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How Epistolary Novelists' Literalizations of Moral Sense Philosophy

Dramatize the Long-Eighteenth Century's Gender Battles

By

Melissa Bishop-Magallanes

Claremont Graduate University

2022

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## **Approval of the Dissertation Committee**

This dissertation has been duly read, reviewed, and critiqued by the Committee listed below, which hereby approves the manuscript of Melissa Bishop-Magallanes as fulfilling the scope and quality requirements for meriting the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.

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## **Abstract**

How Epistolary Novelists' Literalizations of Moral Sense Philosophy

Dramatize the Long-Eighteenth Century's Gender Battles

By

Melissa Bishop-Magallanes

Claremont Graduate University: 2022

While some might consider epistolary novels of the long-eighteenth century as the sentimental purview of women readers, this research proposes that many of these epistolary novels serve as powerful markers in the gender wars of this era. While an overall sense of optimism pervaded Britain's long-eighteenth century, people still grappled with foundational moral questions. These questions came to be addressed in increasingly secular ways by moral philosophy. As these philosophers occupied influential government, law, and publishing positions, their ideas and works greatly influenced the public imagination. The publications of moral philosophers—such as John Locke, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, Joseph Butler, David Hume, Adam Smith, and Jeremy Bentham—sparked the imaginations of some of the era's top epistolary novelists who dramatized their philosophical theories in fictional moral experiments. This project investigates how and why the novelists Aphra Behn, Samuel Richardson, Sarah Fielding, Frances Burney, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Mary Shelley literalized the dialectics of certain moral philosophers. This research asserts that the novelists adopted the structure of the three-stage moral dialectic found in moral sentiment theories and patterned their novels and their characters' psychological

processes to be a literalization of the moral-philosophical dialectics. As the novelists use the realist epistolary genre, they capture real-world settings and complex psychologies with startling accuracy, prompting interpretive questions regarding character ethics and credibility. Literary analysis reveals that the novelists designed fictional plotlines that facilitate inevitable moral dilemmas for the characters to contemplate and determine their moral actions. These plotlines and character dilemmas follow a three-stage moral dialectic of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. While no one to one pairing of novelist and moral philosopher is identified or argued for, the literary analysis reveals undeniable mutual influences and metatextual responses across the works chosen for this project.

In the thesis stage, novelists have their characters literalize the philosopher's process of contemplation. For example, Aphra Behn designs her characters to dramatize John Locke's focus on applying experience-based knowledge in the process of refuting received social customs. This novelist-philosopher connection also appears in Samuel Richardson's characters who emulate Shaftesburean principles when they depend upon their innate moral sense to ascertain the virtuous path in a precarious situation. After the contemplative thesis stage is played out, the novelists move to the antithesis stage, which expresses a state of skepticism wherein the characters are unwilling or unable to bridge the gap from moral knowledge to moral behavior. The novelists then dramatize the synthesis stage, which resolves the unstable condition of the antithesis state, through some external regulatory structure. The specifics of the resolution vary across the novels depending on which moral philosopher's stance is adopted. For instance, Frances Burney's warning novel of *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties* (1814), literalizes the importance of everyone adhering to David Hume's General Rule and of respecting class boundaries. This project uses narratology focused on diegetic framing levels and voice styles to

analyze how the novelists shift first-person epistolary voices and third-person omniscient voices to convey their perspectives regarding the social benefits of living out these moral philosophies. Specifically, the novelists assert how the external regulatory structures impact women, eliciting praise or criticism from the various authors.

In these designed fictional worlds, this research asserts that several novelists develop narrators who emulate a moral philosopher's specific concept of an "imagined internal entity." This entity functions as a self-reflexive tool for thinking and assessing a situation's holistic moral implications and potential actions. For example, this entity refers to Shaftesbury's "critical self," Butler's "conscience," and Smith's "Impartial Spectator." This project ultimately asserts that the stage three synthesis presents the most significant social commentary posed by the novelists. In this stage three turn to external regulatory structures, such as marriage in particular or the law in general, some of the novelists—such as Samuel Richardson, Sarah Fielding, and Frances Burney—applaud the philosopher's proposal for regulating social harmony. However, other novelists—such as Aphra Behn, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Mary Shelley—use their fictional works to dramatize how this turn to external regulatory structures led to gender and class discrimination, to the point of women experiencing social condemnation, unjust imprisonment, and capital punishment.

*Keywords:* long-eighteenth century, moral sentimentalism, epistolary novels, narratology, gender equity

## Acknowledgments

I came into my intellectual personhood before the era of the Internet. And, even after the Internet had firmly arrived, I found that letters were far more appealing than email. While a teenager growing up in sunny Southern California, I was pen pals with my grammy Doris May Bishop who lived in Lynn, MA. I loved nothing more than opening her letters, scanning the pages of her immaculate penmanship, and then carefully reading her tender sentiments. Grammy and I still corresponded even as her eyesight deteriorated and I moved to Northfield, MN, to attend St. Olaf college. Her penmanship never changed, nor did the pleasure I experienced in receiving her letters. I met my husband David long before I went off to college. My freshman year was spent scrawling letters to him, as I similarly pined for his presence like many of the characters in the epistolary novels I have come to adore. In completing this project, I find I still return to my shoebox filled with letters from my grammy and my now-husband. The treasured slips of paper vibrate with excitement, sadness, and longing. As I look back over my life in the context of this research project, I realize how I have long been a child of the epistolary genre.

At the core, I realize my interest in the epistolary letter derives from the deep and fulfilling relationships I have had in my life. The written communications I have exchanged with friends and family members are rich and meaningful—they have sustained me across vast distances. Making sense of oneself in connection with others is a never-ending process that I will work on throughout my entire life. For this reason, I have been so fascinated by eighteenth-century epistolary characters' self-examination, as they attempt to make sense of themselves in relationship with others. Thank you to all those who have corresponded with me at one time or



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I am profoundly grateful to Marc Redfield for introducing me to the eighteenth-century novel, *Pamela*. Anjali Arondekar—thanks for helping me see that it is the epistolary novel that fascinates me. I owe so much to Jolene Zigarovich's humor, knowledge, and patience, as I meandered my way through Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Julie* during our Independent Study Course on the epistolary novel. That course brought what Anjali Arondekar helped me identify as my passion into a whole new light.

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As a fulltime high school teacher and an adjunct community college professor, I must thank my students for teaching me about patience, persistence, and tenacity. My students are fearless and resilient. They inspired me to continue even when I had moments that I thought I could not continue.

To the book club that I hijacked—Sharon Frayer, Roxana Manuel, Grace Farag, Heidrun Burghardt, Molly Hewitt, Lori Bishop (Mom), Randall Bishop (Dad), Stanley Oropesa, Gabriela Yariv (without Gavi's support in the last leg of this process I might not have finished)—thank you for embracing my primary text reading list. Your generous hours spent reading the novels that have formed the core of this project and our profound discussions on their deeper meanings filter throughout every page of this project. The long and winding road of book writing is lonely—yet you all filled it with debate, laughter, and joy.

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Do the Voices Carry?: Invisibilizing Characters, Modern Epistolary Novels & Social  
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## Introduction

### Part I: The Inspiration for the Research Project

To escape a forced marriage, Caroline Belmont elopes clandestinely with a handsome, wealthier rake—as expected, this does not go well. While giving birth to their child, Caroline, in an ultimate act of agency, writes a letter seeking both to offer Belmont forgiveness and to secure his acknowledgment for their child, Evelina. Although Caroline’s death after giving birth to Evelina is tragic, Belmont’s fate takes on its own heartrending dimension. Caroline’s posthumous letter of forgiveness strikes Belmont to his moral core. Frances Burney’s Epistolary novel *Evelina*,<sup>1</sup> captures Belmont’s emotional response as he reads Caroline’s letter:

‘To clear her (infamy), and receive her child,’ continued he, looking steadfastly at the letter, ‘are the conditions upon which she leaves me for forgiveness: her fame, I have already cleared;—and oh how will-ingly would I take her child to my bosom,—fold her to my heart,—call upon her to mitigate my anguish, and pour the balm of comfort on my wounds, were I not conscious I deserve not to receive it, and that all my affliction is the result of my own guilt!’ (Burney 385–6)

Even though Belmont has and will clear his wife’s fame and own his child he still feels unable to shake his emotional torment on being forgiven. Of great importance, Caroline’s authority and Belmont’s overwrought emotional response does not come through ominous threats of hauntings or indignant demands of apologies. Rather, Caroline’s agency comes through her posthumously

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<sup>1</sup> The full title for *Evelina* (1778) is *Evelina, or the History of a Young Lady’s Entrance into the World*.

penned forgiveness, which drives Belmont toward moral behavior, securing Evelina's inheritance.

This stunning passage has left an indelible mark on my own heart and mind, as it inspired questions regarding eighteenth-century epistolary novelists' inspiration to write these psychologically complex characters, how the epistolary mode dramatically enhanced the character interactions, and the sociohistorical and gendered background that facilitated this dynamic interplay between epistolary form and moral philosophy. As I delved deeper into the long-eighteenth century's epistolary novel, I noticed the profound popularity of these letter-based fictions where novelists designed characters with intricate psychological profiles. Further reading revealed eighteenth-century epistolary characters lived within highly controlled circumstances related to secret marriages, forced marriages, hidden identities, illegitimate births, inheritance conflicts, false imprisonment, and other gender biases and systems of violence. These characters' interpersonal conflicts facilitate ponderous moral questions—both how people arrive at moral knowledge and the moral behavior that should—but often does not—result from this awareness.

As my literary investigations expanded into moral sense philosophy, my research adopted a transdisciplinary approach where I contemplate the moral philosophy bubbling within these fiction texts. Through this process I discovered that while most of the authors this project explores meant their epistolary novels for general edification and enjoyment, something much more profound occurs in these texts—and investigating the metatextual conversations among the long-eighteenth century's moral philosophers and novelists that create the fabric and design of these works has become the passionate source of this research project. This project considers how the novelists' epistolary form dramatizes moral sense philosophy and through this process negotiates the philosophy's impact of gender roles. After confirming the structural and content

links between certain novelists paired with specific moral philosophers, this research explores how the writers' dramatizations offer praise or issue condemnations towards the philosophers' impacts on gender dynamic.

## **Part II: The Historical Background Underlying Literary Realism and the Epistolary Genre**

### *Shifting Systems: From Monarchy to Parliamentary, Agrarian Feudal to Industrial Colonial*

The long-eighteenth century represents a historical epoch based on events rather than an abstract year. It is defined by the pivotal events of the 1688 Glorious Revolution, which resulted in the removal of the Catholic sympathizing James II and laid the foundations for increased governance through parliamentary control and overall democratization of the English government. This era concluded with the 1815 Battle of Waterloo, which ended the Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815) and opened the gateway for England's ascension as a global colonial force. The Enlightenment and its key ideas—reason, cosmopolitanism, tolerance, and progress ideas—widely influenced people's outlooks within all spheres of life, including philosophy, sciences, and literature.

### **This Optimistic Era's Moral Philosophy: Core Tenets and Relationships with Religion**

Many in society had a powerful reaction against Thomas Hobbes's (1588–1679) *Leviathan* (1651) and its conception of humans as innately ruthless in their desire for power, leading to violence. While Britain did not revel in a utopic naiveté, an optimistic *esprit de corps* spread throughout British culture. People embraced the era's catchword of “sentimentalism” and generally perceived that “human beings are naturally good and find their highest happiness by being good to others... Those who trusted humanity looked for virtue in instinctive and social impulses rather than in a code of conduct sanctioned by divine law” (Abrams 2052). The cultural

attitude of interpersonal benevolence filtered throughout daily life and drove the feedback loop between moral philosophy, epistolary novels, and social reception during this era.

Starting from the mid-seventeenth century and continuing in the eighteenth century, ethics were front and center for many philosophers in England. The philosophers explored in this research project all touched upon or were integral to this dialogue regarding the British conception of human nature. These include John Locke (1632–1704), the third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713), Joseph Butler (1692–1752), David Hume (1711–1776), Adam Smith (1723–1790), and Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832). Viewed on a chronological timeline, these thinkers evolved out of their family backgrounds, in their sociohistorical eras, through the influence of their predecessors, and in reactions that disputed previous dialectical concepts. Regardless of the specifics of each moral philosopher’s unique viewpoint, all touched upon similar core tenets regarding their perceptions of how the human mind operates and how to best inspire moral knowledge, encourage moral behavior, and ensure justice and harmony through external regulatory structures. While this research is not centered on a nuanced interpretation of these philosophers’ concepts nor an intervention proposing new interpretations, readers of this transdisciplinary project still might benefit from reviewing the philosophical concepts associated with these thinkers.

In brief, they focused on questions related to the role of passions, sentiments, and reason in arriving at moral knowledge; the motivating factors of pleasure and pain, especially in terms of virtue, vice, and happiness; the process and tools of sympathy (or understanding) towards oneself and others; and the impacts of internal and external regulatory systems in driving humans from moral knowledge to moral behavior. Concerning the last point, the era of the long-eighteenth century delved into questions of the inherent goodness (or benevolence) or evil



(selfishness) of humans; how people perceived their interpersonal obligations and duties; and the viability of morality as a system of self-governance. During these centuries, these philosophers tackled issues related to the more religious moral voluntarism—where morality derives from God’s will—in tension with the increasingly secular moral intellectualism—where morality rests in humanity’s inborn (and divinely created) faculties in conjunction with guiding social systems and institutions. These moral philosophers impacted all walks of life, including the Royal Society’s scientific debates, the Anglican Church’s models of charity, cultural discussions on taste and politeness, and economic theory and the law.

### **Women and Education: The Bible and Conduct Codes**

#### *Women as Property: Education, Conduct Codes, Citizenship, and Inheritance Laws*

It was believed in the 1600s that women’s spiritual experiences were more intense than that of men. While modern thinkers might jump to call this biological essentialism, many women of this era embraced this pervasive belief, as it allowed women to claim a positive image for themselves and to carve out a “space for the development and exercise of their personalities” (Fletcher 348). Additionally, seventeenth-century personal “materials written by, as opposed to written about, godly women” connect with the internalization of these gendered identities of women set out by “published sermons” (349). Godly women emanated their spirituality through private devotions, which engendered a sublimation and internalization of religion while giving them agency as theological thinkers and writers.

Richard Allestree’s *The Ladies Calling* (1673) essentialized women’s natures as he yoked their presumed weaknesses with spiritual strength. He advocates for a five-step program that

includes: control of the will, modesty as the core of self-discipline, chastity as the ultimate value to be protected at all costs, piety as the tool to moderate pride, and religion as the external source for gendered role regulation (385–6). Allestree’s emphasis on chastity as the primary female value intersects with social concerns on monitoring female sexuality. James Fordyce’s “Sermons to Young Women of 1766” and John Gregory’s “A Father’s Legacy to his Daughters” (1774) “were committed to establishing deeply polarized concepts of masculinity and femininity” (390). In a lengthy sermon, Fordyce exhorts women to embrace their female reserve and to “show the shamefastness proper to their sex: ‘A masculine woman must be naturally an unamiable creature. I confess myself shocked whenever I see the sexes confounded’” (qtd. in Fletcher 391). His words emphasize a binary view on gender roles and performativity, which is derived from a biological essentialist concept of gender.

In this research project, many moral philosophers and novelists include commentaries on the benefits and drawbacks of such conduct codes. For instance, Samuel Richardson (1689–1761) concludes his wildly popular novel *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (*Pamela*, 1740) with a marriage conduct code. And Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) criticizes these conduct codes as vehicles promoting hypocritical shadow laws that foster systemic sexism. From around 1650 to 1750, social attitudes transitioned from a religious patriarchy to a secular one. Where people previously had viewed women as hypersexualized in their behaviors, now women were perceived to be more under control and in control of their passions. The formerly dire view had become a less dire view. Fletcher surmises that this stems from “a growth of male assurance about women’s ability, given the proper advice and upbringing, to control their passions, above all their sexuality” (392). This process of education and indoctrination occurred steadily, especially through conduct books targeting women in a systematized ideological training.

