TO THE LETTER:
POSTAL COMMUNICATIONS AND THE EPISTOLARY NOVEL IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

by

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TO THE LETTER: POSTAL COMMUNICATIONS AND THE EPISTOLARY NOVEL IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

BY

RENEE M. SGROI

A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

This thesis proposes to study the eighteenth-century epistolary novel insofar as it is conceived within a media and communications environment which depends upon the familiar letter and postal technology. An analysis of the familiar letter and the correspondence of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Tobias Smollett, and Horace Walpole reveals the letter's role as a performance, while also providing evidence of complex media shifts from orality to handwriting and from handwriting to print. In addition, the letter's distribution through the postal system demonstrates that it acts as a surrogate for interpersonal (face-to-face) communication; this distribution network also helps to validate its participation in yet another network, printing and publication. The thesis argues that the writing and distribution of letters in the eighteenth century relates directly to the production of its many epistolary novels such as Samuel Richardson's Pamela: Or Virtue Rewarded and Clarissa: Or the History of a Young Lady and Tobias Smollett's The Expedition of Humphry Clinker.

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Introduction

Jerome McGann's The Textual Condition and Lucien Febvre's and Henri-Jean Martin's The Coming of the Book have demonstrated the importance of contextualizing and historicizing texts in order to understand the forces shaping their production and consumption. This thesis attempts to contextualize and historicize eighteenth-century English correspondence, both fictional and non-fictional, in order to comprehend the factors which gave rise to its popularity as a media form in that period. While works such as Ian Watt's The Rise of the Novel document the importance of the epistolary form in the development of the novel, these works ignore the status of actual correspondence in the eighteenth century and the reasons for its appearance in fictional works. To this end, it is necessary to historicize the epistolary situation of the eighteenth century so that we may understand its popularity as a "mass media" during this period.

Eighteenth-century epistolary theory draws a connection from letters to conversation and performance, resulting in a media shift from orality to handwriting. This theory created a paradoxical binary of public and private since letters were intended for publication yet were socialised as a private space. In yet another media shift, letter-writing was translated from handwriting to print. This shift occurred in the publication of both fictional and non-fictional correspondence. Generated within this environment, then, the integrity of the letters in epistolary novels is made suspect and must be re-evaluated from this new perspective.

In this thesis, Samuel Richardson's Pamela: Or Virtue Rewarded and Clarissa: Or the History of a Young Lady and Tobias Smollett's The Expedition of Humphry Clinker will be examined in light of eighteenth-century epistolary theory. In addition, the correspondence of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Tobias Smollett,

and Horace Walpole will instantiate the theoretical implications of the familiar letter as well as provide documentary evidence of the letter-writers' intentions to be printed. Furthermore, these correspondences reveal the postal system's role as a means of publication and its status as a technology which affirms the status of letters and letter-writers.

Chapter 1

The Familiar Letter and the Postal System in the Eighteenth Century

Critics have for many years understood the letter as an opportunity for complete self-expression. Ian Watt claims that "The major advantage [of the epistolary novel] of course, is that letters are the most direct material evidence for the inner life of their writers that exist" (Watt 191). According to Watt, letters reveal the self in its most raw form for they provide a direct link to the inner psyche. Yet Watt is not alone in his beliefs, for, as Tom Keymer points out:

> Lovelace reminds Clarissa that he 'loved Familiar-letter-writing ... 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' (Keymer 50)

Lovelace believes that familiar letter writing does not partake of the same rigid techniques and guidelines as other letter forms. Yet his claim is false, for familiar letter-writing involves a complex set of guidelines which enables the letter-writer to create a fictional, mediated self to be viewed in the public sphere.

In our age of typewritten correspondence, particularly e-mail, we tend to forget the importance of handwriting in the composition of a letter. The quality of eighteenth-century handwriting describes more than an aesthetic art form. Handwriting was an ideological formation that revealed a person's character. Prior to the printing revolution, handwriting styles were not standardized and were subject to the idiosyncrasies of the individual writer. Yet as Elizabeth Eisenstein points out, the printing press's ability to reproduce identical texts influenced

handwriting by standardising styles: "[Printed] Sixteenth-century specimen books stripped diverse scribal 'hands' of personal idiosyncrasies. They did for handwriting what style books did for typography itself" (Eisenstein 54). Thus the standardized printed copybooks convert the idiosyncratic individual hand. As Goldberg observes:

> The hand is suited to the demands of the pen to make it flow properly, overcoming the resistance of the surface, the failures incident to the quill, the materiality of the body. These hands are being instructed to produce documents that will not show the hand; these hands are being trained to be hands of the state. (Goldberg 94-5)

The writing hand must be dismembered or disembodied (Goldberg 84) to be naturalised by the "regime of copying" (Goldberg 113). While inscribing words on a page, letter-writers are simultaneously inscribed by the ideologies contained in the copybooks. Copybooks then play an important role in letter-writing. In fact, judging by the bibliography Katherine Hornbeak provides, copybooks were so popular that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century manuals were reprinted several times throughout the eighteenth century. The Young Secretary's Guide (1687), for instance, was reprinted twenty four times in the eighteenth century (Hornbeak 134-41). New manuals also appeared at this time, such as Samuel Richardson's Familiar Letters on Important Occasions; however, Richardson's manual was written well into the century. Moreover, Hornbeak contends that Richardson's manual borrowed heavily from earlier manuals such as The Young Secretary's Guide and The Experienc'd Secretary (1699) (Hornbeak 101-2). Thus the writers we are concerned with here (particularly, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Tobias Smollett, and Horace Walpole) employed copybooks that were either derivations or reprints of earlier copybooks. According to these manuals, duplication of the

copybook hand determines one's social status, for the quality of the hand reveals social rank.

A case in point is Win Jenkins' poor grammar and orthography in Tobias Smollett's Humphry Clinker. Describing the situation when Tabitha Bramble's dog, Chowder, takes ill, Win Jenkins writes: "Mistress was taken with the asterisks, but they soon went off. The doctor was sent for to Chowder, and he subscribed a repository, which did him great service--" (Smollett Clinker 35). Her letters are comical because she has not mastered the regime of copying. Part of the humour, of course, derives from the attempts to decipher her true meaning. Yet Win Jenkins' letters also demonstrate the importance of the regime of copying and that the quality of the hand determines the quality of the writer.

The instruction of handwriting and character formation pertains not only to the apprehension of graphemes but to the proper formation of the self. As Goldberg points out, it is "the copying that rewrites the social structure through duplication, and that makes the nobleman's hand proper by making it indistinguishable from the copybook hand" (Goldberg 113). Therefore Win Jenkins' handwriting reveals her servant status and characterises her as belonging to the lower classes. A more cogent example of the equation between handwriting and rank comes from Samuel Richardson's Pamela. Mr. B reads Longman's anonymous letter to Pamela and distinguishes the handwriting as that of a lawyer: "don't you see by the setness of some of these letters, and a little secretary cut here and there, especially in that *c*, and that *r*, that it is the hand of a person bred in the law-way?" (Richardson Pamela 1: 303-04). Mr. B. reads Longman's handwriting as a text in itself, since the secretary hand (as opposed to the italic) is employed for business and legal documents (Hector 61). Longman's handwriting reveals his identity because it has encoded his social position.

Thus writing a letter leaves a person open to examination. As John Locke points out:

> The writing of letters has so much to do in all Occurrences of Humane Life, that no Gentleman can avoid shewing himself in this kind of writing. ... his well or ill managing of it [his pen] ... always lays him open to a severer Examination of his Breeding, Sense and Abilities, than Oral Discourses. (qtd. in Irving 15)

As Locke observes, the letter's ubiquitousness in everyday life is a prime reason for possessing good handwriting techniques. One's character, which is to be seen by all the world through the medium of the letter, rests on the successful manipulation of the pen. Failure to duplicate the copybook hand results in a static ranking in the lower echelons of social standing, a ranking which will be made visible to all. However, the character displayed in the letter is not necessarily a reflection of the writer's actual persona. Instead, the figure in the letter is a projection of the writer's enhanced persona. In order to enhance their personae, writers would also need to have effective and persuasive writing skills, and hence letter manuals instruct the art of rhetoric.

Borrowing from neo-classical and French models, copybooks such as Angel Day's The English Secretorie (1586) and T. Goodman's The Experienc'd Secretary (1699) employ the rules of oratory as guidelines to letter writing. For instance, Day's manual outlines the parts of an epistle with terms borrowed from classical rhetoric: Exordium, Narratio, Propositio, Confirmatio, Confutatio, and Peroratio (Day 22). Moreover, Goodman's manual reserves a section for "Rhetorick and Oratory" in which directions are provided for the use of rhetorical tropes. Goodman writes:

> Now, to write like an Orator, or so to speak that Flowers of Rhetorick may be mixed with your Discourse, gracefully to

> set it off, it will not be amiss, because they are scattered through the whole Series of the foregoing Letters, to give the Reader a Prospect of Figures in Rhetorick divided into Trope and Scheme, with what they aim at, to enable a more graceful and pleasing Way of Writing and Speaking. (Goodman 74)

The qualities of rhetoric then can be transcribed into a "Prospect of Figures". In other words, rhetorical tropes can be used to create epistolary characters or figures. Thus copybooks advocate an epistolary style that mixes oral and written media. In fact, the Augustans' choice of model letter-writers reveals the extent to which they follow this epistolary theory.

Among the neo-classicists the Augustans favour Cicero's letters which are less rigid than those of his contemporaries. Following Cicero, the Augustans transform conversation into the core of eighteenth-century epistolary theory (Anderson and Ehrenpreis 274), thereby generating a media shift in communications strategies from the oral medium to the manuscript medium. The goal of letter writing is to achieve a plastic style manifesting itself in spontaneity, the subordination of "'art' to 'nature', the composed to the unplanned" (Anderson and Ehrenpreis 272). Still the Augustans' aspirations were somewhat exaggerated and affected, for they "preached simplicity and practised rhetorical patterns" (Irving 50). To this end, eighteenth-century letter-writers followed the example of Seneca, whose letters were "more concerned with the form than with the substance" (Irving 45). An example of this sleight of hand was performed by Horace Walpole, who advocated that letters should be "'nothing but extempore conversations upon paper', yet notes on the backs of letters to him and scraps of paper show that these extempore conversations were planned with care, for his future life on earth depended upon them" (Lewis xvi). Aware of the public nature of his letters, Walpole takes great care to ensure that he created exemplary letters.

Seventeenth-century French letters also instructed the English in the art of sleight of hand. The examples of Jean Louis Guez de Balzac and Voiture are emulated for their ability to address an audience. Balzac, for instance, catches "the tone of the group in which he moves" (Irving 65) while Voiture feels "the necessity to be smart for the benefit of aristocratic readers" (Irving 72-3). In the hands of a Voiture or a Balzac, the letter is more than a communication, it is an art form, a performance. In fact, Bruce Redford concludes that the eighteenth-century familiar letter is "like the eighteenth-century conversation, ... a performance -- an 'act' in the theatrical sense as well as a 'speech-act' in the linguistic" (Redford 2). It is from these conversationally-inspired French models that generations of eighteenth-century writers learned to write.

The eighteenth-century familiar letter's roots in conversation displays its performative nature, for letters are meant to be read aloud. For instance, Horace Walpole asks his correspondent to omit part of his letter when reading aloud: "Don't read the end of my letter to the Countess; she will think I am as mad as her son" (Lewis 171). Furthermore, Walpole's concern that he might be committed to an incorrect account of Marie Antoinette's last few minutes alive leads him to beg his correspondent, Mary Berry, not to "communicate them [his words] nor read them to any mortal but your father and sister" (Lewis 303). Clearly then, performance is an integral part of the nature of familiar letters. Thus the familiar letter created a feedback loop whereby the medium of conversation was imported into the written medium. In turn, handwritten letters are meant to be read aloud and to be performed before an audience. However, eighteenth-century epistolary theory (as expressed in the copybooks) ignores the media shifts created by this feedback loop, specifically, the shift from orality to handwriting.

