of agency via writing.

Apart from affecting Lovelace's own semantic and textual schemes, the fiction of disruption also functions on a larger scale, as it captures the vexed relations between not only the characters Robert Lovelace and Clarissa Harlowe, but, crucially, the complex relationship between their writing as separate from their characterological interiority. These relationships are displayed not through the processes of plot but are hidden in plain view, on the physical pages of the novel itself. Many critical accounts of Lovelace's writing mark his language and his power as inextricably bound or mutually constituted. Lovelace's practice of manipulative "quotation," here used broadly to characterize the various interactions between Lovelace and Clarissa's

[20] Richardson, 588.

writing, is a form of power enabled by both the (fictional) ownership of physical letters in the plot, i.e. Clarissa's letters that come into Lovelace's possession, and the deliberate removal of a letter's text from its original setting, i.e. Lovelace's transcription of the letters. Both practices, of course, would have been highly familiar to Richardson's readers.

Yet I'd like to suggest that Lovelace's efforts to manipulate Clarissa's writing produce consequences that amount to resistance: a challenge to his seemingly "pure" language, often self-referred to in highly literary terms such as "art" and "invention"; the exposure and dismantling of his solipsism; and the novel's exposure of male, patriarchal discourse as one that dangerously conflates women's writing, crucially, with their subjectivity.

In Letter 321, Lovelace declares that Clarissa is "the only subject worth writing upon."[21] She had earlier escaped from Mrs. Sinclair's, leaving Lovelace seemingly without his chosen "subject." Yet this declaration also inadvertently reveals the dangerous proximity, espoused in or implied by his writing, between Clarissa's person and its discursive semblance in language, whose articulation and meaning are wholly fashioned and controlled by himself. Central to the articulation of Lovelace's Clarissa, as I shall argue, is Clarissa's writing—but only after it is subject to manipulation. Lovelace writes,

> All that the charmer of my heart shall say, that will I put down: every motion, every air of her beloved person, every look, will I try to describe; and when she is silent, I will endeavor to tell thee her thoughts, *either what they are, or what I'd have them to be* (emphasis mine)—so that, having *her*, I shall never want a subject[22]

[21] Richardson, Letter 321; 1023.
[22] Richardson, 1023.

Lovelace's letter proceeds easily from speech to "motion," "air," "look," and "thoughts." Indeed, his account of a subject includes what critics often identify as key features of characterological interiority, as understood to be a kind of proto-subjectivity. Yet in creating a grammatical false equivalence between "what [Clarissa's thoughts] are, or what [he'd] have them to be," Lovelace inadvertently exposes his own solipsism by surreptitiously conflating the novel's representation of Clarissa with an entirely separate one of his own creation. Embedded within this "either/or" is the paradox at the core of Lovelace's writing. Lovelace does not write *about* Clarissa but instead writes another Clarissa into being as a consequence of his solipsism. At the core of the fiction of disruption, then, is the agonistic, prolonged encounter between the "and" of women's writing and the "or" of Lovelace's fictive Clarissa; between the disruptive, agential force of women's writing and its violent enclosure and recapitulation by male discourse.

For Lovelace, to "write Clarissa" is to possess or "have" her even beyond its sexual connotation, precisely because doing so denies her subjectivity. This is perhaps what Castle means by the suggestion that writing is a mode of contact capable of violence. In what follows, I suggest that though Clarissa's subjectivity in this sense is denied, Clarissa's writing itself is capable of disrupting Lovelace's plotting and his language.

Returning to quotation as one of the means by which Lovelace creates "what I'd have them to be," or his fictional Clarissa's thoughts, Lovelace habitually incorporates text from Clarissa's letters, often entire letters embedded intact, into his

own. To the extent that Clarissa is unaware of Lovelace's doings with her letters, the letters are reproduced but not without being altered in some way, whether it is Lovelace's addition of commentary, the strategic placement of a letter's textual contents, or the willful omission of a telling detail—the latter effectively producing a scenario wherein certain presumed "facts" or events of the novel may remain totally unknown to the reader. Though Lovelace does not delve into his processes—a gesture in concert with his refusal to relay the "art" of his seduction—this fictional scenario would have also been familiar to Richardson's readers. In violating the body of Clarissa's writing, though by no means in competition with the violation of her physical body, Lovelace effects the fracturing of his own letters and the meaning they carry.

To encapsulate some of these processes, I turn to Belford and his adoption of Clarissa's phrase—"her sense of the word"—in direct opposition to Lovelace's solipsistic language. In Letter 143, Belford makes a crucial distinction between what he calls "our honour"—that of the rake—and "honour in the general acceptation of the word," thereby exposing Lovelace's solipsism as it attempts to conflate the former with the latter. At the close of this letter, Belford urges Lovelace, "Be honest to her, then, in *her* [sic] sense of the word."[23]

[23] Richardson, Letter 143; 500, 503.

II. Staggered Hands, Crooked Paths

> Don't you see how crooked some of my lines are? Don't you see how some of the letters stagger more than others!
>
> —Clarissa Harlowe to Anna Howe, Letter 91

> What therefore, upon the whole, do we get by treading in these crooked paths, but danger, disgrace, and a too-late repentance?
>
> —John Belford to Robert Lovelace, Letter 192

One origin story of *Clarissa* is that of the Richardson-Fielding debate that originated around Richardson's first novel *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740). Upon the novel's publication in 1740, the reading public seemingly divided itself into polar opposites: "Anti-Pamelists" levied charges of lewdness and depravity on the novel, while the novel's defenders, "Pamelists," touted Pamela Andrews as the paragon of moral, social, and female sexual virtue. A flurry of redactions, chief among them Henry Fielding's critical parody *Shamela* (1741), reveal an intense cultural awareness of, and concern for, what constituted appropriate behavior for women, particularly the sexual conduct of young, unmarried women. The Pamela debate quickly became a sensational controversy that engulfed the British republic of letters in a manner unprecedented in the period, precisely because its stakes were none other than the sexual conduct of young women, the perennial subjects of Richardson's novels. Indeed, this public response aligns with Richardson's self-purported aim for virtually all of his writing as the moral improvement of the reading public, especially of young, impressionable readers, which I explore at length in Chapter Three.

Though the Pamela debate seems only to involve moral principles as practiced by individual persons, this controversy was also equally a debate about the novel form, specifically Richardson's use of first-person narration in *Pamela*. Since the novel's titular character is the sole letter-writer in the novel, Anti-Pamelists were quick to point out the hidden dangers, and potential hypocrisy, of Pamela's account, especially since the events that are relayed to the reader directly involve herself. Levying this critique, Fielding's *Shamela* accuses Richardson of naiveté in claiming to have rendered Pamela's interiority transparent. The parody preserves most of the plot of the novel but alters the account to reveal Pamela's deception, covert machinations, and moral corruption, which, as the parody readily suggests, might have been the case all along, only cleverly concealed by Pamela's unreliable narration.

Yet to others, that transparency was compelling. Several "letters to the editor" are printed with Richardson's introduction to the second edition of *Pamela*, though not all of the letters are printed in every edition. In fact, most modern editions seem to prefer Richardson's table of contents more than the letters, which are often omitted. Nonetheless, these letters to the editor are curious artifacts worth noting, particularly in light of the Pamela debate's central concern around characterological interiority. One anonymous contributor—decidedly a Pamelist—writes,

> I am charmed with the beautiful Reflections [Pamela] makes in the Course of her Distresses; her Soliloquies and little Reasonings with herself, are exceeding [sic] pretty and entertaining: She pours out all her Soul in them before her Parents without Disguise; so that one may judge of, nay, almost see, the inmost Recesses of her Mind.[24]

[24] Samuel Richardson, *Introduction to Pamela*, ed. Sheridan W. Baker, Augustan Reprint Society 48 (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, 1954). The contributor is unnamed and could very well be Richardson himself.

Here, the writer's gesture of correcting their own writing—a self-conscious invocation of the common trope of "writing to the moment" in epistolary practice—deftly reflects the concerns of the novel's readers as well as its author. Correcting "judging" to "almost seeing" Pamela's mind reveals not only a concerted awareness of the literary representation of interiority, but also the terms by which the reader might engage with that representation. This corrective motion, albeit performed, resembles those generated by the fiction of liminality or "staggering," its eighteenth-century counterpart, which I shall explore in this section as another fiction of materiality generated by rape that enables the representation of interiority. In this regard, the anonymous letter is apt to mention, first and foremost, "Distress" as a marker of interiority—a piece of Pamela's "Soul" that readers may "see" and judge for themselves. Yet ultimately Pamela's distress is the result of the multiple threats of rape that she must successfully avoid before she is rewarded for her virtue.

Richardson's radical choice to depict multiple letter-writers in addition to the titular character in *Clarissa* carries these concerns forward. The epistolary novel's newfound polyphony responds to the Pamela debate and bolsters the narrative's claims to realism by creating a network of witnesses who may corroborate each other's account of the novel's events. Yet modern critical accounts only point out the opposite: the network of letter-writers instead creates what Castle famously calls "hermeneutic anarchy." In *Clarissa's Ciphers*, Castle's deconstructive reading vehemently denies the possibility of "seeing" Clarissa's mind. According to Castle, "the tragedy is that this opacity in the realm of events, the inaccessibility of any single human truth, breeds a

kind of hermeneutic anarchy."[25] According to Castle, it is this "opacity" that pits one exegete against another in a violent struggle to assert one's own meaning, which is not really meaning at all, being almost wholly "conditioned" by individual interpretation. Thus, as Castle writes, "in order to escape victimization, we are obliged to assert our reading of the text against the readings of others. To interpret [is] to circumscribe, preempt, 'interrupt' the other."[26] Given the motions by which the violence of interpretation mirrors the violent physical acts in the novel, the struggles of interpretation and its accompanying stakes become clear: in the face of such uncertainty, how can we interpret without committing violence against others?

The fiction of liminality describes the myriad formations that arise from different forms of uncertainty, such as interpretive uncertainty so acute as to foster both Castle's "hermeneutic anarchy" and William Warner's "struggles of interpretation" in *Reading Clarissa: The Struggles of Interpretation* (1979). Along with hermeneutic uncertainty, which gives rise to wavering, hesitation, and/or indecision, uncertainty may also manifest in material and discursive forms. The main reading of this section centers on Clarissa's "staggered hand," the crooked lettering that characterizes the self-written accounts of the violent trials she endures in the novel, in which hermeneutic uncertainty becomes visually and materially manifest. I introduce the term "staggering" as a proximate, historical counterpart to liminality, which retains, to the present day, the twin senses that formed around uncertainty by

[25] See Terry Castle, *Clarissa's Ciphers: Meaning & Disruption in Richardson's "Clarissa"* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 21; and William B. Warner, *Reading Clarissa: The Struggles of Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).
[26] Castle, 181.

the mid-eighteenth century. The literal sense of the word, which describes physical movement characterized by imbalance or unequal force, is accompanied by its metaphorical sense, which describes the primordial, fundamentally human encounter between pressing doubt, on the one hand, and belief, purpose, or long-held ideas, often of religion, on the other.

In *Clarissa*, the fiction of liminality engages the representational dilemma of rape in three major ways: liminality reveals uncertainty as inherent in acts of violence even, or perhaps especially, in the form of threats, constituting a distinct form of control; liminality's affinity for hesitation likewise generates affective states such as distress, while enabling violence via inaction and/or belated action; finally, liminality makes visible the asymmetrical power relations that govern the novel, challenging prevailing accounts of subjectivity that are predicated upon relationships between equal subjects, whose aim is mutual recognition.

As the longest novel in the British canon, the sheer volume of *Clarissa* is, by turns, both a cause for celebration and a source of vexation, including for Richardson himself. Based on his correspondence with literary interlocutors such as Aaron Hill, Richardson sought to shorten the novel, but without much success. The novel retained its volume in part due to Richardson's uncompromising vision of realism, but also the protracted unfolding of "poetic justice" in concert with the triumph of moral virtue.

Yet the difference a single word makes in *Clarissa* should not be underestimated. Letter 256 is Lovelace's recounting to Belford of Clarissa's failed, final attempt at escape from Mrs. Sinclair's brothel, immediately prior to her rape. Lovelace writes,

> Lady Betty would think it very strange, I told her, if she were to know it was so disagreeable to her to stay one night, for *her* company, in a house where she had passed *so many*!
>
> She called me names upon this.—She had called me names before—I was patient.
>
> Let her go directly to Lady Betty's lodgings, then; *directly* go; if the person I called Lady Betty was really Lady Betty.
>
> IF! my dear! Good Heaven! What a villain does that IF show you believe me to be!
>
> I cannot help it—I beseech you once more, let me go to Mrs. Leeson's, if *that* IF ought not to be said.[27]

In this exchange, Clarissa's "if" begins, ordinarily enough, as a statement of disbelief. As if dangling in front of her question of whether "the person [Lovelace] called Lady Betty was really Lady Betty," Clarissa continues to be skeptical of Lovelace's claims. More dangerously, the conditional "if" seems to suggest that the truth of the matter will come out, regardless of Lovelace's efforts at deception. Yet Lovelace's reply, "What a villain does that IF show you believe me to be!" effects a rare moment of self-awareness for Lovelace—that he *is* indeed a villain—and begins the process of transformation that this little word would undergo.

Though recapitulation obscures the transformation of "if" in this instance, so as to render it virtually imperceptible, Clarissa's final "if" transforms the word into a much larger, clever wager. Realizing the power of her "if," Clarissa offers to Lovelace the possibility of redemption: "let me go to Mrs. Leeson's, if *that* IF ought not to be said." Once she leaves for Mrs. Leeson's, the wager goes, Lovelace's villainy would be redeemed—not a bad bargain, after all, for an abductor who has committed so much. It is precisely this relaying of "if" back and forth that allows for its transformation. Read alongside the fiction of liminality, the transformation of "if"

[27] Richardson, *Clarissa*, Letter 256; 881.

reveals a certain productivity that arises out of the recapitulation of tropes, on the one hand, and a rhetorical power capable of disrupting Lovelace's language, on the other. The readings in this section argue that such transformations enabled by liminality allow for the possibility of both agency and resistance, which originates in women's writing as a direct result of gendered violence.

My choice of the term "recapitulation" is an effort to question and disengage from ideas of cogency and resolution sometimes associated with repetition in literary discourse. Recapitulation disengages the basic movement of repetition from presupposing ideas such as organic unity, reconciliation (moral, aesthetic, political, and so forth), mutual identification, and symmetry. I seek to shift our attention away from these theoretical anchors not because they are incorrect terms for describing the literary and discursive treatment of repetition. Rather, this shift is meant to acknowledge the harrowing force and forms of rape and gendered violence that incessantly repeat themselves without resolution. In many scenarios, effecting reconciliation seems even more difficult than confronting rape's representational challenge.

Recapitulation's resistance to resolution parallels one of the most critical implications that can be drawn from Clarissa's "if." By insisting on asymmetrical power relations, the disruptive effect of "if" revises Enlightenment accounts of subjectivity, specifically those that arise out of an equal intersubjective encounter and/or perfectly symmetric affective identification. In *Romantic Intimacy* (2013), Nancy Yousef formulates the term "intimacy" as apt to describe "asymmetrical and

nonreciprocal forms of relation, attention, and appreciation,"[28] an intersubjective asymmetry more encompassing of human relational experience than the longstanding idea of sympathy. Eighteenth-century accounts of sympathy, which often form the basis of ideas of larger social relations, were in part responsible for the term's legacy. As I shall examine in detail, this legacy reverberates in both Richardson's vision of interiority and present-day accounts of subjectivity.

Further, the eighteenth-century discourse of sympathy does not only concern its major association with the cult of sensibility. Sympathy in fact engages two core concerns of the Enlightenment: epistemology and morality. Its accompanying problematic then arises from the triangulation of feeling (as a proxy for sympathy), knowing, and moral principle. It is the question: "how does one know what the Other feels?" As Yousef points out, its various possible answers often presuppose the moral teleology of an intersubjective encounter (the aim or end must be moral) while taking an epistemic stance beforehand (presuming to know certain facts about the Other before the actual encounter).

If most Enlightenment accounts of intersubjective relations are predicated upon subjects on equal footing, then the various scenarios involving Lovelace and Clarissa suggest that not only are their relations asymmetrical, but that interiority, insofar as it is considered a form of proto-subjectivity, arises most explicitly from decidedly asymmetric encounters. In this case, Clarissa's abduction and physical confinement reveals the unsettling violence that accompanies the novel's vision of interiority. In the same letter, the fiction of liminality operates by dramatizing the gendered violence of

[28] Nancy Yousef, *Romantic Intimacy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 1-2.

Clarissa's encounters with Lovelace, again via the recapitulation of "if." As Lovelace recalls,

> Then assuming a more resolute spirit—[Clarissa says] I will go! I will inquire my way!—I will go by myself!—And would have rushed by me.
>
> I folded my arms about her to detain her; pleading the bad way I heard poor Charlotte was in; and what a farther concern her impatience, if she went, would give her.[29]

Lovelace invokes Charlotte, a niece of Lord M., his uncle, as a reason for Clarissa to remain at Mrs. Sinclair's, citing Charlotte's concern: "what a farther concern her impatience, if [Clarissa] went, would give her." Yet along with this familiar strategy of outright deception, Lovelace also relays Clarissa's "if" back to her, at once rejecting her previous wager and turning the word against her. "If she went" suddenly becomes threatening; it becomes his own wager, which, unlike Clarissa's, comes without the possibility of escape or freedom. The convoluted trajectory of "if," beginning with Letter 256, performs the transference of power—the black transaction—at the core of Clarissa and Lovelace's relationship, of the novel *Clarissa*, and of the critical tradition of Ian Watt, Warner, and others.

When Lovelace "folded [his] arms about her to detain her," he assumes a common posture that often portrays gendered violence in visual art. This particular episode recalls Clarissa's abduction from Harlowe Place, the first scene of physical confrontation in the novel. Consider Francis Hayman's painting of the scene (Fig. 1). Hayman's painting was completed in 1756 during the novel's continued, enthusiastic reception, being one among countless visual adaptations. The painting shows Clarissa and Lovelace outside the walls of Harlowe Place, Clarissa's family home, their arms

[29] Richardson, *Clarissa*, Letter 256; 881.

Fig. 1. Francis Hayman, *Robert Lovelace Preparing to Abduct Clarissa*, 1753, oil on canvas, Southampton City Art Gallery, Southampton, U.K

locked in an uneasy embrace. In the background of the scene, a carriage awaits to take them away.

At the center of Hayman's scene, the two figures of Clarissa and Lovelace are in active but suspended motion, which I'd like to suggest is a visual fiction of staggering according to the period's conventions in visual art. The figures' staggered feet create the sense of physical imbalance that makes their dynamic, active posture plausible to the viewer. In the following pages, I shall argue that suspended motion, as the visual rendering of staggering, visualizes the asymmetrical power relationship between Clarissa and Lovelace by pitting one trope against another. Clarissa's posture deviates from the set of familiar tropes that organize the representation of romantic mutuality in promenade portraiture, such as the posture of embrace and direction of

the gaze. The tropic confrontation begins with her right arm breaking free from Lovelace's attempted embrace. Thus, Hayman's abduction scene is useful for thinking about staggering in the following ways: the painting visualizes staggering via the figures' suspended motion, which coincides with eighteenth-century ideas of the term; the painting's engagement with staggering reveals the asymmetrical power relations that define the relationship between Clarissa and Lovelace, even when rendered via popular tropes and received conventions; finally, reading the novel's account(s) of Clarissa's abduction through ideas of staggering no longer suggests a determined, tragic end for Clarissa, but a staggering *away* from violence and control towards resistance and agency, revising the stakes of this abduction scene.

In *Clarissa's Painter: Portraiture, Illustration, and Representation in the Novels of Samuel Richardson* (2009), Lynn Shepherd situates Hayman's painting within the context of both the promenade and marriage portraits, two popular genres in the eighteenth century. In order to portray the abduction scene and its extraordinary perversion of traditional narratives of courtship and marriage, Hayman purposefully inverts several conventions of these two types of portraiture. In traditional promenade and marriage portraiture, male and female gender relations are almost always mutual—even if only outwardly, as Shepherd regularly points out. In Hayman's painting, Clarissa and Lovelace resemble the subjects of a promenade portrait yet are marked as highly unusual. The promenade concept is thus reconceived as abduction, presaging Clarissa's rape with Lovelace's rapier, prominently displayed as both a marker of his masculinity as well as a reflection of his readiness for violence.

The larger posture that marks this ill-fated promenade is none other than the staggered pattern formed by the two bodies. Recalling eighteenth-century parlance, "to stagger" is to move between one place and another, often involuntarily or intuitively, due to different kinds of uncertainty, physical and otherwise: unsteadiness, giddiness, weakness, hesitation, indecision, and possible others.[30] Staggering describes the posture at the center of Hayman's painting so as to suggest male control, the ensuing threat of violence, and ultimately the asymmetrical power dynamic between the two figures. After all, the scenario of abduction is the culmination of Lovelace's initial series of plots to gain control over Clarissa's physical person, at this point in the novel orchestrated mainly by letters. This posture is none other than this perverted embrace, which declares Lovelace's control, thenceforth, of Clarissa's person.

In another inversion of portraiture convention, Clarissa's own position, leaning forward as if to move away, suggests that she is unable to break free completely, all while gazing back at the safety, no matter how ill-formed, of Harlowe Place. In promenade portraiture, the gaze is often directed at other figure(s) or the viewer, so as to suggest harmony and mutuality. In contrast, the staggering of the two bodies in Hayman's painting generates a sense of imbalance, both physical and metaphorical, visually realized by the figures' posture in the painting and dramatized time and again as unequal transactions of power in the novel.

Citing Gerard de Lairesse's treatise *The Art of Painting* (1738), which maintains that in such portraits the man be "in an active Motion" and the woman "[in]

[30] "stagger, v." OED Online. March 2021. Oxford University Press. http://oed.com (accessed May 20, 2021).

a sedate Motion," Shepherd points out that the reverse is true in Hayman: "it is Clarissa, not Lovelace, who is in 'active motion'—her shoulders are braced as she pushes her lover's hands away."[31] Reconceptualized in the terms of this study, Hayman's perversion of tropes suggests that the dilemma of representation affected the visual arts as much as it did the novel tradition, producing both tropic recapitulation and creative innovation.[32]

But what of Clarissa's emboldened right arm, which breaks free from Lovelace's deadly embrace? We know that Clarissa escapes at last, by leaving one father's house for another.[33] In the following pages, I'd like to suggest that Clarissa's staggering away from Harlowe Place without her consent, involuntarily towards her confinement and rape, can nonetheless exceed the kinds of deterministic readings—those that insist on a tragic finality at the moment of Clarissa's abduction—that have accompanied this famous scene. In many ways, the first reader of this scene is Anna and her warning, issued earlier in the novel, is perhaps the first to connect the abduction with a fatalistic end for Clarissa. Anna writes, "Punctilio is out of doors the moment you are out of your father's house."[34] "Punctilio" is a diminution of the Italian *puntiglio* and Spanish *puntillo*, meaning "point."[35] Anna rightly suggests that all the

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[31] Lynn Shepherd, *Clarissa's Painter: Portraiture, Illustration, and Representation in the Novels of Samuel Richardson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 167-68.
[32] For instance, Shepherd argues that this painting's dynamics shed light on Lovelace's use of the caged bird metaphor (Letter 170; 557 and elsewhere) and points out that the same metaphor is "a recurrent trope in eighteenth-century marriage and family portraiture, and one that covertly discloses the wife's real status in the house, for all the superficial iconography of mutuality" (160). Critics often point out how Richardson maintained a certain fluidity between visual and textual forms throughout his career.
[33] This is the famous "My Father's House" letter, Letter 421.1, one of Clarissa's last letters to Lovelace. See Richardson, *Clarissa*, Letter 421.1; 1233.
[34] Richardson, Letter 87; 355.
[35] "punctilio, n. and adj." OED Online. March 2021. Oxford University Press. http://oed.com (accessed May 20, 2021).

fine points of decorum—the quibbles, trifles, and niceties of behavior and reputation—will be figuratively "out of doors" once Clarissa is herself literally "out of doors" of Harlowe Place.[36]

Yet this moment of abduction can also constitute the beginning of a longer trajectory of resistance and agency that culminates in Clarissa's famous letter, which she sends to inform Lovelace that she had set out for "her father's house," considered by many critical accounts as a major moment of power reversal in the novel. What Castle calls hermeneutic opacity, then, is also an active form of self-protection, rather than an involuntary lack of intelligibility; as opposed to spectacular, outside "readers," the terms of the conversation are re-centered on those subjected to violence. Ultimately, Clarissa's staggering is more than simply metaphor. Fictions of staggering and liminality reveal the uncertainty and asymmetrical power relations in the novel, yet also paves the way for incipient, generative forms of agency.

The next reading of this section investigates another kind of staggering, one materially embedded within the novel's epistolary fiction, and one that engages some of its best-held tenets. At different moments in the novel, Clarissa's handwritten lines and lettering become staggered or crooked as a result of distinct affective and/or mental states such as confusion, hesitation, indecision, distress, or even illness. In Letter 464, Belford readily observes that on her deathbed Clarissa "has written a good deal; but in a hand not like her own fine one […] but much larger, and the lines crooked."[37] Tracing the uneven trajectory of Clarissa's staggered hand reveals its

[36] The two friends continue to echo this formulation to one another in two subsequent letters, Letters 89 and 90.
[37] Richardson, *Clarissa*, Letter 464.

sustained thematization as a marker of, and evidence for, Clarissa's increasingly desperate trials, but also as the entwinement between female interiority and writing. In this scenario, Clarissa's hand parallels her exposure to danger, distress, and illness, as if a proxy for her character. Central to the trajectory of the staggered hand is Clarissa's intense awareness of the visually manifest changes in her own writing during the course of her narrative, which is nothing less than a call for her readers to bear witness to the very trials her staggered hand suggests.

Yet the structural resemblance between Clarissa's staggered hand and the distresses of her inner self belies its critical function as a major challenge to one of the most pervasive fictions of epistolary culture: epistolary sincerity, or the complete correspondence between the letter-writer's thoughts and feelings and their expression in writing. In Samuel Johnson's oft-quoted formulation, it is that

> In a man's letters […] his soul lies naked, his letters are only the mirror of his breast; whatever passes within him is shown undisguised in its natural process; nothing is inverted, nothing distorted: you see systems in their elements; you discover actions in their motives[38]

The idea of epistolary sincerity—of the letter as mirror to the innermost, private self—forms the crux of Ian Watt's own formulation of the novel and its capacity to "penetrate" private experience through literary technique, which reflects the rise of the private sphere and its accompanying fictional forms.[39] Watt's account of epistolary sincerity endures in criticism of *Clarissa* and of the novel form more broadly,

[38] Samuel Johnson to Mrs. Hester Thrale, Lichfield, 27 Oct 1777, in Samuel Johnson, *The Letters of Samuel Johnson, with Mrs. Thrale's Genuine Letters to Him, Vol. 2: 1775-1782; Letters 370-821.1*, vol. 2, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 228-29.
[39] See Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 175-76.

specifically on the novel form's contribution to forming modern ideas of subjectivity. Yet in Watt's model, the privacy that ensures the letter's authenticity actually runs counter to another vision of privacy as enabling both deception and violence. In a sense, the problem is that the scenarios posed by *Clarissa* are *too* private, which reflects critical interest in forms of physical, psychological, and moral "enclosure" in the novel by critics such as Elizabeth H. Cook, Eagleton, and Castle.[40] In *Clarissa*, private enclosures afford no help or witness, but only writing that originates from within Clarissa's private chambers at Harlowe place, and later at Mrs. Sinclair's—locales that turn out to be not so private at all, but constantly surveilled by others.

The staggered hand's close association with female distress genders our understanding of epistolary fiction beyond the conventional gendering of private, sentimental letter-writing as female and of epistolary political and philosophical critique as male.[41] I'd like to suggest that beyond this gendered binary of epistolary writing, the staggered hand reveals Watt's vision of epistolary sincerity as a powerful, male, Lovelacean fiction that recapitulates Lovelace's solipsism and ultimately threatens to establish this solipsism as a critical norm. In the readings that follow, the female response to gendered violence exposes this Lovelacean fiction precisely by

[40] For further discussion of enclosure, see Elizabeth H. Cook, *Epistolary Bodies: Gender and Genre in the Eighteenth-Century Republic of Letters* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). Notably, Cook describes enclosure as anticipating more fully-fledged forms of the Gothic. According to Cook, the novel's "Gothic subtext of spaces associated with menace, imprisonment, tyranny, and torture is never far from the daylight life of this prosperous English family [i.e. the Harlowes]" (90). For a feminist critical account of the Gothic and its relation to gendered violence, see Terry Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[41] Cook, *Epistolary Bodies*, 71. Here, Cook rightly suggests that critics often elide the similarities between sentimental letter-writing and philosophical epistolary narrative, instead focusing on the distinctions between the two modes that have come to typify them.

relying upon the letter form's materiality to circumvent discursive control. The challenges afforded by the materiality of the letter form—the inaccessible materiality of the novel's "real, handwritten letters," for instance—are not impediments to understanding the novel, but become fictions of materiality that turn against male discourse.

The idea of an unusual, erratic hand is, of course, not Richardson's invention, but common parlance in familiar correspondence in the eighteenth century. Describing a hand as "staggered," however, arguably endows handwriting with the historical sense of the word "stagger" that was widely used in the eighteenth century before it became obsolete. Almost always anthropocentric, the common sense of "staggered" in the eighteenth century describes the surprise, difficulty, or confusion with which something or someone affects a person, specifically those that engage deeply human themes such as Christian assurance, moral purpose, and political conviction. In his commentary on a forged letter, Ben Jonson declares that the forgery "for a long time staggered my incredulity."[42] In an entry in *The Lives of the Poets*, Johnson describes an episode where Lord Lyttleton "saw difficulties which staggered [him]," when first confronted by challenges to his Christian faith.[43] All of this is to suggest that the forces of staggering, as used to describe Clarissa's handwriting, endow an almost-human quality to her letters—as if the words themselves are surprised, distressed, or wavering. Not until the late-nineteenth century will the physical and visual sense of

[42] Richard Farmer et. al., *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare: With the Corrections and Illustrations of Various Commentators: Comprehending a Life of the Poet, and an Enlarged History of the Stage* (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1821), 413.
[43] Samuel Johnson, "George Lyttleton," in *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. George Birkbeck Hill, vol. 3, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), 446–61.

staggering (such as the staggered arrangement of physical objects) surpass the word's original anthropocentric valence; as if caught in the forces of secularization, staggering began to shed some of its religious and moral connotations.[44]

That Clarissa's staggered hand so much *staggers* her readers in the novel—first Anna, then Belford—is due to the manner and flourish of her usual handwriting. In Letter 529, Anna describes to Belford,

> [Clarissa] was an admirable mistress of all the graces of elocution. The hand she wrote, for the neat and free cut of her letters, (like her mind, solid, and above all flourish) for its fairness, evenness, and swiftness, distinguished her as much as the correctness of her orthography, and even punctuation, from the generality of her own sex[45]

Richardson's detailed attention to Clarissa's hand reflects some of his existing commitments to familiar letter-writing, which critics often mark as a career-defining practice. Echoing Anna's elevation of Clarissa as above "the generality of her own sex," Richardson's own opinions on letter-writing, specifically on its female gendering, is well-established in his vast body of correspondence. In this scenario where writing and character are intertwined, Clarissa's manner of writing, as separate from the sentiments they convey, becomes a marker of her character.

Situating Clarissa's staggered hand within eighteenth-century metaphors of writing reveals its dual role in what Brad Pasanek calls "metaphors of the mind."[46] That is, the discourse of interiority in this period relies heavily on metaphors of physical objects to convey its ideas—in this case, paper, ink, and pen as instruments of

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[44] "stagger, v." OED Online. March 2021. Oxford University Press. http://oed.com (accessed May 20, 2021).
[45] Richardson, *Clarissa*, Letter 529.
[46] See Brad Pasanek, *Metaphors of Mind: An Eighteenth-Century Dictionary* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015).

writing. As if passing through the mediation of objects, interiority takes its shape in metaphor and, according to Pasanek, arguably cannot do so otherwise. In *Pamela*, Pamela compares her reader's mind to a blank sheet of paper, a Lockean *tabula rasa*: "Here are Pen and Ink: Here too is Paper; but it is as spotless as your Mind."[47] On the *tabula rasa* of the mind, God's law is writ in the conscience, and memories may be "blotted from the mind," a metaphorical drop of dark ink effecting willful forgetting. Beyond instruments of writing, character attributes may be "stamped" on a person's countenance or ideas deeply "impressed" upon the mind—processes that refer to the burgeoning culture of print. Indeed, metaphors of writing in forms old and new often reveal the comingling of the *tabula rasa* model of the mind with technologies of writing, whether in manuscript or print.

Yet perhaps the most oft-quoted of Richardson's sentiments on this subject is this reflection on familiar letter-writing:

> I proceeded therefore—That I loved Familiar-letter-writing, as I had more than once told her, above all the species of writing: It was writing from the heart (without the fetters prescribed by method or study) as the very word 'Cor-respondence' implied. Not the heart only; the soul was in it.[48]

While these sentiments reflect Johnson's vision of letter-writing in his letter to Hester Lynch Thrale, many critics have pointed out that both are instances of misquotation. Yet critical inquiry often ends with simply recognizing this misquotation. Contrary to the attention it has been paid, the ramifications of this misquotation are both

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[47] In Samuel Richardson, *Pamela: or, Virtue Rewarded. In a Series of Familiar Letters from a Beautiful Young Damsel, to Her Parents* (London: C. Rivington and J. Robinson, 1740; title page says 1741). As recorded in Pasanek's database, http://metaphors.lib.virginia.edu/metaphors/12293.

[48] This appears in the third edition of *Clarissa* (rather than the first edition cited elsewhere), Vol. IV (out of 8 vols.), Letter 44. In the 1751 printing, pp. 269-70. This also appears in Cook, *Epistolary Bodies*, 87.

complicated and severe. Specifically, the sentiments above, though almost always attributed to Richardson, are actually Lovelace's writing in Letter 210. "Writing from the heart" turns out to be a Lovelacean fiction, one towards which many eighteenth-century authorities on writing, including Johnson, were already suspicious. Among the ramifications of this fiction is the discrediting, depoliticization, and erasure of violence from women's speech and writing. Thus, the fiction of epistolary sincerity is always in danger of becoming its own form of gendered violence, which anticipates the discursive forms of violence that constitute present-day, feminist critical concerns, to which I will return.

Perhaps the most enduring fabrication of epistolary sincerity is the false etymology of the word "correspondence" offered by Lovelace. In common parlance, "correspondence" implies a certain degree of mutual reciprocity but lacks the psychological sense of "coming from the heart" that Lovelace newly ascribes to the word.[49] By surreptitiously endowing the word with affectivity and authenticity, Lovelace fashions the very "fetters" that his etymology claims to deny. When applied to women—and women's words—gendered violence, truthfulness, credibility, and literacy are dangerously, methodically "fettered" together as a form of discursive control.

Johnson's letter to Thrale warrants discussion at length as it also contains his own de-mystification of epistolary sincerity. In *Epistolary Bodies: Gender and Genre in the Eighteenth-Century Republic of Letters* (1996), Cook describes Watt's use of

[49] "correspondence, n." OED Online. March 2021. Oxford University Press. http://oed.com (accessed May 20, 2021).