Female sexuality became intensely monitored, as “within the framework created by the new accounts of English national identity, a woman’s private virtues now had a public relevance. They had to be seen as crucial to the nation’s welfare” (9). Leading scientists steered patriarchal norms and assumed a self-determined requirement to design the female identity for the weaker sex’s benefit and betterment. Francis Bacon (1618–21), René Descartes (1596–1650), and Locke all contributed to a new, more secular ideology of gender that varied significantly from the previous “scriptural theory of patriarchy” (Fletcher 289). However, this secular, scientific notion remained true to traditional hierarchies of male dominance over the female sex.

Bacon espouses this dominance in his text *The Masculine Birth of Time* (1603), in which he asserts a “kind of power by his male domination over” the female gender and “by connecting knowledge with power and linking women with matter which is to be known by male intellects, Bacon places men at the head of constructing female gender” (289). In fact, during the founding of the Royal Society, which was in part created to establish a social and gender order, one of its central founders, Joseph Glanville, boldly asserts that ““Truth had no chance of being declared”” when ““the affections wear the breeches and the female rules”” (qtd. in Fletcher 289). Glanville’s blunt statement establishes the idea of men being rational leaders. In his view, if women took over this leadership position, it would lead to anarchy. This type of attitude prevailed during this time, as seen through systematic gender inequity within nearly every sector of British life.

### **Women as Purified Icons: Marriage Controls via Coverture, Estate Entails, and the Hardwicke Act**

*Women’s Legal Rights: Coverture, Financial Resources, and Domestic Violence*

During the long-eighteenth century, the legal system of “coverture” represented a civil or social death for women, as they transitioned from unmarried *feme-soles* into married *feme-covert*.

Consider the blatant import of the following regulations:

By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection, and *cover* she performs everything; and is therefore called in our law-french, a *feme-covert*, *foemina viro co-operta*; and is said to be *covert-baron*, or under the protection and influence of her husband, her baron, or lord; and her condition during the marriage is called her coverture. (Blackstone qtd. in Anolik 26)

In effect, coverture represents a massive legal system filled with extensive law codes organized around a woman’s designation as her husband’s property. The authority of coverture derives from a socially accepted idea that women acquiesce to this secondary status when they become married. Skinner emphasizes that “a married woman had no separate legal identity. Her existence was, figuratively, covered, subsumed into that of her husband” (92). At this time, a woman—regardless of class, race, or religion—was not legally afforded full, individual citizenship rights.

Skinner explicates how this normalized legal system impacted a woman’s right to property in the realm of marriage, contracts, divorce, child custody, alimony, and freedom of movement. “Upon marriage,...she was not able to enter into contracts, to sue or be sued. She had no legal rights over her children, nor did she have the right to leave her husband’s house without his permission—if she did so, she gave up her right to his support, but could also be legally compelled to return” (92). Women’s second-class citizenship prevented them from

independently engaging in business and other contractual relationships. If the wife left the husband's marital home, she abdicated her right to his financial support; yet, she could legally be coerced to return. The husband was considered her "guardian" who had the notorious legal right to inflict corporal punishment upon his wife, as long as the stick were 'no thicker than this thumb' (qtd. in Skinner 92). Skinner surmises that "the law effectively infantilized married women, treating them as incapable of handling their own affairs," which also provides a bleak picture of the average woman's legal and social position during this time (92). Beyond abstract concepts, these laws heavily influenced women's daily lives and became the source material for many novelists central to this project.

These biased laws impacted women's access to financial resources and figured within their compromised psychological and physical safety. As noted above, the "rule of the thumb" permitted husbands to physically abuse their wives, as long as the stick were not wider than an adult man's thumb. Heather Nelson notes that although domestic violence was stigmatized as an issue within low-class families, this attitude not only harmed low-class victims but invisibilized domestic violence in middle- and upper-class families. "Due to Blackstone's theory of coverture, wives allegedly consented on their wedding days to future abuse. Further, Bacon legalized physical and emotional marital abuse, and (Sir Mathew) Hale established the marital rape exemption" (Nelson 89). Under the concept of women's acquiescence to coverture, they were considered to have given "approval" and "consent" to the treatment that occurred within the domestic confine (90). This included psychological, emotional, and sexual abuse, which remained legal under the "marital rape exemption" law that was only repealed in 1991.

## **Estate Entails: Privileges and Primogeniture**

Being little but property themselves, “instruments of mortgage and, strict settlement and entail” the laws of primogeniture (Porter 62) further codified such inequalities. “A settlement was designed to care for extended family and to keep a family’s estate together for future generation...The land belonged to a trust, for which the current holder was named beneficiary” (Bogart and Richardson 3). Estate entails were designed both to maintain the integrity of the estate and to keep the estate within the family lineage in perpetuity. “The holder, in turn, held the land in trust for other beneficiaries, typically including his wife, children, unborn descendants, all potential future heirs, and members of his extended family, such as his brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, and other descendants of previous holders of the estate” (3).

In particular the rule of primogeniture, where the eldest son inherited the entire estate, created boons for the firstborn and difficulties among the other siblings. This law was supported by referencing the era’s popular natural law. This theory argued that an instinctive parental love for all their children instilled a desire to provide all the necessary elements of childhood for their offspring, which would, by extension, pragmatically ensure the survival of the species. Proponents “recognized the importance of primogeniture to the maintenance of family estates and to the stability of hierarchical social system[s]” (Barclay 312–3). Additionally, there was a need for the affective order that primogeniture hoped to ensure, making “‘peace and concord’ among brothers, as otherwise they would ‘malign’ and ‘envy’ each other. Similarly, removing that decision from fathers through the legal device of the entail or the strict settlement allowed for a more harmonious family relationship” (312–3). According to natural law, instinctive affections coexist with and undergird the civil order of marriage and primogeniture. One allows for the harmonious love of all children and, therefore, the continuity of the species. The other

assures the economic welfare of the family and society and, therefore, the continuity of the species.

Not only did the entail system favor the firstborn son, but this system also represents a profoundly gendered inheritance law, as the female body becomes the controlled vehicle to produce legitimate descendants to ensure the smooth and determined transfer of estates within a family's lineage. Moreover, within this patriarchal society, the sub-law of the strict settlement placed overt pressure on the wife, who was often viewed as the responsible party for the healthy reproduction of (male) heirs. In this schema, virginity facilitates the good of the nation and species because it "reinforced the primacy of families over individuals, [and] helped landed families keep their estates (and their power) intact" (Povey 12). Therefore, "the rule of chastity, since, as we have seen, a[n] [illegitimate child] could completely undermine dynastic ambitions" is paramount (12). Overall, Mary Povey notes how the control of female virginity and sexuality links with the social structures centered on aristocratic power held through continuous in-family land inheritances, which secures wealth and voting rights.

### *Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753*

During this period, legal and social power struggles were occurring between the secular and religious realms regarding the authority over the marriage ceremony and contract ramifications. This eventuated in Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753, which decreased the ecclesiastical court's power by altering legal marriage's official definition. Before this act, marriages did not require clergymen to officiate any specific ceremony or rituals—unions could be considered legal through a verbal contract, rendering any following marriages as bigamous. However, these church-validated marriages were not legally binding, which precluded any property rights issues.

Legally binding “clandestine marriages” —performed by clergy under a variety of irregular ritual procedures—further complicated this era’s types of marriages with varying degrees of financial implications. These secret unions were actively suppressed by lineage gatekeepers, who fretted over “minor heirs and heiresses from being persuaded into secret but legally binding marriages by their social and financial inferiors” (Skinner 93–4). Hardwicke’s Marriage Act systematized the marriage ceremony and procedures. Under this act, legal marriages required a license, a witness, a recognized clergyman, and parental consent from guardians for minors, along with the recording of the event in the legal Marriage Register (93–4). This impactful act was intended to safeguard vulnerable women against fortune hunters, protect inheritance lineages, and streamline chaotic marriage regulations and procedures.

While the Hardwicke Act soothed the minds of many estate monitors and, of course, offered some protection to the vulnerable and clarification of ceremonies and legalities, the act ultimately reinforced aristocratic and dynastic control of family property. Since women were themselves property, this law tightened the father’s patriarchal control over the daughters as property. Under the Hardwicke Act, unapproved lovers or pure lotharios faced increased barriers and deterrents to “steal” a daughter’s love (her virginity), which was intertwined with her role as property and the physical vessel and conveyer of the family inheritance line. The Hardwicke Act’s crackdown on impromptu marriage led to the establishment of legions of lawyers who drew up contracts that provided pin-money and other financial securities for the wife. But, more telling, these contracts worked aggressively to establish clauses that would assure the money and property brought to the marriage by the wife would return to the family if she died without a child. In truth, the daughters were rarely the real object of concern during these contract



negotiations. These contracts restricted the circulation of wealth within society among the few aristocrats with the financial means of orchestrating these contracts.

### **The Bluestockings: Female Salons**

Yet were women only such downtrodden, controlled entities? Of course not. Many social organizations worked to better women's situations; and, many novelists, such as Wilkie Collins and George Eliot, and moral philosophers, such as Jeremy Bentham, supported women's rights. Deborah and Steven Heller's research explores the female salon known as the Bluestocking community, which held a special "social role—in terms of their structural position in the social network, their activities and productions within the field of culture" (18). In essence, Bluestockings' interests in moral, cultural, intellectual, and artistic production and dissemination transcended politics and social stations. This transcendence was partially facilitated through "their communicative networks (including) correspondence, interpersonal networks, books, pamphlets, or public fame" (29). Because their social visits and assemblies were manifold, they generated correspondence and gossip (for lack of a better word), which translated into an "open network, consisting of elaborately overlapping cliques of people, penetrating into the larger arena of the 'public'" (29). Mainly upper-class, white, educated women, the Bluestockings enjoyed the freedom to meet in salons to discuss the day's issues, facilitating social support networks for and literary productions from these free-thinking women.

Bluestockings' efforts to direct their political and social endeavors could be seen in court proceedings where they protested against laws that negatively impacted women in general and the Bluestockings themselves. Gery Kelly notes the Bluestockings critiqued "the patriarchal court system's trivialization and eroticization of women for the process of court politics and

culture, as these were diffused through society by social emulation” (168). Of course, this extended into critiques of the “interlocked systems” of “property, patronage, and paternalism...that required the subordination and oppression of women” (168). In their efforts to stymie these crosshatched hegemonies that dominated women’s lives, the Bluestockings traversed multiple tricky terrains. On the one hand, they worked to remove women’s enforced identities as erotic playthings, whose sexuality had to be controlled by men while they were simultaneously being exploited and manipulated by this patriarchal culture.

On the other hand, the Bluestockings inadvertently reinforced the denial of women’s sexual passions and sexual agency. This bifurcated identity further instantiated women as models of religious purity and positioned these indoctrinated women within the patriarchal concepts of their ostensibly growing power as matriarchs of the home. Thus, the Bluestockings represent a complex entity—they might have inadvertently encouraged a desexualized view of women, yet they still promoted feminist initiatives and published impactful works from members such as Wollstonecraft and Sarah Fielding.

### *Art Reflecting and Influencing Society: Genre Tropes of the Realist Epistolary Novel*

In the world of literature, the realist genre innately holds a special bond with moral philosophy in this artistic genre’s detailed exploration of the individual mind, interpersonal dynamics, and people’s relationships with their environments. In *The Rise of the Novel*, Ian Watt notes how the novel’s form allows platforms for the intense “individualisation of its characters and to the detailed presentation of their environment” (18). These novels demonstrate common characteristics, including highly defined and realistic characters, interactions among characters from varying social classes, real-world environments, plots derived from actual historical events

of that era, and contemplations on the balance between individual pursuits and serving the greater good. Watt notes that “the various technical characteristics of the novel described above all seem to contribute to the furthering of an aim which the novelist shares with the philosopher—the production of what purports to be an authentic account of the actual experiences of individuals” (27). There is a drive “to ascertain and report the truth” (31). Such elements filter across every page of the novels selected in this research, where the intersections of the moral philosophers and the novelists cross over into real-world historical, political, and legal issues.

Watt explains the massive transition in writing content and style during this era away from characters who were composed of “general human types against a background primarily determined by the appropriate literary convention” (15). Writers turned to developing fiction worlds where “the plot had to be acted out by particular people in particular circumstances” (15). This authenticity of experience allowed their artistic endeavors to foster and “embody the individual apprehension of reality as freely as the method of Descartes and Locke allowed their thought to spring from the immediate facts of consciousness” (15). This type of world building towards an aim at realistic particularity where Watt identifies how the novelists’ attention to establishing specific times, places, and character identities culminates in “an air of complete authenticity, (that) is also closely related to one of the distinctive methodological emphases of philosophical realism” (27). The stunning complexity of the novelists’ exploration of their characters’ psyches facilitates the exploration of the human process of acquiring moral knowledge and the dilemmas associated with enacting moral behavior.

Patrick Bray agrees with Watt’s contention that a novel of this era might be assessed as a “series of letters,” which are “especially well-suited to the exploration of the ‘subjectivity of

mind” (9). Bray contends that “the representation of consciousness in the epistolary novel is not... transparent and unmediated”—it is not a “spontaneous transcription” of a stream of consciousness (10). He encourages readers to catch “the subtlety with which epistolary novelists can probe the ‘recesses’ of their characters’ minds, and the tensions within the ‘subjectivity’ of the self that they can reveal” (10). For example, Bray highlights the effectiveness of applying a Lockean philosophical dialectic to understand an epistolary novel character’s complex psychology. Specifically, Bray argues that epistolary narratives wrestle with the “tension that can be created between the letter-writer’s past and present selves, and the uncertainties about identity that arise as a result” (16). Bray’s ideas on the characters psychologically evolving through the letter-writing process connect with the idea of readers psychologically reacting to the events in these novels. As the characters confront moral dilemmas and make virtuous or vicious decisions on how to react, readers confront their own moral compasses.

In thinking about Watt’s points on the intersections of moral philosophy and literature, it is essential to remember that moral philosophy can be quite dry. In contrast, literature can be a realm where readers can engage in the fictional dramatization of an imagined situation. Consider Martha Nussbaum’s exploration of this concept. While she praises the power of philosophical prose to offer insight into the world’s plethora of mysteries and complexities, she assesses this style as “remarkably flat and lacking in wonder” (Nussbaum 3). Thus, imaginative literature provides a platform “in a language and in forms themselves more complex, more allusive, more attentive to particulars” that guide readers to contemplate these deeper issues plaguing the human condition (3). Nussbaum asserts that “literary form is not separable from philosophical content, but is, itself, a part of content—an integral part, then, of the search for and the statement of truth” (3). Instead of relying on “abstract theoretical language,” Nussbaum considers that emotional

ideas “are most efficiently communicated to readers of a certain sort through colorful and moving narrative” (6). Nussbaum argues that the author’s chosen “style makes, itself, a statement: that an abstract theoretical style makes, like any other style, a statement about what is important and what is not, about what faculties of the reader are important for knowing and what are not” (7).

She continues to emphasize the connection between a novelist’s style choice and writerly intentions, stating “these literary texts [are] works whose representational and expressive content issues from human intentions and conceptions” (9). This connection is particularly true with virtue ethics as there is not a straightforward formula but rather a variable-by-variable, passion-by-passion assessment and working through circumstances in order to arrive at the most beneficial outcome. Nussbaum notes the connections between determined form and authorial intention, as “this feature is, in fact, prominently dramatized in the novels studied here, in all of which the voice of an authorial consciousness is to be heard, and in all of which the making of the text is an explicit theme of the narrative itself” (9). For this transdisciplinary project, her assessment of the fluid interactions among philosophy and literature and how they bolster and comment upon each other capture this research’s intervention into understanding these coevolutionary philosophical and artistic relationships.

### **Part III: Transdisciplinary Research Design and Methodologies**

#### *Narratology Frameworks: Techniques of Shifting Diegetic Levels and of Voice Presentations*

Within this project’s transdisciplinary design, the moral philosophy—especially the various manifestations of regulations—has been applied as an analytical framework in investigating the

form and content of the literature. In conjunction with this analytical framework, standard narratology related to diegetic framing levels and voice styles has been used to deepen the literary analysis. James Phelan's narratology on the author-text-reader rhetorical triangle in connection with readers' mimetic and thematic responses is intersected with Gerard Genette's dissection of diegetic narrative levels. Analytical ideas on framing and embedding narrative levels continue into questions on readers trusting various characters. Narratology related to theories from Phelan, F.K. Stanzel, and Wayne C. Booth on character reliability and credibility are intersected with Norman Friedman's theory of Free and Indirect Discourse (FID). FID is explored in terms of the functions and impacts of editorial narrators in connection to Booth's ideas on dramatic irony and authorial silence.