By disregarding this media shift, epistolary theory overlooks the fact that the technology of pen and paper delimits the replication of oral conversation. As

Friedrich Kittler comments, "To transfer messages from one medium to another always involves reshaping them to conform to new standards and materials" (Kittler 265). Hence the oral conversation can only be transposed and not translated to the written medium. In another example of such a media transposition, letters possess certain conventions which are unique to this medium and which are circulated through the copybooks. The salutation, for instance, aims to reproduce oral greetings yet reveals itself as a written speech-act. Samples in Richardson's Familiar Letters begin with "Dear --" or "Honoured Sir", for example. Neither one of these greetings are applied in oral conversation for both are limited to epistolary discourse. Even more compelling are the list of ready-made superscriptions in Samuel Speed's The New Academy of Compliments (1669) such as "To his honoured Friend" and "To his respected Friend" which offer the writer a choice of pre-constructed greetings (Speed N.pag.). These letter techniques propose appropriate roles for both sender and receiver. In addition, they define the level of formality, thereby indicating the relationship between writer and recipient. Yet Emanual Schegloff points out that telephone conversations, which are not unlike the salutations in letters, possess a set number of possible greetings which would not be employed in face-to-face communication (Schegloff 416).

The salutations of "real" correspondence also demonstrate the use of these conventions. For instance, one of Walpole's letters to George Montagu begins "Dear George" (Lewis 1) while a letter to Richard Bentley maintains a respectful distance by using the formula "My dear Sir--" (Lewis 60). In addition, Smollett's farewell to his colleague, Alexander Carlyle, reveals the intimacy of their friendship: "Dr. Sandy, / Your Friend and Servt." (Knapp 67). On the other hand, Smollett's letter to William Strahan contains more formalized language, as evidenced by the use of the title 'sir' rather than an affectionate nickname: "I am very truly,/ Dr. Sir,/ Your obliged humble servt." (Knapp 67). Thus the

conventions of greeting and farewell contribute to the creation of personae because they are epistolary formulae borrowed from the copybooks. They do not represent the expression of a person's inner thoughts and feelings, nor do they simulate orality in a handwritten medium. Instead, they serve to demonstrate the collision between oral and written media. It should be mentioned briefly that signatures also belong to this category of constructed letter techniques for they are required as a substitute for an interpersonal farewell. A person's signature is always the same, acting much like a stamp (Goldberg 239) and its repeatability instantiates the presence of the absent writer. The signature authenticates the letter in a way that conversation need not be authenticated. Thus the copybooks reveal that letters are pre-constructed and that attempts to transpose the qualities of orality into print succeed only in generating a media shift.

Moreover, letter manuals are significant because they begin to incorporate narratives into the instruction of writing techniques. As Hornbeak points out, many of the manuals made forays into the realm of fiction, including Angel Day's The English Secretorie and Nicholas Breton's A Poste with a Packet of Madde Letters (Hornbeak 49). Indeed, of the seven "Epistles Amatorie" in Day's manual, "not one .. is suitable for general use. They tell a story involving four persons ... The story is told by the seven letters, all written by the lover, and by connecting bits of pure narrative" (Hornbeak 49). Following the first letter, in which the lover begs for "any little remembraunce at your handes" (Day 234), Day inserts an editorial explanation of the effects of the letter on the beloved. Day writes: "Immediately after the writing hereof, having convayed the same to her reading, she seemed afterwardes to entertaine his services, both with better liking and greater favors" (Day 235). The editorial commentary continues the narrative thread begun in the letter. Day produces a fiction that is not unlike Richardson's Pamela in which the editor interjects to explain how Mr. B. took Pamela away to Lincolnshire

(Richardson Pamela 1:123). Thus the tradition of writing proto-epistolary novels was well in place one hundred and fifty years before the arrival of Richardson's Familiar Letters.

Yet Richardson's manual differs from those of his predecessors in that the characters in the manual are fleshed out more than in the earlier texts (Hornbeak 112). Richardson transforms the concept of epistolary narratives in writing manuals by imbuing his characters with the qualities of what E.M. Forster terms "round" characters (46). He is able to do this in part because of the sheer length of the letters in his manual. While the average length of letters in earlier manuals combined was .72 pages, the average length of letters in Richardson's manual was 1.57 pages (Hornbeak 104). As Hornbeak observes, copying one of Richardson's letters word for word would result in a hefty postage expense (Hornbeak 104), therefore suggesting that Richardson's efforts should be regarded as literary productions rather than as viable correspondence. More importantly, however, Richardson explores the narratives of his exemplary letters in a series of letters. For instance, the story begun in letter eighty-five: "From a Gentleman to his Mistress, resenting her supposed Coquetry" plays itself out in a series of four letters. Following the first letter, Richardson provides "The Lady's angry Answer", "The Gentleman's submissive Reply" and finally "The Lady's forgiving Return". Rather than instructing in the art of character formation, Richardson's manual presents pseudo-fictional characters which "contribute to *mend the heart, and improve the understanding*" (Richardson Familiar Letters xxvii). What Richardson suggests here is a recipe for improving the self. By employing his letters as exempla, Richardson plans to improve the moral fibre of his readers (Hornbeak 105). The case then is twofold, for Richardson's manual creates fictional characters as well as offering prospective letter-writers an opportunity to alter their own characters. It is no accident, then, that this dual objective finds its way into

Pamela, for this novel is intended to "*divert* and *entertain*, and at the same time to *instruct* and *improve* the minds of the YOUTH of *both sexes*" (Richardson Pamela 1: 31). Clearly then, Pamela is all about the development of characters both within and without the novel.

Moreover, the creation of Pamela during the writing of the Familiar Letters situates the novel in terms of content and context. Brian Downs claims that Richardson recommended Pamela's story to various authors for at least twenty years prior to its publication (Downs xxii). Evidence of Pamela's story appears in letters one hundred and thirty-seven and one hundred and thirty-nine of the Familiar Letters. The manual's table of contents describes these letters as "A Father to a Daughter in Service, on hearing of her Master's attempting her Virtue" and "The Daughter's Answer", respectively. Richardson pushed aside the completion of the Familiar Letters and wrote Pamela within two months. Pamela then is the flip-side of the letter-manual, the literary form of the copybook. Pamela's genesis in the midst of the creation of a writing manual demonstrates the blurring of distinctions between fictional and non-fictional letters. The novel can be seen not so much as a discrete art object but as a media object possessing multiple layers of textuality. What rests between the covers of the novel is not the product of a hermetically-sealed artistic project but the result of a complex union of processes and societal influences which shape and form the literary effort.

Before discussing Pamela at length however, it suffices to state that epistolary texts like Pamela and the Familiar Letters demonstrate the popularity of the epistolary form both as an instructional and as a fictional text. As we have already seen, the familiar letter is intended to exist in a public sphere. Ironically, however, the space for writing was socialised as a private space, particularly for women. Handwritten in private yet read aloud, letters belong to a binary of private conception and public consumption. Epistolary novels as far back as Les lettres

portugaises document the socialisation of a private writing space. The Portuguese nun keeps to her cell as much as possible so that she may write to her lover in private (Les lettres portugaises 9). Later fictional letter-writers adopt the tradition of writing in a cell. Pamela's first letter, for instance, is written in the late Lady B's dressing-room (Richardson Pamela 1: 44). Clarissa also locks herself away in her closet so that her family will not discover her writing: "when I write, lock myself in, that I may not be surprised now they think I have no pen and ink" (Richardson Clarissa, 2: 247). Similarly, Lydia Melford must write secretly to her companions so that her uncle does not find out. She writes under cover to Letty and does not communicate any thoughts to any other chums, for "it is not fit that any of them should know you [Letty] have received this letter." (Smollett Clinker 39). Yet these characters write in private due to their circumscription by other characters and circumstances in the novels. Privacy here is determined more by clandestine communications than by epistolary etiquette.

However, as Richardson comments, a woman's "Closet [is] her Paradise" (Carroll 68) and thus, regardless of circumstances the space for women's writing is relegated to the private sphere. Moreover, as Richardson believes, women should write:

> at the retired hour, either morning or evening, before needful avocations take place, or after they have been answered. For the pen is jealous of company. It expects, as I may say, to engross the writer's whole self; every body allows the writer to withdraw: it disdains company; and will have the entire attention. (Carroll 66)

The paradisiacal environment configures itself according to a woman's "needful avocations", themselves constructed by notions of women's roles in society. Delimited by these avocations, the letter environment is literally envisioned as a

small, compartmentalised part of a woman's day. Yet it is here, in the silence of her private closet, that a woman "can distinguish Her Self: By this means she can assert and vindicate her Claim to Sense and Meaning" (Carroll 68). Construction of a persona can only occur in the privacy of the closet. As Jonathan Goldberg states: "Women ... [are] constructed as the repository of privacy" (Goldberg 255).

Indeed, women are not only expected to write letters in private but they must also read letters in private. For example, Pamela locks herself into her closet to read a letter from Mr. B (Richardson Pamela 1: 200). In this scene, Pamela is mistakenly given a letter intended for Mrs. Jewkes. Mrs. Jewkes approaches Pamela to retrieve her letter and proceeds to leave the room to read it, knowing full well that Pamela has already read it. After reading the letter, Mrs. Jewkes returns to Pamela's closet to discuss the matter. Clearly then, reading a letter in one's own private space is equally as important as writing in a private space. Yet men do not seem to be obliged to observe the same rules of writing location. Lovelace, for instance, is given the opportunity to compose a letter outside in the rain (Richardson Clarissa 2: 19). Nevertheless, one can estimate that men's writing was generally a private affair as the pen would "engross the whole self".

However, the example of Pamela and Mrs. Jewkes reading their letters in private may be an exception to the rule. For in most cases, familiar letters are written with the intention of being consumed publicly, whether that be through oral readings or print. Horace Walpole's correspondence, for instance, was written with the knowledge that the letters would someday be published. Walpole "'thought it worth his while to preserve these [his letters to Horace Mann], as they contain something of the customs, fashions, politics, diversions, and private history of several years'" (Lewis xv). Similarly, Lady Mary's Turkish Embassy Letters are not in fact the actual letters she wrote while in Turkey but a collection of her

correspondence from the period, altered for publication (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 1: xiv). That Lady Mary intended them for publication is made clear by the fact that she collected these letters into albums and loaned them to Mary Astell (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 1: xvii). Furthermore, Lady Mary comments in a letter to her sister that her letters are worthy of publication:

> The last pleasure that fell in my way was Madam Sevigny's Letters; very pretty they are, but I assert without the least vanity that mine will be full as entertaining 40 years hence. I advise you therefore to put none of 'em to the use of Wast paper.
> (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 2: 66)

Hence the notion that letters are a free and uninhibited expression of the writer's thoughts is quite false. Even Walpole is caught in his own charade. In a letter to John Chute, he states: "I write at random, and, as I talk, the first thing that comes into my pen" (Lewis 124). However, Walpole's extensive collecting and editing of his own letters reveals his concern for future editions of his letters. Contextualization of his letters then destabilises his projection of the letters as unplanned, meandering conversations. Indeed, his letters are meant to be published.

Yet publication in the eighteenth century is not restricted to the transference of text from manuscript to print. Publication also implies the circulation of letter manuscripts amongst friends and colleagues. As Richard Halsband demonstrates, many eighteenth-century writers, particularly women, often write "squibs, ballads, epigrams, imitations, songs, [and] epistles" (Halsband Lady of Letters 39) which they circulate amongst their peers. This form of publication garners an audience for these writers, especially women for whom publication for profit is deemed improper. Hence private letters written to friends may appear in a social circle for which it may not have been originally intended.