Johnson's earlier formulation as testament to "the enduring ideological power of the *foenestra in pectore* ["window to the heart"] model of the letter."[50] Cook points out that in the very same letter, Johnson's declaration of the letter as mirror to the breast is actually a view *performed* for Thrale, his addressee. Immediately following his initial formulation, Johnson continues,

> Of this great truth, sounded by the knowing to the ignorant, and so echoed by the ignorant to the knowing, what evidence have you now before you? Is not my soul laid open in these veracious pages? Do not you see me reduced to my first principles?[51]

Here, the lost irony of Johnson's playful rapport captures another significant part of Watt's critical position. It is this lost irony that shores up Watt's account of Richardson's relationship with epistolary sincerity, which ultimately forms the basis of Watt's genealogy of the novel, specifically when the rise of the Richardsonian novel guarantees "the penetration of the private through increasingly sophisticated techniques."[52] Echoing Lovelace, Johnson thus satirically concludes, "This is the pleasure of corresponding with a friend, where doubt and distrust have no place, and every thing is said as it is thought."[53]

Revising Watt's claims around Richardson's views of epistolary sincerity, Cook juxtaposes Johnson's earlier formulation that letters are *foenestra in pectore* with a contradictory view in his *Life of Pope* (1779). Johnson writes,

> It has been so long said as to be commonly believed, that the true characters of men may be found in their letters, and that he who writes to his friend lays his heart open before him. But the truth is that such were the simple friendships of the Golden Age, and are now the friendships only of children […] There is,

[50] Cook, *Epistolary Bodies*, 86.
[51] Johnson to Hester Thrale, Lichfield, October 27, 1777, 228.
[52] Cook, *Epistolary Bodies*, 84.
[53] Johnson to Hester Thrale, Lichfield, October 27, 1777, 228.

> indeed, no transaction which offers stronger temptations to fallacy and sophistication than epistolary intercourse.[54]

Formulating an alternate set of terms to describe Richardson's epistolary practice, Cook reminds us that Johnson and Richardson share an acute awareness of the letter as performance, adopting "a vocabulary of role-playing suppressed in Watt's idealization of epistolarity."[55] Later in the entry on the life of Pope, we also find an echo of the Anti-Pamelist position in the *Pamela* debate: Johnson adds, "surely no man sits down to depreciate by design his own character."[56] Thus, the idea of the letter as written performance reflects not only the origins of *Clarissa*'s plot in the dramatic form of the she-tragedy,[57] but also their common theatricality. Both she-tragedy and novel transform gendered violence into spectacular performance, to which the audience is voyeur. This entry thus offers astute commentary on Johnson's previous tongue-in-cheek "performance" of epistolary sincerity to Thrale and reflects a concerted awareness of this performativity, rather than Watt's impulse to erase its irony.

Is Clarissa's writing, then, a window into her soul? The answer to this question is not so much elusive as it is protean, even when it surreptitiously denies its own history. From the descriptions and judgments of Clarissa's character to what Cook calls Lovelace's "*hyperprivate* discourse,"[58] and implicating the fault lines drawn between Watt, Warner, and their critical descendants and subsequent critics such as Eagleton, Castle, and Cook, the tug-of-war between "yes" and "no"—at times vexed

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[54] Samuel Johnson, "Pope," in *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. George Birkbeck Norman Hill, vol. 3, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), 206-7.
[55] Cook, *Epistolary Bodies*, 86.
[56] Johnson, "Pope," 207.
[57] See Jean I. Marsden, *Fatal Desire: Women, Sexuality, and the English Stage, 1660-1720* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).
[58] Cook, *Epistolary Bodies*, 89.

and complicated, at others startlingly simple—belies its fundamental violence. For Lovelace and Watt, Clarissa and Anna *must* be naïve writers, their correspondence perfectly transparent—they must remain, in Johnson's sense, innocent "children" devoid of "fallacy and sophistication" in order for (male) forms of fictional and critical control to function successfully. The fiction of epistolarity sincerity applies unequally to Clarissa and Anna as a form of hermeneutic control, in line with and perhaps exceeding Castle's account of Clarissa as a "hermeneutic casualty," implicating them in Ferguson's paradigmatic dilemma of rape, which is that of the contradictory nature of consent: in "the very form of the law of rape," Ferguson writes, "one might never consent even if one wanted to consent [and] the form might itself oppose the very mental state it was designed to represent."[59]

While for Ferguson the forms in question are rape law and the psychological novel, in the framework of this study the application of form extends to the governing fictions of epistolary practice, including epistolary sincerity, and the ways in which they further physical and discursive violence in *Clarissa*. The crux of this violence is the coupling of epistolary sincerity with the expressive doubt that often accompanies Clarissa's lack of consent—another fettering. In *Failures of Feeling: Insensibility and the Novel* (2019), Wendy Lee traces the overwhelming readerly and critical impulse to discredit Clarissa's own feelings, and by extension her (lack of) consent, which begins—perhaps surprisingly—with Anna and her conflation of "knowing the heart" with the presence of romantic love. Anna's letter, Letter 10, appears at the novel's

[59] Ferguson, "Rape and the Rise of the Novel," 100-101.

literal beginning, in which she responds to rumors of Lovelace's courtship of Clarissa and the scandal it has brought upon the Harlowe family. Anna writes to Clarissa,

> In short, my dear, it is my opinion […] that [Lovelace] has seen more than *I* have seen; more than you think *could* be seen—more than I believe you *yourself* know, or else you would let *me* know it.[60]

While it is perhaps premature to chastise Anna for her sentiments, Lee points out that the expressive doubt of whether Clarissa "knows her own heart" persists, even after the plotted abduction, rape, and eventual death of Clarissa, a plot that runs parallel to Richardson's historical completion of the novel and the novel's readerly reception. Later in the same letter, Anna concludes, "It is my humble opinion […] that on inquiry it will come out to be LOVE [*sic*]."[61] Reading this letter, Lee points out that Anna is not alone in this matter: "Like Anna, Richardson's readers discredited Clarissa's account of her own feelings, convinced that she did love, or at least should have loved, her rapist."[62] We may recall here, too, that many of Richardson's most avid interlocutors, most famously Lady Dorothy Bradshaigh, objected to Clarissa's death in favor of marriage.[63]

Taking up the issue of romantic love, Katherine Binhammer situates this debate in *Clarissa*'s reception within modern feminist accounts of modern subjectivity, which recalls our earlier discussion of Yousef and mutual recognition as foundational to proto-subjectivity. In "Knowing Love: The Epistemology of

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[60] Richardson, *Clarissa*, Letter 10; 71.
[61] Richardson, 71.
[62] Wendy A. Lee, *Failures of Feeling: Insensibility and the Novel* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), 61.
[63] This will be discussed more fully in the context of Richardson's reception in America in Chapter Three.

Clarissa," the pervasive discrediting of Clarissa's own account of her feelings argued by Lee becomes a question posed by Binhammer simply as "Does she or does she not love Lovelace?"[64] As if to replace Foucault's "master key" to epistemology—sexuality—with what Anna calls "love," Binhammer locates the "problem of love"—Anna's assertion of love in spite of Clarissa's denial—in a "new and secular modern subject, one whose desires are hidden from itself and whose heart is capable of acting without its knowledge."[65] This idea aligns conceptually with Ferguson's own account of subjectivity as arising from a kind of unconscious space or gap made visible by the contradiction of consent, or the conflict between the form(s) of consent and the "mental states" they claim to represent—though always unsuccessfully. This highly structural process reveals, in Ferguson's words, "the importance of the notion of subjectivity itself [as] guaranteed precisely by eradicating its relevance."[66] Subjectivity is constructed precisely in the moment in which it is erased, and always belatedly after the fact of rape.

In reviewing this critical history of epistolary sincerity, I'd like to suggest that the staggered hand, in part due to its non-discursive nature, is one way in which Clarissa's writing refuses to participate in the fraught debates around the affectivity and authenticity of writing, issues specifically gendered female so as to be deployed against women. To the extent that Clarissa's letters claim, according to Lovelace, to provide a view of her authentic, private experience, the staggered hand resists such

[64] Katherine Binhammer, *The Seduction Narrative in Britain, 1747-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 861.
[65] Binhammer, 861.
[66] Ferguson, "Rape and the Rise of the Novel," 98.

manipulation as a non-discursive means of witness and agency that circumvents discursive control, even as Clarissa and her letters become increasingly enclosed. The negation or violent discrediting of women's words, then, may in fact be reconstituted as agential, expressive, and/or non-discursive force.

For Clarissa, to call attention to her staggered hand is to call for readerly witness: "Don't you see how crooked some of my lines are? Don't you see how some of the letters stagger more than others!"[67] As the novel's chief witness, Anna models how to bear ethical witness first and foremost by reading Clarissa's letters ever more closely. Contrary to her earlier disbelief of Clarissa's protestations against Lovelace, Anna's acts of witness, via precisely this kind of close reading, return us to the staggered hand. In Letter 473, Anna echoes Clarissa's worry, even while questioning her own judgment:

> But methinks, your style and sentiments are too well connected, too full of life and vigour, to give cause for so much despair as your staggering pen seems to forbode.[68]

Clarissa's staggering pen forbears "despair," yet her writing is nonetheless "full of life and vigour." Anna brings "style," "sentiments," and Clarissa's staggering pen into close scrutiny because they seem, uncharacteristically, to contradict one another. Yet in *Clarissa* such contradictions are not unusual, as the thematization of the staggered hand is also the thematization of hermeneutic reading. Anna interprets the nature and quality of her correspondence with Clarissa with increasing worry, especially when

[67] Richardson, *Clarissa*, Letter 91; 368.
[68] Richardson, Letter 473; 1348.

her own interpretive gestures, such as the one described above, operate against the grain of Clarissa's "sentiments."

In addition to its function as a proxy for Clarissa's interiority, the staggered hand also captures, via structural resemblance, the moral dimensions of Clarissa's narrative. The trajectory of Clarissa's staggered hand begins with the materiality of epistolary form but is subsequently endowed with moral efficacy. As the two epigraphs of this section suggest, the novel metaphorically transforms staggered lettering into an uneven, tortured "path" characteristic of an immoral life, as Belford suggests in Letter 192:

> What therefore, upon the whole, do we get by treading in these crooked paths, but danger, disgrace, and a too-late repentance?[69]

In his letter, Belford embeds this question within a longer reflection—his own repentance—indicting Lovelace but also himself. Belford's "crooked paths" encompass not only immoral acts of seduction and abandonment, but also the legal trajectory of male-inherited property, marital ruin, and children born out of the rake's penchant for adultery, infidelity, and divorce. In her own condemnation of Lovelace's libertinism, Clarissa echoes Belford's formulation. Recounting her speech to Belford, Lovelace writes,

> See, Mr. Lovelace, said [Clarissa], what you have brought me to, by treading after you in such crooked paths!—See what disgrace I have incurred![70]

Belford's rebuke applies to the scenario of this letter, too. Here, Clarissa invokes the "crooked paths" of an immoral life in order to reject Lovelace's proposal for a

[69] Richardson, Letter 192; 615.
[70] Richardson, Letter 221; 708.

clandestine marriage, a plot he had arranged beforehand with his accomplice, Captain Tomlinson.

To the extent that Clarissa's hand is intertwined with her interiority, then, I'd like to suggest that Clarissa's moral virtue—in this case, her refusal to tread after Lovelace on paths ever more crooked—is similarly related to one of the most distinctive markers of her physical person in the novel: her handwriting. Thus, we may revise our initial understanding of the staggered hand by acknowledging its co-occurrence—as if a kind of comorbid condition—with the moral dilemmas posed by the novel, rather than their separation. The fiction of staggering is not only a mode of liminality, one that suggests conditions such as hesitation and indecision, but also a formal means by which moral questions may be rendered materially. In other words, the fiction of staggering fulfills its structural function as a mode of relation-making that registers the gendered violence from which it originates.

While the staggered lines manifest on the body of the novel's fictional letters attest to the importance of materiality—and its vexing inaccessibility—in epistolary practice, the dilemma of representation nonetheless remains: rendered in print, the letters' materiality is inaccessible to the novel's readers. Not only are signs of materiality formally denied by the medium of the printed page; their inaccessibility becomes embedded in the novel's fiction. According to claims made by the fictional editor of the novel, the staggered lines, like all of Clarissa's letters, have been rendered uniform in their fictional, editorial transformation from handwritten letter to printed page. Yet the persistent, self-conscious performance of the letter's materiality, which calls attention to the handwritten letters as unique, non-replicable, physical artifacts,

registers a profound sense of loss that accompanied the tectonic shifts in dominant media forms that occurred in the eighteenth century—shifts not unlike those in our present day—specifically the ways in which the handwritten letter's capacity for conveying and authenticating affect cannot be fully rendered in printed form. Thus, we may view the fictional practice of invoking the materiality of handwriting as in part an effort to retain, and perhaps translate, the imprints of the human on writing at its limits, against the mechanical forces of print.

Working as both author and printer, Richardson was well-poised to pioneer the conventions by which the letter's materiality may be captured in print. Indeed, Richardson's chosen genre, the epistolary novel, by its very premises must engage the tensions that arise from the shift from manuscript culture to print. In the following pages, I argue that *Clarissa*'s self-conscious performance of the letter's materiality constitutes, perhaps paradoxically so, one of the novel's core fictions of materiality and one of its most compelling and enduring claims to realism, despite the novel's constant reminders that this materiality is inaccessible to its reader. Its consequences are two-fold. First, the novel's fictional rendering of materiality endows Clarissa's writing, as a proxy for female writing, with expansive capabilities for agency, affectivity, and authenticity. In broader, theoretical terms, the novel's engagement with materiality models one of the major claims of the new materialism's theories of vibrant matter, recalling Bennett's idea of matter as possessing a kind of "vitality," or

as "the capacity of things […] to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own."[71]

Ideas of vibrant matter, in turn, animate the potential and force of epistolary materiality in this study. In effect, epistolary fictions embrace theoretical ideas and embodied manifestations of eighteenth-century vibrant matter as fictions of materiality and as genre-defining tropes of epistolary practice that certainly exceed their strictly fictional forms. For Richardson's readers, the materiality of epistolary fiction renders the novel all the more life-like partly as reflecting existing epistolary practices (the self-conscious invocation of human engagement with the physical letter), but also as "vibrant" in the new materialist sense. In other words, Richardson and his readers recognized the hermeneutic power imbued in the hand-written letter's vibrant materiality.

In the last section of this chapter, the fiction of fragmentation not only allows for the representation of rape—in this case by the survivor—but also revises prevailing accounts of Clarissa's "mad papers" as the product of a disordered, broken mind. While Clarissa's crooked lines expose the fiction of epistolary sincerity, a revised account of the mad papers—the novel's most critical engagement with the dilemma of representing rape in its aftermath—reveal fragmentation as enabling representation, rather than breaking apart a fictional cogency that never existed.

[71] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), viii.

III. "Paper X" and the Fragments of Feeling

> That *Clarissa* is a highly moral work,
> has always been allowed; but what is the
> moral?
>
> —Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Preface to
> *The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*

The "mad papers" are a set of unusual letters written by Clarissa after her rape, though they are not letters in the conventional sense. They are perhaps better characterized as simply ten pieces of paper, which, in the fiction of the novel, are not only written and read but torn, thrown under the table, transcribed, and circulated among different characters. The final section of this chapter examines these unique artifacts alongside the fiction of fragmentation. In doing so, it mounts a challenge to the prevailing, dominant reading of the mad papers that sees this writing as indicative of, and evidence for, Clarissa's "disturbed," "broken," or "insensible" state of mind—essentially deeming Clarissa a "broken victim."

In this reading, after her rape Clarissa can no longer write with purpose or clarity because her mind, also sometimes described as "consciousness," is disordered. Since she did not write legibly, her mind must be similarly confused. Observing Clarissa during this time, Lovelace writes that he fears "that her intellects are irreparably hurt" and describes her as capable of being "deemed raving mad, and [that Lovelace] should be obliged to confine her,"[72] should she continue her present behavior.

[72] Richardson, *Clarissa*, Letter 261; 888.

Among studies of the novel, Warner's *Reading Clarissa: The Struggles of Interpretation* (1979) follows the broad critical shift from reading for social context towards close reading in order to discover—or perhaps *uncover*—authorial dimensions. In the previous generation of criticism, Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) had marked the activity of reading *Clarissa* as, in a certain sense, an exercise in epistemology. According to Watt, the novel destabilizes categorical notions of "the real," "Nature," and "Truth," by revealing that they are merely constructions, in turn generating precisely the "struggles of interpretation" that Warner describes.[73]

However, in both *The Rise of the Novel* and *Reading Clarissa*, the fictional nature of the novel's world and the challenges accompanying its interpretation had cast Clarissa's rape as a "mere" construction among countless others. This larger critical movement did not merely leave rape and gendered violence unattended. As the conclusion of this chapter demonstrates, much of the critical history, especially of the mad papers, effectively excised Clarissa's rape out of the novel *Clarissa* entirely. Warner refers to the rape as the "black transaction," a euphemistic phrase used in the novel by its fictional editor, obscures its accompanying violence and loss, and instead recasts the rape as the "triumph" of Lovelacean language, one in which sexual violation mirrors rhetorical power. Clarissa seeks to defend her virtue, but even more so her version or interpretation of events in the "play of rival significations."[74] Thus,

[73] Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, Ch. 6 "Private Experience and the Novel." See also Castle, *Clarissa's Ciphers*, 27.
[74] Warner, *Reading Clarissa*, 60. See also John Preston, *The Created Self: The Reader's Role in Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (1970).

the black transaction, while still a marker of power, arguably does not involve the fact of rape in a central or meaningful way.

It is worth noting that the phrase "black transaction" itself originates, perhaps ironically, in a highly uncharacteristic letter in which Lovelace communicates to Belford, in extremely veiled terms, that he had committed the rape. Letter 257 states simply, "The affair is over. Clarissa lives."[75] Yet referring to Clarissa's rape as the black transaction is not Lovelace's doing, but that of the novel's fictional editor. Below Lovelace's lines, a note reads:

> [The whole of this black transaction is given by the injured lady to Miss Howe, in her subsequent letters, dated Thursday, July 6. See Letters 312, 313 and 314.]

Devoid of his usual prolixity, it is as if Lovelace is momentarily struck dumb by the weight of his action, so much so that the fictional editor feels compelled to intervene by redirecting the curious reader elsewhere. In order to deny the account of rape any spontaneity due to its obscenity, the letters to which the editor refers are dated in July, both belated accounts; Lovelace's letter is dated "Tuesday morning, June 13."

In response to Warner, later critics such as Castle, Ferguson, and Eagleton have returned Clarissa, her body, and rape to the fore. Feminist criticism of *Clarissa* begins and ends with Clarissa Harlowe as female subject, attending to a diverse range of issues such as sexuality, gender, patriarchal authority, domesticity, religious ideology, and of course, literary form. Margaret Anne Doody's work comes to mind, along with those of Carol Houlihan Flynn, Mark Kinkead-Weekes, Katherine M. Rogers, and Thomas Keymer—too numerous to properly address in the scope of this

[75] Richardson, *Clarissa*, Letter 257; 883.

study. Yet within this extensive, immensely lucid body of criticism, I'd like to suggest that a certain ambiguity remains around Clarissa's possible "madness" and the question of whether Clarissa can be (re-)empowered after her rape. Second-wave feminist critics such as Janet Todd worry whether the novel's resolution actually re-inscribes, rather than breaks away from, patriarchal discourse. For other critics, the stakes of Clarissa's misfortune centrally involve ideas of subjectivity or self and the ways in which they are created or destroyed, such that in the end Clarissa does lose her mind and, often, the agency that a coherent self should bring. Finally, the stakes are inevitably raised when Clarissa is cast as the paradigmatic rape victim, acting as a proxy for all. And insofar as interiority constitutes modern proto-subjectivity, the paradigmatic rape victim is thus in danger of becoming the paradigmatic female subject.

Surveying the body of criticism of the novel and highlighting its interests and concerns may help explain the use of "mad" to describe Clarissa's written fragments. Indeed, the fact that the papers are fragments supports the choice of the term. Yet while the term "fragment" conventionally signals a lack of cogency, intelligibility, or bodily-material integrity, all of which are considered possible signs of Clarissa's "madness," in the framework of this study, fictions of fragmentation can convey the very agency that Clarissa has been denied in this long critical history. This involves reconceptualizing the idea of agency itself and the forms by which it manifests, as described in the beginning of this chapter. I do so by disengaging the notion of agency from subjectivity, which I use broadly in this literary context as suggestive of a

constellation of related terms, such as human character, interiority, psychological complexity, the self, consciousness, and mind.

Once agency is disengaged from subjectivity, fictions of fragmentation enable renewed forms of agency based on the materiality of the papers—not only the fictional mad papers, but also the physical pages of the novel *Clarissa* itself, as situated within eighteenth-century epistolary culture. In the pages that follow, I reconceptualize fragmentation as a form of activity (i.e. the action of creating fragments). Fragmentation's brokenness is precisely what enables the writing of rape's dilemma of representation—via recapitulation, haunting, and two divergent definitions of what I call *claritas*—as well as a physical or material way to appositively (re)describe rape and its violence.

Reconceptualizing the terms that have critically accounted for the mad papers in the history of the novel's criticism reveals the longstanding characterization of the "mad papers" as ultimately Lovelace's construction—yet another way in which his language inflicts discursive violence. Thus, to call the written fragments "mad" is in fact to rehearse Lovelace's commentary, rather than refer to their actual contents. The nature of Clarissa's condition resembles trauma, rather than madness; her seeming hysteria—which reminds us of the misogyny associated with the very word—is an affective condition as opposed to a purely cognitive disability.

Among the various material traces of Clarissa's distress, tear stains emerge as a genre-defining trope of epistolary fiction and a highly visible trace of rape's violence, one that illustrates the role of materiality in epistolary practice. This is because the tears stain the physical "body" of the letter but do not affect its contents. Even more

explicit in its portrayal of affect is the scenario of a distraught Clarissa writing the fragments as observed by her chambermaid, Dorcas—voyeuristically staged, returning again to the dramatic mode—in Clarissa's private chamber. Lovelace relays this account to Belford:

> Just now Dorcas tells me that what [Clarissa] writes she tears, and throws the paper in fragments under the table, either as not knowing what she does, or disliking it: then gets up, wrings her hands, weeps, and shifts her seat all round the room: then returns to her table, sits down, and writes again.[76]

Although trauma theory lies beyond the scope of this project, this spectacular "performance," even to a modern, lay reader, easily reads as traumatic, specifically due to its repetition. I'd like to suggest, in a similar vein, that this "non-writing" ritualistically enacts the trauma of rape, which foregrounds the readings of this section: Paper I conveys trauma via the recapitulation of "empty" utterances, communicating the fact of Clarissa's rape non-discursively, while Paper X dramatizes rape's penchant for, and ultimately reliance upon, recapitulation as a formal and thematic "haunting," forbearing the ways that the tragic story of Caroline Evelyn, Evelina's mother, haunts Evelina's own narrative, a key continuity between *Clarissa* and *Evelina* that I explore in the next chapter. Lastly, gathering the fragments together reveals a movement towards what I term *claritas*, a recollection of intelligibility that Lovelace himself acknowledges as possessing "method" and "sense," wherein the fragments elicit strong affective and material effects that not only render Lovelace's solipsism, once again, untenable, but also generate an unlikely witness in the process. Formerly Lovelace's accomplice, Dorcas becomes a witness on record.

[76] Richardson, Letter 261; 889.

In many ways, Paper I enacts Richardson's vision of characterological interiority in the novel, a vision that has since reverberated through literary and critical discourse, especially so due to the status of *Clarissa* as one of the pioneers of interiority in the history of the novel. Juxtaposed with Lovelace's earlier description of Clarissa's efforts to write at her desk, Paper I furnishes this account with an "interior," first-person account that seems to corroborate Clarissa's madness. Yet, as the premise and theoretical aims of this study suggest, the interiority so central to both Richardson's literary successors and modern criticism, particularly to critical discourse on the rise of the novel, is a product of Clarissa's traumatic recollection of her rape and her efforts to articulate that recollection—none other than a concerted, difficult, and painful effort to "say" one's own rape that fails. In its place, Clarissa recapitulates none other than rape's dilemma of representation. Similarly, hallmark signs of interiority such as self-reflexivity or meta-reflection in the novel also arise from rape and its violence.

As I argue in this section, the true "interior" of Paper I is not Clarissa's own writing and its accompanying signs of madness, but the "black transaction" that her writing paradoxically obscures. Clarissa writes,

> I sat down to say a great deal—my heart was full—I did not know what to say first—and thought, and grief, and confusion, and (Oh my poor head!) I cannot tell what—And thought, and grief, and confusion came crowding so thick upon me; *one* would be first, *another* would be first, *all* would be first; so I can write nothing at all—only that, whatever they have done to me, I cannot tell; but I am no longer what I was in any one thing.—In any one thing did I say? Yes, but I am; for I am still, and I ever will be,
>
> Your true—[77]

[77] Richardson, Paper I, 890.

Paper I is identifiable as a drafted letter addressed to Anna, but the fact that Clarissa did not sign her name after the valediction leaves her letter unfinished. At a certain point, Paper I's former status as an unfinished letter ends. Yet Paper I's brief time as a letter is but the first sign of the fiction of fragmentation in the mad papers. That may be because Clarissa has been tasked—or rather, has tasked *herself*—with the harrowing deed of telling her best friend about her own rape. This is what she means by "I sat down to say a great deal," which recalls Clarissa's traumatic ritual at her writing desk, one voyeuristically consumed by Clarissa's maid Dorcas, Belford, and finally the novel's readers. Here we are about to read, Paper I seems to say, the "interior" of the outward performance we saw earlier.

Yet the "interior" of Paper I is not the harrowing picture of Clarissa at her desk, but rather rape's dilemma of representation. Paper I is a paradigmatic instance of the repetitive, discursive "noise" that rape's representational difficulty generates; in fact, this scenario participates in, rather than reveals, discursive forms of rape's violence. Disengaging Clarissa's character from her writing makes visible Paper I's account of the dilemma of representation, first via the recapitulation of empty utterances, and later of the dilemma itself.

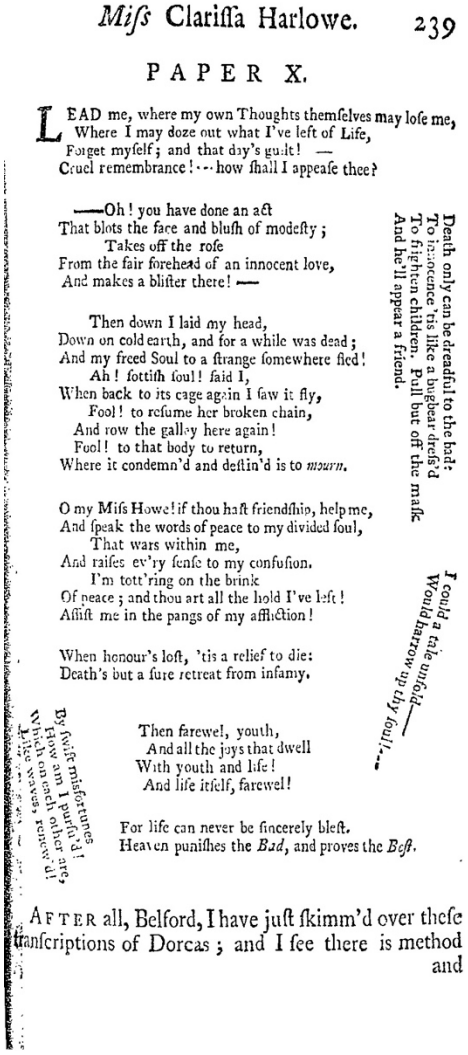
But how can utterances be "empty"? In the framework of this chapter, empty utterances reveal a heightened engagement with form. To be empty is to forgo individuated "meaning," broadly conceived in this context as specific, direct references to a larger world of people, places, events, and so forth, which might take the form of proper nouns, claims of truth or falsehood, or specific spatial and/or temporal coordinates. Thus, an empty utterance is not the non-existence of language,

but rather empty form visible and audible in its non-referentiality. In this sense, "I sat down to say a great deal" is an empty utterance in that it says nothing specific at all, yet nonetheless communicates the fact of writing itself, the action of Clarissa sitting down to begin the task. As we have seen earlier, Lovelace's penchant for platitudes can also be considered a penchant for empty utterances, functioning in ways similar to Clarissa's formulations of how and why she is unable to write in this instance.

When Clarissa writes, "I did not know what to say first," she explains her inability to write as due to a "crowding" of "thought, grief, and confusion," such that she "can write nothing at all." Clarissa's description of the "crowding" of affective states upon her—which prevents meaningful writing precisely by generating empty utterances—registers the ways in which rape's silencing is accomplished via discursive, empty noise that similarly crowds out individuated meaning, which remains a key concern of contemporary feminist discourse on rape. In Paper I, the silence of rape is paradoxically sounded via the recapitulation of empty utterances—a deafening, discursive noise—that draws attention away from, and ultimately silences, any specific account of rape. At the heart of this silence is the dilemma of representation itself. Rearticulated in Clarissa's own words, it is "whatever they have done to me, I cannot tell"; "I cannot tell" at once acknowledges both rape's representational difficulty, the first sense of "tell" as the ability to discern, and its unrepresentability, the obscenity that does not allow for Clarissa to "tell" Anna, in the sense of forbidden action.

As a literary consequence, the formal engagement registered by empty utterances returns us to the construction of characterological interiority. It is rape's

dilemma of representation that generates the self-reflexive, acutely metafictional sentiments that collectively reveal the broken "interior" of Clarissa's mind to Lovelace and each of the letter's subsequent readers. Yet underlying Clarissa's seeming madness is the bifurcated silence of rape, characterized by its capacity for discursive violence and its practice of recapitulation. In other words, the interior of Paper I is not madness but rape's violence: decidedly empty, audibly silent, and endlessly rehearsed. In enabling the representation of rape, the fiction of fragmentation thus reveals the trauma that inheres in the form of recapitulation, prefiguring not only Paper X's subsequent thematization of rape as haunting, but also its enduring legacy in numerous literary-critical accounts of rape thereafter.



Miſs Clariſſa Harlowe. 239

PAPER X.

LEAD me, where my own Thoughts themſelves may loſe me,
Where I may doze out what I've left of Life,
Forget myſelf; and that day's guilt! —
Cruel remembrance! — how ſhall I appeaſe thee?

—Oh! you have done an act
That blots the face and bluſh of modeſty;
Takes off the roſe
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
And makes a bliſter there! —

Then down I laid my head,
Down on cold earth, and for a while was dead;
And my freed Soul to a ſtrange ſomewhere fled!
Ah! ſottiſh ſoul! ſaid I,
When back to its cage again I ſaw it fly,
Fool! to reſume her broken chain,
And row the galley here again!
Fool! to that body to return,
Where it condemn'd and deſtin'd is to *mourn*.

O my Miſs Howe! if thou haſt friendſhip, help me,
And ſpeak the words of peace to my divided ſoul,
That wars within me,
And raiſes ev'ry ſenſe to my confuſion.
I'm tott'ring on the brink
Of peace; and thou art all the hold I've left!
Aſſiſt me in the pangs of my affliction!

When honour's loſt, 'tis a relief to die:
Death's but a ſure retreat from infamy.

Then farewel, youth,
And all the joys that dwell
With youth and life!
And life itſelf, farewel!

For life can never be ſincerely bleſt.
Heaven puniſhes the *Bad*, and proves the *Beſt*.

Death only can be dreadful to the bad:
To innocence 'tis like a bugbear dreſs'd
To frighten children. Pull but off the maſk
And he'll appear a friend.

I could a tale unfold—
Would harrow up thy ſoul!—

By ſwift misfortunes
How am I purſu'd!
While on each other are,
Like waves, renew'd!

AFTER all, Belford, I have juſt ſkimm'd over theſe tranſcriptions of Dorcas; and I ſee there is method and

Fig. 2. "Paper X," in Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa. Or, the History of a Young Lady*, Vol. 5 (1748) 1st edition printed and sold by A. Millar, J. and Ja. Rivington, John Osborn. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*.

But what does Paper X actually say? It seems that Clarissa has written, in her supposed frenzy, a set of verse fragments. Upon closer examination, however, these fragments, save for one, are not her own. The top-most fragment ("Lead me, where my own thoughts…") are lines from Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserv'd* (1682), a she-tragedy with which Richardson would have been familiar. Others allude to Samuel

Garth's *The Dispensary* (1699), Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, John Dryden's poem *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), Abraham Cowley's *The Mistress* (1647), and an eighteenth-century verse adaptation of the Oedipus story by Dryden and Nathaniel Lee. The ample references to tragic drama suggest an affinity for the genre. Yet they might also suggest that Clarissa can no longer rely on her own words to express the unrepresentable core of her own tragic drama. Instead, she gathers the verse fragments from memory. This is, once again, a form of recapitulation: Paper X recapitulates a partial genealogy of tragic drama, in which Clarissa's rape is a forgone conclusion. Curiously, some of the fragments refer to, or are actually lines spoken by, ghosts. One couplet, rotated sideways, reads:

> I could a Tale unfold—
> Would harrow up they soul!—

These lines are suggestive of those spoken by the ghost of Hamlet's father during their first meeting at Elsinore. They are likely from an eighteenth-century verse adaptation of the play. Shakespeare's original reads:

> I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
> Would harrow up thy soul[78]

The tale is, of course, the "foul crimes" that have been committed against Hamlet's father. His ghost will not find peace until the crimes "Are burnt and purged away."[79]

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[78] This appears in Act I, Scene 5 of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

[79] The ghost's speech reads,

> I am thy father's spirit
> Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,
> And for the day confined to fast in fires
> Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
> Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid
> To tell the secrets of my prison house,
> I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
> Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,

This reference thus evokes some of the familiar roles that ghosts play, especially in tragic drama: to tell a hidden "truth," to express the need for revenge, to illustrate crimes or other forms of trauma as "haunting," or to foreground transcendence into the realm of the divine or supernatural.

Yet the choice of *Hamlet* seems curious. If the ghost in *Clarissa* is Clarissa herself, who "haunts" Lovelace for his crimes, there is, however, no familial relation between them, unlike that between Hamlet and the ghost of his father. Further, a gendered crime such as rape also seems dissimilar to politically motivated murder. One may read this superimposition as symbolic of the domestic plot "usurping" aristocratic, political intrigue, which is often patriarchal, as a dominant cultural narrative. A drastically different conclusion is that both *Clarissa* and *Hamlet* are, at their core, familial dramas that end tragically. For instance, this conclusion might cast the rape as the culmination of a failed courtship plot between Clarissa and Lovelace. But what seems clear is that this small fragment of Paper X takes literally the notion that trauma is a kind of haunting. In effect, there is no ghost of Clarissa; the act of rape itself is the specter that haunts.

To conclude this chapter, I juxtapose two competing visions of *claritas*, the folk etymology of "Clarissa" offered by Castle that closely aligns with Watt's conceptualization of the novel as indexing an epistemological shift. Thus far, I have presented Watt's epistemological concept of the novel as a critical foil to later feminist readings. While Watt's epistemological shift is predicated upon increasing exposure and diffuseness, Castle, Ferguson, and other feminist critics turn to forms of control.

Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres… (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I.v.14-23)

Delineating the crux of Watt's critical legacy and summarizing his account, Castle writes,

> *Clarissa* impels its reader toward a revolutionary epistemology: a view that Nature, truth, indeed the "real" itself, exist first as private constructs, functions of subjective determination.[80]

Yet Watt's legacy is not the "constructedness" of *claritas* but its dissolution, "the replacement of a single so-called objective narrative by a multiplicity of *interpretive* events."[81] As the first vision of *claritas* that I offer, the dissolution of *claritas* in Watt's epistemological reading, distillable as fundamentally a movement from objectivity towards subjectivity, exemplifies a critical tradition that disables Clarissa's agency by ignoring the possibilities offered by the novel's engagement with materiality. Specifically, in the paradigmatic case of the mad papers and Paper X, the nature of and degree to which these fictional artifacts are abstracted vary according to shifting critical currents, as opposed to the nature of their representation in the novel that engages the vibrant materiality of print and paper; the history of female literacy and gendered practices of letter-writing; and their mutual co-constitution in the novel form. Although perhaps too simple of a formulation, the critical history of Paper X is only a history of criticism itself.