### **James Phelan's: Authorial Agency, Textual Phenomena, and Reader Response**

For this project, Phelan's narratology provides the primary framework to analyze interactions in the author-text-reader dynamic, the narrator's role, and character credibility. Phelan asserts that writers express their ideas in a complex feedback loop of shared and growing ideas and opinions between the writers and readers. Phelan proposes that narrative operates as a rhetorical device because various readers share similar experiences. This reader-character allows the narrative to pinpoint meaningful associations "in a feedback loop among authorial agency, textual phenomena (including intertextual relations), and reader response" (18). For Phelan, "this conception of the recursive relationship among authorial agency, textual phenomena, and reader response entails the possibility of shared readings among different flesh-and-blood readers" (19). This concept dovetails with this project's emphasis on the fluid nature of the fictional works, moral philosophy, and the lived experience of the long-eighteenth century in British life.

Phelan explains that the interactive nature of “the rhetorical act of narrating entails a multileveled communication from author to audience, one that involves the audience’s intellect, emotions, psyche, and values” (19). As the narrative progresses, readers grasp the story’s internal logic and the characters’ reactions to their obstacles within the framework of their lived personal experiences and ethical perspectives. These memories and life lessons influence the readers’ reactions to and judgments on all those involved in the novel’s world, including the author, narrator(s), and other characters. Far from being passive watchers, these active readers invest themselves in these narrative worlds. “As audiences follow the movement of instabilities and tensions, they engage in many kinds of responses: judging characters, developing hopes, desires, and expectations for them, and constructing tentative hypotheses about the overall shape and direction of the narrative” (20). Phelan notes how the feedback loop oscillates from the author’s decisions in directing the narrative and designing the characters to the readers’ responses, culminating in a metaleptic, cross-diegetic narrative flow of communication.

Phelan’s narratology offers valuable terms to describe interactive modes of communication and coevolutionary influence among the writers and readers—all filtered through the literary text with the characters dramatizing these moral dilemmas. Phelan includes three terms central to this project. Mimetic responses refer to “an audience’s interest in the characters as possible people and in the narrative world as like our own” (Phelan 20). Scholes, Phelan, and Kellogg intersect with this concept and explain realism’s and the epistolary genre’s propensity towards “highly individualized” characters, which facilitate a high degree of mimetic responses in readers:

by awakening complex correspondence between the psyches of character and reader, such characterization provides a rich and intense ‘experience’ for the reader. This

experience may not only move him but also exercise his perceptions and sensibility, ultimately assisting him to perceive and comprehend the world of reality more sharply and more sensitively than he otherwise might. (103)

Mimetic responses impact how strongly readers feel any thematic responses, which refers to “an interest in the characters’ ideational function and the cultural ideological, philosophical, or ethical issues being addressed by the narrative” (Phelan 20). This research considers how the authors apply different strategies to engender mimetic responses in the more significant effort to convey their themes and to elicit desired thematic responses from readers.

### **Framing Devices: Levels, Gaps, and Jumping**

This research applies questions regarding the credibility of various narrators within framed tales in several works in this project. Gerard Genette considers the collective group of all the “diegetic levels” to be the narrating acts that produce the overarching narrative. Genette calls this the “extradiegetic level,” which could center on a character (whom the reader considers the main storyteller) writing an autobiography. The “diegetic,” also known as the “intradiegetic,” level would be the first level of framing, which could be the events described in the autobiography. Genette’s “metadiegetic level” would be another internal level of framing, which would be a character stepping into the role of narrator to tell the story of one of the events described in the autobiography.

William Nelles introduces embedded, or framed, stories and their accompanying levels of narrative voices. Nelles discusses how novelists have their characters shift in literary functions by adopting the role of the narrator within an embedded story. “Metalepsis” refers to the process



whereby a character (usually the narrator) moves from one diegetic narrative level to another within a potential *mise-en-abîme* of framed narratives. Angela Moger assesses the interplay of these framed narrative levels more deeply. Moger contends that the novelist's choice in including a framed narrative seeks to highlight not what the framed story is about but to highlight the telling of the story itself. She explains, "the telling of a story is often a way of doing something to someone, the choice of calling for the storyteller may here take on heightened significance" (134). This complex technique results in an impactful interplay of structural elements furthering thematic concepts.

Moger asserts that as "the framing of a narrative constitutes the explication of the self-referential quality of narrative (the frame compels the understanding that the story is about the telling of the story), we perceive the complexity of the paradigmatic axis engendered by the interplay of thematic elements and structural elements" (136). Moger also contends that "the function of the frame, then would be to undercut the framed, to make clear that the central narrative's appearance of the substantiality is an optical illusion, and to mock the pretensions of the conventional reading of such a story" (134). For Moger, this framing technique functions to destabilize the framed narrative where the embedding both creates the illusion of a more profound realism while simultaneously drawing conscious attention to the artifice. This interplay emphasizes the illusory nature of the presented images and concepts.

Concerning metaleptic diegetic leaps, John Pier notes how a potential "contamination of levels in a hierarchical structure (can occur as) metalepsis produces a 'short-circuiting' of levels, calling this distinction into question and having repercussions for a number of other distinctions current in narrative theory" (303). Connecting with intentional or unintentional contamination in narrative accuracy, Bernard Duyfhuizen contends that the same issues can arise when an oral

narrative is transcribed into a written epistolary form. “Despite transcriber promises of faithfulness to the original, the logical gap between oral narration and its transcription within the framing narrative opens interpretive space for the reader” (187). The crucial gap between the oral translation and its physical transcription invites readers to intuit deeper and more personal interpretations of the events and actions. Linking with Genette’s work, Duyfhuizen asserts, “As each narrating act contains another narrating act, the diegetic level shifts from the initial extradiegetic level to an intradiegetic level of narration, to a metadiegetic level of narration, and beyond” (187). This concept intersects with the author’s ability to plant elements that spur readers to question a character’s reliability, which instigates deeper probing of a novel’s messages.

### **Trust: Characters and Narrators Communicating Between Authors and Readers**

Phelan also delves into the diegetic framing of doubled communication situations in fiction where a character relates a story to the reader regarding another character’s happenings or even storytelling. This doubled communication quickly becomes a “layered ethical situation” of character reliability and credibility, especially in terms of the narrator (21). Phelan notes that a narrator’s behaviors will inevitably include ethical aspects. These reactions might be a non-judgmental reaction, a nuanced criticism, or overt condemnation. Phelan’s theoretical model centers on the triangular relationship among the “implied author, narrator, and authorial audience,” with a focus “on the activities of the narrator as teller and as discloser and on those of the authorial audience as reinterpreter of what is told” (50). The narrator serves as the conduit working back and forth between the author’s mind, the fictional world, and the individual

characters' minds. The third-person omniscient narrator is endowed with external overviews of the situations and internal insights in the characters' minds where:

...an inconceivably complex social unity, are worked out in fiction through the dynamic interplay between the 'worm's-eye view' of the characters and the 'bird's-eye view' of the narrator, who alternately embraces his own omniscience to point out the unseen interconnections, and undercuts it by means of witty skepticism or explicit partiality for one or more of the novels' characters. (Courtmanche 3)

Narrators present authors with awesome opportunities to tell their stories creatively from various perspectives and through a variety of tones and styles. However, the issue of narrator and character ethics and credibility of relayed information continuously challenges the astute and active reader.

### *Credibility of Voices*

Phelan explains that "narrators perform three main roles—reporting, interpreting, and evaluating; sometimes they perform the roles simultaneously and sometimes sequentially" (50). He asserts that these narrators might sometimes and might never coincide with the author's genuine opinions. Like all characters, the narrator is also a tool designed by the writer and "may, therefore, deviate from the implied author's views in one or more of these roles simultaneously, sequentially, or intermittently" (50). Of course, novelists design their narrators with specific functions in mind. "With such deviations the disclosure functions and the narrator functions may very well work harmoniously, but in all cases, the authorial audience will recognize a communication from the implied author beyond the awareness of the narrator" (50). These types

of subtle authorial incursions occur within most of this project's novels. They offer vast amounts of interpretive space for the author's implied meaning in the context of the interconnected moral philosophy and in the context of the gendered repercussions of the enactments of the external regulatory structures.

Character credibility functions pivotally in this project's novels and in their relationships with readers. Phelan identifies six manifestations of unreliability, which include misreporting, misreading, misevaluating, underreporting, underreading, and underregarding (52). All of these unintentional and intentional communication gaps appear in the novels central to this project and serve vital functions in the authors' ability to convey their sociopolitical perspectives. In Phelan's narratology, unreliable reporting centers on the facts related to events; unreliable reading deals with issues of interpretation, knowledge, and perception. And unreliable regarding focuses on questions of assessments and ethics. Naturally, all of these factors of reporting, reading, and regarding situations intersect with characters' abilities to make accurate moral assessments of situations and devise the most appropriate behavioral choices in response.

Moving towards the specific voice styles of individual characters, F.K. Stanzel applies a taxonomic method within the discipline of narratology to break down narrative forms into three types: first-person, authorial, and figural. He asserts the first-person narrators offer subjective and conditionally valid views of the narrated events—the curtailed nature of their views is a product of being a concretely embodied self where his corporeality takes center stage. Stanzel describes an authorial narrator as having a verbose and visible presence in delivering the story from the third-person point of view. Stanzel believes the third-person narrator to be only provisionally credible because “almost every authorial narrator who at first presents himself as omniscient will sooner or later have to be subject to a limitation of his horizon of knowledge”

(89). However, they are functionally given more credibility, because they are not debilitated by the failings of embodied human understanding.

This narrator, an outsider who views from a position of authority, holds and shares knowledge with readers about the fictional world's critical events along with various characters' thoughts and their conscious and unconscious motives. For Stanzel, these narrators address their audience directly and philosophically comment on the characters' thoughts and actions. The narrators' perspectives lead into questions regarding the levels of credibility readers can and should assign to character voices, especially these narrators who might be the proxies of the novelists. The third-person voices are also conditionally credible because they are, after all, fictional characters. Yet, Stanzel affords them increased credibility due to the levels of knowledge their privileged position allows and the author's intention to create a non-judgmental narratorial voice.

Stanzel's narratology theories on the credibility of the various voices speaking within the fictional worlds and outwardly towards readers intersect with the theorist Wayne C. Booth's narratology questions of the morality of impersonal narration. As the novels targeted in this monograph shift from various voice structures, Booth would argue that these more impersonal novels pose moral difficulties as people may misread the author's intent because characters take on too sympathetic a quality (388–9). Booth discusses the positives of narrative omniscience in terms of the privileged access to the characters' minds, as these impartial insights help the reader sympathize with characters because it provides “evidence of a character's capacity for admirable choices” (418). At the same time, Booth stresses that third-person impersonal novels might pose moral difficulties because readers might misinterpret the author's intended character critique. Their authorial choices might paint a superficially rosy view of a character when complex

analyses of the intricate interweaving of various character voices infer a less flattering or more nuanced understanding of a targeted character.

### *Free and Indirect Discourse*

While Bray acknowledges the coining of the term Free Indirect Discourse (FID) in relation to Jane Austen's work, he argues "that one vital and immediate source for free indirect thought in particular has been overlooked: the epistolary novel" (22). Even though FID is often identified through the use of the third person and the past tense, Bray asserts these elements filter throughout the epistolary genre, as seen "in the epistolary novels of (Samuel) Richardson and others, as the letter-writer's past, experiencing self begins to dominate over his or her present, narrating self" (24). Norman Friedman evolved the critical term FID to describe how the authorial narrator communicates with readers and advances his or her own point of view, especially in criticizing other characters. The narrators often hail the readers to join them in a privileged position of authoritative knowledge surrounding social realities of the fictional and the real world. They selectively use FID to advance their authorial perspectives as they criticize characters' thoughts and actions.

Friedman uses the term "editorial" omniscience to describe narrators (who present as authors) whose voices dominate the story, especially through the use of personal pronouns like "I" and "we." He contends that "the reader accordingly has access to the complete range of possible kinds of information, the distinguishing feature of this category being the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of the [narrator] himself; he is free not only to inform us of the ideas and emotions within the minds of his characters but also of his own" (Friedman 1171). Editorial narrators with editorial omniscience provide readers with a complete range of information as

they jump between the bird's-eye view and a worm's-eye view of the fictional events and characters' minds, respectively. Friedman asserts that FID speech sometimes demonstrates an overlapping of a character's innermost thoughts with the narrator's private thoughts.

Returning to the theorist Booth, he extends these concepts to emphasize that the omniscient narrator can enter a character's thoughts and then reemerge as the arbiter of truth and fact. These dominant narrators control dramatic irony, which is produced through sharing with the reader information that other characters do not know. Instead of just flattering the readers, Booth proposes that writers effectively employ unreliable narrators through the deft application of irony. This narrative technique operates as "in part a device for excluding as well as for including, and those who are included, those who happen to have the necessary information to grasp the irony" (Booth 305). This privileged narrator-reader communication is often done by revealing other characters' contradictions between their inner thoughts and their external acts.

Booth cites this as "Authorial Silence," where readers are enraptured with a sense of pleasure through being in "the know" while simultaneously knowing others are excluded from this privileged knowledge set. This reader who possesses privileged information can feel a kinship and collusion with the silent author. Readers "cannot but derive at least part of their pleasure from a sense that others are excluded... Our pleasure is compounded by pride in our own knowledge, ridicule of the ignorant narrator, and a sense of collusion with the silent author who, also knowing the facts, has created the trap for his narrator" (305). Commenting on the potential nastiness of a narrator-reader gossipy relationship, Booth contends that some narrators also use this communicative relationship to acknowledge personal failings. Booth asserts that sympathy is made possible by FID that shrinks the psychic distance between the narrator and the character, allowing the narrator to identify with the character's subjectivity.

However, these narrators often fluidly move from these moments of warm identification back to positions of authorial commentary. Authorial commentary allows the narrator to assert their personal opinions about the character's thoughts and the character's specific fictional situation, eventually linking these commentaries to the larger real world. Because readers can join the narrator as he or she enters into the characters' minds, readers share the narrator's privileged position as the moral judge, arguably, guided by the narrator's detailed understanding of the circumstances. When the narrator offers commentary on the characters and circumstances that register real-world concerns, the narrator constructs an ironic distance that encourages a moralizing judgment. Mirroring the Royal Society's investigative methods and capturing the era's realist genre style, the long-eighteenth century narrators often report almost anthropologically on characters' actions, their private consciousness, and the social circumstances in which they act and think. As a result, authorial narrators' commentary often highlights social disequilibrium and incongruities, which were major concerns of this era's novels. Readers observe characters' growing self-awareness through the narrator's judgments and by characters' interpersonal relationships and how they define themselves in and against the social positions of other characters.

*Notes: Research Fields, Chapter Formats, Gender Inclusivity, and Philosophical Terms*

This project is designed as a transdisciplinary investigation where the chosen literature pieces are analyzed through their companion moral philosophical pieces lenses, such as in Aphra Behn's (1640–1689) novel being analyzed according to Locke's moral philosophy. This project asserts these philosophical dialectics both structure and form the fictional platforms for the novelist's praise or criticism of the moral philosopher's dialectic of how individuals can foster social



harmony. In this research, the literature is analyzed by being filtered through the moral philosophy framed as a three-stage dialect. In this system, the novel operates as the first-tier primary source while the moral philosophy functions as the second-tier primary source applied to analyze the literature. From there, narratology functions as the overall methodological framework to assess how the literature expresses the moral philosophy and the resulting presentation and affects of the artistic work. And, secondary research sets include this era's gendered economics situation, inheritance laws, and marriage laws; print culture and literacy sociology; and, related literary analytical texts targeting these specific novels in relation to the chapters' original concepts.