Knowledge of this practice would unquestionably influence the writing of private letters, causing writers to create good self-images. Furthermore, these letters could also be published by the correspondent, as happened to Lady Mary (Halsband Lady of Letters 40). The letter's status as a public document further emphasises the need to create a suitable persona since the writer does not know in whose hands his or her letter might appear. Epistolary novels demonstrate a similar circuit of epistolary writings and exchange. Pamela's letters are intended for her parents' viewing but they come to the attention of Mr. B and his circle. Pamela's father does not think Mr. B should see the letters: "'Why, wife, there are in these papers twenty things nobody should see but ourselves, and especially not the 'squire'" (Richardson Pamela 1: 315). Yet the letters circulate so that by the end of volume two, everyone in Bedfordshire knows about Pamela and Mr. B. As A. D. McKillop comments, "The writing of the letters is only the beginning; they are copied, sent, received, shown about, discussed, answered, even perhaps hidden, intercepted, stolen, altered, or forged" (McKillop 139). "Publication" thus implied a form of circulation, both in the epistolary novel and in real life. Letters can be publicly consumed without ever being printed. Moreover, the publication of letters and their ubiquitousness in eighteenth-century society results in the letter's dominance as the medium for political discussion.

As Mary Favret points out, many letter societies sprang up in the eighteenth century for the purpose of discussing political issues through the mail (Favret 28). These letters were often published in journals, such as "The Proceedings of the Society of the Friends of the People", which discussed issues "for the benefit of the public" (qtd. in Favret 28). Furthermore, Favret also points out that the "debate between Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* and Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* was waged primarily in the form of letters sent back and forth between very public individuals" (Favret 9). Use of the

epistolary medium allowed Burke and Paine to debate issues in public. Their example not only emphasised the political and public nature of the familiar letter, but it demonstrated the letter's effectiveness as a surrogate for personal presence. However, these letters would not have reached their intended audience had they not circulated through a distribution network.

Relying upon the circulation of information through a distribution network, the letter in fact acts as a surrogate for communicative exchange when persons are absent from one another. As Goldberg observes:

> Immediacy is mediated, and the letter stands in the place of the face-to-face communication of the messenger, writing structured as the familiarity of speech. One man and another function as bordering absences that meet in the letter. (Goldberg 251)

Yet it is the characters in the letters who mediate this exchange. Rather like the transmission of a radio signal over the airwaves, this exchange is not free from noise. The characters in the letter are the noise, the mediation of communication, what Goldberg terms the "bordering absences". Through the technology of the familiar letter, these "bordering absences" become virtual selves; they mediate communication as they project their images at one another from separate geographic locations.

The letter then becomes a hyper-real extension of the self. Both in the epistolary novel and in "real" correspondence, the letter not only acts as a substitute for the absent person but it becomes more real than the person. As Carol Flynn comments:

> the printed word takes on more significance than the experience itself. Richardson believed in the pen's ability to transcend social circumstances. His modest woman, 'never glaring', could

> shine in her closet, showing her wit in well-turned phrases. (Flynn 266)

Experiences are not real then unless they are written down as part of a letter. Translating experience onto the written page brings with it a validation of the experience. For instance, Smollett's Travels through France and Italy is written to provide accurate information for travellers, particularly for "valetudinarians who travel for the Recovery of their Health" (Knapp 126). The travel letter also seems to offer a vicarious experience of exotic locales for the recipient. Moreover, the letter comes to be equated with, or have even greater status than, the body of the writer. The relationship between Clarissa's body and her letters, for example, demonstrates that the letter may prove to be even more substantial than the person. In fact, Anthony Kearney states that "any threat to Clarissa's correspondence becomes a threat to herself" (Kearney 48). Clarissa comes to be identified and affirmed through her letters. In fact, letters are the only means of uniting her person after the rape. By writing, Clarissa defines and purifies herself. Following the rape, Kearney cites:

> An epistolary 'recovery' [which] therefore parallels the spiritual one, and that vast bulk of writing, including the eleven 'posthumous' letters and the thirteen-page will, is a final comment on the connection between right-mindedness and epistolary expression. (Kearney 54)

Writing letters enables Clarissa to pull herself together because it demands her to project a virtual self to the rest of the world. Clarissa's words become not only a means for her purification but they become her "truth" by becoming hyper-real. As Anna Howe proclaims over her casket: "And is this All! -- It is All, of my CLARISSA'S Story!" (Richardson Clarissa, 8: 22). At her death, Clarissa's body is far less important than the narrative left behind in her letters.

Yet the creation of a hyper-real self also depends in part on the circulation of letters through a distribution network. Improvements in the post office in the eighteenth century enlarge the popularity of the letter as a communications technology. For instance, the British post office subsumes the Penny Post system begun by William Dockwra and Robert Murray. Under the Penny Post system, letters are collected at sorting houses and stamped with the location of the house and the date the letter is mailed out (Robinson 72). Lady Mary's letter manuscript to Lady Frances Erskine, for example, bears the stamp "14 DE", meaning that it was received and sent out on 14 December (see fig. 1 in appendix). The stamp records the letter's participation in the postal network and acts as a check by making the post office accountable to its customers (Robinson 72-3). Other improvements in the postal system include the use of mail coaches in 1784 (Robinson 138) and more importantly the reparation of English roads which make coach travel possible. Robinson observes:

> John Metcalfe, the first of a triumvirate that included Telford and McAdam, began laying down solidly built and enduring roads as early as 1765. They made feasible the assertion of [John] Palmer that mail coaches could be used, not only for the London-Bath service, but throughout the land as a whole. (Robinson 130)

Prior to this time, road conditions were extremely poor and the idea of mail coaches was unheard of. These improvements in transportation therefore alter the face of the British postal system and the circulation of letters by creating a technology stable enough to influence the status of the media objects it transmits. This is to say, improvements in postal technology elevate the position of letters in eighteenth-century society such that letters become the dominant mode of communication. Not only can a maidservant such as Pamela write and send letters

but politicians such as Burke and Paine can employ the letter medium for political debates.

Moreover, circulation of letters through the post office provided a relatively dependable means of delivery, and more importantly, confirmed the status of letters as hyper-real media objects. In Electronic Hearth, Cecelia Tichi discusses the television medium's valorisation of people on TV. The example of the boy from TV as a larger-than-life person demonstrates the hyperreality of those who have been authenticated by this medium: "He is the real thing, supra real, precisely because he is an on-screen simulation" (Tichi 130). The boy's foray into the medium of TV validates his existence. He becomes larger than life because he has been "seen on TV". The circulation of letters through the post office achieves a similar result. Sending a letter by the post authenticates the sender. For example, Mr. B sends a letter to Mr. and Mrs. Andrews to reassure them of his intentions towards their daughter. They do not believe what he has written and Mr. B has Pamela send a letter to the Andrews but this time he sends this through the post (Richardson Pamela 1: 315). The letter's transmission through the post office authenticates it and imbues it with an official status which is not shared by clandestine forms of mail delivery. The post office suggests truth, order, and efficiency and anything connected to the post office carries this aura along with it. Lady Mary echoes this perception, for she tells her lover, Edward Montagu, to send his letters through the post: "you may direct 2 or 3 lines for me, by the penny post, as if it came from an unknown hand. Say any stuff, tis no matter what; I shall know my letters came safe" (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 1: 40). The dependability of the post office further stabilises its position as a technology worth becoming associated with. Letters must be circulated through a distribution network, then, in order to achieve affirmation and status. Any messages contained therein are only potential messages until they have been circulated through a postal

medium. The content of the message in fact has no bearing on the status of the letter. What is important here is that letters are circulated. Just as in Thomas Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49, the point of the letters circulated in the W.A.S.T.E. system (a clandestine form of mail delivery) is "To keep it all cycling" (Pynchon 105), to keep communication flowing, no matter what the content. For as one of Pynchon's characters astutely observes, "'Communication is the key'" (Pynchon 105).

Reading an epistolary novel as a discrete art object therefore does not provide an adequate picture of the processes contributing to its significance. This chapter has attempted to illustrate the fallacy of the genuineness of letters, both fictional and "real". Moreover, an attempt has been made to link fictional and non-fictional letters as examples of literary writing. For both fictional and non-fictional letters offer an opportunity to construct a character, a virtual self. Perhaps the most definitive statement to be made on the "genuineness" of the familiar letter comes from the pen of Samuel Johnson, who writes:

> No transaction offers stronger temptations to fallacy and sophistication than epistolary intercourse. In the eagerness of conversation, the first emotions of the mind often burst out, before they are considered; in the tumult of business, interest and passion have their genuine effect; but a friendly Letter is a calm and deliberate performance, in the cool of leisure, in the stillness of solitude, and surely no man sits down to depreciate by design his own character. (Johnson 8: 314)

Chapter 2

Correspondence of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Tobias Smollett, and Horace Walpole

While studying the literary works of a particular author, students often refer to that writer's correspondence to provide background information that will help to explain his or her texts. Similarly, biographers look to correspondence for information on the private life of the writer. Letters have been viewed as a source of autobiographical information, where a writer pours out his or her soul, much like in a journal. As Ian Watt claims,

> The major advantage, of course, is that letters are the most direct material evidence for the inner life of their writers that exist. Even more than the memoir they are, to repeat Flaubert's phrase, 'le réel écrit', and their reality is one which reveals the subjective and private orientations of the writer both towards the recipient and the people discussed, as well as the writer's own inner being. (Watt 191)

Clearly Watt believes in the letter's innocence as a form of writing which bears a closer relation to a Romantic notion of writing involving the full expression of one's soul. However, letter-writing in the eighteenth century is a far cry from this kind of Romantic depiction of uninhibited writing. In fact, sociological and ideological formations impinge upon the letter and describe it as an art form to be learned and imitated. As we saw in the previous chapter, the familiar letter is in a sense a literary text that requires a detailed amount of arrangement and construction as evinced by the copybooks. In this chapter then, I would like to

instantiate the letter's role during this period by making specific reference to the correspondence of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Tobias Smollett, and Horace Walpole.

As was touched upon in the first chapter, the familiar letter offered writers an opportunity to create characters for themselves which they would project onto the letter. Rather than revealing the "depths" of an inner self, Lady Mary's letters illustrate the display of various characters, depending on the situation. She gives her daughter, Lady Bute, for instance, advice on the education of her daughter. Lady Mary writes: "I will therefore speak to you as supposing Lady Mary [Stuart, Lady Bute's daughter] not only capable but desirous of Learning. In that case, by all means let her be indulg'd in it" (Halsband, Letters of Lady Mary 3: 21).
In these letters Lady Mary becomes a quasi-feminist in that she attempts to champion her granddaughter's education. She plays the role of educator as well, suggesting appropriate subjects for her granddaughter to acquire. She writes:

> At the same time I recommend Books, I neither exclude Work nor drawing. I think it as scandalous for a Woman not to know how to use a needle, as for a Man not to know how to use a sword. ... The ultimate end of your Education was to make you a good Wife (and I have the comfort to hear that you are one); hers ought to be, to make her Happy in a Virgin state.
>
> (Halsband, Letters of Lady Mary 3: 23)

However, the pose Lady Mary strikes is not unique for it appears in the second volume of Pamela where Pamela writes a book on the education of children. In particular, Pamela addresses the education of women:

> I would indeed have a girl brought up to her needle, but I would not have *all* her time employed in samplers, and learning to mark,

> and to those unnecessary things, which she will never, probably, be called upon to practise. (Richardson Pamela 2: 413)

Both Lady Mary and Pamela advocate a middle ground between intellectual knowledge and domestic duties for women. In fact, Pamela questions the logic behind educating women, for "when a poor girl, in spite of her narrow education, breaks out into notice, her genius is immediately tamed by trifling employments, lest, perhaps, she should be the envy of one sex, and the equal of the other" (Richardson Pamela 2: 386). Pamela proposes an equal education for women (Richardson Pamela 2: 413) yet she recognises the effects this produces in social settings. Similarly, Lady Mary proposes the education of her granddaughter, but she understands the difficulties this causes in society. She warns her granddaughter:

> to conceal whatever Learning she attains, with as much solicitude as she would hide crookedness or lameness. The parade of it can only serve to draw on her the envy, and consequently the most inveterate Hatred, of all he and she Fools, which will certainly be at least three parts in four of all her Acquaintance.
> (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 3: 22)

Lady Mary's stance on education is strikingly similar to that adopted by Pamela. Hence the feminist argument is equally put forward by both "real" and fictional characters.