Revisioning the critical history of Paper X and its legacy warrants, first and foremost, a return to textual situatedness—simply conceived here as Paper X's literal place among the pages of the novel *Clarissa*—in concert with a return to rape's specific effects, the body, and the materiality of pain. The mad papers, as I have

[80] Castle, *Clarissa's Ciphers*, 27. See also Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, Chapter 6.
[81] Castle, 27.

indicated earlier, are complicatedly embedded in a longer letter by Lovelace. Clarissa's and Lovelace's writing actively fragment one another, and efforts at glossing, self-justification, or imposing an overarching narrative result only in a Gordian knot of multiply mediated "eye-witness" accounts, layers of questionable truth-telling, covert deception, and outright lies. Serving as the crux of action, the fiction of fragmentation is generative of a kind of written agency, specifically in the figure of Dorcas recast as a "modest witness"—to invoke a mode of self-effacing witnessing in experimental science—to Clarissa's abuse. In doing so, the moral or ethical project of the novel is revealed as such: as not only involving epistemology, rarefied textuality, and hermeneutic violence, but also the specific kinds of "human pain" that arise from the specific fact of rape. Such a revisioning of Paper X's critical history intervenes in socio-historical and literary accounts of Clarissa as the "broken victim," a common, destructive scenario for rape survivors that endures to the present day and warns against the conflation of female interiority with writing in both literary studies and present-day cultural discourse at large.

The alternate vision of *claritas* that I wish to offer belongs to the unattended yet distinct history of the common variants of "clarity" up until the late-seventeenth century—that of "brightness"—before undergoing a shift in the eighteenth century that replaced ideas of brightness with "clearness" and its metaphorical twin, clarity. Theoretically, I draw upon this shift in usage to track the application of agency or agential force to the category of "things," first from those marked as "inanimate," towards something more like the vibrant materiality of objects capable of eliciting strong effects and even spurring human action. Perhaps inadvertently, Castle's and

Watt's *claritas* suggests some of the pre-eighteenth-century valences of the word, particularly the association of *claritas* with purity and its heightened moral value. Its constellation of related terms might include singularity, unity, coherence, and objectivity, all of which stand to be interrupted, fractured, or destroyed by fragmentation.

Ideas of *claritas* as brightness originate from ideologies of Christian grace metaphorically describing sources of light, as in the "brightness, lustre, brilliancy, splendour"[82] of the sun, moon, and fire. By the eighteenth century, this sense became obsolete and was replaced by clearness and clarity. Only via complicated maneuvers in modernist poetics has the term been revived, and while I present this history in brief, I hope to demonstrate that the "brightness" sense of *claritas* has endured as an alternative to clarity. In the Imagist poetics of William Carlos Williams, *claritas* suggests epiphany or revelation. In the context of Williams' highly concrete, intractably simple poetry, *claritas* is a desired effect—an alternative to precisely the kinds of theorization and interpretation described throughout this chapter. Similarly, James Joyce excavates ideas of radiance, intelligibility, and perception from Thomist aesthetics in relation to the term. All of this is to suggest that besides the objective/subjective binary fundamental to Watt's *claritas*, the *claritas* of modernism instead relies on a different, decidedly unmodern binary of darkness and light.

In turn, the dark/light binary carries with it longstanding associations with knowledge and perhaps a subtler one involving the role of perception in revelation—

[82] "clarity, n." OED Online. March 2021. Oxford University Press. http://oed.com (accessed May 20, 2021).

that the light allows one to see. This is not to suggest that in this context a trajectory from disorder to clarity effects reconciliation or resolution; in the world of *Clarissa*, this movement is but another recapitulation. However, I argue that fictions of fragmentation and their investment in the quasi-agential, vibrant materiality of writing allow for the reconstitution of agential force in this context. Indeed, the originary fiction of fragmentation in the novel is the epistolary form itself, a narrative minutely pieced together letter by letter—each one a small fragment of the whole. Yet while fictions of fragmentation superficially corroborate claims to dissolution and disorder, embracing these claims uncritically risks ignoring the novel's larger ethical project. For Castle, this project comes in the form of an open opportunity for the reader to judge for themselves, or the radical and precious freedom to operate both within and beyond the discursive constructions in which we ourselves are implicated. As Castle writes,

> *Clarissa* opens up a space for judgment. It returns us to the matter of human suffering—the pain expressed by Clarissa in that line with which we began, the pain of being made a "cypher." Which human constructs exploit, turn others to mere "cyphers"? […] By raising such questions, *Clarissa* allows for a mode of ethical self-consciousness.[83]

This is another instance of feminist worry that takes its shape, in Castle's study, as the anticipated failure of the reader to judge ethically. The radical and precious freedom to judge for oneself does not guarantee "a mode of ethical self-consciousness," but merely, uneasily "allows" its possibility. Castle, as critic, "leaves to [the] reader the task of judging the relation of these operations, in turn, to human pain."[84]

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[83] Castle, *Clarissa's Ciphers*, 29.
[84] Castle, 29.

If the "space of judgment" afforded by the novel is in danger of being empty, then what remains of the "matter of human suffering"? Reading Castle here reveals the presence of "matter" in the problem of recognizing pain, which recalls Castle's earlier formulation of "the matter of interpretation" at the beginning of this chapter and my similar suggestion that matter is crucially missing. In the framework of this study, the matter of human suffering is none other than the material traces of rape's violence, rendered most visible in the scattered ink of Paper X.

Though situated within Letter 261, self-consciously curated and displayed by Lovelace, the mad papers are traditionally examined without this surrounding context. Upon closer examination, however, reviewing the contents surrounding the mad papers reveals some of the most dramatic performances of epistolary tropes, specifically that of "writing to the moment" and epistolary sincerity. With epistolary sincerity in particular, it is important to observe that readings of the mad papers take to heart this fiction, so as to read Richardson's typographical experimentation as only the outermost, superficial indicator of the complex truths that the mad papers contain.

Evaluating Letter 261 also reveals the intermediary role of Dorcas, Clarissa's chambermaid, who not only serves as an eye-witness to Clarissa writing her letters, but also transcribes the letters for Lovelace. Revealing Dorcas' role to Belford, Lovelace declares, "Dorcas, therefore, shall here transcribe [a letter]: *I* cannot."[85] In the very letter to which Lovelace refers, Clarissa corroborates Dorcas' status as eye-witness: Clarissa records in her letter, "Good Dorcas, look not upon me so fiercely."

[85] Richardson, *Clarissa*, Letter 261; 895.

As both eye-witness and transcriber, then, Dorcus occupies a central role in the production of the mad papers easily obscured by its critical history.

That the mad papers are multiply mediated is widely acknowledged, as they pass through and/or are textually altered by the novel's interlocutors. Yet Dorcas' presence effects another kind of mediation altogether: Dorcas mediates the mad papers *affectively*. The traces of Dorcas' affect return us to the materiality of the letter. Lovelace complains at the letter's close, "The paper, thou'lt see, is blistered with the tears even of the hardened transcriber; which has made her ink run here and there."[86] Even Lovelace, it seems, finds the writing affecting. Immediately after Paper X, Lovelace concedes,

> I see there is method and good sense in some of them, wild as others of them are; and that her memory, which serves her so well for these poetical flights, is far from being impaired.[87]

The "poetical flights" to which Lovelace refers may very well be the lines of poetry in Paper X. Instead of testifying to Clarissa's irreversible madness, in Lovelace's view, the poetry seems to generate something more like moral judgment. Dorcas is tasked with transcribing Clarissa's writing precisely because, as Lovelace writes, "The reading of [the mad papers] affected me ten times more than the severest reproaches of a regular mind."[88] Lovelace's affective response captures the sudden intelligibility of *claritas* even as Clarissa's writing recapitulates disorder, incoherence, and loss ("My head is gone"; "I never shall be myself again"). Paper X spurs Lovelace's awareness of his own subjectivity, prompting the litany of justifications that follow.

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[86] Richardson, 896.
[87] Richardson, 894.
[88] Richardson, 894.

In light of these findings, the novel's ethical project is a return to rape and the body in their specificity. No longer abstracted as "real phenomena" or "human pain," the scenario that Clarissa's writing describes ceases to perpetuate the larger, pervasive fictions that obscure rape as a specific crime with its own violent history. In decidedly modern terms, the generative effects of Clarissa's writing in the aftermath of rape shed light on the "broken victim" narrative that can all too easily subsume any meaningful account of rape—yet another kind of empty utterance or discursive noise that constitutes rape's representation.

CHAPTER TWO

MATERIAL REVISIONS: REPURPOSING THE RAPE PLOT IN *EVELINA*

This second chapter examines the fictions of materiality inherent in practices of writing and female literacy in Frances Burney's *Evelina; or, The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778). The novel is often read as a courtship and marriage plot that operates largely within the comedic mode, specifically through its scenes of sharp social satire and given its happy resolution. This chapter argues, however, that *Evelina* can also be understood in the context of gendered violence via Burney's many borrowings from and references to the dramatic she-tragedies of the late seventeenth century, such as Thomas Otway's *The Orphan, or, The Unhappy Marriage* (1680) and Thomas Southerne's *The Fatal Marriage* (1694), works that also shaped Richardson's *Clarissa*. In this way, we can read *Evelina* as a novel constructed along the lines of the dramatic she-tragedy—in other words, as fundamentally a rape plot—wherein the pervasive threat of rape defines and shapes the narrative in major ways, often with irrevocable consequences. Yet with *Evelina*, the basic plot of rape is thwarted. Rather, Burney reconfigured the marriage plot as a series of trials and successful escapes from rape and its violent consequences, rejecting a courtship plot that guarantees a happy outcome.

Running parallel to the repurposing of the rape plot is the critical repurposing of prevailing accounts of the novel and of Burney's revision practices, as well as the use of Burney's archive in critical accounts of her literary writings. Turning to ideas and forms of materiality and the record of gendered violence in the archive, this

chapter juxtaposes literary and archival evidence from Burney's vast body of writing. Thus, alongside gendered violence in relation to fictional plot, this chapter also examines gendered violence in the context of Burney's unique archive[89], using manuscripts and other materials related to *Evelina* and its unusual circumstances of publication. In Burney's archive, gendered violence manifests in decidedly subtler ways as the suppression of female writing and literacy, the oftentimes necessary practice of anonymous publication, and the restrictions in travel, financial means, and limited access to paper that Burney and certainly other female writers in the period experienced as a daily reality. The evidence that emerges from this archive reveals the meaningful and especial materiality inherent in Burney's archive, but also complicates ideas of materiality in the forms and fictions of letter-writing and in manuscript culture at large. Thus, this chapter also undertakes its own critical revision of prevailing archival research methodology.

The tragic plot of *Evelina*'s "mother text" already in many ways precedes the plot and inception of *Evelina*, including its actual writing in physical manuscript. This text is the story of Caroline Evelyn, Evelina's mother, entitled *The History of Caroline Evelyn*. Its contours are familiar: in order to escape an unwanted marriage, the young heroine marries a profligate rake, Sir John Belmont, but the story quickly descends into tragedy after Sir John abandons Caroline and disowns Evelina, their infant daughter. *The History of Caroline Evelyn*, along with *Clarissa* and *Evelina*, share

[89] Frances Burney d'Arblay collection of papers, The Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, The New York Public Library (henceforth MSS Arblay); and Correspondence of Frances d'Arblay, Barrett Collection Vol. VI (ff.108), The British Library (henceforth MSS Egerton 3695-96).

common ground in their critical borrowings from a group of she-tragedies written during the 1690's. All feature a passive but virtuous female protagonist whose tragic plot derives from a sexual transgression of some kind, almost always committed unwittingly but with consequences that may lead to madness, disgrace, abandonment, and even death. Thus, though no actual rape occurs in Caroline's story, her narrative directly echoes the tradition of she-tragedies from which the rape plot emerged, particularly those that find afterlives in Richardson and subsequent reworkings of *Clarissa*.

Burney's ongoing engagement with the theater and her direct allusion to the premise of the she-tragedy in writing *The History of Caroline Evelyn* reveal the rape plot that lies just beneath the courtship and marriage story of Caroline's daughter. Reading *Evelina*'s narrative as a reconfigured rape plot in turn makes visible its connection to the she-tragedy in their common reliance on gendered violence as the main driver of plot, whether it be unwanted male advances, covert abduction, efforts at deception, or even attempted rape. These connections have been hitherto obscured by the dominant reading of the novel as a marriage or courtship plot. Perhaps because the pervasive allusion to rape in the course of the novel's plot seems to eventually dissipate at the happy outcome of the courtship, this reading allows for the recasting of prior episodes of violence as less threatening or ultimately resolved.

Likewise, subtle but persistent forms of gendered violence characterize the circumstances surrounding the writing and publication of *Evelina*. As is well known among Burney scholars, Burney's first published novel *Evelina* was written, to borrow Joyce Hemlow's terms, "in fugitive." Though Burney began to write at a young age,

writing was nonetheless heavily discouraged by Dr. Charles Burney, her father, and others in her circle of family and friends, even while visitors to the Burney household in London included eminent men of letters, performers, and artists such as Samuel Johnson, David Garrick, Richard Sheridan, Edmund Burke, and Samuel Crisp—the latter a close family friend who became young Frances' mentor and second "daddy." In other words, Frances Burney belonged to a highly literate family of readers and writers well-versed in the arts, yet it was only in secret and under strict disguise that Burney wrote the manuscript of *Evelina*, her first major work, and solicited its publication.

While the seemingly proto-Austen marriage plot of *Evelina* ultimately occludes much of the gendered violence in the novel, including violence against women characters apart from Evelina, Burney's archive serves as a material reminder of the pervasive threat to women in the public sphere, in life as in fiction, including the perils of traveling alone and the vulnerabilities of a female writer posed by a publishing environment generally hostile to women. In fact, Burney's direct engagement with this form of peril generated perhaps the most distinctive set of artifacts presented in this chapter—a series of letters and a manuscript leaf sent to Thomas Lowndes, *Evelina*'s publisher, written by Burney in a feigned hand. The particular history of *Evelina* and of Burney's writing, revision, and publishing practices reveals the high stakes of female authorship and literacy in this period. These were pressures acutely felt by Burney as a published author and public figure in a world wherein public authorship and female propriety seemed impossibly opposed.

In light of the challenges to female writing and literacy, this chapter ultimately suggests that if the history of the novel's publication and its enthusiastic reception can be taken as a kind of success story in female authorship, then this success should be seen as a corollary of *Evelina*'s negotiation with the material threat of rape, which begins, but does not end, with the fictional terms by which Evelina makes her "entrance into the world." By repurposing Caroline's tragic story, *Evelina* challenges the dangers posed by a conventional rape plot, even while fully registering the pervasiveness and persistence of those dangers. In broadening the scope of analysis beyond the novel's plot and criticism to include the formal features of its manuscript and other materials from Burney's archive, this chapter demonstrates that materiality plays a critical role in Burney's reproposing practices—her material revisions—which include the careful repurposing of the material traces of violence that we have seen to be complicit in *Clarissa*'s engagement with female epistolary practice.

The first section of this chapter uses this claim for the relevance of the material threat of rape in the novel to account for feminist critical readings of the courtship and marriage plot of *Evelina*, as well as accompanying critiques around female self-fashioning and self-determination. While the novel ends in a happy marriage between Evelina and Lord Orville, an honorable nobleman, strong echoes of rape pervade Evelina's courtship, including a carriage scene that critics often interpret as an attempted rape. Ultimately, the crux of Evelina's *bildung* is not only her increasing social acumen, which allows her to better navigate London society, but also her successful escape from the threat of rape and gendered violence. To directly "say

rape" in *Evelina* thus affirms and provides a fuller explanation for the critical uneasiness with which feminist critics have attended to the novel.

Identifying the presence of rape and its legacy in *Evelina* intervenes in literary studies in three major ways. First, reading *Evelina* as a reconfigured rape plot addresses the feminist critique of the novel for failing to advance female autonomy, specifically the charge that Evelina's attention and self-regard—indeed, her whole sense of self—is too invested in a single person, Lord Orville, her social superior and future husband, to provide for any degree of independence. This particular concern about Evelina's lack of agency in her own *bildung* runs parallel to critical worries about Burney's own practices of editing and revision, which often involved redacting or destroying materials as a form of self-censorship—seemingly a concession to the public sphere, like Evelina's concession to marriage—in order to evade the judgment and scrutiny that comes with becoming a public figure, professional author, and celebrity.

This chapter thus connects Burney's practices of revision with *Evelina*'s repurposing of the rape plot, reconceptualizes the latter as another form of revision, and suggests that the critical debates around Burney's revision practices, specifically the revisions of the *Evelina* manuscript, should be understood in the context of gendered violence. Drawing from key critical accounts by Hemlow and Hilary Havens and, especially, following the work of Havens on Burney's archive in her recent study, I argue that the materiality of writing critically informs both Burney's practice of revising her texts and Evelina's seemingly ambiguous role in her own self-

fashioning—whether it be Sir Clement Willoughby's fictional, forged letter in the novel or the mangled pages of its actual manuscript.

The effacements of and in Burney's archive—some self-inflicted, others accidents of time or mishandling—are the material manifestations of the forces that organized Burney's writing, including the pressures that accompanied a female public figure and career writer in the period, caught in the midst of a reading public dominated by unrelenting male critics. This chapter makes explicit the untold narratives and hidden forces of gendered violence that informed Burney's re-imagining not only of a "woman's plot," but also the ways and means of "plotting" afforded to women—and women writers—in this period.

The second section of this chapter develops a critical account of silence as a fiction of materiality. I will describe silence as a figure dangerously interchangeable with vulnerable individuals, a highly mobile trope of disenfranchisement, and a key enabler of gendered violence, specifically when silence is deliberately misconstrued as implied consent in the context of sexual assault. In *Evelina*, the silence of its women characters are wide-ranging: some imply resistance, others express affect such as surprise or trepidation, while others signal complicity. Yet others still are instances of covert, knowing communication, often between women, which Julia Epstein calls an "indirect, feminine language."[90] This section's account of silence begins with what I shall call the "silent archive" of Caroline Evelyn, which refers to the completed manuscript entitled *The History of Caroline Evelyn* that was burned along with all of

[90] Julia Epstein, *The Iron Pen: Frances Burney and the Politics of Women's Writing* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 9.

Burney's writing up until that time in 1767, when Burney was fifteen years old.[91] Caroline's silent archive attests to the fact that most records—whether paper records in physical manuscript or historical testimonials of violence against women—do not survive long past their making. Indeed, the very practice of archival research is to gather whatever remains of the written lives of those such as Burney, with the awareness that its vast majority cannot be recovered. In this way, archival research is always ongoing and incomplete. The archival research conducted for this dissertation, then, is also a reflection on the myriad forms of silence that structure the archive itself, a silence particularly acute in the archives of women writers.

As an organizing structure and heuristic, the fiction of silence is also deeply gendered, as records of women's literacy are not so well-preserved due to their relative scarcity compared to those belonging to male writers. Yet more urgent is the threat of silencing whatever records do remain. As I have suggested in the previous chapter, rape's discursive violence includes the silencing of specific, meaningful accounts of rape, along with other forms of suppression, denial, and erasure. This chapter thus endeavors to demonstrate the ways in which silence can be weaponized and turned against women in the aftermath of rape by moving through a series of readings of *Evelina*, wherein the silence of Caroline's archive and its role in enabling gendered violence in its daughter text become increasingly intertwined. While the intergenerational violence of the mother's and daughter's plots is a major contention of numerous feminist accounts of the novel, this chapter adds to these accounts the argument that acts of silencing in the archival materials of these texts form a parallel

[91] Joyce Hemlow, *The History of Fanny Burney* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 1.

scenario that demonstrates how Burney's literary plots and lived life are similarly intertwined, with Burney as mother-author and *Evelina* as daughter-text.

Ultimately, this chapter argues that the fiction of silence—whether it arises out of embarrassment, shame, the threat of rape, or the (en)trappings of marriage—inarguably begets a hermeneutic response inseparable from its interpretation (e.g. implied consent), which is paradigmatic of rape's discursive violence. As the readings in this section will suggest, encoded in silence are the competing desires, divergent assumptions, and gendered dynamics that organize the social world within and without the text of *Evelina*. In the specific context of gendered violence, the silence of and around rape—whether it is Caroline's silent archive or Sir Clement's plea for Evelina to keep silent after the carriage scene—is made audible by the materiality of both fictional writing and the embodiments of the archive.

This chapter ends with a formal and literary account of another artifact in Burney's archive, the "Olivier letter," a page of manuscript written on the back of an actual, "recycled" letter. The Olivier letter is both the remaining, material residue of Caroline's story and a key plot device in *Evelina* and illustrates a scenario that I call "incomplete silencing," wherein forms of materiality work to disrupt male discursive control, revealing the silencing of Caroline's story to be incomplete.

I. Repurposing the Rape Plot

> But can your Ladyship be serious in proposing to introduce her to the gaieties of a London life? Permit me to ask, for what end, or for what purpose?
>
> —Mr. Arthur Villars to Lady Howard
> Frances Burney, *Evelina*

In an early letter to his friend Lady Howard, Mr. Villars, Evelina's guardian, poses a question that seems rather redundant, given the predictable outcome of *Evelina*'s plot. Nonetheless, in the context of the narrative as a whole, the question is asked in earnest: what would be the purpose of a young lady's "entrance into the world"? There is much left unsaid by Mr. Villars, namely that "the world" is wayward, corrupt, and potentially dangerous to such a young lady. In this sense, Mr. Villars' concern for his charge is duly warranted. His question suggests that "entering the world" would serve no purpose—or, at the very least, it would not serve his own purposes of protecting Evelina from the perils of London society. In light of the chapter's concept of repurposing, "purpose" is a key term whose various senses aptly convey the complicated and competing dangers, desires, and fictions that organize the world of *Evelina*.

Curiously, the two most common uses of "purpose" in the novel are diametrically opposite: one key sense conveys the difficulty or even futility of social connection—efforts at building relations expended "for no purpose"—while the other captures the uncertainty and precarity inherent in the context of gendered social and sexual relations. That is, this latter sense of "purpose" refers to the seemingly

impossible and endless task, on Evelina's part, of discerning whether male social advances are made with the purposes attributable to a nobleman—or, more importantly, with the purposes characteristic of a rake. In *Clarissa*, for instance, Clarissa's failure to discern Lovelace's true purposes leads to a disastrous outcome. Although its strict definition may point towards rationality and understanding, then, the use of "purpose" in these novels seems to challenge this surface definition.

Meanwhile, I wish to invoke another sense of "purpose" relevant to the repurposing of the rape plot, as grounds for the larger argument of this chapter. This section draws upon the meaning of "purpose" concurrent with the now-anachronistic sense of "purport" prevalent in the eighteenth century. This sense of "purpose" specifically conveys the meaning, effect, or import of words and addresses the re-working of discursive forms and hermeneutic interpretation as key to understanding Burney's repurposing of the rape plot. That is, to repurpose the rape plot is to use the same words—or tropes, figures, and generic distinctions—to generate altered meaning. On the level of plot and critical reading, this new meaning affords Evelina the self-determination denied to her tragic predecessors and grants Caroline Belmont, Evelina's immediate precursor, the last word in her own narrative. The close connection between "purpose" and meaning described here captures the hermeneutic power afforded by fictions of materiality in the novel and the archive.

Burney's repurposing of the rape plot also points to a fundamental tendency in the creation and circulation of tragic rape plots. Whether intentionally or unconsciously, individual, specific, and meaningful accounts of rape are often "flattened" in the fictions of their telling. Thus, if the purpose of the rape plot and its

generalizing function is to flatten individual, specific, and meaningful accounts of rape—the paradoxical maneuver at the heart of rape's dilemma of representation—then the dubious male purposes put forward by a novel such as *Evelina* only serve to further corroborate this sense of female precarity.

Caroline Evelyn's story is, in Margaret Anne Doody's words, "the story of how a woman comes to be a mother and is destroyed."[92] The family saga begins with Caroline's father and Evelina's grandfather, Mr. Evelyn, who experiences a series of unfortunate marriages first with Madame Duval, then a tavern barmaid. According to Mr. Villars' recounting, Mr. Evelyn subsequently left England for France, but "was followed by shame and repentance."[93] Unable to bear these burdens, Mr. Evelyn dies two years later, leaving the first of the novel's death-bed bequests entrusting the care of his daughter to Mr. Villars, who was formerly his tutor. In Mr. Villars' final diagnosis, Mr. Evelyn "was a young man of excellent character and […] unblemished conduct" until he became "unaccountably infatuated" with beautiful women.[94] The path of seduction and shame thus established, Mr. Evelyn's daughter would soon follow his footsteps thereafter.

Under the care of Mr. Villars, Caroline grows up in the quiet shelter of his home, Berry Hill, as will Evelina years later. Caroline's troubles properly begin when, at the age of seventeen, Madame Duval sends for her to Paris, where she finds herself at the mercy of her mother and Monsieur Duval, her mother's new husband.

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[92] Margaret Anne Doody, *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 38.
[93] Frances Burney, *Evelina; or, The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (New York: Norton, 1998), 10.
[94] Burney, 10.

Mistreated by her mother and pressured into an unwanted marriage, Caroline secretly marries—"without a witness"—Sir John Belmont, a profligate young man. Back in England, Sir John soon learns that the Duvals had refused Caroline her inheritance upon her elopement. In his disappointment and rage, according to Mr. Villars, Sir John "infamously burnt the certificate of their marriage and denied that [he and Caroline] had ever been united!"[95] Pleading her case in vain, Caroline gives birth to Evelina and, like her father before her, entrusts Mr. Villars with the infant's care before she dies soon after.

While Doody's emphasis on motherhood foregrounds the problematic and difficult maternal relations depicted in *Evelina*, Caroline's story also draws upon the longstanding tradition of female tragedy. Specifically, Caroline's story closely resembles the fashionable dramatic mode of the she-tragedy, which reached the height of its popularity in the 1690's and continued to be re-staged or revived well into the eighteenth century. We have seen the influence of this dramatic tradition in *Clarissa,* whose plot turns on a single, suffering heroine. Jean Marsden identifies Otway's *The Orphan* as an early influential example and prototype of tragic plots that feature a passive but virtuous female protagonist, who nonetheless becomes sexually "tainted" in some way.[96] Such a scenario is meant to render scenes of expressive distress, on the heroine's part, such that female virtue and suffering would generate pathos for an audience eager for its consumption.

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[95] Burney, 11.
[96] Jean I. Marsden, *Fatal Desire: Women, Sexuality, and the English Stage, 1660-1720* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 79-80.

In *The Orphan*, Monimia, the play's heroine, is an orphaned ward who is the object of desire for two brothers, Castalio and Polydore. When she weds the elder Castalio, Polydore assumes his brother's place on their wedding night by deceptive means. In consummating the marriage in place of his brother, Polydore commits both rape (by deceiving Monimia into thinking he was Castalio, he has failed to obtain her consent) and incest (as sister-in-law, Monimia is considered Polydore's family member). In Polydore's words, "By me, last night, the horrid deed/Was done, when all things slept but rage and incest."[97] In his confession to Castalio, Polydore describes this act as having "stain'd thy bed," and that "thy spotless marriage joys/Have been polluted by thy brother's lust."[98]

Before long, Monimia soon discovers the horror of her unwitting sexual sin. Though unknowingly committed, she readily adopts Polydore's language of pollution, thereby conflating the sexual wrongdoings with herself, surely an instance of what Sandra MacPherson describes as "tragic responsibility," or the separation of agency and consent from responsibility, wherein an individual is held liable for the wrongs that are committed against them.[99] True to MacPherson's formulation, the only agency afforded to Monimia in this instance is the possibility of self-inflicted punishment: Monimia commits suicide by drinking poison, which she calls "a healing draught/For all my cares." Polydore's act of pollution becomes displaced by Monimia's shame; though Polydore dies in a duel with his brother, Monimia herself remains a polluted

[97] Thomas Otway, *The Orphan, or, The Unhappy Marriage* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), V.ii.220-21.
[98] Otway, V.ii.218.
[99] Sandra MacPherson, *Harm's Way: Tragic Responsibility and the Novel Form* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 5.

woman who cannot keep living despite her innocence. Before she dies, she implores Castalio using this rhetoric: "Wilt thou receive pollution to thy bosom/And close the eyes of one that has betray'd you?"[100] As Marsden notes, this tragic formula would endure in the decades to come: "this spectacle of corrupted sexuality, suffering, and ultimate death was to become a defining element in the wave of she-tragedies that emulated Otway."[101]

Following the success of *The Orphan*, the next generation of she-tragedies in the 1690's also shared a preoccupation with the virtuous but "fallen" female protagonist, such as Thomas Southerne's *The Fatal Marriage; or, The Innocent Adultery* (1694) and William Congreve's *The Mourning Bride* (1697), two of the most popular she-tragedies of the decade, both of which closely adhered to Otway's model. Southerne's *The Fatal Marriage* is particularly notable in its many iterations, each increasingly tragic. The plot of the play is derived from Aphra Behn's novella *The History of the Nun; or, The Fair Vow-Breaker* (1689), whose heroine Isabella commits the titular "innocent adultery" through bigamy. Mistakenly believing her husband to have died abroad, Isabella remarries another man and consummates the marriage the night before her first husband's unexpected return. Unlike Monimia and other passive heroines, however, in Behn's novella Isabella murders both husbands with little remorse. In his adaptation of Behn, Southerne's play is a tragicomedy that features an additional comic subplot and omits the murder in order to render Isabella more virtuous, such that her sexual transgression and suffering would elicit the pathos that

[100] Otway, *The Orphan*, V.ii.264-65.
[101] Marsden, *Fatal Desire*, 82.

Otway's model offered. In Southerne's play, Isabella accepts her tragic fate passively, often lamenting, "I was born to suffer."[102]

According to Marsden, plays such as *The Fatal Marriage* and *The Mourning Bride* were performed well into the eighteenth century, even while she-tragedies ceased to be written early in the century.[103] More notable still is David Garrick's revival of *The Fatal Marriage* decades later, re-named *Isabella; or, the Fatal Marriage*, which was performed at Drury Lane, where Garrick was actor-manager, on December 2, 1757.[104] The celebrated singer and actress Susannah Maria Cibber, or Mrs. Cibber, played the leading part of Isabella, while Garrick himself played Biron, Isabella's first husband. This revival eschews the comic subplot altogether, focusing solely on Isabella and the spectacle of female suffering. Tracing the increasingly tragic evolution of Isabella's plot suggests that in the mid-eighteenth century, she-tragedies were near synonymous with passive virtue, female suffering, and sexual shame—the latter simply another word for Monimia's "pollution." And Garrick's successful revival of the play in 1757 reveals the ongoing popularity of the she-tragedy at the time, which endures well into Burney's lifetime.

Though Burney would have been too young to see Garrick's *Isabella* that year, the Burney family's penchant for theater dates from her earliest childhood, and critics have long argued for the importance of theater in Burney's writing, which includes numerous plays. Given Dr. Burney's music career and the status of Garrick as a family

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[102] Marsden, 87.
[103] Marsden, 99.
[104] See Todd Gilman, "David Garrick's 'Masque of King Arthur' with Thomas Arne's Score (1770)," *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660-1700* 34, no. 1/2 (2010): 139. This date was likely the revival's first performance.

friend, the Burneys were avid theater-goers—indeed, they enjoyed special use of Garrick's box at the Theatre Royal, courtesy of Mrs. Garrick—such that the influence of the theater and theatrical performance is unmistakable in Burney's novels.[105] Writing of the reception of Burney's second novel *Cecilia, or Memoirs of an Heiress* (1782), Hemlow notes that Burney knew well "the public who went to weep over Mrs. Siddons as Belvidera or Jane Shore," and "tended to fashion the crises and harrowing denouements of her novels on the pathetic finales of the she-tragedies of Nicholas Rowe and others," pointing out the close resemblance in their highly-pathetic, tragic ending scenes.[106] Mrs. Sarah Siddons was another renowned actress and successor to Mrs. Cibber as the leading *tragedienne* of her time. Siddons famously played the lead female parts of Belvidera and Jane Shore in the revivals of Otway's *Venice Preserv'd* and Nicholas Rowe's *Jane Shore* (1714).

While there is no extant evidence in Burney's corpus to suggest that Garrick's *Isabella* was a direct model for Caroline's plot in *Evelina*, there are elements of the she-tragedy in place in the novel that reach beyond the initial function of Caroline's story as merely establishing the novel's backstory. Francesca Saggini points out the formal indebtedness of *Evelina* in particular to the five-act play, and suggests not only that the eighteenth-century novel "was a hybrid genre, […] with strong dramatic characteristics,"[107] but also that the epistemological shifts that had occurred in the dramatic tradition, which reflected the rise of an anti-aristocratic, domestic, and

[105] See Frances Burney, *Complete Plays of Frances Burney Volume 1: Comedies*, eds. Peter Sabor and Geoffrey M. Sill (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), xxii.
[106] Hemlow, *The History of Fanny Burney*, 158-59.
[107] Francesca Saggini and Laura Kopp, *Backstage in the Novel: Frances Burney and the Theater Arts* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 5.

pathetic form of tragedy, formed the necessary conditions for the rise of the novel mere decades later. For instance, the emotional scene of Evelina meeting Sir John for the first time elicits much of the same pathos generated by dramatic performance, and Saggini observes that the scene seems to intentionally invoke a similar reunion between two characters in Richard Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* (1722), an extremely popular moral comedy, as well as another scene in Samuel Foote's comic play *The Minor* (1760).[108]

In a journal entry on June 18th, 1778, Burney writes that her sister Susanna recalled this account of the meeting scene between Evelina and Sir John, given by Dr. Burney:

> Evelina is in a new style too, so perfectly innocent & Natural; & the scene between her & her Father, Sir John Belmont, is a scene for a *Tragedy*! I blubbered at it, & Lady Hales & Miss Coussmaker are not yet recovered from hearing it; it made them quite ill; it is, indeed, wrought up in a most extraordinary manner![109]

Though Evelina's character may be rendered in a "new style" in the novel, the reaction to this scene is decidedly not. Dr. Burney's account captures many of the familiar tropes that accompany the distresses of the she-tragedy's female audience, ranging from crying to falling ill to fainting, anticipating the similar female reaction to novels such as *Clarissa*, *Evelina*, and Burney's later novels such as *Cecilia*.[110]

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[108] Saggini, 77.

[109] In Frances Burney, *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, eds. Lars E. Troide and Stewart J. Cooke, vols. 1-3, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 3:29 (henceforth *EJL*).

[110] The reaction to *Cecilia* strongly resembles Dr. Burney's reaction to *Evelina*: "As to myself, Cecilia has done just what she pleas'd with me; I laughed & cried, (for I am one of the blubberers—) when she bade me."
From Rev. Thomas Twining to Charles Burney, 18 Sep, 28 Nov, 1782 and 27 Jan 1783, as quoted in Hemlow, *The History of Fanny Burney*, 158.

Highlighting Caroline's tragic plot and acknowledging its origins in she-tragedy complicate the prevailing critical account of *Evelina* as a *bildungsroman*. As Doody has pointed out, though the novel depicts Evelina's character as it develops over time, the idea of *bildung* nonetheless seems out of place for a female heroine in the eighteenth century.[111] Other accounts of *Evelina* as *bildungsroman* are similarly circumspect. Susan Fraiman notes that any account of the novel's courtship plot as a "successful education" must nonetheless compete with what she describes as "an antiromantic narrative of female development."[112] In this way, connecting *Clarissa* to *Evelina* forms an alternative account of the female self as fashioned under the threat of—and ultimately in spite of—rape and gendered violence. This account refutes previous accounts of the novel's plot as one of *bildung* in the conventional sense, which read linear, "masculine" progress as both means and teleological end of female self-fashioning.[113]

To repurpose the rape plot, then, is more than the revision of the violent plots of male desire that dominate and determine the textual contents and plot outcomes of rape plots such as those of *Clarissa* and *The History of Caroline Evelyn*. Feminist critical accounts of *Evelina*, in reacting against the novel's underlying engagement with and possible reaffirmation of male violence, time and again illustrate how critical reading can serve a repurposing function. While a full survey of criticism is beyond

[111] Doody, *Frances Burney*, 45. See also the discussion of Lord Merton's notorious comment dismissing older women in pp. 55-56 of *Evelina*; his is "an extremely ironic remark within a *Bildungsroman*, for it indicates that the *Bildung* is completely unnecessary" (55).
[112] Susan Fraiman, *Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and the Novel of Development* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 34.
[113] Fraiman, 35.

the scope of this chapter, the following critical accounts of the novel commonly advocate for non-linear reading in relation to *Evelina*'s romantic plot of female self-fashioning. I will illustrate this critical contribution by focusing on the work of Doody, Fraiman, Kenneth Graham, and Kristina Straub, with the latter three as roughly representative of the proliferation of Burney scholarship that began in the 1990's.[114] Even prior to this group of critics, Doody's 1988 critical biography of Burney had already established the broader premise of virtually all the Burney scholarship to follow: stated rather plainly, it is that "all of Burney's novels are violent."[115] In the context of this chapter, these critical voices point towards the underlying misogyny and violence of gendered social relations in the world of *Evelina* by employing non-linear reading, which calls attention to circularity and digression as key operative modes within the narrative. Non-linear reading directly confronts the violence inherent in linear, teleological progress in the novel precisely by repurposing existing practices of critical reading.