While each chapter investigates a mutually influential relationship between a moral philosopher and a novelist, all chapters follow a similar organizational format by opening with a chapter-specific argument. First, the thinkers' and artists' biographies are explored along with their social interconnections using George Simmel's sociological theory of "crosscutting circles." For the philosophers, each thinker's major concepts are analyzed concerning this project's concept of his work within a dialectic framework of moral thought processing. Then, the chapter analyzes the literature according to how the plot and characters actively dramatize each stage of the moral philosophy. The literary analysis considers the techniques of diegetic framing, especially through the epistle, and of shifting voices, especially in the role of the narrator, who often functions as a dramatization of the philosopher's concept of an "imagined internal entity." This system can be seen in Wollstonecraft's narrator serving as her proxy as well as being a dramatization of Butler's "conscience." Of course, each chapter concludes with an assessment of the coevolutionary influences of moral philosophers, novelists, audiences,

customs, and laws in their abstract and concrete influences on the era's concepts of gender and the daily enactments of gender roles.

For this project, the researcher acknowledges the patriarchal systems of the targeted era and embraces reading with the grain while still acknowledging the women's actual access to and engagement with these works. Balancing the general reality of eighteenth-century women's restricted access to printed works with the other reality that many educated, upper class, Caucasian women did access these works, this project applies gender-inclusive pronouns outside of quoted materials. As another side note on terms, this project understands that the philosophical term "dialectic" is often associated with Karl Marx and Georg Hegel. However, this project applies this concept in a transdisciplinary way. In his foundational work on dramatic writing, Lajos Egri notes that the word "dialectic" etymologically derives from the Greek for "conversation" or "dialogue," which forms a perfect overlap with the transdisciplinary nature of this research. In Egri's philosophical-literary application, the dialectic proposition equates to a thesis; the contradiction equates to an antithesis; and, the correction, to a synthesis. This tripartite process mirrors the moral philosophers' thesis, antithesis, synthesis, three stages of

1. individual self-reflective questioning,
2. skepticism of the ability to transition moral understanding into moral behavior, and
3. the search for external regulatory structures to ensure the desired moral behavior.

The mental evolution through the three stages of transitioning from contemplating action to taking action represents the narrative threads of this project exploring characters' moral dilemmas and behavioral decisions.

#### **Part IV: An Intervention: Epistolary Novels as Battlegrounds in 1690s–1830s Culture Wars**

*In dramatizing their targeted moral philosophy, the novelists apply framing structures and voice techniques that design their fictional worlds to present as social experiments that pose sociopolitical and gender commentaries.*

While some might consider epistolary novels of the long-eighteenth century as the sentimental purview of women readers, this project proposes that the novels chosen in this project serve as powerful markers in the gender wars of this era. During this time of massive social upheaval towards increasing social equity and mobility, British citizens found themselves pondering dilemmas of the self in terms of their world outlook, gender roles, and social positions. While an overall sense of optimism pervaded this era, people still grappled with foundational moral questions, which came to be addressed in increasingly secular ways by moral philosophy. As these philosophers occupied influential positions in government, law, and publishing, their works held great sway in the public imagination and in effecting tangible change in politics and law. In the world of British elite societies and salons, these thinkers gathered and discussed their works in the company of scientists and artists, facilitating this fecund era of British thought.

These interactions also facilitated agreements and disagreements regarding the moral philosophers' works, which this project asserts were explored through the literary novels of the top writers of the epoch. Adopting the structure of the three-stage moral dialectic, the novelists patterned their novels and their characters' psychological processes to be a reflection of these philosophers' dialectics. Of course, the researcher is not claiming a one-to-one correlation between the philosophical dialectic and the novels' plots; however, analysis reveals that the novelists designed fictional plotlines that facilitate inevitable moral dilemmas for the characters

to contemplate and to act upon, with the questions inevitably being posed to the readers. As the novelists use the realist epistolary genre, they capture real-world settings and personalities with startling accuracy and with all of the interpretive questions regarding character ethics and credibility. This project analyzes just how the novelists play with the shifting of first-person epistolary voices and third-person omniscient voices in conveying their theses regarding the social impacts in these moral philosophies.

In these designed fictional worlds, this research asserts that several novelists develop narrators who emulate a moral philosopher's specific conception of an "imagined internal entity," which functions as a self-reflexive tool for thinking and assessing the holistic moral implications of a situation and the potential actions. For example, this entity refers to Shaftesbury's "critical self," Butler's "conscience," and Smith's "Impartial Spectator." This idea can also be extended to Aphra Behn's use of the Royal Society's idea of the Institutional Observer, in an anthropological and scientific sense. In experiencing and contemplating complex moral situations, the novelists have their characters dramatize the mind process of the moral stage one thesis. In moral stage two, the antithesis devolves into skepticism, doubting that humans will follow through with moral action. At this point, the novelist continues along the moral philosopher's path to the synthesis of the moral stage three, which advocates for turning to an external regulatory structure. The moral philosophers each propose various interconnected systems of internal and external regulatory structures. This project ultimately asserts that the stage three synthesis presents the more significant social commentary posed by the novelists. In this stage three turn to external regulatory structures, such as marriage in particular or the law in general, some of the novelists—such as Samuel Richardson, Sarah Fielding, and Frances Burney—applaud the philosopher's proposal for regulating social harmony. However, other

novelists—such as Aphra Behn, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Mary Shelley—use their fictional works to dramatize how this turn to external regulatory structures leads to gender and class discrimination, to the point of social condemnation, unjust imprisonment, and capital punishment.

## **Part V: Prefacing the Chapters**

After explaining this project's inspiration, the above subsections introduced the long-eighteenth centuries sociohistorical and gender situation and the narratology that will frame the chapters' arguments. In moving towards the project's body, let us preview each chapter's arguments regarding how the novelists' narrative structures and content demonstrate the influence of the moral philosophers and how the novelists' works proffer their praise or criticism of the philosophers' theories' impacts on society, especially women.

In Chapter One, Aphra Behn's *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* (*Love-Letters*, 1684) deceptively presents as a roman à clef with lascivious characters chasing each other across the countryside. However, upon closer analysis, the historically derived novel can be interpreted as a strong condemnation of the anti-monarchical Whigs engaging in violent rebellion during this tumultuous era. In this proto-novel, Behn deftly applies first- and third-person epistolary narrative strategies to offer a negative criticism of John Locke's moral philosophy, which had urged for the rejection of adhering to custom and had advocated for a parliamentary rule to the point of regicide. With a nuanced interpretation, Behn's *Love-Letters* reveals a condemnation of Locke's political disobedience while simultaneously rejecting submission to the patriarch, as she demonstrates Locke's freewheeling social customs can work in men's favor but can have disastrous effects for women.

In Chapter Two, Samuel Richardson's psychologically complex work *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* is explored through the moral philosophy lens of Shaftesbury's encouragement of dialogue that can occur through epistles between and among persons and through epistles written to the self. Richardson also engages with Shaftesbury's ideas that people have innate moral ideas, or the critical self, and explores the philosopher's differentiation between external physical beauty and internal virtuous beauty. This chapter analyzes Richardson's creation of Pamela as a female virtue icon in the context of the British nation and of her positive moral impacts on her kidnapper, the sexually aggressive Mr. B. This chapter concludes with an analysis of Richardson's inclusion of a marriage conduct code. The researcher analyzes both the contents of this conduct code and Pamela's fascinating, quietly rebellious asides to the strongly patriarchal marriage regulations.

In Chapter Three, Richardson's long-time friend Sarah Fielding (S. Fielding, 1710–1768) writes to regulate readers' misinterpretations of his works *Clarissa*.<sup>2</sup> This chapter explores how Richardson designs Clarissa's plot events and characters to force moral dilemmas for the rapist Lovelace and the victim Clarissa. Keeping to his ideas of female characters being opportunities for moral instruction, Richardson designs Clarissa as a saintly paragon who dramatizes Butler's rejection of the corrupt human legal system in favor of the internal regulatory structure of her conscience. Richardson uses the epistolary platform for readers to comprehend Butler's stages of resentment, cool reflection, and forgiveness. After analyzing the Shaftesburean dramatizations in S. Fielding's epistolary work *Familiar Letters between the Principal Characters in David Simple*

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<sup>2</sup> The full title for *Clarissa* (1748) is *Clarissa; or, The History of a Young Lady: Comprehending the Most Important Concerns of Private Life. And Particularly Shewing, the Distresses that May Attend the Misconduct Both of Parents and Children, In Relation to Marriage*.

(*Familiar Letters*, 1747), this chapter explores the public's agreements and disagreements on Richardson's controversial *Clarissa* and S. Fielding's *Remarks on "Clarissa"* (1749). In this publication, she defends Richardson's narrative shift away from *Clarissa* following Shaftesbury's turn towards marriage with a turn towards Butler's system of cool reflection and forgiveness.

In Chapter Four, two female novelists battle each other in a metatextual exchange where Burney regulates one of her own novels while responding to Wollstonecraft's controversial writing. This chapter explores Frances Burney's (1752–1840) work *Evelina* in the context of Butler's Anglican views on cool reflection leading to assuaging resentment and hindering anger. Then, the analysis considers her novel *The Wanderer: Or, Female Difficulties* (*Wanderer*, 1814) as a response to her own work where she seems to, with resignation, dramatize characters whose living outside of social customs leads to confusion and suffering. Whereas Burney had offered *Evelina*'s characters an overall happy ending, even though they had flouted social custom, she reconfigured her outlook in *Wanderer*. In bringing her female protagonist safety and peace only when brought under the confines of marriage, Burney's novel *Wanderer* seems to acquiesce to Hume's concept of the General Rule, where persons should all submit to social customs and legal systems for the greater good of social stability. In *Wanderer*, Burney extends a sharp criticism to her contemporary writer Mary Wollstonecraft. This chapter then explores Wollstonecraft's *Maria: or, The Wrongs of Woman* (1798), which rejects the gender bias that she asserts inevitably arises through enacting Hume's General Rule in favor of the personal empowerment of Butler's conscience, which can be viewed as a legal system functioning within one's own mind.

In Chapter Five, Mary Shelley (M. Shelley) assumes her mother's feminist mantle in writing her own novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (*Frankenstein*, 1818) as a

strong condemnation of Adam Smith's Impartial Spectator. She presents a polysemous allegory where multiple unreliable narrators assume the role of the primary storyteller and even the narrator of other characters' stories. This chapter explores M. Shelley's design of individual characters, society in general, and the law to represent failures of Smith's sympathy and failures of equity under this patriarchal, classist system. In criticizing Smith's Impartial Spectator as simply an internalized manifestation of social indoctrination, M. Shelley turns to Jeremy Bentham's advocations for law reform with a specific focus on transparency and accessibility in reforms intended to increase equity.

The book's conclusion considers how the novelists explored in each chapter dramatize the moral philosophers' core tenets, especially using narrators to literalize the philosophers' imagined internal entities. Then, the conclusion contemplates the repeated invisibilizing of all the novels' central female characters when the plotlines turn towards characters engaging various external regulatory structures. Next, the conclusion considers the literary world's pivot away from the epistolary novel and presents a short investigation of William Thackeray's (1811–1863) *Vanity Fair* (1847–1848) to demonstrate the stylistic and attitudinal shift away from the previous respect enjoyed by the epistolary form. From there, the writer considers the epistolary novel's impacts on the twentieth- and twenty-first-century literary trends and its modern manifestations, including a look at Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. This research project concludes with observations regarding social media as another platform for epistolary communications. In the realm of cyberspace, social media serves as a simultaneously private and anonymous, public and targeted, epistolary battleground for modern manifestations of ongoing culture wars wherein questions of gender equity continue to present moral challenges for individual peace and social harmony.



## Chapter One

Is Disobedience always Gratifying and Liberating?: How Aphra Behn Condemns Locke's Political Rebellion while Encouraging Gender Equity

### Part I: Introduction

Who was the enigmatic Aphra Behn? The writer of the first English novel? A proto feminist? A royal spy? While Behn avoids being resolutely identified, her three-volume epistolary novel *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister (Love-Letters)* immediately illustrates the era's impulse to interweave historical events, moral philosophy, and fictional narratives. Specifically, *Love-Letters* represents Behn's blend of political satire mixed with gender commentary. Behn's amatory novel, published anonymously as a roman à clef, intersects events surrounding the 1685 Monmouth Rebellion with tales of frustrated lovers who undergo a three-stage process of contemplation, skepticism, and turns to external regulations to facilitate moral behavior.

As a woman of letters, the unorthodox Tory Behn, a Loyalist to the Crown, gained familiarity with the opposition Whig Locke's moral philosophy and dialectical moral reasoning through her interactions with members of the Royal Society. This connection intersects with Locke's role as a member of the society, where scientific rhetoric is crucial to his *An Essay concerning Human Understanding (Essay, 1689)*. Both the dialect structure and the content of *Essay* can be seen as foundational to *Love Letters*' narrative structures. Behn's three-volume structure follows Locke's dialectic in advancing the value of reasoning from experience, skepticism that an individual will act morally as result of their reasoning abilities, and the need for the church and government to step in as external regulators. Furthermore, Behn's narrative structure paradoxically dramatizes Locke's epistemological dialectic, while providing a platform for Behn to disagree with Locke's political position on disobedience to the monarchy through her

analysis of the double standards that occurs when a man versus a woman flouts gendered marriage customs.

Let us review the sociohistorical events surrounding this novel's writing to situate its political impulses and Locke's role as a political actor. As a result of Charles II's pivot away from the Reformation's dogmatic rejection of religious tolerance, natural philosophy (science) gained support with the Crown. Charles II reigned as a dynamic monarch. He reasserted Anglicanism,<sup>3</sup> in particular the ideas of the moderate, flexible Latitudinarians,<sup>4</sup> who "were not themselves active scientists (but) were sympathetic to the scientific movement" (Shapiro 113). With the Crown's support and the success and popularity of Baconian science, the Royal Society members believed they were promoting a philosophy that would assist people in all aspects of their lives, including religious quandaries and devotions. Sprat's official apologia for the Royal Society made the alliance between liberal religion and scientific inquiry clear, insisting that the qualities for the Christian and the scientific experimenter were the same. Another spokesman for the Society, Joseph Glanville furthered this notion, "insisting that scientific inquiry itself provided a remedy for religious dissension" (Shapiro 113). Aided by Sprat's "setting science on a firm apolitical and utilitarian basis..., (he) described fanaticism and pedantry as the enemies of knowledge," which supported the Royal Society's intellectual dovetailing with England's goals to advance in global exploration, trade, and colonization (Todd 171). For Locke, religious

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<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of Charles's desire for religious tolerance see Tapsell, Grant. "Religion and the Government of the Later Stuarts," *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern English Literature and Religion*, Andrew Hiscock and Helen Wilcox, editors.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of Latitudinarians see Shapiro, Barbara J. *Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England* pg 111–15. The Latitudinarians were practical and steered a center course through the religious conflicts in 1640–1688. They joined in an acceptance of divine Providence with indifference to Nonfundamentals in accepting both Puritan Interregnum and Anglican Restoration and then the Revolution of 1688. Although they were willing to accommodate various dissenting groups, which caused conflict with the High Church of England, they were firmly within Anglican tradition.

tolerance and rationalism married well with his philosophical outlook, as will be discussed in this chapter.

Through these royal patronages of the new natural philosophy, Charles II demonstrated his worldliness and modernity, thus securing the pathways for the Royal Society's scientific views to influence church, palace, and court thought. However, this remained a time of political instability. The 17th century witnessed multiple transfers of national leadership, including James I (1603–1625), Charles I (1625–1649), Oliver Cromwell (1653–1658), Richard Cromwell (1658–1659), and Charles II (1660–1685). In simplistic terms, these power shifts centered on differing visions of monarchical versus parliamentary rule and disagreements on Catholic, Anglican, or Protestant religious rule. In *Love-Letters*' prefatory "Argument," Behn overtly references one of the era's notorious foiled anti-monarchy incursions—the Monmouth Rebellion, which indirectly came to greatly impact Locke's safety when he became suspected of involvement.