Lady Mary's letters to the young Italian, Francesco Algarotti, demonstrate a different persona, borrowed from the pages of romantic fiction. Lady Mary's letters to Algarotti (especially those between 1736 and 1741) demonstrate the voice of a star-crossed lover begging for the attention of her beloved. In these letters, Lady Mary pleads with Algarotti, using all the set rhetoric and formulae of the impassioned lover. For example, she writes thus:

> Je ne sçai plus de quel façon vous écrire. Mes sentimens sont trop vif; je ne sçaurois les expliquer ni les cacher. Il faut estre touché d'un entousiasme pareil au mien pour souffrir mes Lettres. ... Pardonnez l'extravagance que vous avez fait naitre, et venez me voir. (Halsband, Letters of Lady Mary 2: 103)

The tone of this letter reveals her stance. She cannot hide nor explain her feelings and she states in typical romantic fashion that one would have to have an enthusiasm equal to hers in order to endure reading her letters. She claims that Algarotti has given birth to the extravagant sentiments she professes for him. Yet Lady Mary's imagery and rhetoric are not unique, for they stem from romantic literature.

In fact, a glance at Les lettres portugaises (1669) reveals the same imagery and sense of unrequited love that we find in Lady Mary's letters. In the first letter, for instance, the nun writes:

> The Passion that I design'd for the Blessing of my Life, is become the Torment of it: A Torment, as prodigious as the Cruelty of his Absence that causes it. Bless mee! But must this Absence last for ever? This Hellish Absence, that Sorrow it self wants words to express? ... But I must ask your Pardon; for I lay nothing to your Charge. (Les lettres portugaises 5-6)

Clearly, the sentiments expressed in both letters share the same rhetoric. The nun is tormented by her passions while Lady Mary states that one must share her enthusiasm in order to suffer her letters. In addition, both letters close with a request to be pardoned for the extravagances expressed. Furthermore, as Natascha Würzbach points out, "To write 'a la portugaise' became a literary vogue and the seduced and forsaken nun, or at any rate the mourning, forsaken, letter-writing lover, developed into a stock fictional figure" (Würzbach 3). Thus Lady

Mary's use of the fictional persona creates a feedback loop in which the image borrowed from romantic fiction stands for Lady Mary's persona, which is in turn projected onto the letter. Lady Mary borrows from fiction to create a 'fictional' self.

Yet Lady Mary is not alone in her creation of different personae, for Walpole also practised this technique. The subjects of his letters were tailored to the recipients, for instance, "antiquities for [William] Cole, politics and foreign affairs for [Horace] Mann, social gossip for [George] Montagu and Lady Ossory" (Lewis xvi). A look at Walpole's correspondence clearly illustrates the roles he plays in his letters and in particular, their relationship to contemporary periodicals. In a correspondence to Horace Mann, for instance, Walpole writes:

> The ghost is laid for a time in a red sea of port and claret. This spectre is the famous Wilkes. He appeared the moment the Parliament was dissolved. The ministry despised him. He stood for the City of London, and was the last on the poll of seven candidates, none but the mob, and most of them without votes, favouring him... (Lewis 139)

While Walpole flexes his satirical muscles, he also reports valuable information to Mann, who was the British Resident and Minister in Florence for almost fifty years. Hence Mann may not have had access to up-to-date reports on British politics and Walpole filled this gap for him.

However, Walpole also 'reports' to other friends as well, for his letters are interspersed with the latest political information. Walpole relates the conditions of France a few years prior to the Revolution in a letter to John Chute from Paris:

> New arrêts, new retrenchements, new misery, stalk forth every day. The Parliament of Besançon is dissolved; so are the *Grenadiers de France*. The King's tradesmen are all

> bankrupt; no pensions are paid, and everybody is reforming their suppers and equipages. (Lewis 158)

As we have seen, Walpole intends his letters to be published and preserved for posterity. Hence his mention of current events aims to provide future generations of readers with contemporary accounts of political events. However, Walpole also fulfils the role of foreign correspondent here. His letters are like newspaper accounts of current affairs, which often consisted of extracts of letters from abroad. For instance, the Daily Universal Register (later the London Times) published the "Extracts of a letter from an Englishman at Paris":

> Reason has at length triumphed over prejudice in this country; we shall no longer see the innocent disgraced in France, on accounts of the misconduct of criminal relations. You know, that for ages past the most noble families were disgraced, if even a remote relation had fallen by the hands of the executioner, except only when the criminal was beheaded ...
>
> (Daily Universal Register January 5, 1785)

Thus letters could be printed verbatim in newspapers because they already participated in a journalistic dialogue. Like the newspaper letters, Walpole's letters are quite terse: "The spectre is the famous Wilkes. He appeared the moment the Parliament was dissolved" and yet his satirical comments, "The ghost is laid for a time" are not unwelcome. As the extract from the Daily Universal Register indicates the newspapers allowed room for metaphorical descriptions such as "Reason has at length triumphed over prejudice in this country". Thus Walpole's journalistic mask is yet just another example of the adoption of a particular type of voice that did not necessarily represent Walpole's own, "inner" self. Furthermore, Walpole's example illustrates that writers could select characters from a wide range of possible sources.

Smollett's correspondence presents yet another instance of character creation albeit from a different source. Contrary to Knapp's contention that Smollett's letters do not show evidence of an intention to publish (Knapp xxi) even those letters "penned in great haste" (Knapp xxi) reveal a business-like persona. Many of Smollett's letters address his business concerns and as such are quite short and to the point. For instance, a letter to the publisher James Rivington, encompasses all of five lines:

> My neighbour John Lewis Bookbinder, alias Strap, wants ten Copies of the History, which are bespoke by his Customers. The money will be returned as soon as he can deliver the Books, but he will expect to have them at bookseller's Price. You will let him have them accordingly and oblige, ... (Knapp 56)

Smollett doesn't spare much time negotiating the sale of his Complete History of England with Rivington. Similarly, his dealings with William Strahan are quite terse, yet his farewell indicates a less formal relationship than that between Smollett and Rivington. Smollett writes: "Your obliged humble servt. and/ Sincere friend" (Knapp 62). As discussed earlier, greetings and farewells reveal the level of intimacy between sender and receiver. Regardless of the friendship between them, Smollett still writes a short letter for this is part of the businessman persona. As an example from The Experienc'd Secretary demonstrates, eighteenth-century business letters, like present-day business letters, were direct and brief. Goodman writes:

> At Six days sight, Pay this my First Bill of exchange, to Mr. *George Dober*, or Assignes, One Hundred Pounds Sterling, for the Value here Received of Mr. *James Woodvill*, make good Payment, and put it to Account, as *per* Advice. *Your Loving Friend*, ... (Goodman 155)

Hence the writing of a business letter is in a sense another convention, one which allows Smollett to create an official, corporate-like persona. In addition, Smollett's use of the financial persona demonstrates the transferability of this persona through utilising it with both friends and business contacts. Thus letter-writers borrow characters from a wide range of sources and apply them in letters to different correspondents. However, as we have argued previously, these characters would not be relevant had they not addressed an audience through print.

The printing of correspondence involves a media shift from manuscript to print. The facsimile of Walpole's letter replicates the title page of a printed book and foregrounds the media shift by attempting to manipulate handwriting to simulate print (see fig.2 in appendix). However, as his cover page indicates, he tried to minimise the shift by creating a text which mimics the technology of print. The cover page of the facsimile appears in Walpole's eight-volume collection of his letters to Horace Mann (Lewis xv) and emulates the title page of a printed book. His inclusion of an epigraph suggests the collections' affinities with printed volumes. Moreover, the style of handwriting simulates the use of the Roman Type in printing. Compared to the title page of the first edition of Walpole's Catalogue of the Royal and Noble Authors of England (Hazen 34), we notice that the title words 'Catalogue' and 'collection' each are given a separate line while words such as 'of the' and 'from' are in smaller print (see fig. 3 in appendix). As well, the epigraph from the Cardinal D'Este to Ariosto in the Catalogue is printed in italic, while the epigraph of the correspondence is written in the same italic as the content of the letter. Hence Walpole's handwriting reveals not only his use of the italic but the association he makes between handwriting and printed texts. Clearly Walpole employs his handwriting as a means to simulate printed texts, thereby further emphasising the public nature of his familiar letters.

Lady Mary, on the other hand, does not participate in the publishing circuit in the same way as Walpole. Yet the fact that some of her works were published during her lifetime suggests her awareness of the possibility that they would be published. For instance, Lady Mary complains that Richardson caricatures her in Sir Charles Grandison. Lady Mary writes:

> You will think me angry with him [Richardson] for repeating a saying of mine, accompany'd with a description of my person which ressembles me as much as one of the Giants in Guild Hall, and plainly shews he never saw me in his Life.
>
> (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 3: 95)

What is interesting is that Richardson quotes Lady Mary from a letter to Barbara Calthorpe written in 1723 (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 2: 33, n.3). That Richardson catches hold of this phrase demonstrates the success of the alternate forms of 'publication', such as the circulation of literary works amongst friends and colleagues as we saw in the previous chapter, to which Lady Mary's correspondence is subjected. Hence Lady Mary was quite conscious of the association between writing letters and publication. Moreover, Richardson's caricature of Lady Mary establishes a feedback loop in which the 'real' person appearing in Lady Mary's correspondence becomes fictional. In the midst of a letter, Lady Mary criticises the transposition of her virtual self into a fictional character in an epistolary novel.

Ironically, however, Lady Mary condemns her persona's entry into the printed medium, even though this fulfils the ultimate goal of her correspondence. As her comments about the publisher Dodsley reveal, she does not wish to be printed in this indirect manner. She berates Dodsley for publishing some of her verses to a song without her approval (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 3: 187). She even goes so far as to absolve herself of any connection with Dodsley, "who I

never saw and never mention'd or thought of in my Life" (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 3: 193). However, Lady Mary's experience with Richardson reveals that her works would eventually find themselves in the hands of publishers, whether or not she intended them for publication. Thus the relationship between writing, especially epistolary writing, and publishing demonstrates that correspondence is intended to perform and exist in printed editions.

Moreover, books of correspondence, which purport to be actual correspondence, also appear during this period. Although based on actual correspondence, these books are to a large extent fictional. Lady Mary's Turkish Embassy Letters are such an example, for they blur the distinctions between actual and fictional correspondence. Copied out of an album she intended for publication after her death (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 1: xvii) the Embassy Letters do not address particular individuals and this throws doubt upon the letters' status as actual correspondence. For instance, a letter of August 16, 1716 is addressed: "To Lady ---" (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 1: 252) while another letter dated October 1, 1716 is addressed: "To Lady X ---" (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 1: 275). Directed to no one in particular, these are fictional labels which emphasise the letters' ability to address a large, unidentified audience. Clearly the Embassy Letters are meant to be read by an unknown reading public.

Smollett's Travels also purport to be his actual correspondence written during his travels. As one writer comments, "Smollett's Travels were written hastily and vigorously by an expert man of letters. They were written *ad vivum*, as it were, not from worked-up notes or embellished recollections" (Seccombe xvii). Furthermore, even one of Smollett's biographers believes that Smollett was unable to edit his letters due to "pressure of work ... and with a minimum of alteration [he] published them in 1766" (Melville 216-17). Yet as more recent critics have discovered, the Travels, although based on his correspondence, were in part

fictional letters. The dates of the letters, for instance, reveal inconsistencies which suggest that they were not actually composed when they claimed to be. As Martz points out: "Smollett was in Italy during September and October, 1764, yet in his Travels we find two letters (XIX, XX) dated from Nice on October 10 and 22, 1764" (Martz 69). The dates illustrate that the letters were written after Smollett had visited Nice.