With *Evelina* in particular, Doody's approach finds fault with many critics' limited focus on only this novel, due to its disproportionate popularity and impact on modern critical reception of Burney's writing. Instead, Doody advocates for reading *Evelina* "beyond *Evelina*."[116] Taking the long view here seems prescient given the

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[114] Besides those mentioned earlier, other critical work on Burney includes Katharine Rogers, *Frances Burney: The World of Female Difficulties* (1990); Barbara Zonitch, *Familiar Violence: Gender and Social Upheaval in the Novels of Frances Burney* (1997); Joanne Cutting-Gray, *Woman as 'Nobody' and the Novels of Frances Burney* (1992). The late 1990's also saw a proliferation of books on Burney geared toward general audiences, including those by Kate Chisholm, Claire Harman, Hester Davenport, and Janice Thaddeus.

[115] Doody, *Frances Burney*, 3.

[116] Doody, "Beyond *Evelina*: The Individual Novel and the Community of Literature," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 3, no. 4 (1991): 359–72. This 1991 issue of *ECF* is a special issue on Burney, though

novel's enduring legacy in Burney's own life. Indeed, we find Burney writing and reflecting on *Evelina*, and not merely on its fiction, years after the novel's publication and initial success. In the *Memoirs of Doctor Burney* (1832), Burney recounts the story of how *Evelina* came to be—which seems by now synonymous with the story of how Burney became a celebrated author—as a cornerstone episode of her youth. *Evelina* and the story of the bonfire are also mentioned in the Dedication to *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties* (1814), Burney's last novel, which she similarly dedicates to Dr. Burney, to which we will return.[117]

Another point of departure for Burney criticism is Doody's characterization of female life, also expressed in highly formal terms. Doody writes that only through farce and satire can the novel challenge the "narrative straightness" that is "the formula for a woman's life."[118] In other words, Doody describes how the prevailing model of a female life is discursively narrow, in the sense that social norms and ideas of female propriety point towards a single path with a decided end. Yet despite the happy resolution of the novel, Fraiman is right to point out that Evelina's path to marriage is fraught with the violence of dubious male purposes, which constantly generates and maintains an intergenerational, traumatic legacy of violence against women, such that "local sites of violence function as figures for the overall violence of

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Doody notes in her essay that it arose not out of editorial planning, but organically due to the sheer number of essays on Burney that were submitted at the time.

[117] Burney, *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties*, eds. Margaret Anne Doody, Robert L. Mack, and Peter Sabor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3. Burney writes, "With what grateful delight do I cast, now, at the same revered feet where I prostrated that first essay [i.e. *Evelina*], this, my latest attempt!" Specifically, the Dedication seems to refer to the dedicatory poem "Oh author of my being!" printed in *Evelina*. See also Doody, *Frances Burney*, pp. 35-38.

[118] Doody, *Frances Burney*, 49.

the antiromantic narrative, identifying as rude arrest what [critics such as George Starr] perceived as happy quiescence."[119]

According to Fraiman, so opposite are the dangers posed by the rape plot and the seemingly desirable outcome of marriage that *Evelina* is doubly layered: a superficial reading yields a comedy of manners, Cinderella romance, and linear narrative arc, while the novel's underlying layer depicts pervasive violence against women, marriage as a form of institutionalized, patriarchal control, and a cyclical, non-linear anti-*bildung* that merely replaces one form of male control with another. In this reading, Mr. Villars simply transfers Evelina to a new guardian, Lord Orville.[120] In structural terms, Fraiman sees the antiromantic female formation of Evelina as a "circling counterstory" operating in tandem with its main narrative of courtship and marriage, such that the novel becomes "a satiric and sadistic rewriting of the fairy tale." What Fraiman terms "the logic of impediment" of the novel, then, creates a "holding pattern" similar to those in the Gothic tradition, though fully-fledged Gothic terror is less apparent.[121]

Yet the observation that Gothic terror is less apparent is precisely my point of emphasis. Fraiman points to Evelina's failure to interpret correctly as one of the manifestations of violence in the novel, formulated almost entirely in Richardsonian terms:

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[119] Fraiman, *Unbecoming Women*, 35.
[120] Fraiman, 35-36. Central to Fraiman's reading is the transfer of guardianship of Evelina between Mr. Villars and Lord Orville, which holds in mutual tension the linear plot of female education and courtship with the non-linear, "waylaid" circulation of women as a form of property, noting the close affinity between ideas of property and (female) propriety.
[121] Fraiman, 36.

> As prince turns repeatedly into dragon, rescue into recapture, and relief into trepidation, Evelina begins to doubt not only the world but also her own ability to interpret it. More than simply blocked, she is worn down almost, as she says, to death.[122]

The difficulty of interpretation described here reflects the continuity that Fraiman accurately observes between Richardsonian texts, such as *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, and *Evelina*. The key difference, as Fraiman suggests, is that Evelina, though worn down, is spared from death—in other words, that both Pamela and Evelina are afforded the "almost" denied to Clarissa.

Fraiman's argument here reinforces the generic claim that my perspective in this chapter develops further: the fact that Evelina is spared from Clarissa's—and, significantly, her own mother's—tragic end is perhaps the most forceful intervention of repurposing in the novel, allowing for the crucial generic shift from female tragedy to comedy. And that repurposing, which includes reworking scenes of violence both explicit and implicit, centrally involves interpretation as Evelina learns to read her surroundings more shrewdly.

In her study of Burney, Straub's interrogation of marriage in the novel reveals the institution of marriage in the eighteenth-century to be "double and contradictory."[123] Straub argues that although the path to marriage is full of "gulphs, pits, and precipices,"[124] which aligns with this chapter's argument about the reconfiguration of the rape plot, marriage itself turns out to be "one of life's major

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[122] Fraiman, 36.
[123] See Kristina Straub, *Divided Fictions: Fanny Burney and Feminine Strategy* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987), pp. 6, 82.
[124] This is a key formulation for Straub, recurring throughout *Divided Fictions*. See for instance Straub, Ch. 2 "Evelina: Gulphs, Pits, and Precipices," pp. 23-52 and Kristina Straub, "Fanny Burney's 'Evelina' and the 'Gulphs, Pits, and Precipices' of Eighteenth-Century Female Life," *The Eighteenth Century* 27, no. 3 (1986): 230–46.

snares, a trap in which people (especially women) are destroyed or at best given a life sentence of discomfort."[125] The strong emphasis on entrapment suggests that the reconfiguration of the rape plot, wherein Evelina escapes the violation of her sexual virtue (or at least, the reputation thereof), does not necessarily result in freedom or independence—at least in our modern sense of the word. Yet equally potent here is Burney's depiction of what Straub describes as "the culturally problematic mature woman who has eluded direct male control,"[126] which in turn reveals the significant role of fiction in the formation of the discourse of gender. Straub's model of a woman who eludes direct male control prefigures some of this chapter's claims about the power of female literacy, even as it reveals how it is precisely the "narrative straightness" that Doody described earlier that feeds into discursive control as a form of gendered violence; so discursively narrow is the allowable trajectory of a woman's life that any deviation results in nothing less than tragedy.

Echoing the alternative structures of reading posed by critics thus far, Graham's essay on *Evelina* and its vexing resemblance to two archetypical fairy-tale plots, those of Cinderella and Bluebeard, supports my suggestion that the novel is structured by the existence of Caroline's plot, which affirms the concerted and necessary presence of Caroline's silent archive in the next section of this chapter. Graham's account also foregrounds the critical focus on Burney's practices of revision, which is another core concern of this chapter. Graham's essay combines ideas of doubling with repetition in its suggestion that *Evelina*'s plot is doubly

[125] Straub, *Divided Fictions*, 55.
[126] Straub, *Divided Fictions*, 24-25.

constructed, in line with Fraiman's account, though Graham describes this repetition with a small amendment: such is the force of the doubling and repetition that *Evelina* actually resembles the story of Bluebeard, rather than Cinderella.[127] For Graham, marriage is not merely the life of discomfort described by Straub but a literal entrapment, with strong Gothic echoes. Common between Graham and Straub is a bleak vision that extends the temporality of marriage indefinitely, such that marital entrapment becomes, in Straub's terms, "female futurity."[128] This account of entrapment reflects the central feminist critique of the conservative reading of Evelina, wherein patriarchal authority is, whether ironically or not, reaffirmed.[129]

In reviewing these critical accounts of *Evelina*, binary structures emerge as an organizing force in the novel's tradition of criticism, in part due to critical engagement with the gender binary assumed in these accounts' particular use of feminist inquiry. Graham's account of the novel seems to suggest major points of convergence between the plots of Bluebeard and Cinderella, revising the previous conventional reading of *Evelina* as only one or the other. Fraiman and Straub, in contrast, form their arguments around the simultaneity of doubling, or the double presence of the surface Cinderella plot and the covert precarity underneath. While in this chapter my focus shifts away from the binarism applied to *Evelina* in its critical history, this reorientation is not to undermine these accounts or to disallow doubleness in readings of the text. Instead, by

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[127] On the Cinderella myth in relation to Burney, see also Huang Mei, *Transforming the Cinderella Dream: from Frances Burney to Charlotte Brontë* (1990).
[128] In Straub, see for instance pp. 35-37, 42, 62.
[129] Readings of Burney that tended towards conservatism include Deborah Ross, *The Excellence of Falsehood: Romance, Realism, and Women's Contribution to the Novel* (1991) and Claudia Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790's—Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, Burney and Austen* (1995).

invoking the presence of matter and materiality, my argument complicates current readings of the novel by calling attention to ideas of gender not in relation to the gender binary, but in relation to Burney's writing practices. This triangulation allows this chapter to better situate *Evelina* within the context of the materiality of writing and literacy, by acknowledging the continuities between this materialist account and the central concerns about gendered violence in previous criticism.

Given the critical emphasis on form in criticism of *Evelina*, specifically the ways in which binary structures are able to capture and accommodate the binarism of the novel's representation of gender norms and register its impact on a doubled/doubling plot, turning to ideas of matter and materiality appends to this critical history the presence and influence of the archive. Reviewing the history of Burney's formative years reveals that *The History of Caroline Evelyn* and the history of its material existence—its physical creation, destruction, and the traces that remain—are inextricably bound.

In this respect, Marsden's study of the dramatic tradition offers a useful starting point. In addition to the thematization and visual representation of female tragedy as sexual spectacle, Marsden's study also engages the increasingly common physical presence and heightened visibility of actual women on the stage, a practice that had been taboo prior to the Restoration. Crucially, Marsden argues that the very fact of seeing actual women on the stage played a major role in shaping the genre and its influential politics, and that "[the women's] material presence altered the

representation of women in drama and even reshaped dramatic form…when theater was the most public and most debated literary venue."[130]

Following Marsden's claims, this chapter's findings suggest that the material presence—or absence—of physical writing in the archive sheds further light on the discursive representation of gender and violence offered by the literary text. As we shall see, in the case of *Evelina*, textual representation and the materiality of the archive are so intertwined as to be near inseparable, even as critical accounts of the novel and of Burney's archive often address each separately. Caroline's story in *Evelina* is thoroughly shaped by the history of its physical manuscript, which begins with its initial destruction, the persistence and eventual "birth" of Evelina's plot, and the latter plot's realization more than ten years later as part of a published work.

i. On *The History of Caroline Evelyn*

Numerous critics including Hemlow, Peter Sabor, and Havens have pointed out how *Evelina*, and possibly Burney's entire corpus, would not exist without Caroline's story in *The History of Caroline Evelyn*. *Evelina* really begins with the tragic plot of Evelina's mother. However, *The History of Caroline Evelyn* perished, along with all of the young Burney's store of writings, in a bonfire made for the occasion on June 13, 1767, Burney's fifteenth birthday. Hemlow's biography begins its first chapter with this moment in Burney's childhood, as if recounting the birth of her subject. Thus, when "Fanny obediently burned her novel 'Caroline Evelyn' along with 'Elegies, Odes, Plays, Songs, Stories, Farces,—nay, Tragedies and Epic

[130] Marsden, *Fatal Desire*, 3.

Poems,"[131] Hemlow is right to imply that this early loss would eventually spur the birth not only of Evelina the fictional character, but also of Burney as an author.

Yet the birth was not without difficulty. Already implicated in this birth were the forces that would continue to follow Burney as she formally embarked on her writing career with the publication of *Evelina* years later. Further, as Hemlow often reminds us, the activity of writing itself—which Burney began "as soon as [she] could write at all"—was "by no means approved by [her] elders," and had to be "pursued fugitively." Thus, as Hemlow notes, "much of the early scribbling was consigned by command, or by caution, to the flames."[132] In sum, the forces that arose to impede Burney's writing included disapproving elders, a seemingly acute self-consciousness of female propriety, and later the unrelenting reviewers and critics of London's literary world. These forces were the crucible not only of Burney's formally published works, but also her life writings, which have been as much the subject of scholarship and celebration as her published literary output.

In addition to Burney's new life as an author, the bonfire of 1767 also gave birth to the plot of *Evelina*, a process that she remembers in the *Memoirs*, so many years later, as both "irresistible" and "almost unconscious."[133] In the *Memoirs*, after the young Frances had burned "her whole stock of prose goods and chattels," Burney writes,

> This grand feat, therefore, which consumed her productions, extirpated neither the invention nor the inclination that had given them birth; and, in defiance of

[131] Hemlow, *The History of Fanny Burney*, 1. Hemlow's quotation is from Burney, *Memoirs of Doctor Burney*, 3 vols. (New York: AMS Press, 1975), 2:121-171. First published 1832 by E. Moxon (London). Henceforth *Memoirs*.
[132] Hemlow, 1.
[133] See *Memoirs*, 2:121-26.

> all the projected heroism of the sacrifice, the last of the little works that was immolated, which was the History of Caroline Evelyn, the Mother of Evelina, left, upon the mind of the writer, so animated an impression of the singular situations to which that Caroline's infant daughter,—from the unequal birth by which she hung suspended between the elegant connexions of her mother, and the vulgar ones of her grandmother,—might be exposed; and presented contrasts and mixtures of society so unusual […] that irresistibly and almost unconsciously, the whole of *A Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, was pent up in the inventor's memory, ere a paragraph was committed to paper.[134]

This passage warrants examination at length as it captures the events of June 13, 1767, the date of the bonfire, as well as the history of the intervening sixty-five years. Writing in the third person, Burney asks her reader to participate in the playful fiction that so deftly conceals the naked violence beneath. An aside given a few pages earlier reveals how the bonfire was in fact the result of gossip and embarrassment. Prior to the bonfire, Mrs. Burney had heard a "neighboring lady" comment on Burney's writing—or rather, Burney *writing*—described as "indolence, or stupidity, whichever it might be."[135] Here it is worth mentioning, as a corollary, the embarrassment and gossip that Evelina herself would also endure in her story. The aside follows the chief characterization of the child Frances Burney as disobedient, with which the account of *Evelina* in the *Memoirs* begins: Frances was "the most backward of all [Dr. Burney's] family in the faculty of receiving instruction."[136]

Burney's fixation on maternal relations, prefaced by the incident of the neighbor's gossip, continues to emerge in the matrilineal drama of *The History of Caroline Evelyn* and *Evelina* as mother and daughter texts. In the *Memoirs*, Burney

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[134] *Memoirs*, 2:125-6.
[135] *Memoirs*, 2:123-24. She is, of course, referring to her stepmother, Mrs. Elizabeth Burney (née Allen).
[136] *Memoirs*, 2:123.

remembers Evelina first and foremost for the "unequal birth by which [she] hung suspended"[137] between two generations of women: her mother Caroline and her grandmother, Madame Duval. Burney also seems to use the language of birth interchangeably to describe Evelina's birth and the birth of the novel. Notably, there is no mention of Sir John Belmont, whose actions are responsible for the dissolution of this family. These births seem, then, purely matrilineal, occurring without male influence.

Yet men are not at all absent. The fact that the key male figures in this narrative, Dr. Burney and Sir John, do not appear directly belies the essential role they play in the novel's intergenerational drama. This important omission is perhaps a plea for the centrality of women that I've described earlier, in relation to the *Memoirs* as written in the third person. Part of the fiction that Burney constructs is not only a characteristically self-effacing, playful description of a budding writer, but also a fiction of a world without men, one wherein women's suffering—and women's suffering alone—begets twin daughters, Evelina the heroine and *Evelina* the novel.

In light of this focus on female suffering, feminist critics thus mark the sacrificial "death" of the mother text of Caroline's story as the necessary condition of the birth of the daughter text of *Evelina*.[138] Reviewing the history of *Evelina* in concert with *The History of Caroline Evelyn* and the destruction of that manuscript reveals how *Evelina* is already shaped by a kind of originary violence, as if Caroline's tragic plot—which ultimately resulted in the death of her character—also effected the

[137] *Memoirs*, 2:125.
[138] For further discussion of the bonfire, see for instance Doody, *Frances Burney*, 37; and Saggini, *Backstage in the Novel*, 48-51.

destruction of its physical, material text. In Saggini's words, "the imaginary ashes of Caroline Evelyn, whose death gives rise to the events narrated in *Evelina*, are mixed in with the real ashes produced by the bonfire of the manuscripts."[139] Further, as Susan Greenfield suggests, the absent mother as figure readily exceeds its role as novelistic plot device and quickly becomes implicated within larger literary networks of female authors. In *Evelina*, the daughter's very person bears the imprint of the mother, such that the mother-daughter resemblance (as opposed to the broader category of mother-daughter relations) becomes a form of recognition—not only of Evelina's legitimacy as Sir John and Caroline's daughter, but also as a way by which women writers may "signal an affiliation with one another."[140]

My investigation of materiality in Burney's corpus begins with the disguised handwriting that Burney used to produce a manuscript copy of *Evelina* and correspond with potential publishers. Part of *Evelina*'s remarkable publication history is that the novel's manuscript was written, recalling Hemlow's formulation, "in fugitive," not unlike Burney's earliest childhood writings—as if the twenty-five-year-old Burney embodied herself as a child, "scribbling" against the wishes of her elders. As we may recall, Dr. Burney and Crisp consistently discouraged Burney from writing, especially fiction. This led Burney to produce the bulk of the novel's manuscript at night and in private seclusion. Its publication was also pursued in secret, with the help of two of

[139] Saggini, *Backstage in the Novel*, 51. Burney uses the phrase "imaginary ashes" in the Dedication to *The Wanderer*, p. 9.
[140] Susan C. Greenfield, *Mothering Daughters: Novels and the Politics of Family Romance, Frances Burney to Jane Austen* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 37.

Burney's closest siblings, a long cloak-and-hat disguise, and the forwarding address of a fictional "Mr. King."

Having written the manuscript without her father's knowledge or permission, Burney did not produce the manuscript pages of *Evelina* in her own hand, since she had been her father's amanuensis and worried that her handwriting would be recognizable to publishers. As recorded in the *Memoirs* in her own words, Burney writes that she "copied the manuscript in a feigned hand."[141] She also insisted on anonymous publication, though publication in any form was already a major endeavor.

The correspondence between Burney and Lowndes currently resides at the British Library as part of the Barrett Collection, which indicates that these letters were passed on to Charlotte Barrett (1786-1870), Burney's niece. Upon Burney's death in 1840, Barrett was appointed literary executrix according to the terms of Burney's will. Though Burney's last years were already solely devoted to curating her personal papers with the understanding that they would eventually be published, Barrett herself, much to the chagrin of later bibliographers, made extensive changes on the original manuscripts, letters, and journals themselves, often, as Hemlow points out, with her infamous scissors and paste-pot.[142]

Besides cross-hatchings and crossed-out lines of text, Barrett marked other portions for inclusion in Burney's published correspondence, which Barrett had secured on contract with the publisher Henry Colburn in 1841. Barrett also cut out

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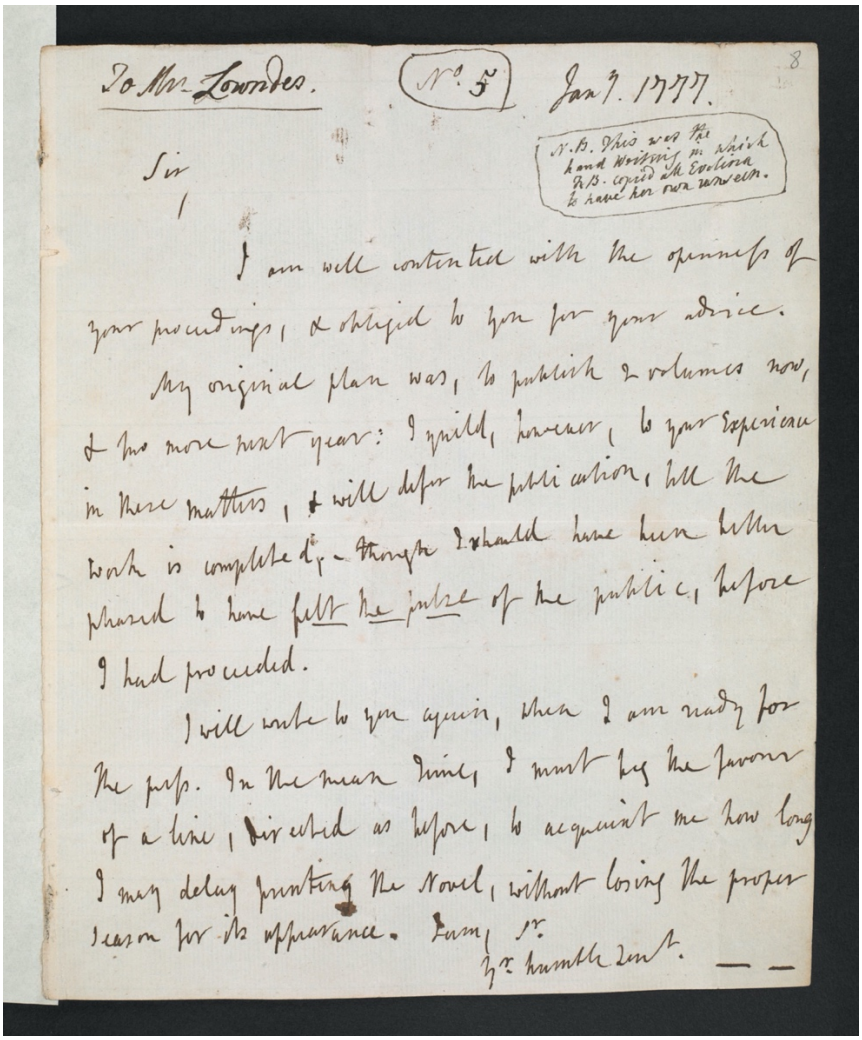
[141] *Memoirs*, 2:126-27.

[142] As Hemlow observes, "among editors of eighteenth-century manuscripts Charlotte Barrett must be given the prize for her work with glue-pot and scissors." As quoted in Frances Burney, *The Additional Journals and Letters of Frances Burney*, ed. Stewart J. Cooke, vol. 1: 1784-1786, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), xxiii (henceforth *AJL*).

parts of pages and pasted them onto others without regard for textual integrity or chronology. Later archivists and bibliographers describe the rather mangled remains as "textually corrupt, heavily abridged and bowdlerized."[143] Consequently, much of the critical work around the archive has involved efforts at textual recovery, which I will shortly discuss in more detail. Nonetheless, when considered via the lens of materiality, Burney's remaining papers—however messy, mangled, and obscure—are unique in their engagement with the imprints of their human handlers, yet also indicate the potential limits of such engagement.

In the Lowndes correspondence at the Barrett Collection is the first letter that Burney sent on January 7, 1777 to Lowndes' office on Fleet Street, carried by her brother Charles (Fig. 3). Prior to writing to Lowndes, the manuscript had already been turned down by another publisher, Robert Dodsley, who declined to print an anonymous work.[144] Burney's own account in the *Memoirs* devotes an entire chapter to the history of *Evelina*'s publication, suggesting that this tale had become, in the intervening years, one of the Burney family's favorite stories to tell.[145]

[143] *AJL*, xxii.
[144] *Memoirs*, 2:127-28.
[145] See *Memoirs*, 2:124. For instance, Doody recounts a famous instance of a dialogue between King George III and Burney in 1785, where Burney did not quite know how to tell the King how it was that *Evelina* came to be a published novel. See Doody, *Frances Burney*, 35.


To Mr Lowndes. No. 5 Jan. 7. 1777.

N.B. This was the hand Writing in which D'Arblay copied the Evelina to have her own secret.

Sir

I am well contented with the openness of your proceedings, & obliged to you for your advice. My original plan was, to publish 2 volumes now, & two more next year: I yield, however, to your Experience in these matters, & will defer the publication, till the work is completed — Though I should have been better pleased to have felt the pulse of the public, before I had proceeded.

I will write to you again, when I am ready for the press. In the mean time, I must beg the favour of a line, directed as before, to acquaint me how long I may delay printing the Novel, without losing the proper season for its appearance. I am, Sr.

Yr. humble Servt. — —

Fig. 3. Autograph letter written in a feigned hand, Frances Burney to Thomas Lowndes, London, 7 Jan 1777. MSS Egerton 3695 f. 8r, Barrett Collection, The British Library.

Dated in 1777, one year before the publication of *Evelina*, this letter established the correspondence between Burney, then writing anonymously, and Lowndes about the possibility of publishing the novel. The letter reads:

To Mr. Lowndes, Jan. 7, 1777

Sir,

> I am well contented with the openness of your proceedings, & obliged to you for your advice. My original plan was, to publish 2 volumes now, & two more next year: I yield, however, to your Experience in

> these matters, & will defer the publication, till the Work is completed, – though I should have been better pleased to have *felt the pulse of the public*, before I had proceeded.[146]

Though the sentiments in this letter convey the trepidation of a first-time author—one who seeks to "[feel] the pulse of the public" before publication—I'd like to suggest that this trepidation is further heightened by the feigned hand when the hand is considered as a material feature of this letter. The feigned hand in which this letter is written—as a matter of physical embodiment separate from its discursive, textual contents—suggests that a fair degree of concern had already been present even before the letter was penned. The feigned hand registers non-discursively the gendered dynamics produced by the male-dominated publishing industry in the period, as well as internal, familial demands that Burney give up writing altogether, in a way that already precedes the kinds of interpretation to which the letter's actual contents would be subject. It is perhaps no surprise, then, that Lowndes' reply is addressed first to "Sir," and subsequently to the pseudonym of "Mr. King" supplied by Burney, while she reveled in the gender confusion.

Recalling the manuscript's history, we know that Burney's worry about discovery had been present at the outset, since the two volumes that had been completed by that time were written in secret prior to Burney's correspondence with Lowndes. Burney's covert communication with Lowndes and initial insistence on anonymous publication, then, were made in order to preserve the already disguised production of the text. In her biography of Burney, Hemlow has already pointed out

[146] FB to Thomas Lowndes, publisher, London, 7 Jan 1777, MS Egerton 3695: Correspondence with T. Lowndes, Dec 1776-2 Jul 1778 (ff. 1-11), f. 6.

some of the logistical challenges in producing the manuscript, such as when Burney makes a visit in March 1777 to Chessington Hall, the country residence of Crisp.[147] Once settled at Chessington or at the London house at St. Martin's Street, Hemlow writes that Burney's work "must be done at night when she could work unobserved."[148] However, this mode of operation also presented its own challenges. Hemlow writes,

> The October nights were getting cool; Susan with the incipient trouble in her lungs could never have stood these nights of writing added to the tasks and demands of the day, but Fanny had her father's constitution and his ability to recover from physical and mental exhaustion.[149]

In recounting the episode, Hemlow thus situates Burney's practice of writing at night in the context of family, domesticity, and crucially, the "tasks and demands" needed to maintain both—in essence, an argument about female domesticity and invisible labor echoed by numerous scholars, including Doody, who describes Burney at twenty-five as "a working woman, if an unpaid one."[150]

Compared to her sister Susanna, Burney's healthy constitution—inherited from her father, another avid writer—is what allows for the possibility of writing at night, something that Susanna could not have physically accomplished. Hemlow's account reveals how Burney's writing practices, specifically the composition of *Evelina*, depended on her ability to perform the female labor demanded by daytime, even as the nighttime writing—another kind of labor—was physically and mentally exhausting. In sum, two embodied, gendered practices made Burney's writing possible: the feigned

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[147] Hemlow, *The History of Fanny Burney*, 85.
[148] Hemlow, 85.
[149] Hemlow, 85.
[150] Doody, *Frances Burney*, 39.

hand and the physical activity of writing in secret. These practices entwine the materiality of writing, the demands of gendered, domestic labor, and the embodied terms of female literacy: in what kinds of space(s), bodily posture, or under which special circumstances may women practice literacy?

One of the central claims of this chapter is that the great efforts that Burney undertook to write and publish in fugitive are traceable back to the genealogy of gendered violence that not only staked its claims to morality on women's bodies—as did the she-tragedies and novels like *Clarissa*—but also sought to circumscribe or otherwise control women's writing. Recalling Lovelace's crucial observation that "women" had become differentiated from "women's words," then, Burney's feigned hand registers some of the pressures that arose during the rise of female literacy in this period, as one important—and potentially violent—consequence of that differentiation. From artifacts produced in the feigned hand and drawing upon the history of covert writing, this chapter's account of materiality brings together *Evelina*'s fictions and Burney's own correspondence, each a response to the gendered forces that sought to delimit women's writing practices in the period.

ii. Material Revisions: *Evelina* in Burney's Archive

This section reviews two critical accounts of Burney's practices of revision to form a theoretical analysis of the materiality inherent in literacy, writing, and gendered practices of revision. By situating this description of materiality in the context of Burney's revision practices, I consider this chapter's artifacts as "material revisions" not only because their physical embodiments remain in the actual archive, but also because they arise non-discursively due to the gendered forces that influenced

Burney's writing—both privately in the Burney household and publicly in a male-dominated publishing industry—forces that were nonetheless repurposed by Burney ultimately to the success of *Evelina* upon its publication.

The survey of critical literature and manuscript history presented here thus generates the central methodological query of this chapter: with what purposes do we revise our own critical accounts of *Evelina* and of Burney's archive? This chapter's exploration of Burney's archive seeks to repurpose existing archival materials and critical work to revise the current mode of reading *Evelina* and better foreground the materiality of the archive. Subsequently, the archive becomes the crucial link between fiction and materiality, revealing common discursive and material traces of gendered violence. By reconceptualizing these debates in terms of materiality, this chapter makes the case that female literacy was indispensable to both female self-fashioning and female agency's role in its own self-determination, and makes visible the fundamental violence of the novel's underlying rape plot.

Burney's archivists and scholars, from Hemlow and Sabor to Havens, have demonstrated the extent to which Burney spent her life writing—or, in Burney's own words, "scribbling." This self-effacement in regard to her position as author—in the sense of being a writer as well as of *auctoritas*, or literary authority commensurate with a career author—was well known among her critics, who sought in different ways to interrogate the precise nature of how and what it is that was effaced. In *The Iron Pen*, for instance, Epstein examines the political nature of women's writing in the closing decades of the eighteenth century and describes Burney's self-effacement as a paradigmatic negotiation between women's writing and the patriarchal structures of

publication and, ultimately, of publicity itself. Yet Epstein ultimately suggests that the stakes are even higher, that writing was a means to survive pervasive hostility to women and women writers in this period. For Epstein, "[Frances Burney] was a compulsive writer, and wrote in order to permit herself to live."[151] Though this obsession, Epstein argues, comes in face of a series of losses later in life, such as the death of General d'Arblay, her husband, and subsequent bouts of illness, including breast cancer and a mastectomy without anesthesia, Burney's early writings also suggest that "writing in order to live" had always been a key feature of Burney's life. And there is perhaps no better dramatization of the tensions between authorship and effacement than Burney's own archive.

In their critical accounts of Burney's revision practices, both Hemlow and Havens agree that *Evelina* is, by and large, a happier revision of *The History of Caroline Evelyn*. Hemlow's approach characterizes Burney's revision process as an elevation in style and diction consistent with Burney's growth and maturation as a writer. The common and colloquial everyday style of Burney's early journals, which Hemlow calls an "unbowdlerized idiom," is thus transformed "as if the stern but delicate, spidery, and informing hand of a professor in stylistics had gone over the girlish text."[152] Comparing the text of the manuscript copy held at the Berg Collection, an earlier draft, with the final printed version of *Evelina*, Hemlow writes,

> A comparison of the original section with the printed text will show the trend of the improvements: the clarifying of occasional ambiguous phrases, pruning of unimportant or superfluous details, tightening of the sentence structure, re-

[151] Epstein, *The Iron Pen*, 9.
[152] Hemlow, *The History of Fanny Burney*, 78-79.

> placing of direct, artless, and informal effect by one of greater finish, dignity, and elegance[153]

In Hemlow's account, the emphasis on growth is inextricable from the earlier work of recovery—both increase textual clarity and lessen ambiguity.

Building upon this work, Havens has applied new technology to this recovery process. Developing new techniques in digital paleography, Havens recovered additional obliterated passages from Burney's corpus, including a deleted masquerade scene in the manuscript copy of *Cecilia*, also held at the Berg Collection.[154] Such findings underlie Havens' larger argument about practices of internal revision—the re-use of unpublished existing materials, or "literary recycling"—and networked authorship. Situating the revision of *The History of Caroline Evelyn* into *Evelina* in the context of Burney's career-long revision practices, Havens points out that the novel was "Burney's first successful act of internal revision."[155] Deploying digital paleography techniques, Havens' recovered passages from the *Evelina* manuscript reveal how subsequent revisions to the manuscript text effected a "toning down" of the sharp satire, which complicates Hemlow's earlier conclusion about the refinement of crude or colloquial language by introducing the element of self-censorship that will later dominate discussions of Burney's archival legacy.

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[153] Hemlow, 80.
[154] For a fuller description of this methodology, see Hilary Havens, "Adobe Photoshop and Eighteenth-Century Manuscripts" (2014) in *DHQ: Digital Humanities Quarterly*. Havens' results have also appeared in "Revisions and Revelations in Frances Burney's *Cecilia* Manuscript," *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 55, no. 3 (2015): 537–58, which features materials from the Berg Collection and elsewhere.
[155] Hilary Havens, *Revising the Eighteenth-Century Novel: Authorship from Manuscript to Print* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 57.

In light of these largely discursive (i.e. textually-based) accounts of Burney's revision practices, I'd like to suggest that the drama of authority and deference that characterized Burney's early writing career materializes equally in the literal, physical material of the archive, or the body of her writing that remains in the present day. Much is held between the lines, as well as in the remarkable history of the archive itself: the excising, deleting, and effacing of the pages and passages that did not survive; the fate of pages (and in the case of *Evelina*, entire manuscripts) lost during the initial dispersal upon Burney's death; and their extensive circulation, sale, and travel, most of which remain unknown. Thus, this chapter aims to revise the current critical approach to Burney's practices of revision, which has focused largely on the discursive, textual contents of Burney's writing. This revised approach includes the material manifestation of the writing and the recovery of obliterated passages, such that the archive may offer an alternative, non-discursive account of what it is that was effaced, revised, suppressed, and destroyed—and what survived.