The history on the Monmouth Rebellion is quite convoluted. In brief, the first Earl of Shaftesbury (Ashley), for whom Locke served as a family doctor and tutor to his son, had left his government post, and his finances fluctuated. Ashley was imprisoned in the tower for several political and economic reasons while a Popish Plot stirred anti-Catholic sentiments in the English public. As Ashley was imprisoned and under surveillance, he avoided implication in this anti-monarchy plot. However, he used the social turmoil to vastly expand support for his Whig party, as he increased the Whig dominance to gain parliamentary control. The Whigs focused on passing the Exclusion Bill to deny James II, the Catholic brother of Charles II, from ascending the throne. However, they failed; Ashley was imprisoned again, only to be soon released. Next, the Whig contingency attempted the Rye House Plot in June 1683, which intended to assassinate

Charles and his brother. Locke became implicated and fled to exile in Holland, where he began writing *Essay* in earnest. After the death of Charles II, James II was forced from the throne by William of Orange in what is known as the Glorious Revolution.

Behn's opening Argument to *Love-Letters* alludes to and dismisses these historical events and incredibly complex factors. However, with close analysis, these pages introduce Behn's subtle system of presenting a political and gendered critique masked as a scandalous love affair. Under Behn's direction, the editor of this collection of epistles begins to develop a closeness with the readers by introducing Silvia with an italicized aside of "(so *we* shall call the noble Maid)" (10). This aside infers that Silvia might be a pseudonym, which creates a secretive connection between the editor and the reader and hints towards the real-life scandals of a prominent Whig family. At the same time it broadens the identity of Silvia to be an anonymous Everywoman, which makes the narrative both intimate and universal, illuminating the impact of politics and philosophy on women generally. At this point, Behn's editor-narrator presents *Love-Letters'* exposition. Again, Behn demurs from the open secret of England's larger political and religious machinations: "[B]ut 'tis not my business here to mix the rough relation of a War with the soft affairs of Love; let it suffice, the Hugonots were defeated and the King got the day, and every Rebel lay at the mercy of his Sovereign" (10). Instead, under the cover of foreign lands and factions, Behn's editor specifies Philander's involvement in anti-monarchist politics resulting in his imprisonment. However, Philander was not imprisoned long before escaping with Silvia, who met him on the run and they absconded together to live in a cottage.

Behn removes herself from making any political or gender commentary by using the unnamed editor-narrator as a credible source to present these letters, which were supposedly "found in their Cabinets, at their house at St. Denice, where they both liv'd together for the space

of a year” (10). Behn’s credible, unbiased editor promises that the letters have been collated “as exactly as possible” and printed “in the order they were sent” (10). This collection of epistles reveals Philander’s seduction of Silvia and her sexual awakening as evidence of Locke’s belief in individuals’ ability to reason, freeing themselves of prejudice, and his skepticism that an individual with a deficit, whether in skills, constitution, or education will reason rigorously enough to accurately evaluate the necessity of the desire for long term happiness. Philander exemplifies a libertine’s ability to reason without morality and Silvia’s vulnerability to such reasoning, as she was purposeful taught to be vapid, making her vulnerable to custom’s control or that of any authority figure (like Philander).

Behn shifts the epistolary nature and the tone in Volume II. Behn increases the voice of the omniscient but non-judgmental narrator. Initially, this narrator presents as an objective witness who mirrors the role of the Royal Society’s Institutional Observer on an anthropological study. As new lovers Octavio, a nobleman from abroad, and Brilljard, a servant whom Silvia marries to cover for her forbidden love with Philander, both compete for Silvia’s romantic and sexual affections, the narrator and the audience observe them, and their letters serve as research and evidence. By adding epistles from more characters than just Philander and Silvia, readers are challenged to decipher the truth through the characters’ competing motivations. The skepticism of man’s ability to reason-well, becomes ever more evident, as the reader observes the characters’ rational-incoherence and dissimulation.

By Volume III, Behn further complicates the amount of evidentiary knowledge conveyed in the epistles and the ability for readers to trust the narrator. In this final volume, Behn’s narrator becomes increasingly judgmental as Silvia continues her sexual escapades and rebellion against custom. She praises Octavio’s entrance into Holy Orders. The narrator’s judgments in

Volume III, remove her from the scientific realm of Volume II and establish her as an external regulatory apparatus. Just as Locke turns to God and government to punish and reward, the narrator judges Octavio but praises his realigned-reasoning and his return to obedience; whereas, the narrator both assassinates Silvia's character and disappears her as an active agent—as she only warrants a handful of pages detailing her wanton acts of lust and greed—in a novel where she was once a vivacious driving force. This narrative choice illuminates Behn's criticism that women are particularly harmed by their attempts to reason, because it gives them hope they do not have the support to truly entertain in that they are void of the skills to reason well, because excessive harm befalls them when they do it poorly, and finally because the return to regulation seems even stricter than what they first endured.

Like a detective procedural, this chapter investigates proof of Behn's intellectual engagement with Royal Society members and her criticism of Locke's philosophy when applied to women. Then, the argument proceeds to analyze the impacts of Behn's choices of narrative shifts that occur in *Love-Letters*. This follows from Volume I's first-person epistles to Volume II's hybrid epistolary and third-person structure and, finally, to Volume III's predominantly third-person narrative. A secondary argument emerges through this exploration of how these characters dramatize Locke's dialectic. While Behn's dramatization initially privileges female agency—as reason reigns and guides the fictional character Silvia's emotions—Behn eventually forecloses the feminist impulses being awakened in Silvia's questioning of her cultural indoctrination. Following Locke's third dialectic stage, Behn shifts her narrator's focus towards external regulatory structures. Here, this equates to the narrator's positive assessment of the male Octavio's taking of the Church's holy orders contrasted to the narrator's negative assessment of the female Silvia's continuing with her amorous and lustful passions. Thus, Behn's work

demonstrates the pattern to be shown in each chapter where the novelist dramatizes a moral philosophy dialect, either in praise or in criticism of those tenets. However, ultimately, the author forecloses any social openings of women's empowerment through the dialectic's third stage turn to external regulatory structures, which through formal legal codes or shadow laws of customs diminish women's rights.

## **Part II: The Moral Philosopher John Locke**

### *Locke's Biography and Cross-Cutting Circles*

John Locke's journey towards philosophical fame and prominence in the government was a process of evolution, assertion, and self-correction. Locke's life journey was deeply influenced by the tumult of the time, the various people surrounding him, and his own capacious and curious mind. Locke Biographer Roger Woolhouse suggests Locke always seemed to be guided by his desire for a tempered civil society unshackled from extremes. Locke seemed to have been born as a child of history, as his tenth birthday coincided with the day civil war broke out against Charles I (Woolhouse 8). Although little evidence suggests that Locke was brought up in a puritanical home, Calvinist impulses guided his grandfather and father. Ultimately, Locke's father was on the side of the Parliamentary forces, which allowed him to lobby people of import to nominate Locke to Westminster School in London. Locke was a strong student, and, in 1652, he received a studentship to Christ College, Oxford. A year into his schooling, Locke survived a Parliamentary Visit, which purged students thought of as lax Puritans or non-Puritans.

Locke's intellect and curiosity simultaneously led him towards the medical sciences and political philosophy, where he evolved his intersecting outlooks on scientific reasoning and religious faith. His views were always tempered with intellectualism and tolerance. Locke continuously pursued higher education to complete a three-year MA by 1658. In 1659, Locke

collaborated with Henry Stubbe and John Owen on measures to facilitate religious tolerance in government. While Locke thought tolerance was possible, he believed Catholicism was incompatible with a tolerant society. In 1660, Locke began to etch out his conception of natural law, where God confers morally obligatory rules on humans that they can discern either through reason or scripture. Ultimately, he believed that the magistrate's laws, which were promulgated for the good of society, were evidence of God's laws.

He also surmised that human-made laws indicated that moderating political and religious actions would lead to a more stable society. Therefore, he was initially sanguine when Charles II was reinstated along with the Church of England resuming official national functions. Although Locke did not perfectly align with Charles II's religious and political outlooks, the philosopher believed that an individual's morals and faith (even when contrary to another religion's perspectives) could endure. Locke believed a person's communion with God mattered, not the person's religious affiliation. At age thirty-three, Locke's views on religious tolerance expanded when he lived in France, where he experienced their advanced religious tolerance. Over his lifetime, Locke evolved his thinking on the intersections of personal faith and government controls on formal religion. He came to believe that an individual's morality deserved space for him or her to determine how to worship and that citizens should disobey laws created by magistrates that prohibited religious liberties.



### **Evidence Gathering and Inductive Reasoning**

As an active member of the Royal Society and a de facto assistant to Robert Boyle,<sup>5</sup> Locke includes direct and indirect references to this scientific establishment and its values on observation and evidence in his *Essay*. Like Boyle's preface to his *New Experiments* (1660), Locke's preface to *Essay* hails his audience, whom he considered persons of his ilk and "fitted to" his "own size."<sup>6</sup> Because Locke believed his audience to be his equal, he desired them to engage candidly with his assertions and to consider this philosophical text in connection with their own experiences. The preface's letter format provides an intimate space for such an address, as Locke writes, "If thou judgest for thy self, I know thou wilt judge candidly...For though...there is nothing in this Treatise of the Truth whereof I am not fully persuaded; yet I consider my self as liable to Mistakes, as I can think thee; and know, that this Book must stand or fall with thee" (7). The letter allows Locke to solicit his audience to think through his assertions with him: "There are few, I believe, who have not observed in themselves or others" (8) and to reflect upon their own experiences. Eager for collaboration, reciprocity, and circulation, Locke wants his audience to fact-check his observations and to add their understandings to the epistolary archive of scientific observations.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Boyle, Sir Robert. *Works of the Honourable Robert Boyle*. Ed. Thomas Birch. 2nd ed. 6 Vols. London: J. & F. Rivington et al., 1772 (1:2)

<sup>6</sup> John Locke. *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, "Epistle to the Reader." (8).

<sup>7</sup> Henry Oldenburg, quoted in Marie Boas Hall, *Promoting Experimental Learning: Experiment and the Royal Society, 1660–1727* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), 9; Sprat, *History*, 119

Daniel Carey suggests “Locke’s investigation of the natural history of man...relied heavily on the findings of travelers, examining narratives for evidence of human custom, belief, and intellectual capacity“ (25). Like the Royal Society, Locke invested in observation and accumulation of data to direct his assertions, for “[h]aving accepted moral and intellectual diversity, he committed himself to the gradual process of accumulating examples inductively before advancing hypotheses and explanations” (25). Locke encourages people to use observations inductively, asserting that the “Mind, by degrees, improves in these and advances to the Exercise of those other faculties of Enlarging, Compounding, and Abstracting its Ideas, and of reasoning about them, and reflecting upon all these” (II.I.22, N: 117). Locke insists that observations and discoveries be inductive and not a product of artificial hypotheses that jumps to deductive reasoning.

The Royal Society’s experiments, like the speculative philosophy of Locke’s *Essay*, relies more on descriptive than justificatory processes. For example, the Royal Society empirical scientist Robert Hooke felt the “best scientific procedure began with observation, continued according to reason, and returned to the ‘Hands and Eyes’ again by a ‘continual passage round from one Faculty to another’ in a never-ending process” (qtd. in Shapiro, Probability 50). Hooke explains how with the data gathered from a variety of persons and resources culminating to provide “an adequate supply of empirical data, a ‘storehouse’ of ‘Thousands of Instances’ to work on, the rational and deductive faculties might accomplish a great deal. Hypothesis and empiricism were closely linked” (qtd. in Shapiro, Probability 50–1). This process gives observers access to matters of fact through the replication of the experiment, which then confirms the deduced probability of veracity.

Understanding sensations and reflections through the tool of language—whether this be through internal or external dialogue—represents vital processes for Locke’s dialectic Moral Stage 1. In this stage, people witness and experience human society and earthly processes where each person must critically contemplate the issue at hand and formulate assessments and decisions. Hopefully, these are accurate assessments that facilitate moral knowledge, which precipitates moral decision making with the concomitant moral behavior. As Locke wants people to reevaluate issues and situations constantly, he describes reasoning as an ever-evolving, self-correcting dialectical process. Locke’s concept of skepticism plays centrally in the operation of the self-reflexive process. He advocates for people to observe events to make empirical inductions, weeding the moral stage and the antithesis moral stage because individuals have access to reasoning skills, but those skills meet with empirical constraints making error possible.

*Locke’s Synthesis: Internal, External, and Divine Regulatory Systems*

**Moral Stage 1 Internal Regulators: Pain, Pleasure, Happiness, and Will**

Although Locke explains how he views the body’s and mind’s experiences, memories, and thoughts, how does he think people can bridge the gap between moral knowledge and moral action? While Locke remains skeptical that people can cross this gap, he explores the influences of pain, pleasure, happiness, and will as primary regulatory systems to guide humans towards moral behavior. According to Locke, people possess internal regulatory structures to support them in the thesis Moral Stage 1. Accordingly, Locke argues that pain and pleasure present the two empirical experiences that most affect and direct people’s actions. Pain—often produced by an absent object of desire—brings misery. Pleasure—often produced by obtaining a desired

object—brings happiness. However, Locke contends that true happiness relates more to a state of moral contentment, one which is especially found in community with others. This meaningful pleasure can best be facilitated by self-discipline and reason. Thus, people should weigh their desires by deliberating on which ones lead to contentment and not merely immediate, fickle (and sometimes potentially harmful) pleasure.

To understand Locke, readers must understand that he believes all of humanity seeks happiness—the enjoyment of pleasure “without any considerable mixture of uneasiness” (II.XXI.62, N: 275). Locke attributes to wrong judgment a person’s desire for something that brings greater uneasiness than pleasure. Locke proffers prodigality and intoxication as examples of ill-judged immediate pleasures. These indulgences and the immediate pleasures they bring can cause excessive uneasiness in the long term. As a result of individuals’ vulnerability to immediate pleasures (prodigality and intoxication) Locke believes, individuals’ decision making process needs guidance. This need for support is due to: their varied constitution of wants; weakness and narrowness of mind; the overwhelming pain created by unfulfilled desires; and—perhaps most influential—the remoteness of a promised future pleasure.

In addition to the encouraging and prohibitory natures of pleasure and pain, respectively, Locke explains how the human “will” serves as a healthy prohibitory faculty. He asserts that will can steer people from harmful actions, especially when the passions are elevated during extreme states where amorous or vengeful intentions seem to overpower a person. Locke rationally explains that:

the ungovernable passion of a Man violently in love; or the impatient desire of revenge keeps the will steady and intent; and the will thus determined never lets the

Understanding lay by the object, but all the thoughts of the Mind, and powers of the Body

are uninterruptedly employ'd that way, by the determinations of the will. (II.XXI.38, N: 256)

An individual holds the faculties to comprehend pleasure and pain and the will necessary to move towards moral action, which eventuates in personal happiness derived from virtuous behavior and interactions. To obtain Locke's conception of moral happiness, people must suspend desires while analyzing the actual necessity of their wants. Locke understands that his intellectually rigorous process challenges most people. He acknowledges that some people will find it difficult to self-regulate under certain circumstances and due to individual constitutional deficits. This lack of innate skills, formal education, and social support might put contentment and the well-being of society out of reach.

### **External Regulatory System 1: Locke's Social Contract Views on Government**

Because Locke believed that individuals hold the faculties to both reason and act on such reason, but remained profoundly skeptical that humans could bridge the gap to moral behavior through their internal regulatory systems, he synthesized two collaborative external regulatory structures into an overarching moral regulatory system to facilitate moral behavior in people: government and the Divine. Locke asserts a social contract theory that people agree to be governed by a legitimate government which imagines citizens transferring "to the government their right to execute the law of nature and judge their own case. These are the powers which they give to the central government, and this is what makes the justice system of governments a legitimate function of such governments" (Uzgalis 57). He clarifies that legitimate governments must support the people's rights to life, freedom, and property with the concomitant prosecution and punishment of violators of the public good. Education remains essential in establishing both the

critical thinking and the obedience that makes the regulatory structures possible. Locke's theory of government undergirds the external regulations essential to his synthesis moral stage.