Moreover, the Travels prove to be quite literary in another sense, for the Smollett of the Travels is not the author himself, but a persona. As one critic suggests, the Travels reveal how Smollett's persona develops throughout the course of the narrative (Spector 238). Furthermore, Martz observes that Smollett himself suggests the fictional status of his letters (Martz 68). Smollett writes:

> The observations I made in the course of my Travels thro' France and Italy I have thrown into a Series of Letters which will make two Volumes in Octavo. They are now printing, and will be published in the spring. I will not answer for their Success with the Public, but as I have given a sort of natural History of Nice, with my Remarks upon that climate and a Register of the weather, I hope the Performance may be usefull to other valetudinarians ... (Knapp 125-6)

Smollett then 'threw' his observations into a series of letters, that is, a group of letters possessing narrative threads. Furthermore, his use of the word 'performance' here suggests that these letters were meant to entertain. Smollett even goes so far as to identify his audience as "valetudinarians who travel for the Recovery of their Health" (Knapp 126). This work is not a collection of letters but a work of literature. Moreover, Smollett envisions them not as letters, but in the publication format of "two Volumes in Octavo". Thus the Travels bear a close relation to the epistolary novel.

Before discussing the epistolary novel, it should also be mentioned that distribution networks play a large role in the 'publication' of letters. Lady Mary's correspondence draws a complete picture of the actual circumstances of postal delivery in the eighteenth century. For instance, Lady Mary often complains about delays in mail delivery. She writes: "Tis so long since I had a letter from dear Mrs. Hewet, ... which makes me fancy that my last miscarried" (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 1: 22). Furthermore, in a letter to Anne Wortley, Lady Mary complains: "I shall run mad -- with what heart can people write, when they believe their letters will never be received? I have already writ you a very long scrawl, but it seems it never came to your hands" (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 1: 5). At the same time, however, Lady Mary's letters reveal just how quickly letters were delivered, for she received a letter from Anne Wortley dated at London c.3 August 1709 (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 1: 4). Lady Mary's reply was dated at Nottinghamshire 8 August (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 1: 5) and she received another letter from Anne Wortley dated 15 August (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 1: 7). Separated by a distance of approximately one hundred and thirty miles, their letters were delivered and received within five days, judging by their correspondence. This estimate is fairly correct when we consider that it took about four days to send and receive letters from Bristol to London (a distance of about one hundred miles) at the end of the seventeenth century (Robinson 60). Moreover, the later innovation of time-bills and time-pieces ensured that letters would be delivered on time. By winding their time-pieces at each stage of a mail coach's journey, and then registering the coach's arrival time at that stage on a time-bill, postal officials could guarantee speedy delivery in an age before Greenwich Mean Time (Vale 48). Thus the post office created a situation where letters could indeed be delivered safely and quickly.

Lady Mary's correspondence also documents another aspect of postal delivery, and that is the opening and 'publication' of mail. Lady Mary experienced great difficulty with the continental postal system during her exile in France and Italy, for her letters were intercepted by the post office and indirectly made public. Her correspondence was constantly censored by the continental postal services (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 2: 171). The postal system then became a means for political espionage, for Lady Mary lived in Europe during the War of the Austrian Succession. Her letters often address her concern of sending mail without it being opened or destroyed. In fact, so concerned is she that she tailors her letters in order to reduce the amount of suspicion her letters might give rise to. Lady Mary writes to Wortley thus, for example: "I would be more particular if I had a safe direction. I will write at length by the first man I can depend on that goes strait to England" (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 2: 186). As well, Lady Mary, along with her sister, devises a code name, "Sophia", to refer to the Duke of Wharton due to his involvement with the Jacobites (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 2: 42, n.1). Thus the continental postal system does not maintain the privacy of correspondence but rather invades it, making letters public. In an indirect way, the circulation of information via a distribution network propels her letters into the public sphere.

Thus the letter's participation in this public communications technology argues against Watt's claim that letters reveal the writer's 'inner life'. As Samuel Johnson astutely observed, writing a letter was a transaction. Like a financial transaction in particular, letter-writing involved cold calculations for a writer's ultimate goal was often to see his or her letters in print. Letters are not supplemental artifacts to the study of epistolary novels then and are instead a necessary part of the creation of such texts. Hence the notion that letters are intimate and personal revelations is open to question, for it would seem that letters

are as constructed and literary as epistolary novels. Furthermore, the idea that letters allowed for a free expression of the self is misleading since letters are essentially public property, as the example of Richardson's caricature of Lady Mary in Sir Charles Grandison demonstrates.

Therefore, there seems to be little separating the epistolary novel from correspondence, for both texts involve the creation of characters and the desire to address an audience through print. As a result, this study disagrees with Michel Foucault's observation that "A private letter may well have a signer -- it does not have an author" (Foucault 267). While a private letter may not have an author, it appears that the familiar letter does.

Chapter 3

Pamela: Or Virtue Rewarded, Clarissa: Or the History of a Young Lady, and The Expedition of Humphry Clinker

Letter manuscripts permeate eighteenth-century epistolary novels both in content and context. Letters in novels (which we shall refer to as fictional correspondence) represent "found" manuscripts and are presumed to be the letters written by the characters. Internal cues continually remind readers to view the letters as printed versions of the fictional correspondence while simultaneously erasing traces of the novel's actual manuscript as written by the author. In fact, the author adopts the stance of a textual editor and stands in oblique relation to the novel. The author no longer creates the text but becomes its tailor, stitching together fragments of the "found" correspondence. The preface to the first edition of Pamela for instance is written by the editor (Pamela 1: 31) while the preface to Clarissa is written by "A very learned and eminent Hand [who] was so kind as to favour the Editor, at his request, with one" (Richardson Clarissa, 1: xvi). From the outset, the author assumes the position of editor, while the fictional correspondence, aided by editorial tags and intervention, usurps the status of the authorial manuscript and becomes, in a sense, the novel's urtext. For instance, the editor breaks up the epistolary flow of Pamela by interjecting to explain how Mr. B. took Pamela to Lincolnshire. Having completed the interruption, the editor offers to let Pamela "return to the account she herself gives of all this" (Richardson Pamela 1: 129). Although the editor has access to all the documents, she or he defers to the characters as authors of their own manuscripts. The authorial manuscript then occupies a secondary position in relation to the fictional

correspondence. Richardson relinquishes his authorial status so that Pamela comes to be written by the character of Pamela.

Humphry Clinker also demonstrates the fictional correspondence's priority over the authorial manuscript through the use of prefatory letters. Two prefatory letters in Humphry Clinker are devoted to the erasure of the authorial manuscript. Written by a fictional bookseller and the owner of the "manuscripts", the letters discuss the printing of the correspondence in the novel and the bookseller's concern about publishing letters of people still living. The owner of the manuscripts writes:

> as touching what prosecutions may arise from printing the private correspondence of persons still living, give me leave, with all due submission to observe, that the Letters in question were not written and sent under the seal of secrecy. (Smollett Clinker 27)

The letters are contextualized within the framework of eighteenth-century epistolary techniques. According to eighteenth-century etiquette, letters not written under secrecy were deemed publishable whereas those published while the writers were still living went against epistolary etiquette. For instance, Richardson allowed his correspondence to be printed in Germany during his lifetime because it would be published in another language. Thus most of his contemporaries would not have access to his letters (Carroll 3-4). Printing letters in another country and especially in another language therefore ensured that Richardson would not cross the lines of epistolary etiquette. Similarly, Lady Mary arranged for the publication of the Turkish Embassy letters but not until after her death (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 1: xvii). Even though publication propelled Lady Mary to write the letters, epistolary etiquette demanded that the writer cease to exist in order for publication to occur. Thus Humphry Clinker calls upon actual publishing practices of the period to provide a realistic background for his prefatory letters.

Furthermore, the prefatory letters set up a meta-textual relation between Humphry Clinker and other epistolary novels. As the publisher, Mr. Davis writes: "there have been so many letters upon travels lately published -- What between Smollett's, Sharp's, Derrick's, Thicknesse's, Baltimore's, and Baretti's, together with Shandy's Sentimental Travels" (Smollett Clinker 29). Reference to his own text, Travels through France and Italy, is not only meta-textual but it notifies the reader that the text s/he holds is written by a number of individuals and not by a single author, for Smollett apparently writes travelogues, and not works of fiction. Furthermore, the catalogue of names, which assure the Rev. Dustwich of the popularity of the travelogues, also establishes a tradition of epistolary writing to which Humphry Clinker is the successor. Epistolary writing cements itself as a legitimate genre and despite the fact that Mr. Davis believes the market has been saturated by such texts: "Nevertheless, I will, if you please, run the risque of printing and publishing, and you shall have half the profits of the impression" (Smollett Clinker 29). Novels in letters were thus a lucrative commodity worth the risk of investment.

Several editorial "tags" illustrate the editor's interference in the presentation of narrative. All eight volumes of Clarissa, for instance, are filled with "in continuations" which demonstrate the dominance of narrative techniques over epistolary techniques. The editor brings us up to speed on the events and omits passages which could be redundant. The editorial tag to letter seven, volume three of Clarissa, for example, explains the omission in Lovelace's letter:

> *MR. LOVELACE, in continuation of his last Letter (No. iii.) gives an account to his Friend (pretty much to the same effect with the Lady's) of all that passed between them at the Inns, in the journey, and till their fixing at Mrs. Sorlings's. To avoid repetition, those passages in his Narrative are only extracted,*

which will serve to embellish hers; to open his views; or to display the humourous talent he was noted for.

(Richardson Clarissa 3: 52)

Thus the editor explains that this letter continues Lovelace's narrative from letter three. The editor stitches together narrative fragments for the reader and extracts repetitive passages in order to propel the narrative forward. Yet passages are extracted which do not exist, creating the fiction that these passages did exist. Hence the editor slices the letters into fragments and retains only those fragments which are pertinent to the narrative. In this way, the editor becomes a surrogate reader of the correspondence for his audience.

Moreover, the author's transference from creator of the text to editor allows him or her to omit actual epistolary techniques in order to further the narrative. For instance, letter XIV of Pamela has no heading and is signed "Your honest Daughter" (Richardson Pamela 1: 61). Pamela does not sign this letter and Richardson does not provide a printed equivalent for the signature here. A signature in upper case letters appears at the end of the first letter, but such printed representations of the manuscript form are obliterated and are virtually non-existent in the journal sections of the narrative.

The use of the signature in Clarissa further demonstrates the elision of epistolary technology in a printed medium. Of course, the techniques of typesetting make it difficult to render a signature in print. To remedy this, signatures are printed in capital letters in the epistolary novel. Yet the novels do not maintain the use of signatures throughout. Omission of signatures occurs when characters write two or more letters in succession. For instance, letters I, II, III, and IV of volume IV, from Lovelace to Belford appear without signatures as if these letters were part of a continuous narrative. Epistolary techniques are either adapted and modified to suit the printed medium or they are subsumed and

disappear completely in favour of narrative techniques. Very few of the letters in Pamela, for instance, possess the requisite conventions of letter writing, such as date, place, or even address headings. This is not the case in Humphry Clinker though, for Smollett observes the formalities of real correspondence (so much so that letters in Humphry Clinker resemble those in Smollett's correspondence). However, we must take into account that Humphry Clinker is related to travel literature and that the appropriate dates and locations are necessary in order to reinforce the idea that the expedition has taken place for a prolonged duration and over a geographical distance.

The internal cues in the substance of the novels also distance the novels from actual correspondence. These cues are the "concrete materials of correspondence" (Flynn 267) that is, the internal cues which suggest the materiality of writing. For instance, Pamela's tears wet the pages of her first letter home: "O how my eyes overflow! Don't wonder to see the paper so blotted!" (Richardson Pamela 1: 43). The fact of the matter is that we do not see the blotted paper and this information is relayed to us in narrative form. The printed text cannot reproduce the physical damage done to the paper by Pamela's tears. While this emphasises the limitations of the printed medium it also suggests an emotional link between writer and subject matter and the effect this has on the writing of the letter. The fictional correspondence thus becomes a sub-text of the narrative. It can be summoned like a ghostly apparition and hovers constantly over all material situations such as this. Similarly, Pamela later transcribes a letter from Mr. B. to Mrs. Jewkes in haste. Her hastiness affects her handwriting, for she writes: "you'll see how tremblingly, by the crooked lines" (Richardson Pamela 1: 236). As we saw in chapter one, the space for writing is socialised as a private space, yet it is a place for the writing of "*Cor-respondence*". Letters are meant to reveal the writer's personal relation to pen and paper and the effect Pamela's emotions have

on her writing argues again that these letters are written by real persons. However, her emotions are not represented in a visual manner but are suggested by the narrative. The media shift from fictional correspondence into print generates a feedback loop operating between the layers of printed text and fictional correspondence, thereby convincing readers that despite the printed book they hold in their hands, the "original" form of this material is personal correspondence.