II. The Silent Archive

The silent archive is perhaps the most common kind of archive in the history of rape. When forms of discursive control—personal, social, cultural, legal, and more—function successfully, the actual record of rape survives only against near-impossible odds. The silent archive also pertains to the bodies of women's writing that have not been preserved, given the scant access to literacy and means of preservation historically afforded to women, and certainly in Burney's time. Apart from the small number of recovered passages, the bulk of the lost materials of Burney's archive form another "silent archive." Although irrecoverable, it illuminates the overall history of

Burney's public and private writings and suggests new possibilities for study and interpretation. In her preface to the first volume of letters to be published in 1969 under her own editorship, Hemlow reminds us that Burney's archive as it remains is only an "arbitrary selection" from a much larger body of material that, nonetheless, "has long been mistaken for the whole."[156] Considered alongside Caroline's silent archive, Burney's archive reflects the consequences of treating arbitrary parts as "wholes." In the context of rape and gendered violence, treating arbitrary parts as wholes may mean admitting only select kinds of evidence of rape, such as the privileging of physical evidence, while refusing to admit others into consideration, either by discrediting their legitimacy or by refusing to acknowledge their very existence, deeming partial evidence already complete.

Yet as Patricia Kleindienst Joplin writes of an originary myth of the silent woman—the legend of Philomela, whose tongue becomes the sacrifice from which the nightingale's poetic voice emerges—"behind the woman's silence is the incomplete plot of male dominance, which fails no matter how extreme it becomes."[157] In her revisionary essay, Joplin locates the threat to Tereus' male dominance, which spurs the most extreme, violent act of literal silencing—the mutilation of Philomela's tongue—in an effort to prevent "the woman's voice" from "[becoming] public."[158] Such a threat, albeit in subtler forms, resurfaces in Burney's archive, rendering the silence of her archive an archetypical feature of women's archives at large; equally

[156] Frances Burney, *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (Madame D'Arblay)*, ed. Joyce Hemlow, vol. 1: 1791-1792 Letters 1-39 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972) (henceforth *JL*).
[157] Patricia Kleindienst Joplin, "The Voice of the Shuttle Is Ours" (1984), in *Rape and Representation*, ed. Lynn A. Higgins et. al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 39.
[158] Joplin, 40.

archetypical here and elsewhere is Joplin's suggestion that incomplete plots of male silencing inevitably fail and can only "contain, but never successfully destroy, the woman's voice."[159]

Indeed, Joplin's essay itself performs these tensions as part of its critical intervention. Joplin's argument about Philomela is a feminist response to Geoffrey Hartman's 1969 essay, which elides the gendered violence of rape in its account of literary representation even as it utilizes the selfsame Philomela myth.[160] In response, Joplin recasts Hartman's universal poetics of voice as a failed plot of male dominance. In critically repurposing Philomela as a figure for poetic voice, Joplin's account identifies this particular voice—the nightingale's—as gendered and possessing of Philomela's specific, violent history, and in doing so performs a paradigmatic feminist critical maneuver that reveals the universalized, often male, poetical account's failure to contain the female voice.

Keeping in mind the critical burdens of the silent woman, I argue in the following pages that Burney's writings illustrate how familial, social, and public pressures against writing similarly fail to destroy female practices of literacy. Reading key instances of silence in *Evelina* reveals the proliferating fictions of silence that exceed the lost or muted voice of those like Philomela, as silence becomes an organizing structure and heuristic that is associated with violence in both plot and archive.

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[159] Joplin, 40.
[160] See Geoffrey Hartman, "The Voice of the Shuttle: Language from the Point of View of Literature," *The Review of Metaphysics* 23, no. 2 (1969): 240–58.

Due to its epistolary form, *Evelina* uniquely preserves a continuity between silence in the context of speech and sociality, on one hand, and silence in the context of written correspondence, on the other. These twin premises comingle in the novel's representation of both discursive and physical violence, including the euphemistic carriage scene of abduction and attempted rape. In this context, Epstein's analysis serves as a good point of departure. Concluding the chapter on *Evelina* in *The Iron Pen*, Epstein writes, "the most powerful rhetorical experiment and thematic center in all [of Burney's] novels, most carefully integrated in *Evelina* and *Camilla*, is the heroine's silence when she is violated."[161] Yet that silence, paradoxically, must be performed for the reader via degrees of what Epstein calls "speechlessness" or "paralysis of language," resembling varying forms of disarticulated speech. In a manner similar to Clarissa's empty utterances in the previous chapter, Evelina's silence must be rendered audible such that the violation committed against her becomes legible to the reader.

In Letter 29, Evelina writes that her friend Miss Mirvan has "[complained] of my silence," referring to the fact that she had not responded to Miss Mirvan's earlier letter. Later in the novel, that silence would turn against Evelina when she receives a romantically forward letter, forged in Lord Orville's name by Sir Clement Willoughby. Writing again to Miss Mirvan, Evelina describes how, in speech as well as in writing, "What [Lord Orville] thought of my silence and uneasiness I fear to know." Her letter concludes, "Yet I cannot but lament to find myself in a world so deceitful, where we must suspect what we see, distrust what we hear, and doubt even

[161] Epstein, *The Iron Pen*, 121.

what we feel!"[162] Evelina's experience of silence thus generates what critics would mark as an exemplary moment of *bildung*. Broadly reconceived in the context of this chapter, part and parcel with Evelina's *bildung* is the hermeneutic power of silence, specifically the social and critical urge to account for, interpret, or even foresee moments of female silence.

Numerous moments of silence and disarticulated speech punctuate the novel's famous carriage scene, which critics such as Fraiman, Straub, and Epstein commonly mark as a euphemism for attempted rape. In the context of Burney's repurposing of the rape plot, this scene is a critical juncture. In this scene, Evelina finds herself alone in a carriage with Sir Clement, who had been making advances towards her, but to no avail. The carriage ride back to the Mirvans' residence at Queen Anne Street had seemed unusually long. Sensing that something is amiss, Evelina eventually realizes that Sir Clement has orchestrated the situation—that "he had himself ordered the man to go a wrong way."[163] Burney's repurposing of the rape plot affords Evelina this prescience. For the tragic heroine, unlike Evelina, such a realization would always come too late. Recounting the episode in her letter to Mr. Villars, Evelina writes:

> I now began to apprehend that he had himself ordered the man to go a wrong way, and I was so much alarmed at the idea, that, the very instant it occurred to me, I let down the glass, and made a sudden effort to open the chariot-door myself, with a view of jumping into the street; but he caught hold of me, exclaiming, "For Heaven's sake, what is the matter?"
>
> "I—I don't know," cried I, (quite out of breath) "but I am sure the man goes wrong, and if you will not speak to him, I am determined I will get out myself."
>
> "You amaze me," answered he, (still holding me) "I cannot imagine what you apprehend. Surely you can have no doubts of my honour?"

[162] Burney, *Evelina*, 216.
[163] Burney, 82.

> He drew me towards him as he spoke. I was frightened dreadfully, and could hardly say, "No, Sir, no,—none at all,—only Mrs. Mirvan,—I think she will be uneasy."
>
> "Whence this alarm, my dearest angel?—What can you fear?—my life is at your devotion, and can you, then, doubt my protection?"
>
> And so saying, he passionately kissed my hand.
>
> Never, in my whole life, have I been so terrified. I broke forcibly from him, and, putting my head out of the window called aloud to the man to stop. Where we then were, I know not, but I saw not a human being, or I should have called for help.[164]

In this scene, Evelina performs the speechlessness that Epstein describes, yet is also able to act against Sir Clement's physical hold. Such desperate actions as opening the carriage door, planning on "jumping into the street," "[breaking] forcibly" from Sir Clement, and calling the driver to stop actively resist Sir Clement's threatening advances, while Sir Clement's professed confusion further complicates and enables the sexual threat. Catching hold of Evelina, he exclaims, "For Heaven's sake, what is the matter?" Following Evelina's "I don't know," Sir Clement declares that he "cannot imagine what you apprehend," even while he "drew [Evelina] towards him as he spoke." Such an action frightens Evelina, rendering her even more speechless as she continues to experience difficulty speaking ("No, sir, no—none at all"), which discursively denies the violation to which she is presently subject, thereby enabling its violence. Sir Clement passionately kisses Evelina's hand, displaying perhaps the most sexually forward gesture in this scene, prompting Evelina to write that "Never, in my whole life, have I been so terrified."

Nonetheless, Evelina is able to finally break free from Sir Clement's grasp—an otherwise deadly embrace, to recall Lovelace and Clarissa's posture during Clarissa's

[164] Burney, 82-83.

own abduction—though not without a final act of silencing. After the confrontation, Evelina continues,

> […] we went through several streets, till at last, to my great terror, he suddenly ordered the man to stop, and said, "Miss Anville, we are now within twenty yards of your house; but I cannot bear to part with you, till you generously forgive me for the offence you have taken, and promise not to make it known to the Mirvan's."
>
> I hesitated between fear and indignation.
>
> "Your reluctance to speak redoubles my contrition for having displeased you, since it shews the reliance I might have on a promise which you will not give without consideration."
>
> "I am very, very much distressed," cried I; "you ask a promise which you must be sensible I ought not to grant, and yet dare not refuse."[165]

Having escaped the physical threat of abduction and rape, Evelina must now confront the discursive violence that follows. Though Sir Clement had previously claimed to be "insensible" of his transgression, he now demands "generous forgiveness" that in this case amounts to Evelina keeping silent about the matter. Ironically, the discursive violence of rape in this scenario contorts seeking forgiveness into an act of silencing the very person whose forgiveness is being sought. The circularity that Fraiman ascribes to the novel's marriage plot also applies here; the rape plot cannot assert its presence without recapitulation, here encapsulated in a promise Evelina does not wish to grant yet dares not refuse.

Recalling previous iterations of silencing in the aftermath of rape, I'd like to suggest that Evelina's silencing, though it unfolds in the novel's text via speech/dialogue, develops from earlier forms of silencing such as Philomela's muted tongue and Clarissa's pen, ink, and paper being taken away. Evelina's impossible

[165] Burney, 83.

promise is one of many eighteenth-century iterations of the problem of silencing, presented under the guise of social decorum. Numerous critics, of course, have explored Burney's affinity for courtesy books, and identify social conduct, particularly the norms of female propriety, as a core concern in Burney's writings.[166] Most notably, Mrs. Mirvan's reaction to this episode exemplifies this line of thinking. As Evelina recounts, "as soon as [Lord Orville and Sir Clement] were gone, Mrs. Mirvan, though with great softness, blamed me for having quitted Madame Duval." Evelina's response is meek and dutiful: she writes that she "assured her, and with truth, that for the future I would be more prudent."[167] Mrs. Mirvan's direction of blame seems to serve as a low-stakes warning, casting the episode as ultimately one of improper, imprudent conduct, and largely on Evelina's part.

Yet unlike the Philomela myth, the attempted abduction and silencing are recorded in text. That is, Evelina recounts this episode in a long letter to Mr. Villars as part of the epistolary fiction of the novel, which would not be possible without literacy. Though Evelina is silenced on the level of the plot (i.e. she keeps her promise and does not tell the Mirvans), the reader is nonetheless privy not only to the events that transpired, but also to Evelina's interiority. Crucially, interiority takes shape via the epistolary fiction of spontaneous writing. Evelina herself writes the letter to Mr. Villars, and truth-telling is all but guaranteed for the eighteenth-century reader by this widely-adopted and assumed fiction.

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[166] See for instance Doody, *Frances Burney*, 231-32 and Joyce Hemlow, "Fanny Burney and the Courtesy Books," *PMLA* 65, no. 5 (1950): 732–61.
[167] Burney, *Evelina*, 84.

In this way, the first-person record of the attempted abduction and Evelina's accompanying silence survives on the level of form, and it is the generic fiction of the epistolary novel that fundamentally allows Evelina's textual account to exist. Evelina's account of her impossible promise in fact performs the recapitulation we have seen in Chapter One's discussion of the mad papers, specifically Paper I. While Clarissa's writing in Paper I conveys the confusion and difficulty of articulating rape, as opposed to a specific and meaningful account of the rape itself, Evelina's literacy and her embeddedness in an existing network of correspondence form a record of Sir Clement's attempt to silence Evelina, thereby refusing to keep silent. Therein lies the critical intervention afforded by female literacy and writing, which repurposes former acts of female silencing into a record of the silencing itself—one to be witnessed not only by Mr. Villars, the letter's fictional recipient, but also the novel's readers. Sir Clement is found out.

III. Manuscript Materiality and the "Olivier Letter"

Turning to the archive, one artifact in particular stands out as the ultimate expression of silencing that fails. A "recycled" letter sent to Dr. Burney from M. A. Olivier, or the "Olivier letter," contains manuscript text of *Evelina* on its reverse side (Figs. 4-5).[168] This artifact emerges out of Burney's common practice of recycling paper, which was prohibitively expensive, though not merely in terms of monetary

[168] For the purposes of clarity, the "Olivier letter" refers to the double-sided, folded insert in the *Evelina* manuscript shown in Figs. 4-5. One side contains the text of M. A. Olivier's letter to Dr. Burney, while the other contains the manuscript text of *Evelina*. The "Belmont letter" refers to the text of Caroline's letter that is reproduced in the novel as Vol. 3, Letter XIII. An "editorial" note in the text indicates that this letter was "Inclosed in the preceding letter," which is Letter XXII, from Mr. Villars to Evelina, pp. 278-81.

currency. The Olivier letter asserts its discursive presence in the novel as the final letter that Caroline writes on her deathbed, which is also the only letter written by Caroline in the novel. Addressed to Sir John, Caroline's letter implores him to recognize Evelina as his daughter, a major turning point in Evelina's efforts to claim her Belmont name. Simultaneously, the Olivier letter asserts its material presence in the archive as a proxy for the destroyed manuscript of *The History of Caroline Evelyn*, which parallels the status of Caroline's letter (henceforth the "Belmont letter") as the surviving remainder of Caroline's fictional—and fictionally lost—corpus of letters. By juxtaposing Burney's repurposed rape plot with artifacts in the archive, this chapter thus reconceptualizes materiality as capable of non-discursive representation that deftly evades rape's silencing, but simultaneously affirms its covert presence.

Consequently, the intervention afforded by turning to the materiality of the archive is three-fold. In the pages that follow, I endeavor to demonstrate that the material presence of the Olivier letter in the *Evelina* manuscript, as physical artifact, communicates gendered dynamics non-discursively—as did the feigned handwriting—without resorting to the disarticulation of speech and speechlessness or turning to conventional metaphors, unlike the persistence of speechlessness in the carriage scene. Second, the remarkable history of the composition and publication of *Evelina* also reveals a history of (male) efforts at silencing that are nonetheless incomplete. The picture of young Burney secretly writing in the attic of her house and copying the manuscript in a feigned hand is both the ultimate expression of the forces that worked against female literacy and authorship *and* an active response to the erasure, discrediting, and suppression of women's writing in the period. Finally, the

Belmont letter's textual contents and its pivotal role in the plot of *Evelina* further illustrate incomplete silencing on the level of plot, being the return of Caroline's story from its lost history. I juxtapose the difficulty that Caroline experiences in addressing the letter to Sir John dramatized in the text of the Belmont letter with Burney's own difficulty addressing Dr. Burney in the prefatory poem "Oh author of my being!" in order to illustrate how the ambiguity of the very name of "author" can shift between Dr. Burney—the "author" of Burney's life—and Burney herself, the author of the novel.

Although there is ample critical literature on Burney in relation to *Evelina*, one of the most studied novels in Burney's *oeuvre*, of her earlier critics only Hemlow has studied at length the manuscript of the novel. Even so, Hemlow's treatment of the manuscript focused on Burney's "pruning of colloquialisms," and it was not until Havens' own study that the manuscript, as physical artifact, was examined fully on its own.[169] In *Revising the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, Havens singles out one of its letters as a rarefied link—the only remaining physical material in Burney's archive—between *The History of Caroline Evelyn* and *Evelina*. This is none other than the Belmont letter, or Caroline's final letter to Sir John, which Evelina receives from Mr. Villars before meeting Sir John. In the manuscript, Burney had transcribed the text of this letter onto the reverse side of an actual letter sent to Dr. Burney by M. A. Olivier, dated November 10, 1770, almost eight years before the bulk of *Evelina*'s manuscript was written. Havens confirms that this letter "predates, by a few years, the other recycled material used in the [*Evelina*] manuscript," and is "one of only two sections

[169] See *AJL*, 192n9.

of the novel to be written on a folio sheet."[170] Kept together with the rest of the manuscript, mostly written on smaller sheets and fragments of paper, the Olivier letter stands out even to the layperson unfamiliar with archival work.

As part of the parallels between Burney's life and her fiction, the facts that distinguish the Olivier letter from the rest of the *Evelina* manuscript, such as the age of this letter compared to other recycled materials in the rest of the manuscript, as well as its irregular folio size, are also facts that distinguish Caroline's archive from Evelina's narrative, which we might call "Evelina's archive." Recalling the earlier discussion of Caroline's "silent archive"— the loss of Caroline's letters in fiction and in manuscript (i.e. the destroyed manuscript of *The History of Caroline Evelyn*)—we find that Caroline's archive may not be wholly lost or silent after all. One vestigial, material trace survives in the form of the Olivier letter, with the Belmont letter as its fictional counterpart. As we shall see, the "return" of Caroline, via the proxy of her letter, allows for some measure of closure, no matter how limited, to *The History of Caroline Evelyn*.

As it now remains in the Berg Collection's archive, the Olivier letter is literally and fictionally folded and enclosed in the pages of the *Evelina* manuscript, in part due to its larger size, but also as if to imitate the way in which the letter, in the fiction of *Evelina*, is also folded and enclosed within a letter by Mr. Villars.

[170] Havens, *Revising the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, 58.

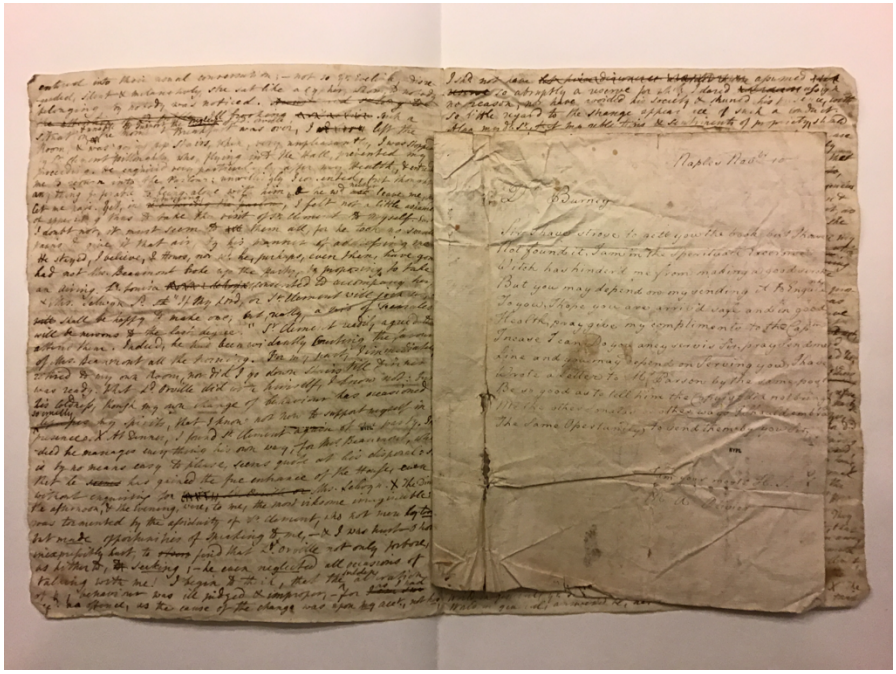


Fig. 4. Manuscript pages of *Evelina* with Olivier letter "insert," incomplete holograph (208 pp.). MSS Arblay, Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

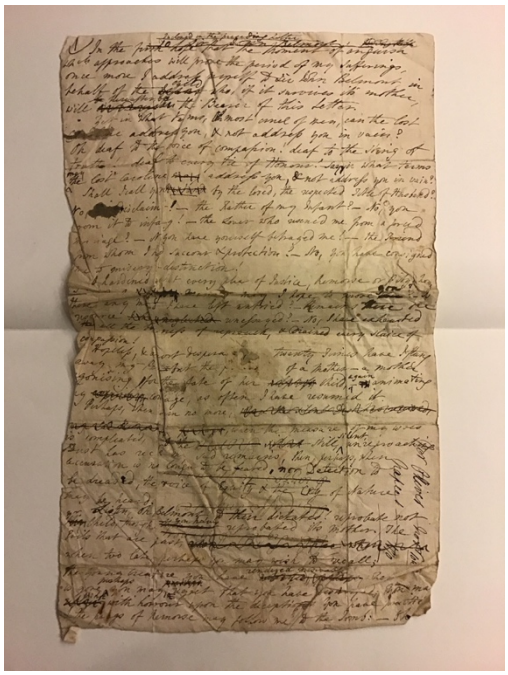


Fig. 5. Inside of the Olivier letter insert above, showing the text of the "Belmont letter" in *Evelina* (Vol. 3 Letter XXIII).

In one sense, the letter's enclosure is a form of mediation but also an act of discursive control. Villars' text circumscribes Caroline's letter, providing its history and provenance, Caroline's last instructions as to its use, together with Mr. Villars' own caution and worry. In striking resemblance to the reproduction of Clarissa's mad papers in Lovelace's letter, the text of Caroline's letter as enclosed within Mr. Villars' is also transcribed. In the fiction of the novel, the original letter would remain sealed until Evelina's second meeting with Sir John, where he is given Caroline's dying missive.[171]

When examined as material artifact in the theoretical framework of this chapter, the Olivier/Belmont letter reveals the extent to which fictions of materiality keep unique record not only of Burney's writing process, but also of a significant moment of her lived life. This record is, crucially, non-discursive and inheres in the materiality of this artifact. The two "texts" written on opposite sides of the folio sheet perform the intimacy with which Burney's life and life-in-letters co-existed, as if to suggest that one could not exist without the other. This phenomenon is, in one sense, a theoretical re-reading of Havens' idea of literary recycling, and proceeds from the idea that the material(s) itself has a history fit for telling. One side is a record of family correspondence, which had traveled to the Burneys' house in London from Naples; the other recorded a more-than-familiar drama of a tragic heroine's hope and despair on her deathbed, which involves the disintegration—rather than connection—of a family. Such a contrast reveals literary and private lives intertwined, as both record and generator of further writing, not only by an individual in their lifetime but as a

[171] This is Vol. 3, Letter XIX; in the Norton edition, pp. 318-19.

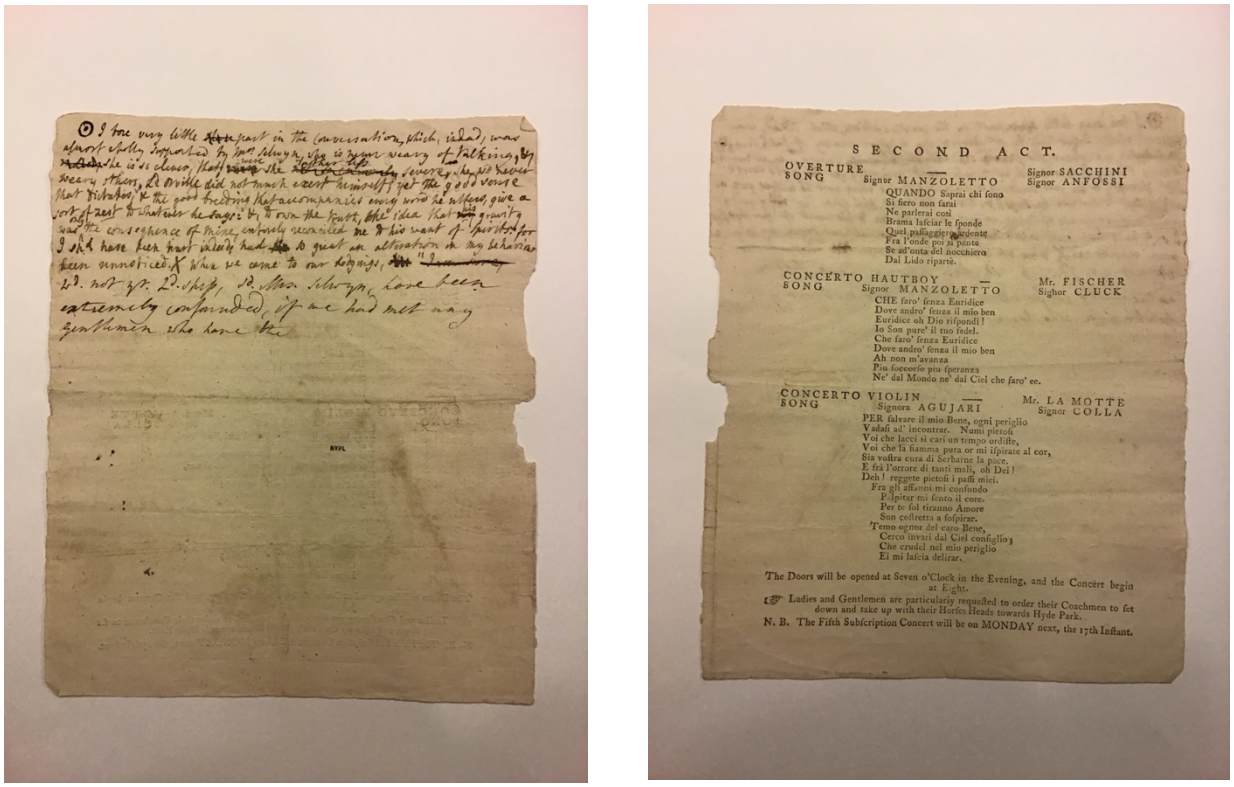
familial, inter-generational legacy. Only the non-discursive materiality of the letter affords this convergence of literary and lived experience.

The resemblance between life and fiction gathered by attending to materiality thus establishes an understanding of the Olivier letter and numerous other artifacts in the archive as biographical objects distinct from biographical speculation. In the context of gendered violence, the contrast between the texts also reveals the close affinity—and oftentimes dangerous proximity—between women's bodies and women's writing that exceeds mere metaphor. Ultimately, the Olivier letter materializes the embodied practices of women's writing, which belabors the fact and consequences of gendered assumptions around such writing, including the lack of access to literacy, the physical concealment of writing bodies, and the process of anonymous publication common or even necessary among women writers in the period. While many of these barriers have been rightfully challenged and increasingly mitigated, the embodied terms and conditions of women's writing remain: the postures, gestures, and (dis)guises—as we have seen with Burney in the attic of her house—that women must assume, inhabit, conceal, or reveal in order to commit their words to ink and paper.

This chapter's account of the Olivier letter builds upon not only Havens' argument about Burney's revision practices—the literary recycling of *The History of Caroline Evelyn* into *Evelina*—but also the record of Burney's practice of recycling paper in general. Evidence from Burney's archive suggests that writing on the blank sides of used paper—the backs of letters, stray pages of books and manuscripts,

envelopes, and even playbills from the theater—was a common routine that continued well into Burney's adulthood.

Examples abound in the Berg Collection alone. Among the recycled papers were a discarded page from Dr. Burney's monograph, *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and United Provinces* (1771); a paper discussing madrigals and Italian composers; the back of a playbill featuring Christoph Willibald Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* (first performed October 5, 1762; Figs. 6-7); and, of course, the blank sides of letters such as M. Olivier's.[172]



SECOND ACT.

OVERTURE —
SONG Signor MANZOLETTO — Signor SACCHINI, Signor ANFOSSI

QUANDO Saprai chi sono
Si fiero non farai
Ne parlerai così
Brama lasciar le sponde
Quel paraggio ardente
Fra l'onde poi si punta
Se all'onta del nocchiero
Dal Lido riparte.

CONCERTO HAUTBOY —
SONG Signor MANZOLETTO — Mr. FISCHER, Signor CLUCK

CHE faro' senza Euridice
Dove andro' senza il mio ben
Euridice oh Dio rispondi!
Io Son pure' il tuo fedel.
Che faro' senza Euridice
Dove andro' senza il mio ben
Ah non m'avanza
Piu soccorso piu speranza
Ne' dal Mondo ne' dal Ciel che faro' ec.

CONCERTO VIOLIN —
SONG Signora AGUJARI — Mr. LA MOTTE, Signor COLLA

PER salvare il mio Bene, ogni periglio
Vadasi ad' incontrar. Numi pietosi
Voi che lacci si cari un tempo ordiste,
Voi che la fiamma pura or mi ispirate al cor,
Sia vostra cura di Serbarne la pace.
E fra l'orrore di tanti mali, oh Dei!
Deh! reggete pietosi i passi miei.
Fra gli affanni mi confondo
Palpitar mi sento il core.
Per te sol tiranno Amore
Son costretta a sospirar.
Temo ognor del caro Bene,
Cerco trovari dal Ciel consiglio;
Che crudel nel mio periglio
Ei mi lascia delirar.

The Doors will be opened at Seven o'Clock in the Evening, and the Concert begin at Eight.

☞ Ladies and Gentlemen are particularly requested to order their Coachmen to set down and take up with their Horses Heads towards Hyde Park.

N. B. The Fifth Subscription Concert will be on MONDAY next, the 17th Instant.

Figs. 6-7. Manuscript leaf showing the text of *Evelina* (r) and an opera playbill (v). MSS Arblay, Berg Collection, New York Public Library

[172] For a full catalogue, see Havens, *Revising the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, 58-59.

It is important to note that this recycling practice was in no way unique to Burney. Reusing paper in this way was a highly common practice during the period, in large part due to the exorbitant cost of paper, as mentioned earlier. It was not until the widespread adoption of the cheaper alternative of wood-pulp in the mid-nineteenth century that this practice became obsolete.[173] Yet, as the findings of this chapter suggest, recycling practices emerged not only because of scarcity or economic necessity, which is a kind of "rational choice" explanation of the practice. Rather, the practice of recycling paper that is core to the material composition of Burney's archive is also a gendered one.

Burney's limited access to paper was due to a combination of her age, gender, and status in the household. And for every Burney, Brontë sister, or Emily Dickinson—major writers who also famously practiced their own unique forms of paper-recycling—there would likely have been countless others.[174] In light of Burney's covert practices of writing, the scarcity of paper was an additional barrier of access to literacy that easily transcends the prevailing explanation of economic necessity. When situated within Burney's writing practices as a whole, the practice of recycling paper becomes implicated in the gendered dynamics—and even potential violence—that organized women's literacy in this period.

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[173] The common key date is 1843, when Charles Fenerty and Friedrich Gottlob Keller developed a method to produce wood pulp for use in paper making, which had hitherto relied on producing pulp out of rags. Recent work on the history of the book and of print technology include Christina Lupton, *Knowing Books: The Consciousness of Mediation in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (2012) and Christopher Flint, *The Appearance of Print in Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (2011).

[174] See for instance Deborah Lutz, "Emily Brontë's Paper Work," *Victorian Review* 42, no. 2 (2016): 291–305; and Virginia W. Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading* (2005).

This chapter concludes with a critical revision of the silent archive. If silence is a proxy for irrecoverable loss, then the repurposing of silence explored earlier, including the case of the Olivier letter, may reconfigure the silent archive as a collection of acts of silencing that are nonetheless open to revision. That is, materiality enables definitive witness of acts of silencing precisely by rendering them incomplete, so as to form a viable, existing record. Moving through the violent losses of and in *Evelina* and Caroline's plot, the history of the novel's publication, and the materiality of Burney's archive, one finds a parallel history of the persistence of female writing and literacy. This history centrally involves "feminine strategy," to borrow Straub's term, as well as the material record of gendered violence in the archive that ultimately grants Caroline Belmont the last word in her narrative. We may return to Joplin's assertion, then, that "behind the woman's silence is the incomplete plot of male dominance," and add to this account the role of female literacy in rendering the plot of male dominance incomplete, which reveals both Philomela's tapestry and *Evelina*'s repurposed rape plot to be powerful acts of resistance that may encompass forms other than the conventional written word.

The text of Caroline's Belmont letter follows many conventions of tragic drama, rendered in the form of a familiar letter. Caroline's letter conveys the fiction of spontaneous writing, following *Clarissa* and others in the genre, by self-consciously calling attention to the moment of letter-writing. Combining dramatic and epistolary conventions in this instance, the fiction of spontaneous writing grants Caroline's letter the dramatic immediacy and quality of live speech, as if to reenact her reprobation of Sir John in the moment of its reading. One of the most striking examples, however,

seems to convey a kind of difficulty of articulation, though in written form, that recalls Evelina's disarticulation and speechlessness in the carriage scene, ending in silence; a stronger echo still is Clarissa's failure to describe her own rape in the mad papers, specifically in Paper I.

Caroline's difficulty of articulation is also distinctive in regard to its reliance on modes of address, a core concern about social position and naming that is a major crux of *Evelina*. The idea of address, however, also invokes the activity of letter-writing, specifically the "address" to which a letter is posted. Here, the difficulty of addressing the letter makes for a letter with no addressee—and no address to send it to. Caroline writes,

> Yet in what terms,—oh most cruel of men!—can the lost Caroline address you, and not address you in vain? Oh deaf to the voice of compassion—deaf to the sting of truth,—deaf to every tie of honour—say, in what terms may the lost Caroline address you, and not address you in vain?[175]

Caroline's question is fragmented and constantly disrupted by her damning reprobations of Sir John, who is "most cruel of men" and "deaf to the voice of compassion." In other words, Caroline's question is not really a question at all. Caroline's questioning becomes increasingly rhetorical as she reflects on the possible titles that Sir John may be given:

> Shall I call you by the loved, respected title of husband?—No, you disclaim it!—the father of my infant?—No, you doom it to infamy!—the lover who rescued me from a forced marriage?—No, you have yourself betrayed me!—the friend from whom I hoped succour and protection?—No, you have consigned me to misery and destruction![176]

[175] Burney, *Evelina*, 279.
[176] Burney, 279.

Moving through the possible titles that may be given Sir John—husband, father, lover, and friend—Caroline supplies her own answers: Sir John may not be given any of these titles, having disabused her and disowned her infant. It is at this point that the fiction of speechlessness or disarticulation when it comes to rape and gendered violence begins to undo rape's silencing, even as more overt forms of speech become increasingly obscured by silence and shame. In writing her final letter, Caroline is no longer bound to the silence or empty, discursive noise that have dominated and silenced the representation of so many other tragic female protagonists, especially regarding their own ability to describe, account for, or question their own injuries.

Perhaps the most striking departure from her predecessors is the decisive moment in which the generic shift away from classic she-tragedy occurs. Significantly, this shift implicates—and repurposes—the fiction of spontaneous writing that had formerly been turned against the child-like or innocent women writers envisioned by Lovelace earlier in *Clarissa*. Describing herself in the moment of writing the letter, Caroline writes,

> Hopeless, and almost desperate, twenty times have I flung away my pen;—but the feelings of a mother, a mother agonizing for the fate of her child, again animating my courage, as often I have resumed it.[177]

Unlike Clarissa, Caroline overcomes the speechlessness that accompanies rape by none other than "the feelings of a mother." This letter demonstrates a final transformation that embraces motherhood, a concept virtually absent in the she-tragedy, such that Caroline's story is similarly transformed—perhaps even liberated—from female tragedy to familial drama. This is precisely the moment in which her

[177] Burney, 280.

story finally becomes, to recall Doody's formulation, "the story of how a woman comes to be a mother and is destroyed." The transformation of the passive and virtuous but sexually transgressive female protagonist into a mother figure is a crucial shift in genre. While the question of motherhood remains largely unresolved, the question carries forward in Evelina's narrative. By repurposing Caroline's tragic plot, Burney brings Caroline and her legacy back into the fold of the intergenerational drama that began with her father, Mr. Evelyn, and happily concludes with Evelina's marriage to Lord Orville. Virtually nameless at the beginning of the novel—Doody and others have pointed out how "Anville," Evelina's alias, is composed of the letters of "Evelina" rearranged—Evelina successfully claims her Belmont name and acquires another, that of Orville, in this sense answering the question she posed in the first of her letters in the novel: "I cannot to *you* sign Anville and what other name may I claim?"[178]

The fiction of spontaneous writing, as depicted in the Belmont letter, is but one of the ways by which Burney repurposes some of the most familiar tenets of epistolary fiction as well as the tropes of gendered violence against women that defined the dramatic tradition of the she-tragedy. In doing so, these tenets become implicated in female tragedy in increasingly inextricable ways. Upon reading the letter, Sir John becomes so remorseful as to spurn the sight of Evelina, whom Lady Howard had deemed "the lovely resemblance of her lovely mother."[179] In this case, literacy calls into question the dilemma of representation of rape, manifest as the difficulty of

[178] Burney, 19.
[179] Burney, 110.

articulating male violence in the Belmont letter. The material fact of the letter that had endured from Caroline's deathbed until the moment it reaches Sir John ultimately reveals Caroline's prior silencing to be incomplete, affording her the last word in her narrative: her parting words delivered by her living resemblance.