### **External Regulatory System 2: Divine Will as the Ultimate Law**

Locke holds firm to his Christian views of God's spiritual endowment in humans of free will and its responsibilities. These ideas link to Locke's synthesis's second thread in his Moral Stage 3 turn to external regulatory structures. Locke states his belief in the human-Divine connection, asserting that humans "have Light enough to lead them to the Knowledge of their Maker, and the sight of their own Duties" (I.I.5, N:45). Thus, while Locke acknowledges people's internal regulatory structures of pleasure and pain and the social external regulatory structures of law and government, Locke believes that the influential regulatory system remains God, primarily through Heaven and Hell's roles in motivating moral behavior.

### **External Regulatory System 1 & 2: Hedonistic Motivations**

Locke considers these two types of external moral structures, including the legal threats of imprisonment and the spiritual ones of damnation, as essential hedonistic motivators toward rational engagement with the passions. Locke explains that "Virtue and Religion are necessary to his Happiness; let him look into the future State of Bliss or Misery, and see there God the righteous Judge, ready to render to every Man according to his Deeds... unto every Soul that doth Evil, Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish" (II.XXI.60, N:273-4). Thus, to avoid long-term misery, people must put a hold on some short-term desires and displeasures; this act of abeyance is an act of reason. In the same essay, Locke exhorts people to eschew transitory pleasures derived from immoral acts for eternal salvation bestowed after living a moral life:

For since nothing of Pleasure and Pain in this Life, can bear any proportion to endless Happiness, or exquisite Misery of an immortal Soul hereafter, Actions in his Power will have their preference, not according to the transient Pleasure, or Pain that accompanies, or follows them here; but as they serve to secure that perfect durable Happiness hereafter.  
(II.XXI.60, N:273–4)

Locke asserts that these two systems of external regulatory structures provide stopgaps in criminal and immoral behaviors, as people fear the consequences of not following the law and of eternal damnation. These hedonistic-based understandings motivate people to control their immediate passions, especially with the guidance of external regulatory structures. In considering people's abilities to control these passions and to adhere to moral behavior, Locke turns his dialectical concerns to ideas on power. This refers to power in terms of the individual alone and to the individual in terms of larger social and institutional structures, which can hinder or aid, all in connection to larger concepts of the Divine.

Locke acknowledged that while he considered the Divine to be the ultimate regulatory system, he realized that this abstract, distanced concept of pain and punishment often remained insufficient to motivate most people to sacrifice their petty wants and desires. Thus, he returned to the importance of legitimate civil government to ensure justice and harmony for society.

### **Part III: The Background and Crosscutting Circles of the Novelist Aphra Behn**

#### *Aphra Behn's Biography*

While Behn's early life remains opaque, her unique position as a female artist in a man's world likely derives from her being born the daughter of a wet nurse who cared for Thomas Colepeper, the second Baron Colepeper. This privileged association with Colepeper's retinue and those of

higher ranks allowed Behn access to reading and writing lessons and materials, which inspired her imagination. Although traveling with her father to Suriname<sup>8</sup> may have temporarily limited her interactions with Colepeper, upon her return they reunited. Through Colepeper, she gained an audience with King Charles II and the dramatist Thomas Killigrew, who were both fans of the types of curiosities she brought back from exotic Suriname. After meeting with the king and presenting Killigrew with feathers from her travels, she quickly found favor with the “most important institutions of the Restoration, the Royal Society, and the theater” (Todd 68). This first-hand experience, combined with her intellectual curiosity, gave Behn an advantage in garnering patronage, as she organically engaged with the aristocracy’s emerging scientific interests. The relationships among Behn, Colepeper, Killigrew, and Lord Willoughby likely led to her rumored missions for Charles II working as a spy in Holland.

*A Liberalizing Court Opens Avenues for a Female Scholar: Theater and the Royal Society*

Aphra Behn might be said to have lived both at the right time and at the wrong time—she was an unorthodox woman who thrived in Charles II’s liberal court. Yet, her dramatic plays, offering biting commentary on politics and gender roles, often landed her hot water. Behn became a regular dramatist in Charles II’s court, where “in the theater, witty, bawdy comedies—written and acted by women as well as men—reflected the style of a fun-loving, dissolute court” (Abrams 2049). Rebecca Tierney-Hynes explains that the theater became a space undergoing complex changes from the interregnum’s “instructive entertainment” to Charles II’s vision of what became the “less strictly controlled” theater of the Restoration (58–9). While Behn’s plays

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<sup>8</sup> Todd. Chapter 3 Voyage to Surinam pg 29–62



like *The Rover* were replete with libertine pleasures, Behn's genius world also included scientific research, investigations, and publishing, which brought her into the realm of the Royal Society, creating a feedback loop of inspiration between her creative and scientific writing.

Behn applied the knowledge from these Royal Society associations and imbued her creative fiction with these ideas and formats. These epistles showcased her knowledge, allowing her to incorporate the emerging scientific discourse popular with audiences. Behn went beyond merely associating with philosophers of her day—she creatively defended those she supported with witty defenses included in her plays. In an epistle to one of her plays, she mocked detractors of Thomas Hobbes, with whom she shared a similar distaste for “wordy philosophers and so-called learned men” (Todd 172). Not only did the unconventional Behn produce this defense of Hobbes, but she also wrote the verse prologue to a translation of *Lucretius* by Thomas Creech. Karen Bloom Gevirtz explains that Behn's creative and intellectual works reflect her social engagements with the era's erudite elite. Behn's “friends and lovers read the work of Boyle, Hobbes, and others,” and her work “demonstrates an independent, critical application of those ideas in fresh contexts” (Gevirtz 87). Thus, Behn's interactions with Royal Society members can be confirmed through her published works, where she incorporated their styles and used the court's theatrical platforms to express her views on sociopolitical topics.

*Politics in the Theater—Not so fast: Why Behn Turned to and Exceeded  
at Novel Writing and Scientific Translations*

As previously noted, the theater's liberalization did not mean Behn could expect to produce controversial work without consequences. The 1690s saw the rise of the conservative “Societies for the Reformation of Manners.” In 1682, she was arrested by Whig-supporting conservatives,

specifically for the contents of her prologue to her play *Romulus and Hersilia, or, The Sabine War, a tragedy acted at the Duke's Theatre* (published 1683). Conservatives charged that Behn's play was centered on the Duke of Monmouth's disloyalty to the Crown. While Behn escaped harsh scrutiny, she did become unofficially censored, which forced her to redirect her writings from plays to novels.

This tense situation likely precipitated her transition away from plays to her writing the novel *Love-Letters* and completing a translation project with the French writer Bernard de Fontenelle (1657–1757). Slightly before publishing Volume I of *Love-Letters*, Behn visited the continent where the French salons promoted freedoms similar to Charles II's court. During this time, Behn worked with de Fontenelle, a fellow of the Royal Society of London, for whom she later translated his *A Discovery of New Worlds* (1688). Although Behn did not have “the physical stamina to write an original work of science... Behn wished it well known that she had the mental equipment” (Todd 413). Illustrating Behn's intellectual prowess, her translation includes corrections of Fontenelle's scientific errors and critical commentary on the original author, demonstrating her knowledge of Descartes and the time's scientific discourse. In fact, Behn's time in France was likely spent on the “fringes of grand and respectable society,” as in France she was liberated from the notoriety of her bawdy plays (Todd 303). Moving in similar social circles, Thomas Sprat, a writer who would become the Bishop of Rochester, and Behn became friends while they sought aristocratic patronage for their academic and artistic endeavors. Sprat, for instance, thought “France ‘next to England’ in its zeal for the promotion of experiments” and “emphasized the Royal Society's ‘perpetual intercourse’ with French philosophers and the value of reports from ‘their most Judicious Travellers’” (qtd. in Shapiro, *Fact* 135). Thus, Behn's

ability to move among the various social circles vastly enlarged her access to scholarly thinkers and their ideas, culminating in the moral philosophy dramatized in her proto-novel *Love-Letters*.

#### **Part IV: Literary Analysis Testing the Effects of Locke's Moral Stages**

*Love-Letters*' three-part stratagem complexly engages with Locke's epistemology and political philosophy to reveal its punitive effects on women. William B. Warner's assessment that the "shift in the narrative form and plot situation from the Letters to the Adventures suggests that Behn engages in something of a thought experiment" (66) marries well with the scientifically minded Locke's stages of moral thought dramatized by Behn's narrative structure. Warner continues that Behn "seems to be asking herself, 'What would happen if my outlaw lovers were given what they have sought throughout the Letters—almost complete freedom from the restraint of fathers and the law?'" (66). Behn's exploratory method parallels Locke's and Boyle's "new scientific style," which was "hostile to dogmatism, system-making, and assertions of authority," favoring "open and inquiring" science "bent on investigation rather than the pronouncement of ultimate truth" (Probability, 17). Following these science-based thinkers, Behn creates subtext-filled narratives layered with contradictions that invite, even demand, critical thought from readers. However, of equal importance is the platform *Love-Letters*' changing forms provide Behn to critique Locke's politics of disobedience and its negative effects on women.

### **Philander Wrestles with the Institution of Marriage versus Authentic Love**

In Volume I's epistolary form, Behn's application of Lock's process is evident when Philander questions his past choices, admits of his errors, compares his current emotions and experiences, and determines a course correction based on that analysis. However, Behn openly presents Philander's amorous intentions, which allows readers to question whether he engages earnestly with Locke's rigorous reasoning strategies meant to help individuals dismantle prejudiced institutions for the betterment of society. Like Locke's exhortatory "Epistle," Philander encourages Silvia to join him in this contemplative process by comparing what she knows from her own experience with the rhetoric of institutions. Paradoxically, this process requires both intimacy and distance. Philander places his history on view for Silvia and he makes demands on her belief system that signal a certain intimacy. At the same time their physical separation provides Silvia a space to contemplate Philander's argument, a process consistent with Locke's request that his readers critique his *Essay* by reflecting on their own experience. The epistolary format offers one an ideal space to reason through arguments without concern for heightened emotional response created by the physical presence of another.

The lovelorn Philander begins his letter to his wife's sister Silvia by critiquing people's irrational adherence to custom and institutions. He specifically attacks their preference for custom above observations gained through their own experiences and passions. The passionate Philander deplores his situation, bemoaning "I think and know enough to justify the flame in me, which our weak alliance of Brother and Sister has render'd so criminal...What Kin my charming Silvia are you to me? (Behn 11–12) Philander transitions his argument from denying

the legal restrictions against unions between those related only by marriage (but not by blood). He turns his attention to denying the enslaving, worldly rules of ceremony, custom, and Church versus the genuine spiritual passion of lovers. Philander ruminates that:

No ties of blood forbid my Passion; and what's a Ceremony impos'd on man by  
custome? what is it to my Divine Silvia, that the Priest took my hand and gave it to your  
Sister? What Alliance can that create? Why shou'd a trick devis'd by the wary old, only  
to make provision for posterity, tie me to an eternal slavery. (11–12)

Philander's first-person narrative articulation, "I know," affirms both his experience and his knowledge. His critique of the institution of marriage comes from this lived experience.

In a letter to Silvia, Philander writes that his wife had affections for another lover previous to their marriage, which precipitated her infidelity. Philander explains that he uncritically followed custom when he pursued and married Silvia's older sister. Now wiser, the bruised Philander intertwines this history with self-reflection through which he interrogates dogmas and institutions, as well as his own apathetic adherence to such customs. In this respect, the particular line of argument Philander uses to convince Silvia of their right to love seems radical—more radical than what is necessary to allow for the satiation of personal passions. By using the epistolary form to interrogate custom, he dramatizes Locke's thesis that people can "carefully" examine "the Dictates and Dominion of others" to break down prejudice and arrive at moral knowledge (Finke 99). In this epistolary exchange, Behn uses Philander's rhetoric to illuminate Locke's approach to breaking down blind adherence to custom, especially when one has controverting personal experience.

Like Locke's "Epistle" and his *Essay*, Philander's letter encourages his reader to think through received doctrines established by other people (18). Silvia's notions of "Virtue and

Honour” are not her own, but rather notions imposed by religion and custom. Philander urges Silvia to question these doctrines because custom told him to marry out of “interest and necessity,—A Wife, a light loose unregarding Property;” and, he finds himself worse off as a result (18). Marriage customs do not require love and fidelity. However, the cruel and expensive teacher “Experience” has taught him now to trust his own emotions. He believes if he “be permitted to lay claim to Silvia as a Lover, and marry [himself] more effectually by [his] everlasting Vows, than the Priest by his common method cou’d do to any other Woman less belov’d,” happiness would surely follow (19). Philander’s letters highlight the harm caused by custom’s prejudices—he claims the right to rely on his own experience and reasoning, a process that Locke’s thesis suggests produces moral knowledge. Locke’s *Essay* argues that ignorance and faulty understanding result from people’s abdication of authority to custom, fashion, and opinions.

As noted in the previous exploration of Locke’s central tenets, he emphasizes dismantling blind obedience to social customs and institutions. However, Locke’s three-stage dialectic closely interweaves with Christian rhetoric on God endowing humans with reason. The faculty of reason allows humans to ascertain moral behavior and then to embrace their free will to implement those correct actions. When Locke pushes against hypocritical social customs or corrupt legal institutions, he is promoting his overall aspiration to make humanity a more godly people. In dramatizing Locke’s thesis Behn presents Philander, who himself opposes custom’s current authority by enacting Locke’s advice to question and not to worship the altar of custom. Of course, tangible differences exist between the philosopher Locke’s and the character Philander’s positions. Consider Philander’s sexual motivations for encouraging Silvia to abandon marriage customs. Philander is not as concerned as Locke with ideas on the reciprocal

connections between right reasoning and understanding God. Rather, Philander focuses on a new moral order unfettered by blind obedience and wrong precedence unmoored from God. While Locke seeks more spiritual connections and Philander seeks more worldly outcomes, both of their moral reasonings are predicated on the same structural basis—the belief that nothing is innate and that custom should be interrogated to generate a reasoned outcome. In advancing her criticism of Locke’s moral philosophy, Behn offers the lascivious Philander as an example of a person whose immediate desires supersede long-term interests or a person who suffers from underdeveloped faculties that would accurately deduce the customs that should be discarded. Philander disobeys marriage customs not for lofty moral enlightenment but for sexual gratification.

### **Silvia Wrestles with the Institution of Marriage versus Authentic Love**

While the character of Philander does not experience a psychological character arc in *Love-Letters*, Behn designs Silvia to embark on an extreme character evolution from a woman of a pristine reputation in Volume I to a lascivious woman run out of town in Volume III. Behn writes out Silvia’s psychological transition in painstaking detail, as one of the author’s themes relates to the hypocritical social reactions when a woman breaks marriage customs. In Volume I, Philander’s epistle ignites Silvia’s questioning of received notions of marriage regulations. Alone with time to think and reread the letter, Silvia enters a state of deep contemplation. If Silvia and Philander were physically together when she attempted a rebuttal to Philander’s argument, affective variables—such as shame, subordination to Philander’s commanding presence, and sexual appetites—might have silenced Silvia. However, Behn presents Silvia in her nascent stages of questioning authority. And Silvia’s epistle betrays her faulty reasoning that clings to

custom's dictates. Because her initial epistle pulls from social dictates outside of her own experience and perspective, her writing reads as duty-bound and florid: "I'll redeem the bleeding Honour of our Family, and my great Parents Vertues shall shine in me" (30). Turning to authoritative codes of family honor and virtue, Silvia uncritically invokes vague words, which are derived from her uncritical acceptance of dogma that is littered with complex, yet abstract moral terms defined by social power structures.

At this point, Behn invokes Locke's ideas of language being a community-building faculty for people to agree upon the definition of a concept and custom. Locke suggests that moral terms are "commonly more complex" and of a more "uncertain Signification" than the terms used to indicate simple ideas or mathematical outcomes (550). The neophyte rebel Silvia uses language itself as a tool to question the received definitions related to marriage, duty, and honor. She struggles with her identity and invokes herself as a bastion of family "Honour" and a symbol of her "Parents Vertues." However, Philander has put the term "Honour" in question. According to his epistles, Honour should signify both integrity and honesty.