This feedback loop also operates in Clarissa. Clarissa receives a tearful letter from her mother: "it was wet in one place, I kissed the place; for I am sure it was blister'd, as I may say, by a Mother's tear!" (Richardson Clarissa 2: 51). This letter represents a great deal to Clarissa for its production, specifically the tear, provides more information than the words on the page. It is through the reference to the fictional correspondence, that we are made aware of Mrs. Harlowe's feelings during the writing of this letter. Another letter further heightens the importance of the sub-text. Clarissa comments on her handwriting: "You will not wonder to see this narrative so dismally scrawled. It is owing to different pens and ink, all bad, and written by snatches of time; my hand trembling too with fatigue and grief" (Richardson Clarissa 2: 363). The sub-text once again provides more information by revealing just how much Clarissa has been affected by the situation. Her distress affects her manipulation of the pen as much as the use of different pens and ink. Yet the sub-text also brings into focus the tools of writing, for quills had to be cut and shaped according to the size of the hand and the style of handwriting (Goldberg 80ff). The effectiveness of the writing materials also influences the letter's production and its mention in this passage would strike a sympathetic chord with contemporary readers. However, our awareness of the materials of handwriting comes from a printed text; thus reference to these materials attempts to convince us once again of the imaginary media shift from fictional correspondence to print.

While these internal cues point to the existence of the fictional correspondence and its translation to the printed medium, Richardson does provide at least one attempt to reproduce a handwritten document. Lovelace supplies Belford with copies of the fragments of Clarissa's letters written in her delirium after the rape. The most compelling of these is Paper X, a poem written by Clarissa (see fig. 4 in appendix). The printed page attempts to reproduce the spatial organisation of material on the handwritten page. As we can see from the facsimile, phrases are printed sideways and at different angles on the page, simulating Clarissa's organisation of the material (Richardson Clarissa 5: 333). Moreover, these lines at the sides indicate Clarissa's attempts to begin the poem. For instance, the line "I could a Tale unfold--" (Richardson Clarissa 5: 333) suggests the beginning of the tale, yet Clarissa decides not to begin the poem this way. However, these incidental lines are not scratched through and thus are not excluded form the poem altogether. Instead, they are given a secondary place in relation to the other material. More importantly, however, we notice that the poem speaks to the epistolary medium, for Clarissa employs epistolary metaphor and style.

Clarissa has not abandoned the epistolary form then, even though Paper X is a poem. For example, she writes that the rape "blots the face and blush of modesty" (Richardson Clarissa 5:333). Clarissa's honour is likened to a once-blank page which is now marred by blots of ink. Her body parallels the body of the letter, as it is plundered by the violence of the pen. For as Goldberg points out: "writing begins with a tool of violence, the knife or razor, and it produces the point of the quill as another cutting edge" (Goldberg 74). Hence Lovelace inscribes himself onto Clarissa's epistolary and corporeal bodies, which, as we saw in chapter one, are synonymous. It comes as no surprise then that Clarissa ends the poem with something approaching an epistolary farewell: "Then farewel, Youth,/

And all the joys that dwell/ With Youth and Life!/ And Life itself, farewel!" (Richardson Clarissa 5: 333). She bids adieu to her friends Life and Youth, for she will not survive much longer.

Yet Richardson's own manuscripts offer an even more compelling instance of the media shift from manuscript to print, for his own correspondence has as its subject the fictional correspondence. Richardson circulated copies of his epistolary novel manuscripts to correspondents. A letter to Sophia Westcomb, for instance, reveals that she was privy to one of Richardson's manuscripts before publication (Carroll 30). Other correspondents were also given the opportunity to peruse the manuscripts, including the writers Edward Young and Aaron Hill, and even Ralph Allen, the postmaster for Bath and reformer of the by- and cross-posts in rural areas of England (Robinson 99ff). Richardson's correspondence with his friends centered on the discussion of the manuscripts as fictional epistolary discourse. For example, in a letter to Edward Moore, Richardson writes:

> 'The triumphant Death of Clarissa, (you say, Sir) needed a more particular contrast than in the Deaths of Belton & Sinclair.' -- I have a few things to offer on this head after I have observed that Lovelace's Remorses are so very strongly painted by himself in letter CXI *a very few days before* the Duel... (Carroll 119)

Thus a feedback loop was generated by the circulation of these manuscripts in which Richardson and his contemporaries discoursed in letters on the fictional correspondence in the printed novels. Furthermore, this discourse paralleled that in the novels. For instance, Lovelace sends Belford a copy of one of Anna Howe's letters, complete with indices and comments, in order to "mark the places which call for vengeance upon the vixen writer, or which require animadversion" (Richardson Clarissa 5: 30-31). The characters engage in commentary over one another's letters just as Richardson and his colleagues discussed the letters in the

novels. Richardson complains to Aaron Hill, for example, about the changes Hill made revising Richardson's text: "I take the Liberty to say, that I have some Objections to the new manner of breaking off between Arabella and Lovelace, and his commencing with Clarissa" (Carroll 76). Hence Richardson's manuscripts generated a discourse amongst his own correspondents; thus life imitated fiction.

More importantly, however, the circulation of the authorial manuscripts through correspondence preserves and perpetuates them: for the actual manuscripts of Richardson's novels have disappeared (Carroll 12). As handwritten documents, the novels exist only in letter form, in the correspondence maintained between Richardson and his colleagues. Richardson's manuscripts not only create epistolary discourse but they **are** epistolary discourse. The manuscripts' existence in letter form adds a further dimension to an already complex set of relations between manuscript and fictional correspondence. For the letters in the novels are, in a sense, "found" letters because they exist only in epistolary form. Fictional correspondence, which represents and simulates the act of writing generates actual manuscripts which discuss and preserve the authorial manuscripts.

Just as Richardson's colleagues discussed his novels in their correspondence, so, too did other letter writers discuss novels in their letters. A case in point is the correspondence between Lady Mary and her daughter, the Countess of Bute. Lady Mary requested her daughter to send her books which she saw advertised in the newspapers (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 3: 125-6). Lady Mary also commented on these works for she believed they gave her something to write about. Regarding Lord Bolingbroke's Letters on the Study and Use of History, for instance, Lady Mary notes that he "labours to display to posterity all the Wit and Learning he is Master of" (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 3: 62). Lady Mary also writes about more renowned epistolary works such as Richardson's Clarissa. She has this to say of Richardson's novel:

> I heartily despise him [Richardson] and eagerly read him, nay, sob over his works in a most scandalous manner. The 2 first Tomes of Clarissa touch'd me as being very ressembling to my Maiden Days. I find in the pictures of Sir Thomas Grandison and his Lady what I have heard of my Mother and seen of my Father.
> (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 3: 90)

Not only does Lady Mary provide a commentary to these works but she subsumes them into her own life, for characters in novels are compared with actual persons. Fictional correspondence then invites comparisons with real life and finds its way into actual correspondence.

In fact, Lady Mary also writes to her daughter about "an Adventure exactly ressembling and, I believe, Copy'd from, Pamela" (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 3: 70). The story she recounts of the servant girl, Octavia, living in Louvere where Lady Mary resided, closely resembles that of Richardson's novel and Lady Mary is quick to point out the relationship between the two stories. More importantly, it is in her personal correspondence that Lady Mary draws parallels between the real and the fictional stories. Correspondence then blurs the boundaries between reality and fiction. Würzbach is undoubtedly correct when she asserts that fictional and non-fictional correspondence are often hard to distinguish from one another (Würzbach x).

Yet we might pause and ask ourselves why authors employed the device of the found manuscript and why they went to such great lengths to create an imaginary media shift? Würzbach believes that the media shift was due to the "Puritan morality [which] branded any kind of fiction as a sinful lie -- hence the universal attempt on the part of authors of novels to convince their readers that what they were about to read was the truth" (Würzbach xxxii). While this statement may address the literary concerns of the Puritans, it would not apply to

eighteenth-century society at large, for it is impossible to assume that a generation of writers would be concerned with the religious beliefs of only a segment of the population. Hence, I would argue that the use of the manuscript device and the creation of an imaginary media shift has more to do with the circulation of information through a distribution network.

Before discussing this concept further, let us first examine the fictionalisation of distribution networks in the novels. Distribution networks play a large role in the life of letters in epistolary novels. Letters would be "autre chose qu'autant de chapitres" (Jost 406) if they remain uncirculated. Hence the letters are not just a collection of "found" letters but they belong to the world of information transmission as illustrated by Claude Shannon and William Weaver in their influential model of communication systems. According to this model, every communication system contains five parts: "An information source .. A transmitter, ... The channel ... The receiver ... [and] The destination" (Shannon and Weaver 33-4). In the postal system, the sender is the information source, the sorting house the transmitter, the road is the channel, another sorting house is the receiver, and the recipient of the letter is the final destination. The letters gain further verisimilitude by participating in this system of communication; more importantly their circulation through a distribution network, acting independently of the author, invests the letters with a hyper-real status. Distribution networks become important sub-texts to the fictional correspondence in the novels. Nowhere is this more clear than in the fictionalisation of the British postal system in Humphry Clinker. Smollett's novel foregrounds the importance of the postal system and the collection and transmission of information. The journey undertaken in Humphry Clinker proceeds along the postal roads of Great Britain. For instance, Bristol (Smollett Humphry Clinker 44) is one of the first places visited by the Bramble clan. From Bristol they move on to Bath (Smollett

Humphry Clinker 56), from Bath to London (Smollett Humphry Clinker 117), from London to Scarborough (Smollett Humphry Clinker 214) and so forth. Their route can be traced out along the accompanying map of the great roads and principal cross roads in 1756 (see fig. 5 in appendix). That they travel postal roads is no accident. Postal roads would have been better maintained than other, secondary roads, due to the priority of mail delivery. Even so, the postal roads themselves were in a deplorable state until the road developments in the late eighteenth century (Robinson 130). Furthermore, Matthew Bramble complains about the state of the roads:

> Considering the tax we pay for turnpikes, the roads of this country constitute a most intolerable grievance. Between Newark and Weatherby, I have suffered more from jolting and swinging than ever I felt in the whole course of my life, although the carriage is remarkably commodious and well hung. (Smollett Clinker 196)

Smollett foregrounds postal delivery yet he also reveals the relationship between mail delivery and road travel. The postal system relies on a network of roads, and the novel highlights the fact that collecting information about various towns throughout the kingdom (which is part of the novel's project) would not be possible without an adequately developed road-system. More importantly, Humphry Clinker connects travel with letter-writing, for the system of roads in Britain developed exponentially to meet the need for greater communication. The growth of towns such as York and Hull, which were not on the six main postal routes organised under Henry VIII, required postal services and thus roads were built to accommodate these outlying areas (Robinson 64). Clearly, and perhaps this is most significant, Humphry Clinker would not exist without postal technology. Besides the obvious fact that the correspondents would have difficulty sending and receiving mail, the characters would not be able to travel throughout

the kingdom with the same relative ease. Yet while the postal system guarantees travel throughout the kingdom, it also controls the journey to a certain extent. For the postal roads, in part, determine the places to be visited in the journey and the scope of the excursion. For instance, it is easy enough for the Bramble clan to journey to Edinburgh because there is an accessible postal road. Had this road not existed, the journey would probably not have extended there. In short then, Smollett's novel foregrounds the use of the postal system in addition to highlighting its influence on the shape of the novel.