Given the emphasis on disarticulated speech and the difficulty of address in the Belmont letter, the archive provides yet another instance where life and fiction resemble one another. Another relevant artifact in Burney's archive that involves a similar scenario of disarticulation is the manuscript draft of the dedicatory poem printed at the beginning of *Evelina*, commonly glossed by editors as a simple laudatory ode to her father. This characterization appears in the manuscript drafts of this poem, though not the final printed version. The poem reads:

To _____ _____

Oh author of my being!—far more dear
To me than light, than nourishment, or rest,
Hygieia's blessings, Rapture's burning tear,
Or the life blood that mantles in my breast!

If in my heart the love of Virtue glows,
'T was planted there by an unerring rule;
From thy example the pure flame arose,
Thy life, my precept—thy good work, my school.

Could my weak pow'rs thy num'rous virtues trace,
By filial love each fear should be repress'd;
The blush of Incapacity I'd chace,
And stand, recorder of thy worth, confess'd:

But since my niggard stars that gift refuse,
Concealment is the only boon I claim;
Obscure be still the unsuccessful Muse,
Who cannot raise, but would not sink, thy fame.

Oh! of my life at once the source and joy!

If e'er thy eyes these feeble lines survey,
Let not their folly their intent destroy;
Accept the tribute—but forget the lay.[180]

This dedicatory poem is one site at which the various narratives of *Evelina*'s inception converge. The "burning tear" and "pure flame" that arose due to "thy example" certainly reminds us of the flames of the fateful bonfire of 1767. Yet equally present here is the common metaphor of the flame as burning desire—not only to please Dr. Burney, the presumed addressee of this poem, but also to write. While the bonfire initially arose from the desire to placate Dr. Burney's, and especially her stepmother's, disapproval of her writing, the bonfire has since then become a kind of spectacular display—the material evidence that the young Burney *did* write enough to make the bonfire in the first place. In Doody's words, "the secret "degradation" is both timidly hidden and angrily flaunted, just as the bonfire both censors the products of sin and momentarily makes a blazing display of them."[181]

Similarly, the "blush of Incapacity" that signals Burney's shame at failing to fulfill her filial duty precisely by writing this poem would return in the Dedication to *The Wanderer*, where Burney makes numerous references to novel-writing as "an inclination at which [she] blushed, and that [she] had always kept secret," specifically invoking the incident of the bonfire.[182] And as we have seen time and again in this chapter, "concealment" and the "obscurity" that characterizes the "unsuccessful

[180] Burney, 3.
[181] Doody, *France Burney*, 36. The term "degradation" comes from Burney's observation that biases against the novel "fastened degradation" to novel-writing in the Dedication to *The Wanderer*.
[182] Burney, *The Wanderer*, 8.

Muse" were constitutive elements of Burney's actual writing practices—including the writing of the very novel that is being dedicated.

Surveying textual revisions in the manuscript of this poem, however, reveals a fundamental difficulty at naming the figure of the "author." Two versions of the poem survive in Burney's archive at the Barrett Collection. Both are fragments that were first kept in an unassuming brown envelope labeled "old composition odds," among other crossed out lines of "To my Susanna," "Refuses of Cecilia" and "Introduction [to] Wanderer" (Fig. 8).[183] The textual labels were most likely written by Burney, as they seem to be written in her usual hand.

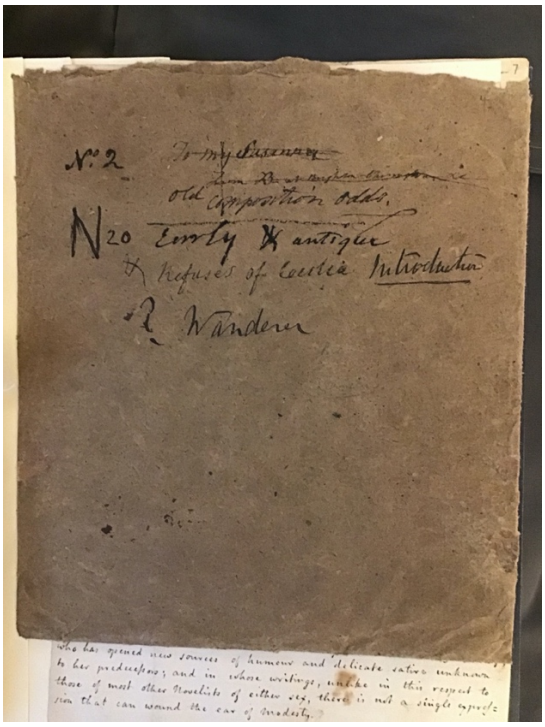


Fig. 8. Envelope containing selected literary manuscript fragments now bound in a single volume. MS Egerton 3696, Barrett Collection, The British Library.

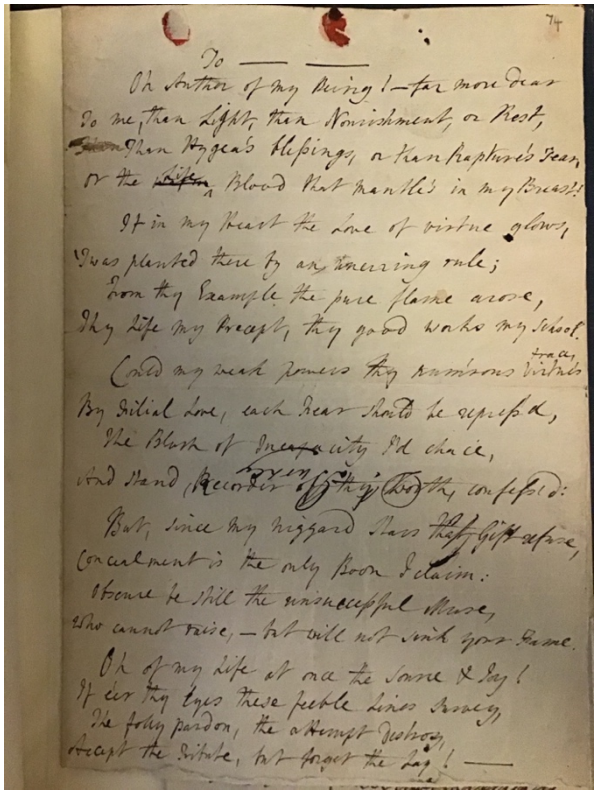
[183] A few select portions have been digitized and are available on the British Library site, https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/manuscript-copies-of-poems-from-evelina-and-contemporary-reviews-of-the-novel#.

The contents of the envelope vary greatly in size and chronology. The texts are often written on recycled materials, mostly the backs of letters, and they include a draft of an introduction to *Cecilia*, two contemporary reviews of *Evelina* and *Cecilia* (the former from an April issue of *The Monthly Review*, while the latter unnamed and undated), an "impromptu by Mrs. Hastings," who Burney meets only later during her time at the court of King George III (f. 81), Mr. McCartney's poems from *Evelina*, "An Epistle to Miss Elizabeth Burney after a Long Silence" (f. 36), and a poem titled "Female Caution" addressed to Miss Allen, her half-sister (f. 79). These fragments were collectively bound at a later date and are now part of MS Egerton 3696, one of the two major volumes of Burney's papers held at the Barrett Collection.

Burney's poem in *Evelina* exists in two versions. One copy shows the final version that is printed in *Evelina*, while the other is an earlier draft showing a revision in the last stanza of the ode. In the final version, the line reads, "If e'er thy eyes these feeble lines survey/Let not their folly their intent destroy." In the draft, however, the line was originally "If e'er thy eyes these feeble lines survey/The folly pardon, the attempt destroy"[184] (Fig. 9). Even more striking, however, are a series of drafts of the initial address of the ode on the verso of this leaf, which shows how Burney experimented with at least two variations of the line (Fig. 10). One variation reads, "Friend of my Soul, & Parent of my Heart/Dearer than Life, Light, Nourishment & Rest," while the other adheres more closely to the text of the final version, "Dear

[184] MS Egerton 3696 f. 74r.

Author of my Being,—far more dear/To me, than Life, Light, Nourishment, & Rest."[185]



To — —

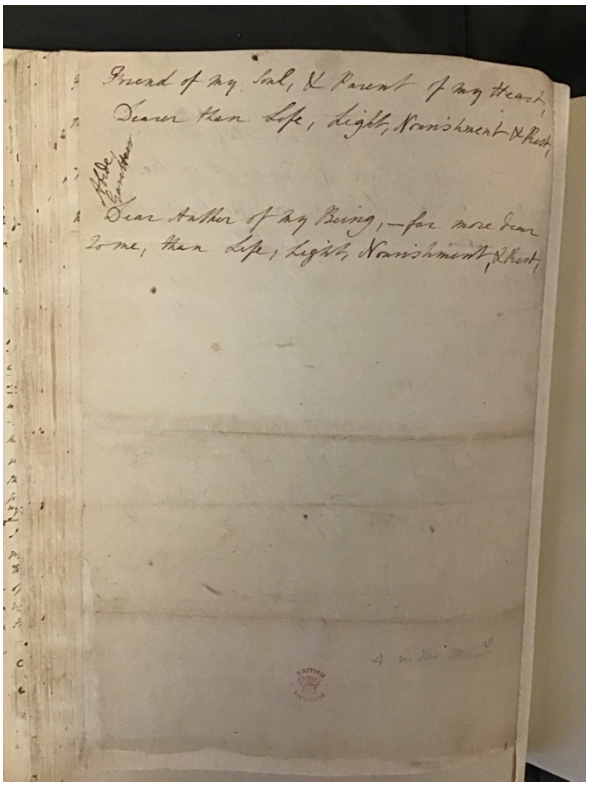
Oh Author of my Being! — far more dear
To me, than Light, than Nourishment, or Rest,
Than Hygeas Slumbers, or than Raptures Tear,
Or the [illegible] Blood that mantles in my Breast!

If in my Heart the love of virtue glows,
'Twas planted there by an unerring rule;
From thy Example the pure flame arose,
Thy Life my Precept, thy good works my School.

Could my weak powers thy numerous virtues trace,
My filial Love, each Year should be expressd,
The Block of Ingratitude Oh! chace,
And Hand Recorder of thy worth, confessd:

But, since my Wizzard Muse thy Gifts aspire,
Concealment is the only Boon I claim:
Obscure be still the unsuccessful Muse,
Who cannot raise, — but will not sink your Fame.

Oh of my life at once the Sun & Day!
If e'er thy Eyes these feeble lines survey,
Tho' folly pardon, the attempt forbear,
Except the Tribute, but forget the Lay! —



Friend of my Soul, & Parent of my Heart
Dearer than Life, Light, Nourishment & Rest

Dear Author of my Being, — far more dear
To me, than Life, Light, Nourishment, & Rest

Fig. 9. Manuscript draft of the dedicatory poem in *Evelina*.
MS Egerton 3696 f. 74v, Barrett Collection, The British Library.

Fig. 10. Reverse side containing different versions of the poem's first lines.
MS Egerton 3696 f. 74r, Barrett Collection, The British Library.

This significant revision—after all, the poem appears on the very first page that readers of *Evelina* encounter—suggests a concerted but rather uneasy interest in the issue of address, albeit perhaps in a milder form, that resembles Caroline's difficulty of address in the Belmont letter. However, Burney's choice to replace "Parent of my

[185] MS Egerton 3696 f. 74v.

Heart" with "Dear Author of my Being" newly creates a possible ambiguity that was not present prior to the change. Critics from Doody to Epstein to Straub have all observed the doubleness of the word "author" in this poem. While the address to a parent is singular in this respect (i.e. it can only refer to Dr. Burney), the invocation of "author" is surely double—after all, Frances Burney is the author of the work at hand. Thus, whatever claims the "unsuccessful Muse" may make also encompass Burney's role as author of *Evelina*. What initially seemed like a difficulty of address, then, becomes one of many covert affirmations of Burney's writing, the novel *Evelina*, and the persistence of female literacy in the period.

IV. Beyond *Evelina*

From the repurposing of the rape plot to the critical repurposing of current archival methodology, Burney's archive attests to the intimacy with which life and fiction coexisted, as well as the potential use and limits of attending to materiality in the archive. Material traces such as the Olivier letter remain, recasting the mangled pages, oddly shaped fragments, cut-out texts, and recycled paper as sites of potential violence. The revision in two drafts of the dedicatory poem of *Evelina* similarly reveals not only the pressures and challenges of becoming an author as a young woman, but also the subtle ways in which female literacy may circumvent patriarchal discursive control, all while remaining appropriately deferential to the norms of female propriety.

Although the story of the publication of *Evelina* is celebrated as a success story in female authorship, one that remains a prominent part of Burney's legacy in her own lifetime as well as in modern scholarship, we may do well to remember some of the

more negative episodes surrounding the novel and Burney's entrance into public life. This chapter's conclusion suggests a further continuity between the patriarchal authority and norms of female propriety that censured women's writing—and by extension women writing—pointing to two episodes in particular. The first involves the circumstances around Burney's failed play *The Witlings* (1779), her next literary project, which illustrate how persuasive these efforts at suppression were even after *Evelina*'s success.

In light of this chapter's core concern about the entanglements between the public and the private, the second episode stands out as exemplary of trauma that derives from the strange intimacy between private self and public authorship. It is well-documented that when Dr. Burney found out that Burney was the author of *Evelina*, which had by then become a runaway success, he was surprised and delighted at the news. Soon enough, the real identity of the author of *Evelina* became known to the Burneys' circle of family and friends. Yet it was not until later in the year, in October 1778, that Burney would face a public outing as the author of *Evelina* in George Huddesford's poem *Warley: A Satire* (1778). Rather ironically, *Warley* was published anonymously, and Huddesford most likely found out about Burney's authorship of *Evelina* from Sir Joshua Reynolds, a member of Burney's inner social circle and one to whom *Warley* is dedicated.[186] The mention of Burney is brief, but unmistakable:

> Will your metre a Council engage or Attorney,
> Or gain approbation from dear little Burney*?

[186] The subtitle of *Warley* is "Addressed to the First Artist in Europe." The reference seems to have been widely understood at the time.

*The Authoress of *Evelina*[187]

Although the majority of the poem's satirical objects are historically-specific people and events that are now obscure, such as the titular Warley common in Essex, a site of the egregious display of wealth during military reviews, the satire *Warley* itself is remembered, in another ironic twist, for its single reference to Burney and *Evelina*.[188] While Lars E. Troide and Stewart E. Cooke characterize the *Warley* incident and the use of "dear little Burney" as a "harmless reference,"[189] General d'Arblay would nonetheless recall, years after the incident, how Burney would become visibly upset whenever *Warley* was mentioned.

Though *Evelina*'s critical and popular success proved that Dr. Burney's initial disapproval was unfounded, at least on the grounds of the literary merits of the writing, whatever *dis*approbation Burney had avoided while she wrote and solicited publication for *Evelina* was merely held at bay. The phrase "dear little Burney" was used in Burney's circle as a familiar nickname. Its use in the context of *Warley*, however, is diminutive and highly reminiscent of the way previous critics have referred to Burney as "Fanny Burney," rather than "Frances Burney."

The suppression of the play *The Witlings*, Burney's subsequent literary output, serves as a further reminder of the challenges faced by the woman writer, which were

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[187] George Huddesford, *Warley: A Satire, Part the First* and *Warley: A Satire, Part the Second* (London: Printed for D. Brown, 1778). The reference to Burney occurs in Pt. II ll. 506-7.
[188] On Huddesford, see Courtney, W. P., and S. C. Bushell. "Huddesford, George (bap. 1749, d. 1809), satiric poet." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.* 23 Sep. 2004; Accessed 3 Apr. 2020. Upon closer examination, the *Warley* incident also reveals the uncomfortable remarks made by Sir Reynolds towards Burney, with sexual overtones, that are later recalled in a journal entry in September 1778. Burney writes that she had heard about Sir Reynolds' reaction, at the suggestion that the author of *Evelina* might turn out to be a woman: Sir Reynolds "says he is *sure* he shall make Love to the author, if ever he meets with her—" *EJL* 3:141.
[189] *EJL*, 3:xi.

particularly acute for the woman playwright. Observing Burney's facility with sharp, witty dialogue and comedic set-pieces in *Evelina*, Mrs. Hester Thrale, chief among Burney's newfound circle of literati at Streatham Park, suggested that Burney try her hand at writing a comedy. Significantly, she and the playwright Richard Sheridan, the producer that would have staged the play at Drury Lane, insisted on staging the play "unsight, unseen."[190] That is, the question of anonymity makes a return, and the result is decidedly different from the anonymous publication of *Evelina*. Underlying the different outcome is the prevailing idea that a female playwright was morally compromised, which, together with the career actress, amounted to a kind of prostitution—if not of the body, then of writing for the stage as an obscene, public exposure of female sexuality.[191] Evidence from Burney's life writings indicates that Thrale, Susanna, and others in the Streatham circle unequivocally supported the play, even while some offered criticism. Only later would Burney quarrel with her two "Daddies" about the contents of the play, and later about whether to stage the play at all, even as she seemed to grow fonder of the play over the course of its composition. Even the possibility of the public becoming aware that Burney was writing a play was an urgent concern for Crisp, such that he instructed Burney to "keep it (if possible) an impenetrable secret that you are even about such a work."[192]

Anxious about the loss of reputation and charges of impropriety should the play be made public, Dr. Burney and Crisp voiced their opposition to the play ever more forcefully. An uninspired reading at Chessington by Burney's family and

[190] *EJL*, 3:235.
[191] See for instance, Saggini, *Backstage in the Novel*, 96-7.
[192] *EJL*, 3:180.

friends—the play's first and final performance in Burney's lifetime—was likely the precipitating event that cemented Dr. Burney's resolution that the play never be staged. Though critical accounts would often point to the subplot of *The Witlings*, which satirizes the contemporary circle of the bluestockings, especially Lady Elizabeth Montagu, its most prominent member, as the reason for the two Daddies' opposition and for Burney ultimately shelving the play, the indelible conflict between women's writing and female propriety that this chapter describes suggests that the moral charges against the female playwright also played a leading role. For these reasons and more, Havens deems the suppression of *The Witlings* "the first and most significant suppression of [Burney's] writings over her more than fifty-year writing career."[193] Such was the shock and scandal of Dr. Burney's opposition of the play that, as Saggini points out, Burney most likely destroyed the letters exchanged between herself and Susanna that discussed the reading at Chessington and its aftermath,[194] as if to form a parallel destruction of the witness record of the silencing of the play.

Although the period immediately following *Evelina*'s publication and Burney's literary celebrity brought about new challenges as well as familiar impediments to writing and publication, culminating in the failure to stage *The Witlings*, one character in the play, Cecilia, would make her way into Burney's next novel. Though not necessarily a full "repurposing" in the sense of the generic shift with the rape plot and *Evelina*, the character of Cecilia Stanley in *The Witlings* would undergo her own transformation into her successor Cecilia Beverly of *Cecilia*. Thus,

[193] Hilary Havens, "Revisions and Revelations in Frances Burney's *Cecilia* Manuscript," *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 55, no. 3 (September 3, 2015): 539.
[194] Saggini, *Backstage in the Novel*, 128.

among the ebbs and flows of the many social currents, persons, narrative forms, and literary genres of Burney's life, the fundamental act of writing—female literacy—persists.

CHAPTER THREE

FAILURES OF TRANSFORMATION IN *WIELAND*

This final chapter examines Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland; or, The Transformation: An American Tale* (1798), one of the earliest novels published in America and a founding myth of American letters, in the context of the Transatlantic exchange and circulation of literary works and ideas, specifically the relationship between *Wieland* and *Clarissa*. While Brown lauded *Clarissa* in his editorial and periodical writings, an otherwise well-known corpus, the Brown-Richardson connection has nonetheless been relegated largely to the status of an anecdote. Yet attending to Brown's relationship with Richardson and with *Clarissa* in particular reveals Brown's vision of the American novel and the basic, formal construction of *Wieland* as deeply indebted to Richardson's pioneering first-person epistolary technique, and as in part a reworking of the tragic rape plot of *Clarissa* and its robust engagement with female literacy. The readings in this chapter are organized around fictions of "failure," which I reconceptualize as operative on many levels of narrative form and critical reading. The critical failure in *Wieland* is the failure of the rape plot, wherein *Wieland*'s protagonist, Clara Wieland, survives both attempted rape and murder—and lives to tell the tale. The failed rape plot of *Wieland* is also highly reminiscent of the thwarted rape attempt, or Sir Clement's plot, in the carriage scene in Burney's *Evelina* that I discussed in Chapter Two.

The central plot of *Wieland* involves the violent dissolution of the Wieland family, which consists of the elder Wieland, his children Clara and Theodore Wieland,

the family's young ward Louisa Conway, and their childhood friends Henry and Catharine Pleyel. Catharine later becomes Theodore's wife, while Clara develops a romantic relationship with Henry. The novel takes place largely at the Wielands' isolated family estate in the fictional town of Mettingen, outside of Philadelphia. Orphaned by the loss of their mother and father early in their youth—the latter by spontaneous combustion—the family estate's isolation further enables the Wieland siblings to pursue a self-motivated scheme of education largely based on the rationalism of the Enlightenment and classical antiquity. In particular, Clara writes that under the care of their aunt, she and her brother "were saved from the corruption and tyranny of colleges and boarding schools,"[195] a sentiment that reflects Enlightenment disdain for existing organized education espoused by thinkers such as Rousseau, who advocated for a free or "natural" education. In light of the plot's later tragic events, the Wieland children's education would become a major point of contention in ascribing cause, motive, or blame for Theodore's "madness" and violent actions.

The arrival of Carwin, a ventriloquist (referred to as a "biloquist" in the novel) and mysterious figure of dubious origins, sets in motion the novel's series of tragic events. Carwin repeatedly deceives the Wielands, Henry, and Catharine through his ventriloquism. One major conflict involves Clara and Henry, whereby Carwin impersonates Clara's voice and stages a romantic conversation between them for Henry to overhear, causing Henry's abrupt departure from the estate. Carwin also

[195] Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland and Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist*, ed. Bryan Waterman, (New York: Norton, 2010), 19.

attempts to rape Clara, a key scenario that I explore in relation to the "failure" of the penknife trope familiar to epistolary fiction in the second part of this chapter.

Yet despite his characterization as a villain, Carwin does not directly commit the crimes at the heart of *Wieland*. It is Theodore, who encounters what he describes first as a "fiery stream," then an enigmatic but markedly divine, or even Godly, entity: "The lineaments of that being […] whose visage beamed upon my sight, no hues of pencil or of language can pourtray [sic]." The divine voice issues a fatal command to Theodore: "In proof of thy faith, render me thy wife. This is the victim I chuse."[196] Following the command, Theodore murders Catharine, his children, and Louisa, only to realize for himself later that the voice was not, as he had believed, divine. Stricken by guilt and grief, Theodore commits suicide in front of Clara. Of these events, Clara is the sole witness survivor who lives to tell the tale. In *Wieland*'s fiction, the text of the novel is a letter manuscript that Clara writes for an unnamed reader.

While *Wieland*'s popular appeal to its eighteenth-century audience seems to lie in the novel's proto-Gothic sensationalism—mysterious voices of unknown origin, a cunning villain possessing extraordinary powers, and lurid scenes of attempted rape and mass murder—the novel's critical appeal encompasses larger socio-political and cultural currents of Enlightenment philosophy, epistemology and empirical observation, extreme religiosity, political upheaval, and the relationship between Britain and America. In *Wieland*, the central plot of a single family's dissolution serves as a versatile crux for a wide range of concerns. It is this broad applicability that underlies *Wieland*'s enduring popular and critical appeal.

[196] Brown, *Wieland*, 126.

In my examination of *Wieland*, fictions of failure do not only affect plot or theme—the failure of the Wieland children's "free" education to guard against future disaster, for instance—but are also treated as a formal concept or structure, such as the failure of Clara's unreliable narration to convey the events that transpire. As one of the novel's failures of form, the failed rape plot anticipates failures on the level of epistemology—Clara's inability to understand what she calls the "sensory forms" around her. In this way, I reconceptualize failure as a formal, organizing principle for the novel so as to make visible its generative potential; instead of absence, closure, or loss, the failures that I describe in the novel are sites of literary production, critical reading, moral doubt, and epistemological inquiry. Fictions of failure encompass the various tropes and forms of the epistolary novel genre, narrative reliability, and practices of reading—not only those practices espoused by Richardson and Brown, but also our own.

Using these reconfigured fictions of failure, this chapter posits that certain "failures of transformation" are only observable when *Wieland* is read as a redaction of *Clarissa*. This is not to suggest that *Wieland* is a failed artistic or philosophical project in any way. Rather, that certain elements of *Clarissa* fail to transform legibly into *Wieland* is indicative of larger moral, political, and literary currents, including the literary-formal concerns of the early American seduction novel and the concurrent public discourse on rape and gendered violence.

In the framework of this study and in light of *Clarissa*'s influence, we may read the romance plot of *Wieland* as a failed rape plot reminiscent of the tragic rape plot of *Clarissa*. The central romance plot between Clara and Henry, which can also

be read as a marriage plot considering their marriage at the end of the novel, begins in their common childhood and seems on the verge of realization when Carwin arrives. Carwin's arrival and subsequent actions thwart Clara's plans to confess her romantic feelings to Henry, while Clara begins to develop a tenuous attraction to Carwin. Although Carwin's attempted rape fails, the hypothetical scenario remains: should Carwin's attempt to rape Clara prove successful, the ending of Clara's story may resemble more closely the ending of *Clarissa*. Further, there is also a sub-plot involving Louisa Conway's mother that follows the conventional form of the tragic female plot, which I will shortly discuss in detail.

While critics often subsume the romantic elements of the novel under allegorical reading or dismiss them as sensationalist, unimaginative, or formulaic, this renewed focus on the *failure* of rape brings Brown's Transatlantic inheritance to the fore amidst the continued and evolving presence of gendered violence in the early American novel. This chapter's critical account of the Transatlantic exchange of ideas appends Richardson's legacy and that of the novel tradition more broadly to the influence of British radical intellectuals, specifically Woldwinites such as William Godwin, Thomas Holcroft, Robert Bage, and Mary Wollstonecraft, the British thinkers most often associated with Brown.

The first section of this chapter explores these legacies more fully in tandem with a critical account of what I call the "American Richardson." Surveying the reception and circulation of Richardson's novels in the British colonies and, after the Revolutionary War, the early American republic, the history of Richardson in America is characterized by the abridgement of the texts and their situatedness in the discourse

of the American seduction novel. In the context of the American Richardson, novels such as *Clarissa* and *Pamela* functioned as discursive instruments of political power, being clearly legible narratives within popular cultural discourse. *Clarissa* ultimately becomes an American myth in its own right.

The second section moves to the core scenario of Richardson's corpus and of the American seduction novel—the rape—and to the representational difficulty of rape articulated throughout this study. In this context, the discursive void of rape manifests visually via the trope of the blank mirror, a recurring object in illustrations of Richardson's novels that reveals what Megan Walsh calls Clarissa's "pictorial erasure." As a casualty of both rape's dilemma of representation and its enduring stigma in American life in this period, Clarissa's physical person becomes obscene and unrepresentable. Following the discursive void of the blank mirror, the subsequent readings in this section examine the trope of the penknife, a common trope in epistolary fiction, in the context of *Wieland*'s failed transformation into *Clarissa*. During its trajectory of recapitulation across three texts—*Clarissa*, *Wieland*, and Brown's subsequent novel *Ormond; or The Secret Witness* (1799)—the penknife trope productively fails to retain its original function both symbolically and in terms of concrete plot outcomes. This failure of transformation on the level of a single trope suggests larger failures of transformation on the level of narrative explored in the third and final section of the chapter.

By invoking *Clarissa*, this chapter also revisits the novel's problems of ethical reading—one of Terry Castle's lingering worries about reading *Clarissa* that I examined in Chapter One. That is, as Castle writes, "*Clarissa* allows for a mode of

ethical self-consciousness" that nonetheless "leaves to its reader the task of judging the relation of these operations, in turn, to human pain."[197] The subjectivity of individual reading remains, which applies as much to Castle's study as to Richardson's own worries that the intended educational value or didactic effect of his novels is never guaranteed. *Wieland* offers a distinctive scenario for exploring the problem of ethical reading in the context of gendered violence, which I discuss in the last part of the chapter.

As a follower of Richardson in this respect, Brown, too, writes within a space of moral uncertainty. This chapter dwells within a fraught yet productive territory, from which a specific kind of narrative emerges. As one subset of interpretation, what I call the "moralizing impulse" is the assertion of moral and political authority that endeavors to impose a certain framework of ideas about female virtue, gendered education, and civic duty upon novels such as *Clarissa*, *Pamela*, and *Wieland*. In the American context, the moralizing impulse easily renders *Clarissa*'s rape plot a lesson in female civic virtue at the expense of recognizing what Castle might call, after all, "human pain."

In response to these concerns around ethical reading, I examine the representation of female literacy in *Wieland* and one of its major sources, an account of the James Yates murders from the *New-York Weekly Magazine* "drawn up by a female hand," in the third section of this chapter to show how female literacy intervenes in this otherwise patriarchal/male discourse by exerting its own form of

[197] Terry Castle, *Clarissa's Ciphers: Meaning & Disruption in Richardson's "Clarissa"* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 29.

narrative authority. This process is similar to the alternative form of agency generated by the materiality of writing in Chapter One. In lieu of the tragic responsibility placed on survivors of violence, the anonymous female account of the Yates murders offers another alternative that embraces, rather than avoids, moral uncertainty.

By examining the presence and influence of gendered violence in the early American novel, this chapter demonstrates how gendered violence, and particularly its affects, manifest as explicitly in literary-formal terms as in familiar, discursive tropes, such as the penknife trope or the figure of the fallen woman. For instance, gendered violence motivates the very form of narration that *Wieland* adopts—the first-person epistolary voice—which it shares with Richardson's *Pamela*. Yet the female literacy implied by the Richardsonian epistolary voice, which Brown carries over and preserves in writing *Wieland*, problematizes readings of Clara's narrative as unreliable. Although these readings render her narrative susceptible to the instrumentalization of gendered violence, returning to the basic fact and capabilities of female writing allows for a recuperation of narrative authority, specifically at the ending of *Wieland*.

I. Revisiting Richardson in America

> Democracy is Lovelace, and the people are Clarissa.
>
> —John Adams to William Cunningham, Jr.,
> March 15, 1804

My account of *Wieland* as a failed transformation of *Clarissa*, of course, deliberately invokes the titular "transformation" of *Wieland*. Though its exact location and import in the text are multiple, the transformation(s) put forth by the novel are nonetheless exclusive of character. The word "transformation" is used in the novel first and foremost to describe Carwin's religious and racial ambiguity—his "transformation" into a Catholic Spaniard—and his ventriloquism, another generator of ambiguity that threatens and ultimately plays its part in the demise of the Wieland family. Theodore Wieland's transformation into the "man of sorrows,"[198] on the other hand, implicates his culpability and guilt for the murder of his family in the novel's vision of Godliness and religion, which had earlier led to the demise of his father, Wieland Sr., who dies of spontaneous combustion during prayer. Lastly, Clara, the sole survivor of the murders and the novel's narrator, attests to her own transformation at the sight of her brother's crimes and the dissolution of her family. Reflecting upon Theodore and his crimes, Clara asks her reader: "Was I not likewise transformed from rational and human into a creature of nameless and fearful attributes?"[199] These sentiments, in turn, are the culmination of the novel's gradual descent into the failure of sensory perception, empirical observation, and narrative reliability.

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[198] Brown, *Wieland*, 170.
[199] Brown, *Wieland*, 135.

In light of these transformations that describe changes in individual characters, this study appends to these accounts a further engagement with transformation on the level of intertext and narrative form. For Brown, these forms of failure bring together his vision of the fiction writer as a "moral painter" as well as the archetypal American writer whose output distinguishes American literature from a largely wayward and corrupt European tradition. Using *Wieland*, I argue that Brown's self-purported aim of moral reading, which he shares with Richardson, actually relies upon failures in the narrative on the level of form. Thus, to think and dwell with fictions of failure is first and foremost to reveal their connection to, and influence on, the moral and aesthetic questions posed by the novel. As we shall see, one of this chapter's findings is that to be a moral painter as Brown intended is to inevitably instrumentalize rape and seduction's violence, while simultaneously and inevitably failing to represent rape.

i. John Adams' *Clarissa*

When John Adams referred to the "people" as Clarissa in his allegory of American democracy, he assumed readerly familiarity. Such a reference indicates not only the widespread impact of Richardson's novel on the literary output and political imagination of the early American republic, but also the seductive and seemingly timeless power of the political instrumentalization of rape. While scholars of early American fiction have long identified the vexing entwinement of female sexual virtue with American civic values and political participation, Richardson's novel remains largely separate from the main interests of this discourse. Attention to British novels in the early American context tends to be excluded in part because of the longstanding critical emphasis on nativism, such as the scholarly focus on first editions that are

published in America, as exemplary of exceptionalism in the field. Yet Adams' letter reveals the extent to which *Clarissa* was simultaneously a popular novel for the American reading public *and* an American fiction in its own right.

Wieland constructs its myth from the early American novel's penchant for seduction and sensational displays of violence, folding them into the incipient genre of the American novel. While Brown's ties to British radicalism have been well-documented,[200] this was not Brown's only Transatlantic inheritance. And while the critical emphasis on Brown's political leanings has long inspired accompanying critical accounts of *Wieland*, Richardson's influence, specifically on Brown's experiments with literary form, remains relatively unacknowledged, even though textual evidence from Brown's corpus of writings, including editorial essays, personal correspondence, and other miscellany, confirms the historical connection between Brown and Richardson.

Brown's engagement with Richardson and with *Clarissa* in particular enables the possibility of reading *Wieland* as more than political allegory, as in Adams' allegory of democracy. Rather, *Wieland* appears to be an epistolary novel that operates to redact the basic, tragic female plot of *Clarissa* and others in this tradition, beginning with Richardson's earlier novel *Pamela* and continuing with early American seduction novels such as William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy* (1789), Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* (1791), *Amelia: or, the Faithless Briton. An Original*

[200] For instance, see Stephen Shapiro, *The Culture and Commerce of the Early American Novel: Reading the Atlantic World-System* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008) Ch. 5 "*Wieland* and the Problem of Counterinstitutionality"; and Lisa M. Steinman, "Transatlantic Cultures: Godwin, Brown, and Mary Shelley," *The Wordsworth Circle* 32, no. 3 (2001): 126–30.

American Novel (anonymous; 1787), and Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette* (1797).

Apart from the main plot of the novel involving Theodore, Clara, and Carwin, the subplot of Louisa's mother—which I will refer to as the "Maxwell plot"— follows the classic model of female tragedy to the letter. The story appears at the beginning of the novel when Louisa, the Wielands' young ward, joins the household. Clara describes Louisa's story as "a mournful one." Louisa's mother, Mrs. Stuart, "had come hither from England when this child was an infant," and "appeared to have embarked in a hasty and clandestine manner,"[201] gesturing towards, but not revealing, the ill-fated events of the tragic plot. In another well-worn trope of female tragedy, Louisa's mother dies shortly after her arrival—"a martyr to woe"[202]—leaving Louisa an orphan. As for the motives and particulars of her journey, Mrs. Stuart, even on her deathbed, "could, by no importunities, be prevailed upon to unfold."[203] These motives become the subject of great curiosity for Clara and her family.