For the confused Silvia, custom dictates a woman's and a family's honor to mean female virginity that sanctifies the transference of wealth and property through marriage. Silvia's use of these terms in her letters illuminates the discrepancies between her parent's socially determined definitions and Philander's self-determined interpretations. Considering these incongruities of definitions, does Silvia's definition agree with her parents or does she even understand her parents' definition? Does she define her honor as the transference of her herself as "property" through marriage? Behn presents Silvia as a woman confounded by the process of questioning custom, especially with the lure of Philander's specious arguments and twisted redefinitions of



customs. Initially, Silvia parrots terms that she has not explored deeply, which probably reflects upon the era's gendered indoctrination of social roles and educational access.

### **Lockean Language Ideas: Silvia Determines her own Signification of Terms**

Locke propounds in Book III of his Essay that “moral Words are, in most [people's] mouths, little more than bare Sounds; or [merely] obscure and confused signification” (III.IX.9, N 480). As Silvia has not rigorously inspected her understanding or defined her terms, her application of language devolves into an allegory of ignorance generated by the unthinking worship of custom. Silvia's retreat to virtue to oppose Philander's arguments reads as ambiguous—Silvia sees “Courage, Honour, and Vertue” as fairies attempting to ward off “Love” (33). For Locke, Silvia's hiding within custom's vocabulary demonstrates that, without clarity, for the “interpretation of Laws, whether Divine, or Humane, there is no end; Comments beget Comments, and Explications make new matter for Explications” (480). Circumnavigating this confusion, Philander's encouragement prompts Silvia to attempt to clarify her thoughts by comparing received doctrine with her real-life experiences.

Silvia's personal experience, joined with Philander's definition of marriage as a union of love, facilitates her reasoning process. Due to Silvia's prior lack of questioning her convictions, she does not know how to defend them. She feels “expos'd without other Guards than this boasted Vertue” (33). All she has is the word, which supports little when its signification is not clear to the user. Silvia's letter reflects this realization: “No wonder that you conquer with such ease, when we are only safe by the mean arts of base dissimulation, an ill as shameful as that which we fall. Oh, silly refuge! What foolish nonsense, fond custom can perswade” (68). Silvia's reflection accentuates the gender segregation of the eighteenth-century men's supine

acquiescence to custom as well as the women's dearth of education. As a woman, she lacked the education level necessary for her to properly reason through this complex situation. Instead, Behn presents Silvia as a common manifestation of the era's female mind that has been taught "the mean arts of base dissimulation" (65). In fact, dissimulation directly contrasts reasoning's purpose to discover the truth. In Silvia's epiphany, she compares her knowledge of language and reasoning with Philander's level, which all prompts self-reflection that leads to her new understanding. Again, Behn's creation of Silvia complicates Locke's high-minded moral philosophy to flout social custom, as Silvia's lack of education and analytical skills instantiated by the very custom she hopes to break undermines her ability to place her long term interest and happiness in the forefront of her reasoning process.

Behn doubles down on her critique of Locke's emphasis on basing moral knowledge on experience because a person's experience can be limited and her interpretation skills and motivations might be circumscribed. Behn advances Silvia's character arc to another stage, as this impressionable young woman develops experience-based definitions for love and marriage. Taking the examples of the unhappy marriages around her, Silvia dramatizes another of Locke's moral philosophy points—to take the specific and to extrapolate it to the general. Silvia ruminates that "daily experience proves to us, no couple lives with less content, less ease than those they cry Heaven joins; who is't loves less than those that marry?" (Behn 111). Silvia notes how these loveless marriages result in mutual negativity between the conjoined spouses, "And where love is not there is hate and loathing, at best, disgust, disquiet, noise and repentance" (Behn 111). Not only does Silvia have her sister Mertilla's example of a hypocritical marriage, but Silvia also knows of her father's infidelities, as revealed by Philander's comical epistle relating catching Silvia's father's affair with a maid. After making an assignation with Silvia in

her chambers, Philander hears a strange noise outside her door. Philander disguises himself in the clothes of Silvia's maid. He escapes into the hallway only to encounter Silvia's father who mistakes the disguised Philander for the maid, whom "it seems he expected" (60). With only these two examples of poor marriages, Silvia decides she cannot defend socially prescribed concepts of "virtue and Honour," which contradict her own emotional needs and experiences (68). She embraces rebellion against social dictates.

With the knowledge that marriages for profit often fail, Silvia devises her own definition of a mutual and egalitarian union. Her newly formed romantic concept of a union between lovers envisions one that could be sustained throughout time, as a product of its integrity devoid of the legal trappings of marriage. Silvia writes:

Philander, that's a heavenly match when two Souls toucht with equal passion meet  
(which is but rarely seen)--when willing vows, with serious consideration, are weigh'd  
and made; when a true view is taken of the Soul, when no base interest makes the hasty  
bargain, when no conveniency or design of drudge, or slave, shall find it necessary, when  
equal judgments meet that can esteem the blessing they possess, and distinguish the good  
of eithers love, and set a value on each others merits, and where both understand to take  
and pay; who find the beauty of each others minds, and rate 'em as they ought. (111–2)

Silvia moves away from her abstract collapse of customary marriages into negative experiences to embrace her self-determined concept of a loving union. In Silvia's mind, her newfound concept of marriage takes on definitional particularity. According to Silvia, people are not objects to be taken—people are agents in control of themselves.

Eschewing official sanctification, Silvia and Philander give themselves to each other in "well considered vows with soft inclining hearts, utter'd with love, with joy, with dear delight

when Heaven is call'd to witness" (112). Meaningful to them, their union is not determined by custom. However, astute readers might question Silvia's path to arrive at her open-minded embrace of love matches. While she has first-hand knowledge of Mertilla's unhappiness, readers might wonder at the fickle, manipulative Philander's bias—vulnerability to immediate desires—in describing the reasons for his unhappiness in his marriage. Also, Behn's choice of the epistolary platform allows for gaps in received, second-hand information, which readers must dissect along with the characters. Should Silvia be suspicious of Philander's letter detailing him catching her father in an amour with the maid? Silvia did not witness this interaction herself nor she mention having had suspicions of her father's infidelities. Behn presents Philander as the only witness to the event that he testifies to in the bid to convince Silvia to step outside of propriety and become his lover. In this way, Behn as the silent author plays with character credibility and challenges readers to question the received information and character intentions.

Behn presents Silvia as moving forward with her newly formed ideas on marriage, ideas crafted and honed through Philander's convincing epistles. However, in Silvia's mind that delights in its newfound rebellious constructs, her definitions are reasoned and discerning. Her epistle's taxonomizing and defining arises from her observations of others' marriages and the inevitable comparisons and extrapolations. She reasons from a place unalloyed by "the desire of Esteem, Riches, or Power" as Locke would say (552). What's more, her reasoning dramatizes Locke's thesis by clearing away prejudice in hopes the moral action will come. She exhorts, "'tis not my love's the criminal, no nor the placing it on Philander the crime; but 'tis thy most unhappy circumstances—thy being married, and that was no crime to Heaven till man made laws" (110). Silvia thrashes against the jurisdictional limits of human-made laws, wondering if their "laws reach to damnation?" and cursing anyone involved in the creation of the matrimonial

institutions, “which man contriv’d for mere conveniency have power to alter the divine decrees at our Creation—...’tis fine divinity they teach that cry—Marriages are made in Heaven—folly and madness grown into grave custome” (111). Silvia has firmly transitioned from blindly following church-sanctioned marriage conventions to blindly following Philander in his selfish rebellions against social codes.

Behn further complicates Locke’s ideal philosophy by having a woman, Silvia, attempt to dismantle custom and prejudice. Silvia reasons from judgments based on limited knowledge and motivated by short term pleasures or the pain from wanting those pleasures (joy, and hope)—not custom. Although Silvia’s misjudgment illuminates Locke’s skeptical Moral Stage 2, Behn’s gendered rendering demonstrates Locke’s blind-spot—Rebellions driven by men and women would always be vulnerable to changing authorities because they have limited education which would guide their reasoning and actions to benefit society and themselves long-term. However, for the enlightened Silvia, conventions and laws, justified as preserving social unity, precipitated Philander’s devastating, ill-suited marriage, which legally was made almost impossible to dissolve under the pretext of protecting said harmony. Philander echoes Silvia’s criticism of individuals subsuming their happiness for a socially prescribed concept of the greater good being enforced through traditional European marriage and inheritance practices. Philander speaks of the institutional effects of rules and regulations, which impact present and future married couples. Philander, who is a Puritan sympathizer engaged in a revolutionary plot against religiously tolerant Charles II’s reign, embraces a political philosophy geared toward larger political changes, which can be yoked to his claims about changing the locus of power in the marriage process.

In Volume I, Philander adheres to Locke's process to reason from his own experience and reflection. This allows Philander to comprehend how ill-reasoning—as a result of blind obedience to custom—caused him to ignore the embedded mistakes dooming his first marriage. Inspired by this enlightenment, Philander/Behn encourages Silvia/the audience to engage in similar reasoning processes to lift the veils of normalized barriers to self-determined understanding. Philander's and Silvia's intimate epistles dramatize Locke's thesis, encoded in his first stage of moral thought: the lovers reflect on their experiences, voice their reasoning from those experiences, and make choices based on that reasoning—a process and forbidden outcome assiduously thwarted and denied to many entering into the marriage market, especially women.

*Love-Letters Volume II: Locke's Antithesis Stage Explored Through Proliferating Voices*

### **Lockean Probabilistic Knowledge: Drawing Conclusions by Analyzing Multiple Voices**

The epistolary transactions of Volume II shift from the first-person voice to a hybrid of first- and third-person voices, exploring skepticism's role in the act of reasoning and the motivation for external regulations. Behn's intricate writing invites readers to analyze how the characters' reasoning, as dramatized in Volume I, does not translate into moral action in Volume II. Through multiplying voices, Volume II's hybrid of first-person epistles in conjunction with a third-person, non-judgmental narrator naturally reveals conflicting perspectives on certain topics and issues. Because Behn expands the cast of epistolary writers and characters, her audience must carefully assess these epistolary texts and insightfully consider the epistle author's intention and the internal consistency of the epistolary testimony. Then, astute readers must consider the varied epistles' agreements and/or contradictions with the non-judgmental third-person narrator's observations, which represents Behn's link to Locke's concept of an inductive probabilistic sense

of understanding and judgement regarding the situation at hand. Using Booth's theory as an analytical tool, Behn's technique of evolving hybridity of voice styles makes *Love-Letters* into a nascent and prescient form of later novels where Behn's first volume's content leads the reader to sympathize with Philander and Silvia. Although readers might have doubts of their self-knowledge and motivations, their characters show their desires with the force of sincerity that makes them sympathetic. The second volume's hybrid structure presents the template for later impersonal novels that mimic Behn's non-judgmental narrator's exploration of the characters' inner thoughts that motivate their epistolary writings, revealing incongruities which require the reader to search for moral meaning admitting a larger world of variables.

As Booth contends, impersonal novels become morally problematic, as readers may mistake the authorial presentation of characters when they are presented sympathetically. Booth argues that some readers only catch the superficial presentation of these complex characters; thus, the readers might easily misconstrue their ulterior motives, which are in fact elucidated by other characters' observations, etc. Behn plays with this danger by writing in tones of intentional ambiguity—although lying and conniving, all the characters are light-heartedly portrayed, and the reader must decide where the fault lies. However, returning to the inherent uncertainty within this type of social investigation, this incertitude plays centrally within Behn's intended formal structure, which plays out as a Lockean dialectic and an empirical experiment.

Booth's theory hypothesizes some authors create characters who adhere to an Outer World Consensus (OWC), while other authors create characters specifically to flout the socially determined consensus (or customs), still others create characters who exist in a twilight realm devoid of any type of OWC (as in a world of chaos). Behn's narrative OWC seems unstable, as her characters are meant to simultaneously critique custom and support customs. For example,

Philander's reasoning in Volume I was against marriage custom while also solidifying male authority as the creator and primary beneficiary of custom. Silvia breaks with custom, but is also so impaired by the custom she wants to break with that she places herself right back in the grips of custom's control. By the trilogy's conclusion, Behn's characters have traversed Locke's dialectical stages of moral thought. Volume I roots out custom, or Booth's static, defunct OWC; Volume II attempts to construct a new, beneficial OWC; Volume III retracts to the imprisoning original OWC. This research project notes this cycle of novelists having characters experiment with greater freedoms of thought only to retract into systematized social structures in their concluding segments runs through most of the moral philosophy-inspired epistolary texts until Hume's and Smith's regulatory vision plays a greater role transitioning the Epistolary novel into its Victorian progeny.

Behn's hybrid narrative form serves as an effective technique to dramatize this thought process because the non-judgmental narrator functions like a Royal Society member in the meticulous process of organizing evidence pulled from a variety of people and locations. Naturally, the third-person narrator possesses more insight about the narrative world's ongoingings because she possesses the vantage point collated from the characters' accrued epistolary testimonies. Adhering to the aforementioned rule of probability ascertained through reviews of evidence, Behn's readers must consider all the epistolary evidence along with the third-person narrator's pronouncements, to analyze Philander's and Silvia's actions in attempting to achieve mutual happiness in their love, unbound by custom, without harming others.



### Readers Assess the Situation Through Analyzing the Various Voices

Behn's Volume II's hybrid structure creates a social experiment that readers attempt to inductively reason from. As the readers observe the thoughts and behaviors of characters in this experiment they exercise strategies similar to those of the seventeenth-century natural historians and Royal Society. Behn, following Locke's system of reasoning, does not construct a rigid formulaic narrative structure. Instead the hybrid structure of Volume II is messy with epistles from multiple characters being sent and intercepted by unintended readers; characters who act on information unintended for them without the original sender of the epistle knowing their message was redirected; a third-person narrator filling the gaps in the plot as well as diving into the minds of the characters. This narrative structure is not a controlled experiment with a formulaic hypothesis; rather, it is like the anthropological and ethnographic work of the British colonial impulses. Volume II's form does not want to prove anything in particular true—instead, its structure reveals the outcome of compromised reasoning and the potential dangers of Locke's gender-blind sanguine philosophy. However, the flaws in Locke's thesis can only be revealed through his skeptical Moral Stage 2 which demands observation in search of data that will reveal inconsistencies in his belief that man can act morally as a result of rigorous reasoning.

The readers are encouraged to see the value of skepticism as it illuminates the inadequacy of Philander's and Silvia's reasoning in Volume I. Additionally, the audience's skeptical reasoning does the double work of bringing them to see the value of the regulatory structures Locke's Moral Stage 3 advises, and which are dramatized in *Love-Letters* Volume III. What's more, this skepticism also complicates Locke's belief in the value of his system for society by illuminating its gender blind spot. However, the audience would not be able to experience this cognitive workout without Volume II's cast of characters in conjunction with the steady

observational force of the narrator paralleling the Royal Society's experimental method.

Consider Shapiro's explanation of the Royal Society data collection process, which "required a vast network of observers and collectors. Sailors, military men, traders, and native and foreign observers [who] were recruited to contribute appropriate matters of fact" (Probability, 22). In this strategy of ascertaining knowledge and truth, "Natural history would thus be the work of many hands and eyes not only of the present but also of the future generations" (Shapiro, Probability, 22). The natural historians' and Royal Society members' data collection based on anecdotal evidence closely mirrors Behn's characters' data collection, which is the product of multiple epistolary writers and a third-person omniscient narrator and finally its presentation to the readers. This intentionally lateral collaborative process is what makes this process akin to the Royal Society. It's not the data collection itself which dramatizes Locke's adherence to the Royal Society's procedures; rather it is the cooling saucer of collaborative data collection and collaborative observation which mitigates errors based on poor information.

Royal Society members, like the readers and the fictional characters, engage in a similarly non-hierarchical collaborative process of coming to the truth. However, this sense of "truth" remains humbly fluid, as the new understanding is based on observations of matter of fact and is only probable—it contains within it a nugget of uncertainty. Again, the Royal Society, in general, and Locke and Behn, in particular, all dovetail in their world views. From the beginning of the *Essay*, Locke explains that he will not provide undeniable demonstration, but rather only "appeal to Mens own unprejudiced Experience, and Observation" of their mind and its behaviors (I, IV, 25. 103). Locke's *Essay* intends to both share his observations of the mind's workings and to encourage his readers to engage in the same process of observing from experience, which

influences his consistent return to language of empirical observation that inform the *Essay*'s formal traits and rhetorical choices.