The methods of distribution in both Pamela and Clarissa are vastly different from that of Humphry Clinker since these novels do not always employ the British postal system. The distribution networks in these novels are clandestine and private, and act as conduits for secret correspondence. For instance, Pamela initially mails letters home via the courier, John, but when she is imprisoned in Lincolnshire she devises a method of corresponding with Mr. Williams. She says to Williams: "Sir, I see two tiles upon that parsley-bed: might not one cover them with mould, with a note between them, on occasion?" (Richardson Pamela 1: 159). Pamela also answers the lack of a suitable distribution network by writing in a new genre so that she may continue writing. She begins writing a journal:

> to amuse and employ her time, in hopes some opportunity might offer to send it to her friends, (and, as was her constant view) that she might afterwards look back upon her dangers; and either approve or repent of her conduct in them.
>
> (Richardson Pamela 1: 130)

Pamela's imprisonment constrains her means of information transmission. Yet Mr. B. also controls the postal workers in Lincolnshire and Pamela could not mail a letter out of Lincolnshire even if she managed to get one to the local post office (Richardson Pamela 1: 166). Even her attempts at an institutional distribution

network are controlled and manipulated by Mr. B. Thus distribution networks represent an instrument of control used to keep people apart. Rather than bringing people together in a communicative exchange, the networks can be manipulated to block communication.

Clarissa's alternative communications network undergoes a similar treatment. Forbidden by her family to write out of her house (Richardson Clarissa 1: 50) Clarissa devises an alternative postal system with Anna Howe and they maintain a correspondence via the wood-house. Clarissa also employs this system to correspond with Lovelace. However, Lovelace manipulates this system. He never receives Clarissa's letter of refusal to him, for instance, because he deliberately chooses not to receive it (Richardson Clarissa 2: 324-6). The letter lies in the woodhouse for more than twenty-four hours even though Lovelace had promised to check every day for letters. Lovelace anticipates Clarissa's rejection of him and answers it by not checking for letters.

Furthermore, Lovelace controls the content of letters and the techniques of epistolary writing. Having managed accidentally to intercept one of Anna's letters, he forges Clarissa's handwriting and replies to Anna's letter (Richardson Clarissa 5: 48). Thus Lovelace controls not only the means of distribution but also the content of the transmissions. His forgery succeeds in keeping Clarissa and Anna separated. He also manages to keep Clarissa captive and to distance her from any hope of rescue by her family and friends. In Lovelace's hands, the distribution network breaks down and distances communication. Moreover, Lovelace's ability to forge Clarissa's handwriting further supports the argument that handwriting in part creates characters, for Lovelace assumes Clarissa's persona in his letters to Anna Howe.

The British postal system also appears in Clarissa yet it is not subjected to manipulation as it was in Pamela. Instead, the British postal system functions to

bring people together in communicative exchange. For instance, Clarissa employs the postal service in order to communicate with Anna while in captivity (Richardson Clarissa 3: 325). Clarissa can communicate daily via the post office because it maintains her privacy. Hence the institutional delivery system assumes a secretive role in that Clarissa's identity is protected by the anonymity of the institutional system. For instance, she is able to employ a pseudonym to protect her identity when she escapes a second time from Mrs. Sinclair's. She informs Anna to direct her mail to "Mrs. Rachel Clark, at Mr. Smith's, a Glove-shop, in King-street, Covent-garden" (Richardson Clarissa 6: 116). Indeed, the use of the British postal system in Humphry Clinker also guarantees privacy, for no one knows that the other is writing. That is to say, part of the entertainment in Humphry Clinker derives from the fact that Smollett juxtaposes letters discussing the same events. For instance, Matthew Bramble complains about the consequences of journeying with women when his sister, Tabitha, mistakes her niece's suitor as courting herself. Bramble writes:

> I am plunged again in a sea of vexation, and the complaints in my stomach and bowels are returned; so that I suppose I shall be disabled from prosecuting the excursion I had planned -- What the devil had I to do, to come a plague hunting with a leash of females in my train? (Smollett Humphry Clinker 174)

In contrast, Jery's letter explains the situation in much less melodramatic terms. Jery writes:

> The farce is finished, and another piece of a graver cast brought upon the stage. -- Our aunt made a desperate attack upon Barton, [the suitor] who had no other way of saving himself, but by leaving

her in possession of the field, and avowing his pretensions to Liddy, by whom he has been rejected in his turn.

(Smollett Humphry Clinker 179)

Matthew Bramble's cynical letters are balanced by the 'true' account of events given by the more objective Jery. As R.A. Donovan has commented:

> Jery's principal function is manifestly to contribute facts and valuations about his traveling companions that they themselves cannot give us. ...Mr. Bramble's point of view is so jaundiced by his bodily ills that it falls to Jery to provide the disinterested and impersonal commentary which will enable us to see the other characters in perspective. (Donovan 126)

To some extent Jery functions as an omniscient narrator yet the irony of his commentary on the other characters derives from the post office's ability to protect the privacy of the contents of letters.

Like letters, books also partake in the transaction of sender/receiver, for books must be bought and sold. Thus another distribution network is at play here, one that is different from but related to the post office. The consumption of books in the eighteenth century depended on the services of writers, printers, publishers, and booksellers. A detailed description of the publishing trade during this period is unnecessary here and it should suffice to say that books were sold at bookshops, fairs, and circulated through lending libraries. Furthermore, the eighteenth century was characterised as the period of subscription and book subscriptions were advertised in newspapers (Plant 252). That readers purchased books in this manner is evinced by Lady Mary, who writes to her daughter from Italy:

> I see in the news papers the names of the following Books: Fortunate Mistriss, Accomplish'd Rake, Mrs. Charke's Memoirs, ...

> I do not doubt at least the greatest part of these are Trash, Lumber etc.; however, they will serve to pass away the Idle time, if you will be so k<in>d to send them to your most affectionate mother. (Halsband Letters of Lady Mary 3: 125-6)

As the note to this comment points out, the titles of these books appeared either in the London Magazine or the Monthly Review. Hence the advertisement for books in newspapers reached large, and often, geographically remote, audiences. Furthermore, advertising subscriptions through the newspapers meant that subscriptions participated in the postal network since it was the postal system that delivered newspapers (Robinson 117). The growth of the newspaper industry in fact relied in part on developments in the postal system. As one author observes:

> The extension of the Post Office packet system at the end of the seventeenth century, together with the development of the by-Post and cross-Post systems for the carriage of mails to outlying localities stimulated the development of the newspaper, which often acknowledged the debt by the inclusion of the word 'Post' or 'Packet' in its title. (Clair 180)

Books also participated in the postal system in that they were distributed via postal roads. Terry Belanger's comment that "Transportation improved, and with it the distribution of books from London to the provinces" (Belanger 19) suggests that books were transported along the same routes as correspondence. As we saw in connection with Humphry Clinker, the postal routes were the most well-maintained roads in an age where road maintenance was generally quite poor. These roads then were by far the most accessible and provided a means for the circulation of printed volumes. Particularly in an age which favoured the consumption of books through subscription, the delivery of books via the postal system becomes an important part of the novels' distribution network. While the

consumption and circulation of books depends on a whole different set of matrices, including the expenses of printing, binding, typesetting, and so forth, the diffusion of printed works is related to the means of information transmission employed by letters.

The institutional postal system thus plays a large role not only in the fictionalisation of distribution networks but in the actual circulation of fictional works. Hence the presence of a distribution network in an epistolary novel, whether clandestine or institutional, confirms the fictional correspondence as a body of work once circulated through the respective postal system. The correspondence thus becomes more real by its participation in a communications technology which gives it an "as seen in the postal system" status (to paraphrase Cecelia Tichi). The irony is, of course, that these books would have reached the reader after participating in the British postal system in some way, either through subscription or delivery. While the authors attempted to transform the letters in the novels into hyper-real media, the novels in fact have already achieved this status due to their participation in this circuit. Clearly then, epistolary novels partake in the exchange of information whereby they must be sent and received in order to fulfil their intended purpose. As one author has observed, "A letter lives only because someone wrote it for someone else to read it" (Drew 14-15). Like a letter, a novel is thus a transaction which remains incomplete until it is processed and received by a reader.

The importance of circulation and the distribution of information to the epistolary novel therefore becomes quite plain. A study such as Jonathan Goldberg's, while it intensively examines the sociological and ideological constructs of handwriting and letter production ignores the fundamental fact that letters are indivisible from their systems of transmission. While this study has attempted in part to complete the project begun by Goldberg and to

recontextualize the letter in its system of transmission, it also has attempted to suggest another method for reading and understanding the epistolary novel. For epistolary novels cannot be examined as aesthetic objects isolated from the complex social matrices which produced them. In order to read an eighteenth-century English novel in letters we must also have some knowledge of epistolary practices and techniques during this period and their effects on society. In this way, we can see the forces shaping the creation of eighteenth-century epistolary texts, both fictional and non-fictional. Moreover, this type of analysis allows us to challenge the notion that letters provide a window into the writer's soul. Instead, letters come to be seen as "'open letters', destined in part to the expressly designated personage, but above all to the great public" (Derrida 91).

Conclusion

In his book, Media Virus!, Douglas Rushkoff describes our present involvement with TV, computers, and other communications technologies as a "mediaspace", that is, "the new territory for human interaction, economic expansion, and especially social and political machination" (Rushkoff 4). According to Rushkoff, people everywhere participate or long to participate in this mediaspace particularly with what he calls "Do-It-Yourself" technology (Rushkoff 5,6). However, the situation which he describes is not a phenomenon belonging exclusively to the late twentieth century, for letter-writing and the circulation of correspondence in the eighteenth century produced a similar effect. Just as computers and the Internet have found niches in many facets of our lives, so, too, did correspondence infiltrate the multiple layers of social activity in the eighteenth century. From business transactions to love letters to political debates, correspondence was **the** medium for social interaction. Combined with the postal technology, which provided a means for communication at a distance, letters assumed a status in society equal to that of our mediaspace today. Thus, while Rushkoff's study may aptly describe our relationship to late twentieth- century communications technologies, it also ignores the antecedents of our current media environment.

Moreover, an analogy can also be drawn between the virtual selves we create in cyberspace and those created by writers of familiar letters in the eighteenth century. Just as Jude Milhon, author of The Real Cyberpunk Handbook -- The Real Cyberpunk Fakebook, created her persona of St. Jude, so, too, did familiar letter-writers construct personae for themselves. While they may not have taken colourful names like St. Jude or R.U. Sirius, eighteenth-century writers did

base their personae on characters found in popular epistolary texts of the day, much like we do today.

The ideological implications of virtual selves in the eighteenth century are also mirrored by twentieth- century virtual reality technology. Like the social inscription Goldberg describes in the acquisition of writing, creating a virtual self involves the internalisation of VR technology. As Allucquere Rosanne Stone observes, "To enter the discursive space of the program [virtual reality] is to enter the space of a set of variables and operators to which the programmer assigns names. ... to enter cyberspace is to physically *put on* cyberspace" (Stone 109). Just as a letter-writer is inscribed by the ideological formations of handwriting techniques, so, too does VR technology naturalise the body to cyberspace.

Therefore, the condition of epistolary writing in the eighteenth century was as complex as our present relation to media such as computers and TV. We often consider media studies to be the examination of late twentieth-century communications technologies. Yet it is clear that the application of media studies to periods such as the eighteenth century not only provides us with earlier models for our present communications strategies, but more importantly it offers new and more relevant ground for studies in earlier historical periods.