Being almost fully submerged underneath the main plot, this subplot is scarcely mentioned until the novel's end, after Louisa's death. This subplot is also striking in that the conventional narrative sequence is reversed. That is, after Louisa's obscure origins are relayed in Chapter 4, the subplot then immediately moves to its resolution—the emotional reuniting of Louisa with her father, another trope of the genre—which is both chronologically and conventionally out of order. Although father and daughter are reunited, the narrative continues to withhold information.

[201] Brown, *Wieland*, 23.
[202] Brown, *Wieland*, 23.
[203] Brown, *Wieland*, 23.

As part of Brown's tying up of loose ends, Clara reveals the true backstory of Mrs. Stuart and her ill-fated romance with Maxwell only in the last few pages of the novel. Described as "deceitful and sensual" while possessing a "great force of mind and specious accomplishments," Brown fashioned Maxwell after the classic model of the rake, Robert Lovelace in *Clarissa*. Maxwell begins to pursue Mrs. Stuart in the absence of her husband, Major Stuart, who travels abroad. After numerous attempts, Mrs. Stuart returns Maxwell's affections, although the relationship would never be consummated, as she "could not…be reconciled to dishonor."[204] Maxwell attempts to persuade her to elope with him but is rejected. Nonetheless, Mrs. Stuart, unable to face Major Stuart upon his return, flees to America with her infant daughter, assuming a disguise thereafter. It is only at the very end of *Wieland* that this subplot reaches its narrative conclusion.

While the Maxwell plot occupies little actual space in the narrative of *Wieland*, the inclusion of such a tropic plot affirms Brown's familiarity with such conventions, specifically those around female tragedy. By virtue of being purposefully included, the events of the Maxwell plot—an illicit romance, absconding to America, assuming a disguise, and so forth—exist as alternate possibilities for the main plot of the novel, for Clara as the female protagonist, and for the romantic relationships in the novel.

Turning to Richardson, we find that Richardson's three novels were some of the most popular imports in the American colonies. Studies of the Americanization of *Clarissa*, such as those by Leonard Tennenhouse and Walsh, indicate the popular transformation of novels such as *Pamela* and *Clarissa* into didactic, abridged versions

[204] Brown, *Wieland*, 178.

for print in American literary hubs such as Philadelphia and New York. Such versions prevailed commercially over the original texts in the American marketplace, specifically in the Richardson "boom" of the late 1780's and 1790's, the years leading up to the publication of *Wieland* and Brown's other extant writings on Richardson. As I shall argue, Brown's reading of *Clarissa* is much more conservative and conservatively "British" than the American reading public's perception of, and general reaction to, Richardson's novels. Brown's reactions are most identifiable in his editorial writings, such as the essay "Eulogy on Richardson" (1800), a defense of *Clarissa* against her American critics. In order to situate Brown's particular ideas about reading Richardson in the socio-political and literary context of the early American republic, I will sketch out the distinctive parameters that form the prevailing account of Richardson's reception in America, or what Tennenhouse calls the "American Richardson," before moving to Brown's specific, conservative reading of Richardson, and my own reading of *Wieland* as an approximate redaction of *Clarissa*.

In particular, common among the works of Brown and Richardson is what I call the "moralizing impulse," a shared tendency to moralize female seduction plots especially, though not exclusively, those that featured a transgression or loss of female sexual virtue. In the context of rape and seduction, the moralizing impulse amounts to tragic responsibility in ascribing the blame for injury onto those who are themselves injured. It is the survivors rather than the perpetrators of rape that bear the serious and possibly fatal consequences that accompany the loss of female sexual virtue, whether it be madness, abandonment, or death. The instrumentalization of rape also recalls the socio-political use of *Clarissa* as a proxy for ideas as disparate as Lockean education,

the American revolution—as in the case of Adams' letter—and the British subject in the American diaspora. Such instrumentalization occludes not only the fact and consequences of the attempted rape in *Wieland*, but also the relationship between sexual violence, the novel's innovations in narrative form, and its situatedness in the Transatlantic literary exchange.

Yet, as this chapter's findings reveal, Brown and Richardson's common, moralizing impulse fails when *Wieland* is reconceptualized as a failed transformation of *Clarissa*. As mentioned earlier, fictions of failure affect key plot outcomes such as the failed attempt at rape and the failure of empirical observation. Above all, we must note the failure of narrative truth-telling, one of the most important tenets of epistolary fiction that is especially associated with Richardson, and one adopted by Clara herself.

ii. The American Richardson

Critical accounts of Richardson's novels in America during the eighteenth century identify Richardson's major works—*Pamela*, *Clarissa*, and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753)—as some of the most popular British imports in an American marketplace already crowded with other familiar names: Henry Fielding, Eliza Haywood, Laurence Sterne, Daniel Defoe, Henry Mackenzie, Charlotte Lennox, and others. For a number of these accounts, the appeal of Richardson's novels seems to lie in the alignment of these novels with the values of the burgeoning American readership and its appetite for sentimentalism during the rise of print literacy and the widespread adoption of leisure reading, the latter largely following the same trend in Britain.

Nonetheless, critics such as Tennenhouse and Walsh have qualified the commercial and popular success of Richardson's novels, pointing out how Richardson's novels had to be, without exception, re-fashioned into Americanized versions to fit readerly tastes. The texts that spurred Richardson's popularity in the 1780's and furnished the success of Richardson's novels in America were in fact drastically different from the British originals. As Tennenhouse points out, virtually every edition of Richardson's novels published during the late-eighteenth century and into the first decades of the nineteenth century differed from the full-length versions printed in Britain. Richardson's novels appeared in abridged versions that were substantially shorter than the original texts, given new titles, and rewritten to dispense with the epistolary format altogether, opting for a third-person narrator who recounts the bare-bones plot of the novels, often in graphic and sensational detail.[205]

For instance, *Pamela* and *Clarissa* circulated more commonly as *The paths of virtue delineated: Or, The history in miniature of the celebrated Pamela, Clarissa Harlowe, and Sir Charles Grandison*, which derived from a British adaptation and abridgement of the novel meant for young readers, first published in London in 1756. While the original, full-length text of *Pamela* ran to approximately 250,000 words, the American edition contained only 27,000 words. Similarly, *Clarissa*'s 1 million words were reduced to a mere 41,000.[206] Yet these titular changes were merely superficial

[205] Leonard Tennenhouse, "The Americanization of *Clarissa*," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 11, no. 1 (1998): 177–96. See pp. 188-90 for a direct comparison of the rape scenes in *Pamela* and *Clarissa* with the American abridgement.

[206] Leonard Tennenhouse, *The Importance of Feeling English* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 54. Tennenhouse also points out that this abridged *Clarissa* had about the same length as another popular seduction novel, Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple*, perhaps to suggest that printers and booksellers saw that American readers were more familiar with, if not outright preferred, much shorter texts. Indeed, a common American critique of *Clarissa* is its length.

markers of more fundamental changes on the level of form. These changes constitute the first in a series of formal transformations that I associate with Richardson's reception in America and the transformations that tropes and ideas from *Clarissa* would undergo in Brown's composition of *Wieland*. In what follows, I argue that these formal changes were part and parcel with the tendency to instrumentalize the female seduction plot and further facilitated the common impulse to moralize such plots that Brown and Richardson share.

As mentioned earlier, these formal changes involved dispensing with the epistolary format altogether in favor of a third person narrator who supplies moral guidance and advice aimed directly at readers. By replacing the first person, female narrative voice, American abridgements evacuated characterological interiority and radically de-emphasized female literacy. While the epistolary format of *Pamela* and *Clarissa* points towards the texts themselves as material evidence of female writing and literacy—these epistolary novels, after all, operate under the fiction that these are *real letters* written by *real people*—the American versions denied characters like Pamela and Clarissa their compelling writerly voices, instead rendering their characters relatively flat archetypes for moral instruction, among many other purposes, sometimes even de-gendering them. Rendering the heroines effectively mute—not unlike, for instance, Benjamin Franklin's pen name of Silence Dogood, an archetype of sorts for these transformed heroines—had far-reaching consequences for reading, particularly regarding whatever virtues may be ascribed to their characters. As Tennenhouse rightly points out, "Stripped of their literariness, the American editions

induce us to admire neither Pamela's literacy, nor Clarissa's fine sense of social decorum, nor either heroine's exquisite awareness of sexual propriety."[207]

Although advertisements for *Pamela* appeared in the British colonies shortly prior, Franklin is credited for printing and advertising the first American edition of *Pamela* in 1742-43 in Philadelphia, during the height of the "Pamela craze"[208] in Britain. Yet contrary to the notion that Richardson's novels were an immediate sensation in America, Franklin's printing met with little success.[209] After 1744, *Pamela* would remain out of print in British America until the Richardson "boom" that began in the late 1780's. As Walsh suggests, illustrated figures of the titular Pamela Andrews in the frontispieces of American editions of the novel suggest that she had become a model for female virtue to be emulated by young women in the republic by the close of the century.[210]

In turn, Richardson's novels circulated within the larger proliferation of seduction fiction, both homegrown and imported, in the American marketplace. Critics of early American fiction such as Cathy Davidson, Stephen Shapiro, and Tennenhouse

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[207] Tennenhouse, *The Importance of Feeling English*, 44.

[208] As James Grantham Turner observes, immediately following the publication of *Pamela* in 1740, the novel inspired "a tidal wave of texts and objects" and "a riot of consumeristic exploitation" that included special editions, translations, paintings, prints, poetry, plays, librettos, parodies, sequels, and even consumer products such as fans, china, and wax figures. One of the most famous and acclaimed adaptations is Henry Fielding's parody *Shamela* (1741). In James Grantham Turner, "Novel Panic: Picture and Performance in the Reception of Richardson's *Pamela*," *Representations* 48 (1994): 71. See also Thomas Keymer, *"Pamela" in the Marketplace: Literary Controversy and Print Culture in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) and Thomas Keymer and Peter Sabor, eds., *The Pamela Controversy: Criticisms and Adaptations of Samuel Richardson's Pamela, 1740-1750* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2001), on the "Pamela/Anti-Pamela" debate.

[209] On the history of the publication of Richardson's novels in British America, see Tennenhouse, *The Importance of Feeling English*, 53-56.

[210] Megan Walsh, *The Portrait and the Book: Illustration and Literary Culture in Early America* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2017). See esp. Ch. 4, "Picturing the Seduction Heroine in the United States," pp. 141-169.

largely agree that sentimental fiction, specifically those that featured seduction plots, represented the most popular, profitable, and widely-circulated genre of fiction in the American republic in the decades leading up to the end of the eighteenth century, which coincided with the first few decades of the new American nation. For Davidson, the social functions of American sentimental fiction were multiple and their impact ubiquitous. Seduction plots that featured a central, female character aptly described the emerging realities of gendered American life, and not only "fulfilled the social function of testing some of the possibilities of romance and courtship," but also "[acknowledged] that married life can be bitterly unhappy."[211]

In both scenarios, however, Davidson rightly suggests that the impetus ultimately lies with the young woman to choose wisely—yet another instance of tragic responsibility, should things go awry—rather than, for instance, structural inequalities in economic opportunity, gender-specific education, and the dangers of childbearing. Much of the violence inherent in the seduction plot is not only the threat of unwanted male desire and/or subsequent abandonment, but also the very real possibility of death during childbirth. Davidson reminds us that in post-Revolutionary America, "every young woman facing marriage also faced the prospect of death in childbirth,"[212] pointing out that in the literary sphere, "sentimental novels also portrayed, frequently in graphic terms, the deaths of many characters in childbirth," such as the death of Eliza Wharton in Foster's *The Coquette*. Likewise, this tendency for graphic description was adopted by the abridgements of Richardson's novels. As we shall see,

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[211] Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 189.
[212] Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, 192.

graphic details also accompany the depiction of women in *Wieland*—not in childbirth, but in their violent, gruesome murders.

While Tennenhouse echoes Davidson in offering the central, basic function of seduction fiction as a testing site for questions about marriage—"experiments in imagining who could in fact marry whom"[213]—Tennenhouse's implication diverges from the quasi-realism ascribed to seduction fiction by Davidson. For Tennenhouse, the marriages in question involved "the exchange of women that maintained the integrity of large landholdings and preserved patrilineage," while American sentimentalism is traditionally characterized by a "longing for a reconstructed family with a father at its head."[214] Tennenhouse's emphasis on male actors—the libertine pitted against the "good father," for instance—conveys the *lack* of emphasis on the young women subjected to this transaction, female friendship, or mother-daughter relations. This economic understanding of marriage as the exchange of property that ensures the desired transfer of wealth also features prominently at the beginning of *Clarissa*, as Clarissa is treated in various ways like property by her family, specifically in regard to her first suitor, Mr. Roger Solmes, on account of her inheritance.

This emphasis on male actors derives, at least in part, from what Davidson identifies as a distinctively male-gendered "verbal chicanery" that is to blame for "female victimization," rather than, for instance, the decision-making or expressed desires of the young women themselves.[215] In the framework of this study, the implications of this assumption are two-fold: first, that the male voice is to blame for

[213] Tennenhouse, *The Importance of Feeling English*, 45.
[214] Tennenhouse, 45.
[215] Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, 185-86.

acts of seduction absolves female actors of their desires and agency; and second, "innocent" female victimization dangerously preserves untainted female sexual virtue as the pillar of domesticity and American civic duty. Such sentiments are echoed in the "masculine narrative superiority" that dominates William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy*, as well as the emphasis on the vices of novel-reading as the key to Eliza Wharton's tragic ruin in *The Coquette*. In the context of the latter, male-dominated discourse simply becomes associated with the seduction novel writ large.

Against these assumptions of female victimization and masculine priority, this study uncovers the relevance and even power of female agency, beginning first and foremost with the exemplary female voices of *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, which I will argue constitute a form of narrative power in themselves. In his account of the sentimental libertine, for example, Shapiro points out how Richardson "sought to make [the novels' heroines] desirable, when he gave Pamela and Clarissa a form of interiority whose *verbal prowess* challenged the libertine seducer's powers of sexual enticement and intellectual mastery"[216] (emphasis mine). Such an observation directly locates the appeal of these heroines in their literacy. Reading *Wieland* as a redaction of *Clarissa* makes visible the common power and legacy of the female voice and its associated forms of literacy, such as familiar letter-writing, in the seduction novel, a visibility that seems to run against the grain of the overall male-dominated discourse of sentimental fiction.

Yet alongside this scenario of gendered power, the history of reading Richardson in America is also the history of the instrumentalization of the seduction

[216] Tennenhouse, *The Importance of Feeling English*, 43.

plot and ultimately of rape itself. On the most basic level, such instrumentalization results from allegorizing *Clarissa*, often with Clarissa and Lovelace as opposite, personified ideas, ranging from political revolution to the struggle against patriarchal authority to Lockean ideas about education. Indeed, Richardson himself had already anticipated this in the preface to the third edition of *Clarissa*. According to Richardson, some of the novel's "moral aims" include:

> To warn the Inconsiderate and Thoughtless of the one Sex, against the base arts and designs of specious Contrivers of the other—To caution Parents against the undue exercise of their natural authority over their Children in the great article of Marriage—To warn Children against preferring a Man of Pleasure to a Man of Probity […] But above all, To investigate the highest and most important Doctrines not only of Morality, but of Christianity[217]

That *Clarissa* warns against "the base arts and designs of specious Contrivers" prefigures the American seduction novel's obsession with marital choice, while shoring up the male-dominated discourse of seduction. That *Clarissa* "[cautions] Parents against the undue exercise of their natural authority" in marriage is reflected in critical accounts of the American seduction novel as fundamentally based on the family unit, rather than a partnership between two individuals. This caution echoes Tennenhouse's assertion that the seduction novel yearns for the restoration of the patriarchal family as the quintessential, American socio-political unit, in direct opposition to the family dissolution that drives so much of its plotted action. Meanwhile, the aim of warning children "against preferring a Man of Pleasure" is

[217] Samuel Richardson, "Letters and Passages Restored from the Original Manuscripts of the History of *Clarissa*, 1751," in *Samuel Richardson's Published Commentary on Clarissa, 1747-65*, ed. Thomas Keymer, 3 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1998), iv.

standard fare in texts and correspondence in the period, ranging from formal conduct manuals to private letters exchanged among women.

The last and final aim listed in the preface, that of advancing moral Christian behavior, is one that is foundational to Brown's writings about *Clarissa*. Not coincidentally, this also reflects Richardson's own "right reading" of the novel. Such is the efficacy of cultivating Christian virtue that Brown declares, at the end of a long letter to Joseph Bringhurst Jr. in 1792, that he lauded *Clarissa* as second only to the Bible.[218] Given these wide-ranging aims, the enduring popularity and influence of *Clarissa* in America seems to stem not only from its readerly appeal as sentimental or seduction fiction, but even more so from its political efficacy.

Perhaps no other piece of writing from the period attests to *Clarissa*'s political power as directly as John Adams' famous letter, which reads *Clarissa* as an allegory for American democracy similarly motivated by Christian ideology. Writing to William Cunningham Jr. in March 1804, Adams' letter relays "the subject which [Cunningham] say now engages the public attention"—democracy—in terms of the allegory. It is important to note that the first printing of *Pamela* that "flopped" in 1740 was prior to the Revolutionary War, whereas the Richardson "boom" of the 1780's coincided with the young American republic in the post-war years. Adams writes,

> You say, the awful spirit of democracy is in great progress. I believe it, and I know something of the nature of it. It is a young rake who thinks himself handsome and well made, and who has little faith in virtue.—When the people once admit his courtship, and permit him the least familiarity, they soon find

[218] Charles Brockden Brown to Joseph Bringhurst Jr., 21 December 1792, Philadelphia, in Philip Barnard, Elizabeth Hewitt, and Mark L. Kamrath, eds. *Collected Writings of Charles Brockden Brown: Letters and Early Epistolary Writings* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2013), 168-172; see esp. 172.

> themselves in the condition of the poor girl, who told her story in this affecting style…

Later in the letter, Adams writes, assuming the point of view of "the poor girl,"

> The next day he grew a little bolder—but promised me marriage. The next day—he began to be enterprising: But the next day—O Sir! the next day he got me with child.[219]

Adams thus concludes his tale: "Democracy is Lovelace, and the people are Clarissa. The artful villain will pursue the innocent lovely girl to her ruin and her death." In Adams' allegory, "democracy" is the "young rake" who offers false promises to the young woman, only to break them after seducing her—here we may recall, for instance, the advice that Richardson had offered earlier in the warning against the "Man of Pleasure."

Yet any reader of *Clarissa* could easily observe that the plot that Adams had just rehearsed is not the plot of *Clarissa*. The most glaring difference between Adams' seduction plot and that of the novel is that Clarissa Harlowe wills herself to die of illness and grief after she is raped and is not at any point in the novel pregnant, though she would endure false allegations of pregnancy by her family. The plot of *Clarissa* also revolves around Clarissa's steadfast and continued rejection of Lovelace's advances, even after her abduction and rape, rather than the presumed consent for male romantic advances and the false expectation of marriage. In fact, Clarissa refuses any possibility of marriage post-rape, despite being offered this choice. In many critical accounts of the novel, this refusal is a major characteristic of her response to

[219] John Adams to William Cunningham Jr., 15 March 1804, in *Correspondence between the Hon. John Adams, Late President of the United States, and the Late Wm. Cunningham, Esq*. (Boston: E. M. Cunningham, 1823), 18-21.

rape that exemplifies her Christian stoicism. And it is precisely Clarissa's steadfast refusal of Lovelace's advances that Brown champions in his reading of the novel as an example—and another allegory—of female Christian virtue "triumphing" over "temptation," to which we will return.

The telling divergence in Adams' letter between the plot of democracy in America and that of *Clarissa* indicates not only that *Clarissa* had become, in the intervening years, an American myth, but also that the mythologized *Clarissa* was not necessarily congruent with the literal, original plot of the novel. Instead, the American *Clarissa* referred as often to Richardson's novel as to a common idea of the seduction plot derived from *Clarissa* in conjunction with other popular, American-born seduction novels such as Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* and Foster's *The Coquette*. In this way, Adams' use of *Clarissa* as an allegory for the American Revolution is but one way in which the rape/seduction plot may be instrumentalized.

In the context of Adams' other writings, however, it becomes clear that the indictment of female sexual impropriety as political peril, such as the seduction and extramarital pregnancy of the woman in Adams' fictional plot, originates in Christian ideology, much like that same reading evident in Brown's essay. Writing to Benjamin Rush in 1807, Adams suggests that the success of republicanism depends on the observance of Christian morality, specifically regarding female sexual virtue, rather than the other way around. Adams writes,

> The Bible contains the most profound philosophy, the most perfect morality, and the most refined policy, that ever was conceived upon earth. It is the most republican book in the world […] The curses against fornication and adultery, and the prohibition of every wanton glance or libidinous ogle at a woman, I believe to be the only system that ever did or ever will preserve a republic in

> the world […] I say then that *national morality never was and never can be preserved without the utmost purity and chastity in women; and without national morality a republican government cannot be maintained.* (emphasis mine) Therefore, my dear Fellow Citizens of America, you must ask leave of your wives and daughters to preserve your republic.[220]

In this letter, Christian morality mediates the cause of propagating female sexual virtue as a form of nationalism, perhaps suggesting that the argument of Adams' earlier letter, too, is motivated by Christian ideology. Adams' sentiments are in turn situated within the larger discourse on female education, including the debate on whether female literacy should be discouraged or promoted. In printed form, conduct manuals proliferated, often offering advice on the appropriate extent of women's engagement with literacy and reading, especially fiction.

In line with Adams' position, Brown's reading of *Clarissa* converts the seduction plot into Christian, moral allegory, which is another way to instrumentalize rape. Even so, the fact that Brown's Christian reading of *Clarissa* aligns with Richardson's didactic aims for his novels—the cultivation of female virtue through the moral education of the novel—does not mean that Brown's reading is more true to Richardson than other accounts of *Clarissa*. Rather, I wish to highlight the moralizing impulse that Brown and Richardson share and mark this impulse as pervasive, even as *Clarissa* and *Wieland* commonly attest to the centrality and agency of female literacy. This legacy becomes visible when we examine the literary-formal changes that distinguish *Wieland* from *Clarissa*. Specifically, the changes around narrative voice/point of view reveal the mutual co-implication of the first-person, female

[220] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 2 February 1807, in *Letters of John and Abigail Adams: 1762 to 1826*, ed. William J. Bennett (New York: Westvaco Corp, 2001), 100.

epistolary voice with the physical, sexual, and epistemological threats posed by the villainous Carwin's male ventriloquism.

In 1800, Brown's "Eulogy on Richardson" appeared in the Friendly Society's *Monthly Magazine and American Review*, during his tenure as the publication's editor. Though *Wieland* seems to warn against forms of excess, whether rational or religious, Brown declares, "I know no moderation in my love of Richardson."[221] Conceived as a defense of Richardson against charges of excessive sentimentalism or melodrama voiced by critics of the day, Brown approaches *Clarissa* with an almost religious zeal, which he describes as a kind of "idolatry." He asks the reader, unapologetically, "Am I not committing a breach of this golden rule?"[222] One piece of criticism that Brown had in mind was an excerpt from the rhetorician Hugh Blair's highly influential *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783), one of the most widely-circulated manuals of writing and rhetoric in the period. According to Brown, in the manual "Richardson is dismissed…with this sage remark: that his works would be more tolerable 'did he not possess the unfortunate talent of spinning out *pieces of amusement* to an immeasurable length.'"[223]

Blair's remarks reflect two of the most common criticisms of *Clarissa* of the day. The first involves the novel's "immeasurable length," while the second involves

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[221] Charles Brockden Brown, "Eulogy on Richardson. An Original Letter," *The Monthly Magazine and American Review*, 3 (1800): 163-67, in *Clarissa: The Eighteenth-Century Response, 1747-1804*, ed. Lois E. Bueler, vol. 1, 2 vols. (New York: AMS Press, 2010), 575.
[222] Brown, "Eulogy on Richardson," 575.
[223] Brown, "Eulogy on Richardson," 576. It is worth noting that by referring to Blair's *Lectures*, Brown had in mind what was essentially the standard Anglo-American textbook for rhetoric and writing instruction in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such that he may offer fiction—as long as it is, like *Clarissa*, fiction of the right kind—as an alternative means for moral and rhetorical instruction. On the history of the *Lectures*, see Stephen L. Carr, "The Circulation of Blair's 'Lectures,'" *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (2002): 75–104.

the categorization of Richardson's novels as romance, a relatively inferior genre fit only for "trifling" matters. Earlier in the essay, Brown had invented this humorous dialogue to voice these criticisms of *Clarissa*, assuming the voice of a common American reader:

> "Why, I must needs confess, some parts of it are very fine; but then—but then—there is so much trifling matter, so many superfluities, and the wire is drawn out to such an immeasurable length, that—that—to say the truth, I could not get through it."[224]

Here and elsewhere, Brown displays a particular disdain for the abridged versions of *Pamela* and *Clarissa* that must have outnumbered their full-length counterparts in America. And reading *Clarissa* as primarily a romance was common practice enough, on both sides of the Atlantic, that Richardson would issue his own prescription, again in the preface to the third edition of the novel. Issuing his instruction, Richardson writes, "considerate Readers will not enter upon the perusal of the Piece before them [i.e. *Clarissa*], as if it were designed *only* to divert and amuse."[225]

Responding to the dismissal of *Clarissa* as a "piece of amusement," Brown writes:

> The story of Clarissa, in which is shown that spectacle, deemed of old so worthy of the Gods, and which every one must admit to be the most salutary and instructive that wisdom can exhibit; the spectacle of virtue serenely contending against temptation on the one hand, and affection on the other, employing all its vigilance to repel the wiles of prejudice, retaining its purity in the midst of contagion, and triumphing in every trial, and finally seeking its refuge and its recompense where only a tenant of this mixed and sublunary scene can hope to find it, in the arms of its God; is a mere *piece of amusement*![226]

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[224] Brown, 575.
[225] Samuel Richardson, "Letters and Passages Restored from the Original Manuscripts of the History of *Clarissa*, 1751," v. Indeed, Richardson correctly anticipates that readers who might have been "expecting a *light Novel*, or *transitory Romance*" in *Clarissa* would find the novel "tedious."
[226] Brown "Eulogy on Richardson," 577.

I quote Brown's sentiments at length because it is highly revealing of Brown's own reading of the novel, which acutely moralizes *Clarissa*'s tragic plot, in much the same way that Richardson moralizes Clarissa's plight, especially in miscellaneous writing appended to subsequent editions of *Clarissa*.

Brown's celebration of Clarissa's virtue "employing all its vigilance to repel the wiles of prejudice" echoes, but also differs from, Clara's parting sentiments at the end of *Wieland*. Addressing her unnamed reader, Clara writes,

> I leave you to moralize on this tale. That virtue should become the victim of treachery is, no doubt, a mournful consideration; but it will not escape your notice, that the evils of which Carwin and Maxwell were the authors, owed their existence to the errors of the sufferers…If Wieland had framed juster notions of moral duty, and of the divine attributes; or if I had been gifted with ordinary equanimity or foresight, the double-tongued deceiver would have been baffled and repelled.[227]

Against Clarissa "triumphing at every trial," Clara's sentiments ascribe blame on herself and her family by suggesting that had she possessed Clarissa's virtue, or even "ordinary equanimity of foresight," they would have been spared their misfortunes.

In what follows, I posit that this moralizing impulse, while in no way unique to Brown and Richardson, is itself a kind of fiction coterminous with both the solipsism of the rake, on the one hand, as well as the deceptive ventriloquism of Carwin, on the other. All of these processes instrumentalize rape and gendered violence in ways that displace, erase, and/or de-gender this violence in the context of the seduction novel. However, there is a path of resistance that is only made visible by connecting *Wieland* to *Clarissa*. While Clara Wieland and Clarissa Harlowe are both subject to male

[227] Brown, *Wieland*, 181.

violence and discursive control, female literacy, as I argue, functions as an alternative mode of narrative authority. When situated within the tradition of epistolary fiction, Clara's first-person, epistolary narration recovers its connection with interiority, affective authenticity, and narrative truth-telling otherwise denied to her by readers and critics alike. Clara's literacy intervenes in the male-dominated discourse of the sentimental novel in ways that expose the genre's implication with gendered violence. To reconfigure writing as such makes possible the female challenge to the rake's solipsism, the ventriloquist's deception, and the author's moralizing of his own tale.

II. The Blank Mirror and the Penknife

Apart from their textual forms, the problems of representing rape and the fate of the fallen woman unfold visually in contemporary graphic depictions of *Clarissa* and other seduction novels. In 1795, Samuel Hall printed the first edition of *Clarissa* in Boston, an abridged version accompanied by six original relief prints. The prints depict different parts of the novel, forming an arc of progression beginning with the scene of Clarissa's abduction from Harlowe Place, titled "Lovelace forces Clarissa to leave her Father's House." The last in the series is titled "Miss Howe lamenting over the Corpse of Clarissa" (Fig. 11), which depicts Clarissa's shrouded body with two onlookers, one of them Clarissa's friend and readerly witness Anna Howe.

Figure 11. *Miss Howe Lamenting over the Corpse of Clarissa*, in *Clarissa; or, The History of a Young Lady* (1795), printed by Samuel Hall, Boston, MA

Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 29413 (filmed)

Featured prominently on the wall behind them is a large, ornate blank mirror.

In her discussion of illustrated editions of seduction novels, Walsh observes that Clarissa had "met the fate of pictorial erasure."[228] Unlike Pamela, whose figure populated illustrations that accompanied the numerous American editions of *Pamela*, Clarissa's body is shrouded and invisible because of her status as a tragic heroine, or more specifically, a raped woman. While Pamela was considered the picture of virtue rewarded, a model to be followed and emulated by American's young women, Clarissa's rape renders her unrepresentable, which reinforces the claim that rape and

[228] Walsh, *The Portrait and the Book*, 168.

its violence cannot (or should not) be represented, here in the context of early American print.

For Walsh, the blank mirror "suggests the scene as an opportunity for personal reflection,"[229] a convention shared, for instance, by the illustration of Ophelia's suicide by poisoning from Isaiah Thomas' 1789 edition of William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy*, also printed in Boston. The print is a sensational, lurid depiction of Ophelia's tragic end, meant in part to appeal to readers eager for scandal.[230] Affixed to the wall is a large mirror, which similarly reminds the reader that they themselves are the true subjects of the scene. Commenting on Ophelia's death, the novel's protagonist Harriot Fawcet writes that one should "draw such morals and lessons of instruction from each side of the question, as will be a mirrour [sic] by which we may regulate our conduct and amend our lives."[231] Later, she writes, "It is the duty of the moralist, then, to deduce his observations from preceding facts in such a manner as may directly improve the mind and promote the economy of human life."[232]

Upon further examination, however, the blank mirror quickly unsettles its initial function as merely a vehicle for readerly self-reflection. The blank mirror, more fundamentally, is a metaphor for the difficulty, and ultimately impossibility, of articulating rape and of the stigma or taboo surrounding the fallen woman in cultural

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[229] Walsh, 168.
[230] The illustration also alludes to a local New England scandal at the time. According to Walsh, the scene of Ophelia's death is also "a thinly veiled allusion to the infamous affair between prominent Boston politician Perez Morton and his neighbor and sister-in-law Fanny Apthorp, which led to Apthorp's pregnancy and suicide" (145). Although Ophelia and Morton's story is a subplot of *The Power of Sympathy*, there are many parallels between the ending of this subplot and that of the main plot, which also involves the protagonist Harriet Fawcet's death and her lover Thomas Harrington's suicide.
[231] William Hill Brown, *The Power of Sympathy* (New York: Penguin, 1996), 42.
[232] William Hill Brown, 42.

discourse more generally. In the framework of this chapter, the blank mirror also represents the failures that accompany *Clarissa*'s transformation into *Wieland*, as well as the uncertain project of insisting that readers understand these works as essentially morality tales. As a crux for interpretation, the blank mirror is precisely the kind of dilemma of free judgment that worries Castle at the beginning of this chapter. In other words, both the direct representation of rape and the moral education of the reader remain impossible to discern, just as the blank mirror perpetually remains devoid of content.

Though it begins as a representational dilemma, the blank mirror's void is also a moral one—or rather, it allows for the possibility of morality to inhabit that discursive space. In turn, the application of morality is what allows for the instrumentalization of rape for certain socio-political and/or cultural aims, such as the didacticism of Brown and Richardson and Adams' reading of the seduction plot as an allegory for democracy in America. Broadly construed, the blank mirror is a metaphor for the treatment of rape in fiction in the period, as particularly evident in the early American novel.

In criticism of *Wieland*, the idea of an absence or void underpins the critical account of *Wieland* as, in Lisa Steinman's words, "a parable of what happens when a culture has no traditional cultural plots."[233] The cultural plots in question are multiple. In the novel, Carwin's secret plots of deception and manipulation circulate unchecked. Outside of the novel, political plots are also operative. Jane Tompkins, for instance, argues that *Wieland* was intended by Brown to be a political tract that warns against

[233] Steinman, "Transatlantic Cultures," 127.

the "horrifying consequences" of independence. Published two years after the Reign of Terror, the novel "presents a shocking and uncharacteristically negative view of what it meant to survive the War of Independence."[234] According to Tompkins, Brown's motive for sending a copy of *Wieland* upon its publication to Vice President Thomas Jefferson was to directly influence concrete public policies, rather than to further his literary ambitions.

Comparing *Wieland* to Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794), a major interlocutor of *Wieland*'s politics, offers another perspective on the novel's relationship to public efficacy. Steinman points out how Brown shares Godwin's anxieties about who gets to control "public discourse" and the failure of individual reason to "inoculate citizens against demagoguery in the *absence* of institutional constraints."[235] While Godwin is primarily concerned with traditional elites controlling public discourse, rather than individual, (ir)rational members of the public, *Wieland* in a certain sense renders Godwin's concerns more acute. That is, *Wieland* explicitly operates in a discursive void, while Godwin's scenario involves the struggle for control of public discourse between traditional British elites and the public. In *Wieland*'s case, however, Carwin's plots circulate freely without any "institutional constraints." In the American context, then, the question is not *who* gets to control public discourse, but whether *anyone* is in control.

In the context of print, plots that run amok suggest none other than the proliferating practice of anonymous publication. Lacking a named author, anonymous

[234] Jane P. Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 44.
[235] Steinman, "Transatlantic Cultures," 127.

books, pamphlets, and tracts therefore lack the authority that is granted to, or withheld from, individual authors. While this neglects the reality that books by women authors do better critically and commercially when published anonymously—their anonymity preserves the cultural authority that would have otherwise been withheld from them simply due to their gender—the anxiety surrounding anonymity in this case applies more readily to the idea of public discourse, mostly with political ramifications in mind. That is, the anonymity of public discourse, coupled with the suspicion that its readership may not be able to tell the difference between socio-politically legitimate rhetoric and ideas and those deemed dangerous or illegitimate, presents an existential threat to the republic. In this sense, Carwin's plots are also anonymous ones; his ventriloquism allows him to produce disembodied voices—or rather, to decouple the voice from its owner, rendering it anonymous. As a proxy for the public, members of the Wieland family time and again fail to identify Carwin's plots as efforts to deceive.

In what follows, I examine the penknife trope and trace its evolution from *Clarissa* to *Wieland* and *Ormond*, Brown's second novel and *Wieland*'s immediate literary successor. In the penknife trope, the female epistolary protagonist repurposes what is ordinarily a tool for letter-writing as a weapon, almost always under great duress. I argue that the penknife trope productively fails to retain its original form and function in *Clarissa* in the transition to Brown's fiction. Acquiring more overt violence in *Wieland*, the trope reveals how the emphasis on sensibility or sentimentality associated with the epistolary heroine and her penknife quickly devolves into a far more violent and bloody form of Gothic sensationalism in its

transformation, which suggests diverging interests and readerly tastes across the Atlantic.