Appendix

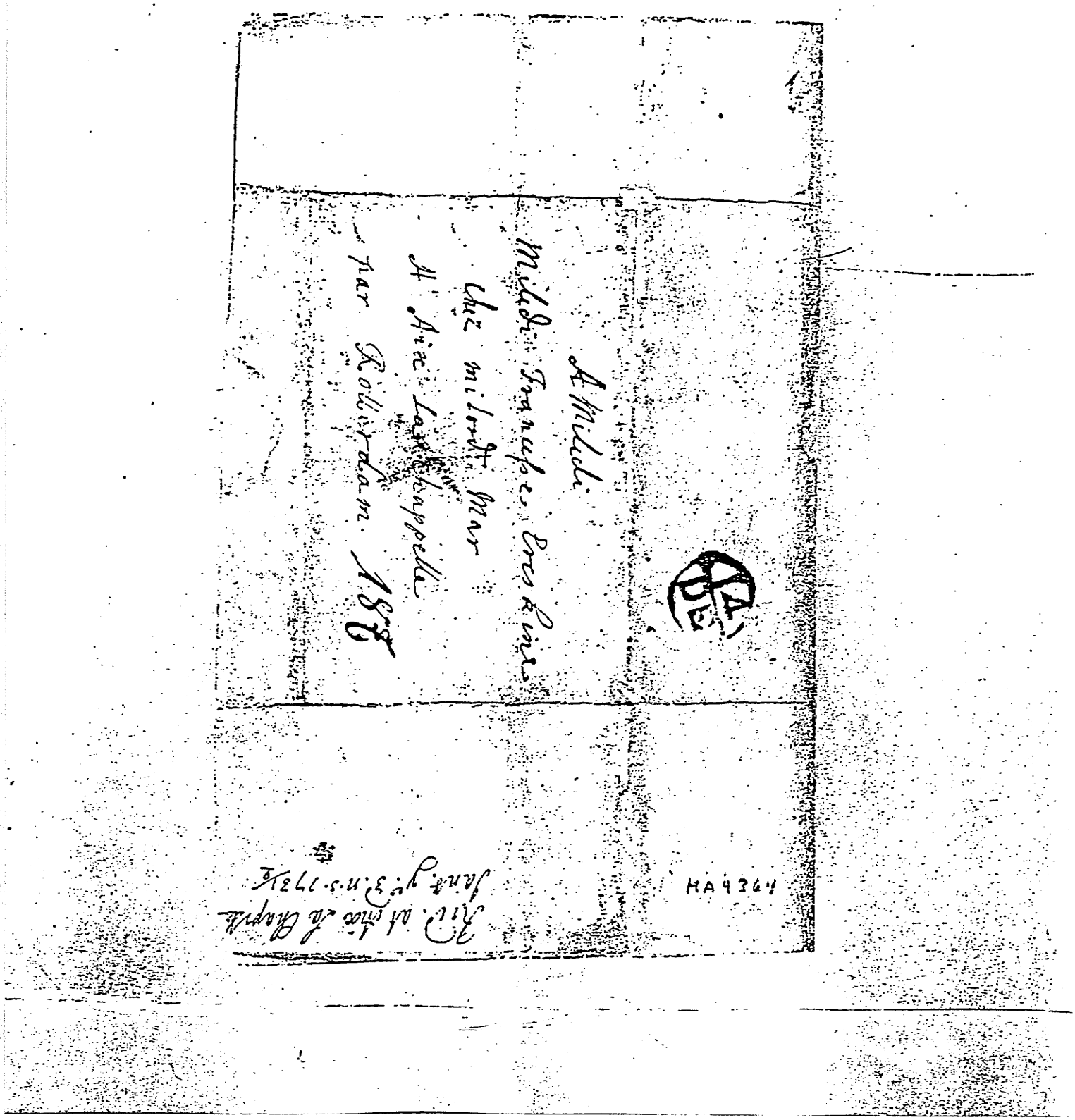

Fig. 1. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Exterior of letter to Lady Frances Erskine, MA 4354. Pierpont Morgan Library.

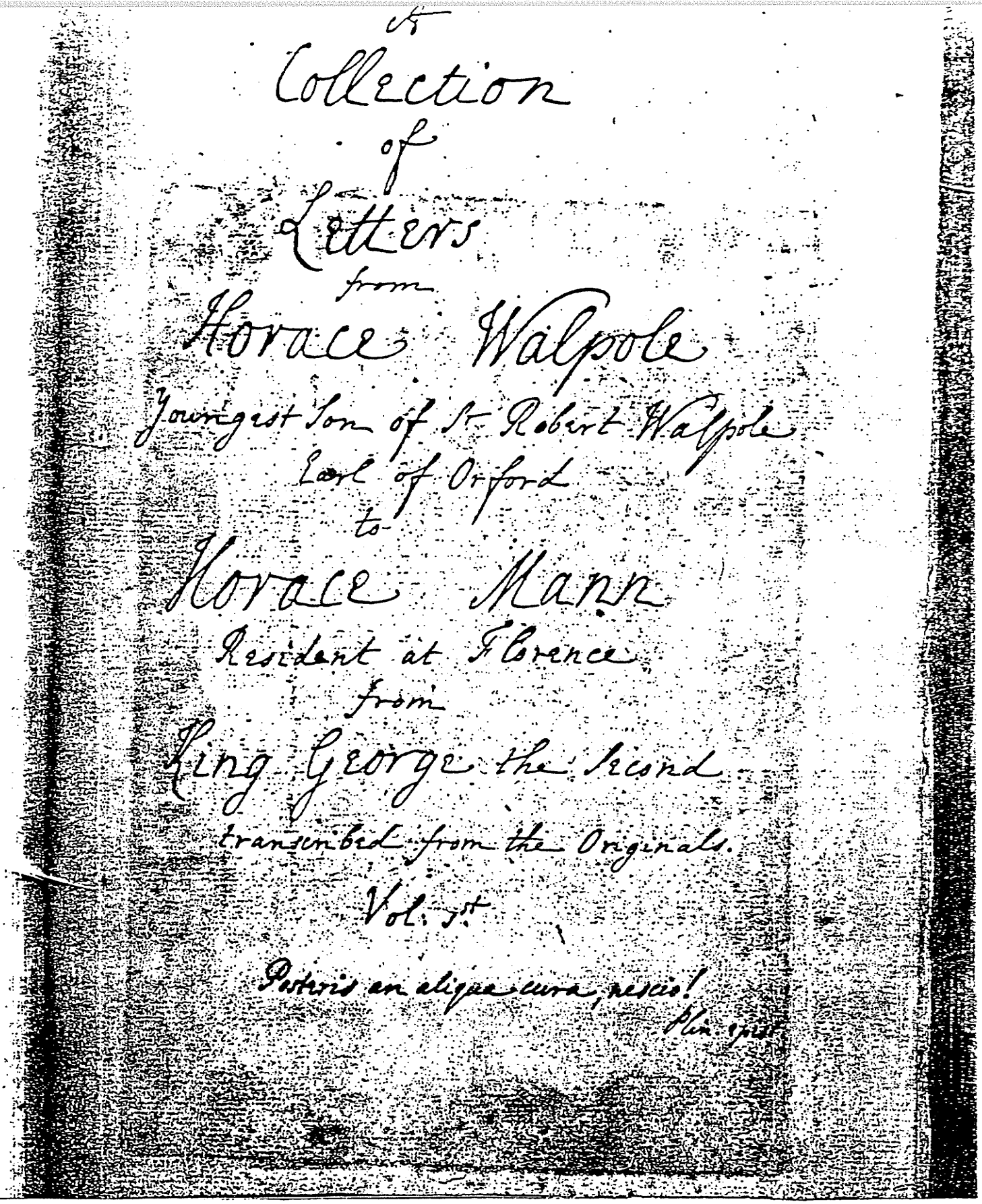
A
Collection
of
Letters
from
Horace Walpole
Youngest Son of Sr Robert Walpole
Earl of Orford
to
Horace Mann
Resident at Florence
from
King George the Second
transcribed from the Originals.
Vol. 1st
Postris ne eligas cura, resciz!
Plin. epist.

Fig. 2. Horace Walpole, Title-page of Letter Collection. Lewis Walpole Library.

A

CATALOGUE

OF THE

ROYAL

AND

NOBLE AUTHORS

OF

ENGLAND,

With LISTS of their WORKS.

Dove, diavolo! Messer Ludovico, avete pigliato tante coglionerie?

CARD. D'ESTE, to ARIOSTO.

VOL. I.

PRINTED AT STRAWBERRY-HILL.

M DCC LVIII.

8.

Fig. 3. Title-page from Horace Walpole, Catalogue of the Royal and Noble Authors of England (Strawberry Hill, 1758); rpt. in A.T. Hazen, A Bibliography of the Strawberry Hill Press. 1942. (Folkestone and London: Dawsons, 1973) 34.

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.
Heav'n 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—

How am I pursu'd
By swift misfortunes
Which on each other
Are, like waves, renew'd!

Fig. 4. Paper X from Samuel Richardson, Clarissa: Or the History of a Young Lady. 1747. 8 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1930) 5: 333.

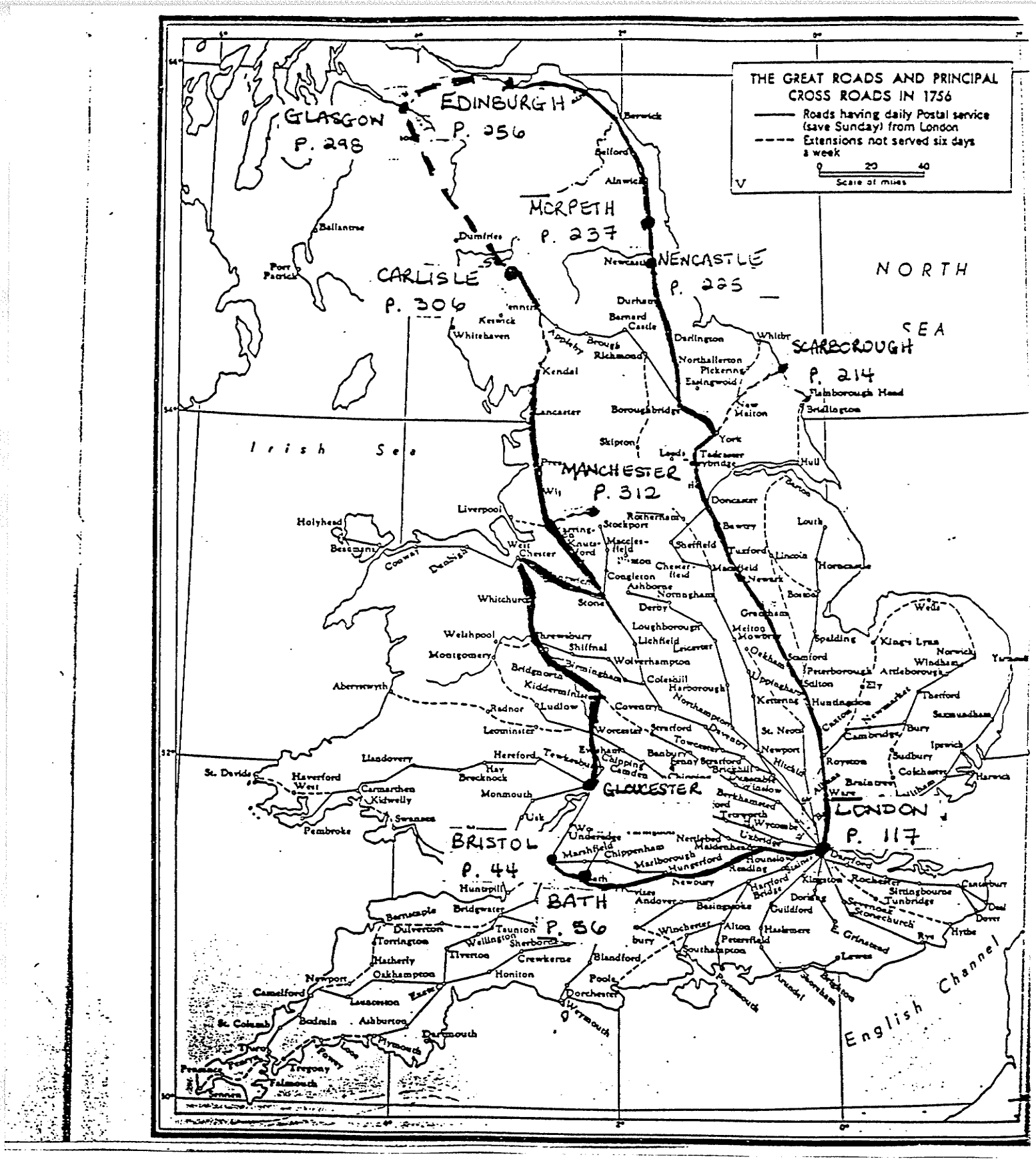

Fig. 5. Map of journey in Humphry Clinker superimposed on Howard Robinson, Map of The Great Roads and Principal Cross Roads in 1756. The British Post Office: A History. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1948) 104.

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