While a detailed account of these three texts is beyond the scope of this chapter, I wish to demonstrate how a single trope may illustrate failures of transformation on multiple levels of form. The penknife trope illustrates the failures of transformation on the level of each novel's specific plotline that is nonetheless deeply embedded within a larger, literary-historical and intertextual context. On the level of plot, I conceive of the rape plot's failure or success with respect to its eventual outcome, broadly defined as the act of rape followed by its tragic consequences. While the success of Lovelace's plot(s) of rape is duly feared but ultimately inevitable in *Clarissa*, a voice of unknown origin thwarts Carwin's attempted rape of Clara, ironically subjecting him to suffer his own ventriloquism. And unlike *Clarissa*, Carwin's attempted rape is but one entry in the novel's array of violence, rather than the main event.

In the larger context that involves its Transatlantic evolution from *Clarissa* to *Wieland* and *Ormond*, the penknife trope reflects a series of failures of transformation on the level of archetype. By virtue of its central role in the recapitulated plot of rape, the transformation of the penknife trope also reconfigures the relationship between rape and death, specifically for the female protagonist. In this new relationship, death occurs prior to rape, rather than acting as its fatal consequence. After this reconfiguration, the survivor no longer carries the burden of tragic responsibility—though not without additional, steep costs. In *Ormond*, the penknife is critical to the outcome of the novel's plot, preventing both rape and murder. Put another way, the

penknife trope's radical transformation is what enables *Ormond*'s heroine to make her escape from danger—and to ultimately survive.

Within this extended discussion of the penknife trope, I also examine another kind of transformation on the smallest possible scale—that of the individual word—which involves a key rhetorical maneuver commonly practiced by Lovelace, Carwin, as well as Brown's subsequent villain, the Carwin-like character of Ormond. Lovelace, Carwin, and Ormond displace the word "rape" and its possible consequences by evacuating it of meaning, in order to replace it with their own self-serving solipsism around ideas of chastity and female virtue. In these villains' common rendering of rape as a "void," to recall the blank mirror as a crux for discursive and representational absence, we find that these processes—the failures of transformation of the penknife trope and the solipsism of articulating rape—are intertwined.

The physical location of Carwin's attempted rape of Clara is, not coincidentally, both the scene of writing *and* of Catharine's murder: a closet in which Clara's books and papers were kept, in Clara's personal quarters in the upstairs apartment of her house. While Theodore hears the divine voice's command to kill his wife as a sacrifice to God, in the scene of attempted rape, the mysterious voice instead prevents the rape from occurring.

In a scenario befitting Gothic horror, Carwin has hidden himself in the closet, waiting until the late hour when Clara would return to her room. When Clara approaches the closet to open it, she hears a loud cry—"Hold! Hold!"—which

prevents her from doing so.[236] Sensing danger, Clara ascribes "protection, and not injury" as the motive of the voice, even while describing it as a "strange and terrible chimera."[237] When she finally opens the closet, as Clara recalls,

> The face that presented itself was the last that I should desire to meet at an hour, and in a place like this. My wonder was stifled by my fears. Assassins had lurked in this recess. Some divine voice warned me of danger, that at this moment awaited me […]
>
> What motive but atrocious ones could guide his steps hither? I was alone. My habit suited the hour, and the place, and the warmth of the season. All succour was remote. He had placed himself between me and the door. My frame shook with the vehemence of my apprehensions.[238]

When Carwin appears on the scene, Clara makes unequivocal the threat that he poses. She makes clear that the "apprehensions" that shook her frame is that of the possibility of rape, given her extremely vulnerable position.

When he is found out, Carwin asks Clara, "What voice was that which lately addressed you?", implying that he was not the source of the mysterious voice. Neither Carwin nor Clara would ever find out the answer. To Carwin, this mysterious voice is doubly ironic, as it is a reversal of the deception he had caused earlier. While he had used his ventriloquism to impersonate Clara, so as to suggest an illicit rendezvous between her and himself for Henry to overhear, here a voice of unknown origin had thwarted Carwin's plan to gain Clara by force and surprise. Realizing that inscrutable powers are working to protect Clara in this way, he confesses to attempting rape,

[236] Brown, *Wieland*, 67.
[237] Brown, *Wieland*, 69.
[238] Brown, *Wieland*, 70.

revealing that had it not been for this voice, he "should long ere now have borne away the spoils of your honor."[239]

After the episode of the attempted rape, Carwin requests an interview with Clara, hoping to extirpate his own guilt. When Clara finds herself at the scene of the closet once again, she finds Catharine murdered. When she first apprehends the scene, she believes that Catharine had been murdered by Carwin in her stead, rather than by Theodore. Clara sees a light in the window of her chamber, and suspects Carwin as the intruder. Preparing for Carwin's potential assault, Clara reaches for her penknife: "I drew forth from my pocket, and opened, a penknife. This, said I, be my safe-guard and avenger."[240] In doing so, and as her predecessors had done, Clara reconfigures the penknife's functional association with writing into an instrument of self-defense and revenge.

In *Clarissa*, Clarissa draws out a penknife during an argument with Lovelace, threatening to kill herself.[241] Recounting the scene, Lovelace writes,

> To my astonishment, she held forth a penknife in her hand, the point to her own bosom, grasping resolutely the whole handle, so that there was no offering to take it from her.[242]

There is perhaps no better illustration of the penknife trope than this scene. The penknife as trope demonstrates the intimate association between written literacy and the woman's body, here rendered literal. Letters that reveal the heart become a

[239] Brown, *Wieland*, 71.
[240] Brown, *Wieland*, 111.
[241] Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa; or, the History of a Young Lady*, ed. Angus Ross (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England; New York: Penguin Classics, 1986), Letter 281; 948-52.
[242] Richardson, 950.

penknife pointed at the bosom, in an equally literal sense the physical location of that heart.

Similarly, in *Pamela*, Mr. B. finds Pamela's letters sewn into the inside of her clothes as he tries to forcibly undress her. The proximity of the written letters to Pamela's naked body—letters that, after all, allow one to "see the inmost Recesses" of Pamela's mind—suggests that the letters conceal and reveal the inner thoughts and secrets of Pamela's interiority in much the same way that her clothing conceals her body. This proximity implies that the letters convey an integrity and authenticity of thought and feeling commensurate to the material reality of her physical body.

Returning to the scene in *Clarissa*, Clarissa's resolve surprises Lovelace, who sees clearly its potentially fatal consequences. So striking is this incident to Lovelace that he concludes his letter by mentioning the penknife again:

> Oh Lord! Oh Lord! What a hand, what a cursed hand have I made of this plot!—and here ends
>
> The history of the Lady and the Penknife!!!—The devil take the penknife!—It goes against me to say, God bless the lady.[243]

In concluding his tale, Lovelace bemoans the plots that had gotten "out of hand," the instructions for which were written, through countless letters, in his own "cursed hand." It is also important to note that this is the precipitating incident after which Lovelace seems to abandon his extramarital "cohabitation" scheme with Clarissa and agrees to marry her, although she would, of course, refuse.

On the broadest level, the major transformation of the penknife trope is the fact that the sharp point of the penknife is no longer aimed at the heroine's person. In its

[243] Richardson, 952.

transformation, the penknife now turns towards her attacker. Clara's resolve combines Clarissa's threat to commit suicide with the use of the penknife as a weapon for self-defense, a purpose that is absent from *Clarissa*. Within Brown's larger corpus, the penknife trope undergoes a final evolution in Brown's second novel, *Ormond*. In my rough juxtaposition of the three scenes, Clarissa Harlowe's transformation into Clara Wieland duly exerts its influence on the protagonist of *Ormond*, Constantia Dudley.

Narrated by Sophia Cortland, *Ormond* follows the life and trials of Constantia, from her family's financial ruin to her association with cosmopolitan revolutionaries during the rapidly changing conditions of the 1790's—a Transatlantic socio-political landscape in turmoil that in turn spurs the transformation of Constantia's individual identity. Constantia meets Ormond, a self-aggrandizing but wealthy figure who, like Carwin, is a fellow practitioner of ventriloquism as a tool for social manipulation. While Constantia's final encounter with Ormond is not her first experience of attempted rape—in her loss of socio-economic status and fall into poverty, Constantia encounters the possibility of public rape by working-class men but is saved by the upstanding merchant Balfour—the final confrontation with Ormond in a fit of jealous rage presents the greatest, most credible threat of rape and danger to her person.

During this confrontation, Constantia arms herself with a penknife. The novel's narrator, Sophia, describes Constantia as she contemplates a final and fatal act of self-defense against Ormond: "to find safety for her honor, even in the blood of an assailant, was the prescription of duty."[244] When Ormond appears, Constantia,

[244] Charles Brockden Brown, *Ormond; or The Secret Witness*, eds. Philip Barnard and Stephen Shapiro (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2009), 215.

following the heroines before her, threatens at first to "plunge this knife into [her] heart," to Ormond's surprise and disdain.

At this point in the narrative, the events that transpire immediately after become purposefully obscure. Sophia eventually finds Constantia in a locked room after the fact. When Sophia enters, she sees three apparently lifeless bodies belonging to Constantia, Ormond, and Craig Dudley, who had been killed earlier by Ormond. While Constantia is revived, Ormond is found dead. When questioned, Constantia claims that "[her] deed was scarcely the fruit of intention." She explains,

> I saw no other means of escaping from vileness and pollution. I was menaced with an evil worse than death. I forbore till my strength was almost subdued: The lapse of another moment would have placed me beyond hope.[245]

Through many backward conjectures and interviews with Constantia, Sophia finds out that Constantia had stabbed Ormond with the penknife at the last moment before rape. Her suspicion that Constantia had been raped was unfounded, but at the expense of Ormond's life. Reflecting on these events, Sophia concludes that "The violence of Ormond had been repulsed by equal violence," and that "His foul attempts had been prevented by his death."[246] Describing the scene of the murders earlier, Sophia observes that "The wound, by which [Ormond] fell, was secret, and was scarcely betrayed by the effusion of a drop of blood."[247] While the sharp point of the penknife finally strikes against Constantia's attacker, fulfilling its fatal evolution, the reader is not privy to a direct description of this gory scene; the reader is secret witness to neither the murders, nor even to Ormond's physical condition.

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[245] Brown, *Ormond*, 220.
[246] Brown, *Ormond*, 220.
[247] Brown, *Ormond*, 219.

Perhaps the most curious transformation of the penknife trope, however, occurs in *Wieland*. Left alone with her brother, who had seemingly gone mad, and with the knowledge that he had murdered his wife and family, Clara writes that she questioned his motives: "I was dubious of [Theodore's] purpose; this purpose might aim at my life."[248] Her thoughts escalate to despair and imminent danger: she now "stood upon the brink of fate, that the knife of the sacrificer [Theodore] was aimed at my heart." Yet rather than resigning herself to the fate she fears, she becomes resolute to find "any means of escape, however monstrous."[249]

Following profuse admissions of guilt that "surpasses that of all mankind," Clara makes another confession. She writes,

> In visiting my house, I had made provision against the machinations of Carwin. In a fold of my dress an open penknife was concealed. This I now seized and drew forth. It lurked out of view; but I now see that my state of mind would have rendered the deed inevitable if my brother had lifted his hand. *The instrument of my preservation would have been plunged into his heart.*[250] (emphasis mine)

As a direct result of her encounters with Carwin, Clara had preemptively brought the penknife with her. Clara's premeditated plan to kill her brother should he attack, using the same penknife with which she armed herself against Carwin, diverges from the sentimentality of the penknife trope in *Clarissa* via its embrace of violence, albeit as a means of self-defense. Yet Clara also relays in equally emphatic terms the moral cost of even imagining this scenario: "Is there a thing in the world worthy of infinite abhorrence? It is I."[251] As the cost of survival, Clara suffers immense guilt and

[248] Brown, *Wieland*, 165.
[249] Brown, *Wieland*, 165.
[250] Brown, *Wieland*, 165.
[251] Brown, *Wieland*, 165.

struggles at the recollection of the scene. She writes in despair that "my heart was black enough to meditate the stabbing of a brother!"[252] Though Clara's plan is never realized, as Theodore would commit suicide shortly thereafter, it is as if the possibility of murder set forth by *Wieland* comes to fruition in the final scene of *Ormond*.

In its transformation, what begins as a highly pathetic scene of sensibility in *Clarissa* becomes a site of sensational violence and bloody horror in *Wieland* and *Ormond*. While the penknife itself is not inherently gendered, its reconfiguration can arguably only be attributed to women. After all, it is hard to imagine a man wielding a penknife, either purposefully or by necessity. Lovelace, for instance, often has his rapier ready, and is quick to draw it out during a confrontation. Ultimately, the penknife trope implicates, via its symbolic and literal association with writing, female literacy in the failed transformation of the rape plot, even becoming the instrument that thwarts the conventional plot outcome of rape—its success.

Apart from the penknife trope's loss of sentimentality and the failure of the rape plot as archetype, another transformation on the smallest scale occurs as shared solipsism. At the scene of his attempted rape, and after abandoning his plan, Carwin attempts to reassure Clara—albeit unconvincingly—that "Even if I execute my purpose, what injury is done? Your prejudices will call it by that name, but it merits it not."[253] Carwin's pseudo-justification of rape here is a distinctive exercise in semantics characteristic of Lovelace's solipsism and of male/patriarchal discursive control more generally, i.e. the pseudo-justification of rape made after the fact serving

[252] Brown, *Wieland*, 165.
[253] Brown, *Wieland*, 71.

as what we might now call "damage control," in the modern sense of the term. Due to rape's representational difficulty and the stigma of its expression, the use of euphemism to replace direct references to rape is standard fare in this period. In the absence of the word, Carwin's rhetorical move not only omits the term, but also denies its consequences, thereby also denying his own culpability. He suggests that applying the term "rape" to his attempt is the result of "prejudice," which unsettles its legitimacy. Carwin then displaces the fact of rape with another word by calling female sexual virtue/female virginity a "chimera," which affirms his earlier claim that his actions would not have caused any "injury."

Continuing his justification, Carwin claims that he "was impelled by a sentiment that does you honor; a sentiment, that would sanctify my deed," yet ultimately concludes that "Be this chimera still worshipped; I will do nothing to pollute it."[254] Significantly, Carwin's "chimera" uneasily recalls Clara's earlier description of the mysterious voice as a "strange and terrible chimera."[255] Ironically, one chimera had worked to preserve the other. Juxtaposing the two instances, we find that Clara describes the seemingly divine, mysterious voice as a chimera in part as an act of questioning her sensory perception. Yet Carwin's use of the word suggests, perhaps inadvertently, that the *real* chimera is the equally mysterious idea of sexual purity as the socially mandated marker of female virtue, precisely because such virtue cannot be easily perceived or proven via sensory perception alone.

[254] Brown, *Wieland*, 71.
[255] See Brown, *Wieland*, 69.

By evacuating the meaning of the word "honor," Carwin's rhetoric strikingly resembles the solipsism of Richardson's rake. As we have seen in Chapter One, "honor" and its related term, "honesty," are the subject of extensive semantic arguments in *Clarissa*. Belford, Lovelace's friend and confidante, is prescient in this respect, marking the manipulation of individual words as a central component of Lovelace's solipsism. Writing to Belford in Letter 138, Lovelace reflects upon his complicated schemes involving fraudulent identities, imagined relatives, and other falsified narratives, in an effort to trick Clarissa into a clandestine marriage. He relays them proudly and describes them as "only the consequences of my own invention."[256]

Even prior to these plots, Lovelace has already unsettled the common meaning of "honest" conduct, such that he is able to conclude, in his next letter, that "the lady [Clarissa] will be mine in an honourable way"[257]—a plot of changed meaning executed via language. Recalling my analysis in Chapter One, Belford is fully aware of Lovelace's plot of language and responds with an urgent plea that is simultaneously a rebuke of this very exercise: "Be honest to her, then, in *her* sense of the word."[258] Equal parts wishful thinking and semantic manipulation, Lovelace's statement reveals the core mechanism of his solipsism as the displacement of meaning on the smallest scale—that of individual words—not unlike Carwin's displacement of "honor" with "chimera" described earlier.

[256] Richardson, *Clarissa*, Letter 139; 494.
[257] Richardson, Letter 140; 496.
[258] Richardson, Letter 144; 503.

In his own response to Constantia, Ormond's speech recapitulates, albeit using different terms, Carwin's accusation that female sexual virtue is an illusory chimera. At the scene of confrontation, Ormond makes his case to Constantia:

> So! thou preferrest thy imaginary honor to life! To escape this injury without a name or substance: Without connection with the past or future; without contamination of thy purity or thraldom of thy will; thou wilt kill thyself[259]

Apart from calling female sexual virtue an "imaginary honor," Ormond also describes rape as an "injury without a name or substance," and that rape would not be a "contamination of thy [Constantia's] purity." Both sentiments recapitulate Carwin's earlier question to Clara: "Even if I execute my purpose, what injury is done?"

While it is less clear whether the claim that rape is "without connection with the past or future" has a precedent in Richardson or *Wieland*, juxtaposing the blank mirror with the penknife reveals the increasing violence generated by the representational or discursive void of rape.

III. "It is drawn up by a female hand": Female Literacy as Narrative Authority

The most direct source for *Wieland*'s plot is the James Yates murders, an inexplicable and sensational case of familicide in 1781. Yates, a farmer in Tomhanick, a rural settlement in upstate New York, brutally murdered his wife, children, and cattle after hearing what he claimed were divine voices instructing him to do so. The textual source was likely an anonymous account of the murders that appeared in *New-York Weekly Magazine* in 1796, "An Account of a Murder Committed by Mr. J— Y—, upon his Family, in December, A.D. 1781." Critical consensus suggests that Brown

[259] Brown, *Ormond*, 216.

saw this account either in July, when it was first published, or in August of the same year, when it was reprinted in the Philadelphia *Minerva*. It is from this account that Brown formed the dark outlines of *Wieland*'s plot, to which he alludes in the novel's "Advertisement." Commenting on the seemingly impossible conduct of Theodore in the novel, Brown writes in the Advertisement that "most readers will probably recollect an authentic case, remarkably similar to that of Wieland,"[260] referring to James Yates.

Yet often overlooked in the study of *Wieland* in relation to the Yates murders is the fact that this account, while anonymous, is actually written by a woman. In a note to the editor of the *New-York Weekly Magazine*, a reader named "Anna" describes the account as having been "drawn up by a female hand," as well as belonging to an eyewitness:

> To the EDITOR of the *New-York Weekly Magazine*.
> Sir,
> The inclosed Account I transmit to you for publication, at the particular request of a friend, who is well acquainted with the circumstances that gave rise to it.—It is drawn up by a female hand, and she here relates respecting Mr. Y— what she knew of him herself, and what she had heard of him in her father's family, where he had been an occasional visitant […][261]

The gendering of this account, which only appears in this separate note appended to its text, almost never appears in critical discussion of *Wieland*. Further, the critical tendency to "de-gender" the anonymous writer also applies to *Wieland*, when critics

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[260] Charles Brockden Brown, "Advertisement to *Wieland*," 4. Recent scholarship has uncovered another possible case of familicide that Brown might have been referring to, that of William Beadle in Connecticut in 1782. See for instance, Daniel E. Williams, ''Writing under the influence: An examination of *Wieland*'s 'Well Authenticated Facts' and the Depiction of Murderous Fathers in Post-Revolutionary Print Culture.'' *Eighteenth Century Fiction* 15 no. 3 (2003): 643–68; esp. 644.
[261] "An Account of a Murder Committed by Mr. J— Y—, upon his Family, in December, A.D. 1781." *New-York Weekly Magazine* 2:55 (20, 27 Jul 1796): 20, 28. In Norton *Wieland*, 266-270; 266.

fail to treat Clara's first-person, epistolary narration as another witness account similarly "drawn up by a female hand." Establishing female literacy as a core concern of *Wieland*'s experiments with narrative form thus enables a reading of the novel in which a degree of agency may be ascribed to Clara's female witness account of the murder of her family.

The third and final section of this chapter argues that Chapter 27, which contains Clara's final letter to the novel's fictional, unnamed reader, is a turning point in the novel's depiction of Clara's interiority. Unlike Clara's earlier characterization as an "unreliable historian," the last letter instead suggests that Clara's writing is truthful and reliable. By granting Clara the qualities of truth-telling and authentic feeling in the letter, *Wieland* returns its narrative to the fold of the Richardsonian tradition of epistolary writing. While the narrative has "failed" thus far to reproduce Richardsonian female interiority, the ending of *Wieland* presents this interiority as an attainable possibility for epistolary heroines born in—rather than borne to—America.

As this last section will demonstrate, female literacy as a key feature of *Wieland*'s connection to Richardson and *Clarissa* is indispensable to the recuperation of Richardsonian female interiority at the end of *Wieland*, when Clara's writing becomes increasingly endowed with narrative authority. These characteristics were unquestionably afforded to Clarissa's writing since the beginning of her story, while Clara must wait until the end of hers. That *Wieland* retains the first-person epistolary female narrator is the crucial condition of form that enables Clara's interiority; the opposite scenario would entail Brown following the complete elimination of the first-person narrator in favor of a third-person, omniscient narrator, as in the abridged

versions of *Clarissa*. Such an elimination also reinforces my earlier claim that the removal of first-person, female interiority is necessary for the moralizing impulse or politicization of the novels to take effect or appear persuasive. The retention of the first-person epistolary female narrator in *Wieland* complicates the moralizing impulse trend, working in part to challenge the instrumentalization of the novel's violence, sexual or otherwise.

i. Waiting for Death

In her final letter, written three years after the cataclysmic events of the main narrative, Clara relays with newfound clarity her life trajectory since the traumatic incidents. The fact that a period of time had elapsed between the chapters is not the only way in which they are marked as separate. A small note at the beginning of the chapter states that this last letter is fictionally appended to the rest of the letter-manuscript, having been written at a much later date. This added letter is yet another fiction of materiality that is rendered inaccessible in the manuscript's transformation into print, to which we will return.

At the end of Chapter 26, Clara insists that the letter she is presently writing will be her last, which, as the reader quickly finds out, turns out to be untrue. After witnessing Theodore's suicide, Clara immediately resolves to stay at Mettingen, rather than leaving the gruesome scene with her uncle and others. She writes,

> The body of Wieland [Theodore] was removed from my presence, and they supposed that I would follow it; but no, my home is ascertained; here I have taken up my rest, and never will I go hence, till, like Wieland, I am borne to my grave.[262]

[262] Brown, *Wieland*, 172.

As part of the novel's connection to *Clarissa*, Clara's turn towards death as the resolution of her story resembles Clarissa's stoicism towards her final illness. In Clara's case, the preservation of her present setting until her anticipated death, as a desire for immobility both in terms of physical location as well as affectively, resembles Clarissa's stoicism in light of her final illness, as she waits for death.

At the end of the chapter, Clara imagines that a scenario similar to Clarissa's ending will soon apply to herself. In an earlier reflection, Clara had introduced the entwinement of writing with life itself. At the close of one chapter, she writes that "I will die, but then only when my tale is at an end."[263] Here, Clara declares at the end of the chapter, "now my repose is coming—my work is done!"[264] And her work here is none other than the task of committing her story to pen and paper. In the fictional world of the novel, this letter(s) is the only witness record of her trauma—and certainly an eyewitness account that places Clara in a similar position to the writer of the Yates account.

The entwinement of writing with living resurfaces in another, more detailed account of the events in the last chapter of the novel. Describing the immediate aftermath of Theodore's suicide, Clara reveals that the very action of writing down the events at hand in fact had a consolatory effect, when other means had failed to move her:

> In relaying the history of these disasters I derived a similar species of gratification. My uncle earnestly dissuaded me from this task; but his remonstrances were as fruitless on this head as they had been on others. They would have withheld from me the implements of writing; but they quickly

[263] Brown, *Wieland*, 169.
[264] Brown, *Wieland*, 173.

> perceived that to withstand would be more injurious than to comply with my wishes.[265]

The "similar species of gratification" to which Clara refers is none other than her resolve to wait for death. She remains adamant to write despite her uncle's pleas. Somewhat cryptically, Clara writes that he and others "threatened to remove me [from the room] by violence—nay, violence was used,"[266] but does not comment further.

The action or threat of withholding pen, ink, and paper from the epistolary heroine is a major trope of the genre. It signifies not only discursive control but also the powerful capabilities of writing, capabilities that necessitated this attempt at control in the first place. In *Clarissa*, Clarissa's family threatens to withhold her supply of ink and paper during her confinement in her room at Harlowe Place. She is forbidden to write, not only to Lovelace but to anyone, including her friend Anna Howe. Later, a servant informs her parents that Clarissa had, in fact, written letters despite being forbidden to do so; Betty had seen her inky finger.[267]

The metaphorical power of ink in this context is not lost on critics of the novel. Sarah Ellenzweig, for instance, writes of the inky finger episode that "Richardsonian letters, leaving traces of ink on fingers in their striving to capture life alive, are never…innocent."[268] For Brad Pasanek, ink is metonymic as well as metaphorical, being the stuff of both thought and soul. In Pasanek's database *The Mind is a Metaphor*, numerous examples abound, including Ascham Schoolmaster's didactic

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[265] Brown, *Wieland*, 174.
[266] See Brown, *Wieland*, 172. This appears in the earlier account given at the end of Chapter 27, rather than the account given in Clara's last letter.
[267] This incident appears at the end of Letter 84 (p. 345).
[268] Sarah Ellenzweig, "The Persistence of *Clarissa*," in *Mind, Body, Motion, Matter: Eighteenth-Century British and French Perspectives*, eds. Mary Helen McMurran and Alison Conway (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 177.

formulation in Johnson's Dictionary: "Heads overfull with matter, be like pens over full of ink, which will sooner *blot*, than make any fair letters at all."[269]

Yet I'd like to suggest that in the context of Clara's adamant resolve to continue writing, which by now seems synonymous with her wish to wait for death, writing does not so much "capture life alive" as it is the critical action that allows her to live, metaphorically and perhaps also otherwise. Clara's writing sheds its association with representation in favor of a more vital connection to her life, perhaps supplying one reason why her uncle understands that "to withstand would be more injurious than to comply with [Clara's] wishes." Similarly, Clarissa's inky finger that attests to her lack of innocence, according to Ellenzweig, is also the material trace of her unwilling confinement—a trace that defies strict orders for it to not exist, so as to prevent a witness record of Clarissa's mistreatment at Harlowe Place.

Although *Clarissa* ends shortly after Clarissa's death—there being no more of her letters to read—Clara's turn towards death is only momentary. Although Clara had implied at the end of Chapter 26 that she will write no more, there is another letter appended to the "original" letter—another fiction of materiality—wherein the appended material is rendered indistinguishable from the rest of the fictional manuscript in print. Written by Clara three years afterwards and dated in Montpellier, a city in southern France, the shift in tone and the clarity of her sentiments are

[269] "Blot," entry in Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language: In Which the Words Are Deduced from Their Originals, and Illustrated in Their Different Significations by Examples from the Best Writers. To Which Are Prefixed, a History of the Language, and an English Grammar* (New York: AMS Press, 1967). In the database, see http://metaphors.lib.virginia.edu/metaphors/13390 (accessed March 6, 2021).

significant and unmistakable. It is here in this final letter that the recuperation of Clara's narrative authority begins to take place.

Beginning her letter, she confesses, "I imagined that I had forever laid aside the pen." Reflecting upon the events of the previous letter, Clara deftly articulates the motives that had influenced her actions and, perhaps more importantly, does so in a highly convincing manner, such that any accusation of unreliable narration that may have surfaced earlier decidedly does not apply. In other words, the tone and finality of her prose begins to resemble that of a Richardsonian epistolary heroine. As Clara writes,

> Surely I had reason to be weary of existence, to be impatient of every tie which held me from the grave. I experienced this impatience in its fullest extent. I was not only enamored of death, but conceived, from the condition of my frame, that to shun it was impossible, even though I had ardently desired it; yet here am I, a thousand leagues from my native soil, in full possession of life and of health, and not destitute of happiness.[270]

Clara explains that the "condition of [her] frame" played a role in strengthening her resolve to wait for death, which draws upon prevailing ideas of female sensibility, wherein certain women are so nervous, or sensitive to feeling, that they may suffer physical injuries from episodes of intense feeling, even dying from it. This fiction of female sensibility readily applies to the tragic female heroine, who often dies of a broken heart or grief. Yet the ending of Clara's reflection reveals that fiction, at least in her case, to be false. On the contrary, she is "in full possession of life and of health."

[270] Brown, *Wieland*, 173.

The incident that effectively changes Clara's resolve is a fire that starts at her house, from which she is saved by her uncle's servant. Commenting on the aftermath of the fire, Clara describes herself as being "roused from the stupor," after which "the monotonous and gloomy series of my thoughts was broken."[271] Since the house had burned down completely—"my habitation was levelled with the ground"[272]—Clara is obliged to finally leave. The fire echoes, though with dissonance, the pretense of fire at Mrs. Sinclair's brothel, a scheme that gave Lovelace further opportunity to make advances on Clarissa. After Clarissa is roused from her sleep by the chaos below, Lovelace seizes this opportunity to carry her down the stairs, despite her unwillingness. Similarly, Clara is carried to safety from the fire, "borne to the window" and "carried down a ladder."[273] While both Clarissa and Clara literally and metaphorically descend from the confines of their chambers, Clarissa falls further victim to Lovelace's plots, while Clara finds safety and revelation.

Clara's last letter also begins the work of tying up the story's loose ends, which I mark as another claim to narrative authority. The reader finds that after the fire, Clara's uncle arranges a meeting between Carwin and Henry, so as to resolve their conflict once and for all, specifically Carwin's earlier deception that led Henry to believe that Clara and Carwin were having an affair. Of this misunderstanding, Clara writes that the reconciliation "restored me to the good opinion of the latter [Henry]."[274] Nonetheless, Henry marries his betrothed, Theresa, and settles in Boston,

[271] Brown, *Wieland*, 175.
[272] Brown, *Wieland*, 175.
[273] Brown, *Wieland*, 175.
[274] Brown, *Wieland*, 176.

even though Clara remains in love with him. Shortly after the marriage, however, Theresa dies in childbirth, allowing Henry to finally reciprocate Clara's feelings. He leaves America to join Clara and her uncle in Europe.

In another moment of clarity, Clara finally concludes that Carwin was complicit in Theodore's madness, though not its direct cause; a "maniacal illusion" was the author of Theodore's conduct, though "the previous and unseen agency of Carwin…indirectly but powerfully predisposed him to this deplorable perversion of mind."[275] Such a stance differs, for instance, from Clara's impassioned exclamation at the end of the previous chapter, "Such is his tale, concerning the truth of which I care not."[276] Juxtaposing these sentiments reveals how the uncertainty that had pervaded Clara's narrative thus far, whether moral, epistemological, or religious, finally dissipates.

Clara's newfound clarity also applies to the remaining uncertainties and loose ends surrounding Louisa, the unraveling of the tragic plot of Louisa's mother that I prefaced earlier in this chapter as a tropic rendering of the seduction plot. Here the reader finds a full accounting of Mrs. Stuart's story: Maxwell's seduction during Major Stuart's absence, Mrs. Maxwell's correspondence with Mrs. Stuart, which reveals the true character of Maxwell to Mrs. Stuart, and Mrs. Stuart's flight to America.

Significantly, this is also the point at which the plot of Clara's plight with Carwin and the backstory plot of Louisa's mother converge. This convergence is both

[275] Brown, *Wieland*, 177.
[276] Brown, *Wieland*, 173.

literal—the characters will meet one another—as well as generic, wherein female tragedy and Gothic horror both furnish one cohesive narrative. In the literal sense, Clara and her uncle meet Maxwell in Avignon during their travels in Europe. In the context of genre, Clara becomes briefly involved in the tragic female plot insofar as Maxwell will, in fact, attempt to seduce her, as he did Mrs. Stuart. Clara writes that after ingratiating himself with her uncle and others in her circle, "[Maxwell] had even tendered me his hand in marriage."[277] At this point in the story, however, Clara unequivocally rejects Maxwell's hand, and with it the tragic consequences that might have followed. In other words, had Maxwell succeeded, Clara's fate might have been one shared with Clarissa or Mrs. Stuart. By rejecting Maxwell's hand, Clara also rejects the figure it suggests—the fallen woman at the heart of the tragic female genre—as if to disavow its presence in her own narrative, which is yet another exertion of Clara's newfound narrative authority.

Another reverberation of *Clarissa*, however, complicates Clara's rejection of the tragic female seduction plot. This is the subsequent duel between Major Stuart and Maxwell, which echoes the duel between Colonel Morden, Clarissa's cousin, and Lovelace at the end of *Clarissa*. Yet while Lovelace dies in the duel, allowing for an uneasy exacting of justice, Major Stuart is murdered by Maxwell's accomplice upon his arrival at the duel. Shortly thereafter, Maxwell disappears, having faced no consequences. Although Clara rejects Maxwell, Maxwell's escape offers neither

[277] Brown, *Wieland*, 180.

justice nor resolution. At the close of her letter and of *Wieland*, Clara appends to Carwin Maxwell's name as another "author of evil."[278]

ii. "I leave you to moralize on this tale": Female Literacy and the Problem of Ethical Reading

In concluding this chapter, I'd like to return to the moralizing impulse, in light of Clara's narrative authority, and offer the continuity between *Wieland*'s ending and the ending of the account of the Yates murders as an expression that there is an alternative to the moralizing impulse. Clara's and the female writer's narratives preserve moral uncertainty and withhold culpability, rather than attempt to explain away the inscrutable causes and motives of Theodore's and Yates' madness. Further, insofar as their writing is gendered female, the alternative they present is similarly gendered, and cannot exist without female literacy. At the close of her account of Yates, the writer concludes,

> The cause for his wonderfully cruel proceedings is beyond the conception of human beings—the deed so unpremeditated, so unprovoked, that we do not hesitate to pronounce it the effect of insanity […] But what avail our conjectures, perhaps it is best that some things are concealed from us, and the only use we can now make of our knowledge of this affair, is to be humble under a scene of human frailty to renew our petition, "Lead us not into temptation."[279]

Rather than other kinds of rationalist or empirical discourse suggested by *Wieland* as seemingly superior epistemologies, this writer finds solace in Christian humility—an affective, rather than moralistic, lesson.

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[278] Brown, *Wieland*, 181.
[279] "An Account of a Murder Committed by Mr. J— Y—, upon his Family," in Norton *Wieland*, 270.

At the end of *Wieland*, Clara tells her reader, "I leave you to moralize on this tale,"[280] which recalls Castle's worries about ethical interpretation with which I began this chapter. Although Clara offers her own perspective in effectively blaming the many sufferers of Carwin and Maxwell's evils for their own injuries, her earlier sentiments granting interpretive reign to the reader remain. Clara's indictment of Mrs. Stuart, in particular, seems to follow MacPherson's idea of tragic responsibility in its suggestion that Mrs. Stuart's tragic end could have been avoided "if the lady had crushed her disastrous passion in the bud, and driven the seducer from her presence."[281] What Clara fails to mention, however, is the fact that these sentiments apply to her as well—she, a "lady," had indeed "driven the seducer from her presence" by rejecting Maxwell, thereby escaping Mrs. Stuart's fate.

In many ways, female literacy in *Wieland* in relation to *Clarissa* is an exception among the failed transformations discussed in this chapter. It is not so much a transformation as a successful preservation of form. As I have discussed earlier, the form in question is, on the most basic level, the first-person, female epistolary narrative voice. Yet this preservation of form also extends to the fictions of materiality that accompany these fictionally female letters, whose imprints and intricacies are rendered inaccessible and uniform, like *Clarissa*'s Paper X, in print.

In conclusion, female literacy serves as one of the strongest proxies of female agency across *Clarissa* and *Wieland*, such that it ultimately authorizes—in the sense of "author" as well as "authority"—the failures of transformation in *Wieland*. While the

[280] Brown, *Wieland*, 181.
[281] Brown, 181.

failure of Richardsonian interiority in America impedes efforts to ascribe agency to Clara's writing, Clara's unexpected final letter endows her with newfound narrative authority commensurate with her Richardsonian predecessors. As this chapter has argued, such a recuperation would not have been possible had the fiction of female literacy been replaced by the third person, moralizing narrative voice that rendered legible and popularized Richardson's novels in America.

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