### **The Narrator's Role Mimics the Royal Society's Institutional Observer**

After the first investigative step of amassing data from the characters, the third-person narrator follows the Royal Society's institutional guidance in the exploration of data, which makes probabilistic knowledge credible. The narrator in Volume II dramatizes the institutional structure that reviews the collected data about the issue, culture, or object under exploration. Because the third-person narrator has access to all the available information, her observations highlight incongruences in the data. Employing Stanzel's exploration of first- and third-person narrators' varying degrees of credibility, this chapter asserts that Volume II's structure dramatizes probabilistic knowledge. Since probable knowledge depends on testaments from individuals imbedded in particular situations, their limited points of view must be considered when coming to judgments. Volume II's narrator assesses the characters' testimonies alongside her own knowledge—which involves the narrative portions between letters. Yet, according to Stanzel's narratology, the narrator is inevitably destined to present themselves with limited perspective at certain vulnerable points. Thus, like Locke, the humbled narrator, while well-informed and able to devise smarter determinations than the often-impassioned characters, will need to accept the possibility of error in her judgment.

Behn uses specific formal structures to endow this third-person narrator with the faculties of reasoning from probability. This simultaneously dramatizes Locke's antithesis—the skepticism required for valid experimental observation—while the narrator supports the real-world reader in drawing conclusions regarding the various characters and the final outcomes. In

order to arrive at dependable summations, Locke's dialectic thesis and antithesis require accurate observation and support the observers' credibility balanced with observations that reveal untruths or discrepancies. This tension is dramatized by the narrator's authority as the institutional observer, her use of scientific diction, and her consistent revelation of incongruences between the epistolary characters' perceptions, motives, and actions.

Behn conscientiously writes her narrator as neutral in her character descriptions and omits any judgments from the narrator on the characters' incongruous behaviors, otherwise tensions regarding the narrator's credibility would arise for the readers. The narrator cannot make judgments about truths as "bad." If the narrator were to lay this judgment on untruths, it might affect the accuracy of her observations. In this capacity, the narrator, as institutional observer, represents the last stop for the shared evidence the Royal Society would collect on a project. She would compile the final grouping of that evidence, archive and protect it, and pass the collated document among the virtuosos to be collectively assessed for the benefit of greater society.

In Behn's scientifically styled laboratory fiction, the narrator's role as the institutional observer means she reports the actions and reactions of the characters she observes without offering personal judgment. While in Volume II, she includes statements on the emotion one character's looks or actions bring another, she does not make a value claim: "Octavi[o] enter'd with an address so graceful and obliging, that at first sight he inclin'd Phillanders heart to friendship with him, and on the other side the lovely person of Phillander, the quality that appear'd in his face and mein oblig'd Octavio to become no less his admirer" (Behn 122-3). The narrator observes that Philander is inclined to friendship with Octavio because of his grace and Octavio is obliged to admire Philander because of his lovely person. The narrator reports the

relationship at hand—she does not confirm that Octavio deserves Philander’s high evaluation nor does she suggest that the readers must see Octavio in the same light.

In a potentially explosive situation, the narrator models objective observations without judgments. At one point Silvia feels betrayed by Philander and decides to exact revenge by fostering a romance with Octavio. The narrator takes the readers through Silvia’s theft of one of Philander’s letters and her plan to use the letter’s contents for her nefarious purposes. Silvia “then read over the Letter he had writ, which she lik’d very well for her purpose, for at this time our young Dutch Hero was made a property of, in order to her revenge on Philander” (Behn 168). The narrator tells of Silvia’s response to this letter that she believes will excite jealousy in Philander and explains her vengeful motivation. But, at no point does the narrator offer commentary on Silvia’s motives or judgment.

This segment of Behn’s multi-voiced writing that highlights the incongruities between epistolary rhetoric and character motives offers a natural intersection with debates on the morality of impersonal narration, especially as explored by Wayne C. Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*.

### **Exposing Incongruities: The Functions and Impacts of the Narrator’s Bracketed Asides**

Behn also effectively dramatizes Locke’s antithesis of skepticism through her narrator’s use of authorial asides bracketed by parentheses. These bracketed asides assert her voice and authorial telling of information; at the same time, they highlight the multiple epistolary characters’ self-deception or purposeful deception of others. Again, the narrator’s objectivity remains crucial to readers trusting her accurate observations of lies and deceptions. Readers must be able to accept the narrator’s authority, truthfulness, or neutrality (as long as she does not pass judgment), which is crucial to them arriving at a sense of knowledge founded in deduced probabilities. In some

authorial bracketed asides, the narrator reveals characters' duplicity, as the characters' motivations (revealed by the authorial statement) counter the characters' expressed reasons for their actions (written in their epistles).

Other authorial asides highlight the characters' interpretive failures, which are not construed as purposeful duplicities. When Silvia attempts to use Octavio as the pawn in her revenge against Philander (who has cast her aside), the narrator explains that if Silvia "reflected with reason" on her romantic fears, her anxieties would be assuaged but "(...she seldom did, for either Love or rage blinded that)" (224). This aside dramatizes, both in its content and its form, the basis of Locke's skepticism. As articulated by the narrator, Silvia has the cognitive capacity for reflection and reason, but passions intercede making it so her actions do not align with her capacity for reason. By observing this with clarity in this authorial aside, the narrator collects data that affirms this skepticism. Several other asides note the impediments to reason, especially in the bias towards positivity and confirmation, ruminating that "(for too often we believe as we hope)" (224-5). And in another moment, the narrator implies Octavio's error with the interjection "(interpreted he)" (246), as she reveals the actual facts.

Finally, at the end of Volume II the narrator's aside does the double task of highlighting Silvia's purposeful duplicity and of showing how the passion of revenge muddles understanding. The narrator states "for the accomplishment of which alone, [Silvia] accepted of Octavio" (251), which contrasts with the previous scene of love making (with a promise to marry), between the couple. This all prepares the reader to view Silvia's selective forgetting that she is legally married to Brilljard as a product of passion imposing on cognitive and rational functions. The authoritative nature of these bracketed asides helps establish the scientific and institutional nature

of the observations under which readers observe compare, contrast, and come to probable judgment. As the asides are purposeful and demarcated, they dramatize evidence.

### **How Behn Uses the Narrator's Worm's-Eye View Inside Various Characters' Minds**

Concomitantly, with the narrator's authoritative asides that expose purposeful and accidental duplicities, she also enters into the characters' thoughts, which reveal Silvia's fidelity to Philander as a love object as well as the unintended ills of Locke's Moral Stage 1 when applied to women who are ill equipped by custom to engage their powers of reasoning in order to cast off custom. Silvia came to love Philander freely and whole heartedly, but she was deceptively tossed aside by him. However, regardless of the conflicted nature of her love, as it mixes with revenge, and the duplicitous choices she makes to either get Philander back or to make him feel her pain, her love nonetheless drives her towards Philander.

Behn's narrator employs a worm's-eye view of Silvia's thoughts to reveal her commitment to Philander no matter what the cost, which further accentuates the outcome of her poorly reasoned divestment of custom. Locke's theory allows for actions motivated by the pain experienced from the absence of a desired experience or object. Both were motivating factors in Silvia's choice to free herself of custom. She desired agency and the joy associated with self-determination as well as the emotive desire for Philander. By entering into Silvia's thoughts we see the level of prolonged agitation and discomfort she finds herself in as her actions have not brought her the stability of reliable company. For example, the narrator exposes Silvia's self-acknowledged guile in her letter to Octavio. As her emotions twist her soul, she "read (the letter) over; and was often about to tear it, fancying it was too kind: but when she consider'd 'twas from no other inclination of her heart than that of getting the secrets out of his, she pardon'd her self

the little levity she found it guilty of” (187). With a self-justification based on “all which considering as the effects of the violent Passion she had for Philander, she found it easie to do, and sealing it she gave [it] to Antonett to deliver...” (187). Silvia dissembles her true feelings and flatters Octavio with the expressed interest to gain information on Philander, her constant love interest. Allowing the audience to see her agitation, her scheming, plotting, and disappointments—Philander is no longer hers and she poorly treats a man who does love her—Behn illuminates Locke’s contention that even though a person can reason himself to moral action it is not assured. What’s more, women are particularly harmed in Locke’s Moral Stage 1 because they are purposefully denied the requisite education to make it possible and therefore the regulations placed on them in Locke’s Moral Stage 3 are even more stringent, making women double losers in this dialectic.

In Volume II the narrator’s rendering of Octavio’s soliloquy about his hopes that Philander conquers his sister’s scruples and becomes her lover reveals just how vulnerable women are to authority, be they old or newly formed out of rebellion against custom. After Octavio angrily reads Philander’s letter that relates his newfound amour with his sister Calista, he considers his new potential with Silvia. Octavio intones “*If thou beest lost, Calista, at least thy ruin has laid a foundation for my happiness, and every Triumph Philander makes of thy Vertue, it the more secures my Empire over Silvia*” (178). In fact, Octavio throws his now defiled sister’s virtue to the flames in his delight of the positive ramifications in removing Philander as his romantic adversary. Here we see the universally bad effects of Silvia’s ill-begotten reasons to free herself of custom. Not only has Philander left Silvia but he intends to engage another in sexual exploits and Calista’s brother who should protect her has been drawn into reasoning that is impotent to the motivations based on immediate pain and pleasure. Octavio’s warped response



reveals his thinking that since he “*cannot be happy: but by the Sisters being undone, yield thou, oh faithless fair one, yield to Philander, and make me blest in Silvia!*” (178) In fact, Octavio abstractly encourages his adversary’s torrid love affair with his sister, exclaiming “*And thou (continued he) Oh perjur’d lover and inconstant Friend, glut thy insatiate flame— rifle Calista of every Vertue Heaven and Nature gave her, so I may but revenge it on thy Silvia!*” (178) Octavio’s desire for Silvia leads him to apostrophize approval of Philander’s sexual adventures with his sister—even if it ruins her eventual marriage prospects—because it will afford him an opportunity with Silvia.

Writing is seen as an action, a maneuver to achieve a goal. Most of the narrator’s entrances into the internal monologues or thoughts of the characters come after their epistolary endeavor, as the characters think through the desired outcomes they want from their actions. Again, the narrator’s observations bring to light the characters’ inconsistent desires in a way that would not be possible if the reader’s observations were purely based on the empirical evidence of the letters. Because empirical observation of evidence (the letters) does not necessarily match the causes motivating their writing, the narrator dramatizes the need for skepticism in the light of observational limitations. Additionally, the narrator draws focus to the characters’ inconsistencies, which questions human’s ability to translate moral knowledge into moral action. In either case, readers must work at their interpretations by sifting through the information offered by several unreliable narrators in comparison and contrast to an omniscient narrator who (at least in Behn’s Volume II) reports on the characters’ actions and thoughts without judgment.

## Standing Behind the Narrator: Analyzing the Impacts of Behn's Authorial Silence

Analyzing the impacts of an unreliable narrator harkens back to Booth's theories on Authorial Silence, as discussed in this book's Introduction. Substituting *Love-Letters'* Volume II narrator for the Author, a few parallels can be drawn. The dramatic irony of shared, privileged knowledge comes as the narrator and the reader work together to discern the insincerity of the characters' actions or words. Even if at times, the characters are in service of their fidelity, their acts offer the narrator and readers an epistemic platform to observe incongruities and to make sense of those incongruities. The reader's sense of connection and privileged inclusion that arises between the narrator in *Love-Letters'* case is analogous to the sense of belonging that develops amongst the Royal Society members. From their position imbued with all the gathered information of various scientists and travelers, they see the world in a way that common people are not privileged to understand. They soar with an eagle's eye, which allows them to ascertain the causes and effects from a scientific vantage, while others still operate out of blind ignorance and false understanding.

Linking back to the Royal Society's impacts on Locke's dialectic process and its influence on Behn's concept of gathering evidence, a final narrative dramatization of the institutional scientific process occurs when the narrator abstracts probabilistic insights from accrued data. These are generalizations about the nature of peoples' behaviors and the state of love. In *Love-Letters* Volumes I and II, Behn experiments with Silvia developing her thought structures beyond the confines of gendered customs. Yet, as Behn's literary dramatization of Locke's moral experiments shifts towards Volume III, Behn comments on women's behavior patterns in a way that begins to foreclose the space given to Silvia in the first volume to speak of her own experience (empirically accurate or not). Behn's narrator conveys her assessment, which

is conveyed to readers as an authoritative assessment of human nature and the issues connected with gender relations.

For example, Behn relates the transfer of Brilljard's ardent love for Silvia to the more readily available Antonett: "But there are in love those wonderful Lovers who can quench the Fire one Beauty kindles, with some other Object, and as much in Love as Brilljard was, he found Antonett an Antidote that dispell'd the grosser part of it" (149). At this point, the narrator initiates a major commentary. Regarding the docile acceptance of this shocking new liaison, Behn's narrator explains "Women never pardon any fault more willingly, than one of this nature, where the Crime gives so infallible a demonstration of their power and Beauty; nor can any of their Sex be angry in their hearts for being thought desirable" (160). Enforcing the submissiveness of women in the world of romantic partners and gender constructs, Behn's authorial narrator casually waves aside this romantic betrayal as one derived from a feminine compassionate understanding of the charms of the beauty of others.

Behn's narrator retracts into gender codes of assigned superficiality, expressing that contorted notion that women's negative attribute of vanity is so hopelessly intertwined with their positive attributes "that those who indeavour to cure 'em of that disease, robs 'em of a very considerable pleasure, and in most 'tis incurable" (164). The narrator overlaps ideas of love and infatuation as a disease where the disappointed and scorned lovers spout "fine speeches..., and believe themselves furnisht with abundance of eloquent Harangues at the sight of the dear Object they lose 'em all" (193). Behn's wise narrator continues her eagle-eye view of the fickleness of love, which "teach[es] 'em a dialect much more prevailing, without the expence of duller thought: And they leave unsaid all they had so floridly form'd before, and sigh a thousand things with more success" (194). Through Behn, the authorial narrator imparts the wisdom that "Love

like Poetry, cannot be taught, but uninstructed flows without painful study, if it be true; 'ts born in the Soul, a Noble inspiration, not a Science!’” (194) This last quote provokes complicated interpretations regarding Behn’s ideas on how to scientifically establish a moral experiment based on the mercurial realm of love matches set within the structured world of legal marriage and social customs.

*Volume III’s External Regulatory Structures: Characters Dramatize Locke’s Synthesis*

As Behn’s *Love-Letter’s* Volume III dramatizes Locke’s dialectical synthesis, this third stage of moral thought bridges moral knowledge to moral action by regulating errant passions and by motivating moral action. As a reminder in moving towards this research section, Locke’s thesis argues that humans, in the ideal, can use reason to access moral knowledge. But, Locke’s antithesis expresses skepticism of the ability to use reasoning to act morally. These two parts of Locke’s dialectic are dramatized by the form and content in Volume I and Volume II of *Love-Letters*. His synthesis accedes that while many people are able to act morally, based on their God-given ability to reason morally, many more are not. Acting morally requires the time and privilege to reflect and that is not available to the masses. Therefore, the majority of humans are shortsighted and overpowered by passions. Because Locke’s hedonistic view is predicated on the idea that pleasure and pain are the primary motivation for action, he identifies legal and Divine sanctions as the external regulations that will motivate those individuals who are uneducated, constitutionally incapable, or deeply vulnerable to immediate pleasure and fear of pain.

This return to a God-directed and government-enforced regulatory system is revealed to be particularly punitive and harmful to woman. To begin as modeled by Silvia in Volume I, she accurately discovers that she did not have the tools for sound reasoning. She had not thought

about why she obeyed custom's regulations on marriage and was only able to parrot lofty language that meant little to her. This realization could have set her on a path to seek such training to develop her intellect. However, her intellectual growth was quickly intercepted by Philander's own reasoning, perverted by the desire for immediate gratification of an object, and she was lead down a perilous route of inductive reasoning made from too few examples, which was compounded by the motivation to avoid pain. Volume II opens up the cast of characters and adds those affected by these poorly reasoned choices. Having leapt excitedly into agency, one that she had intended in earnest, she found herself at the mercy of Philander's dismissal. She is so consumed with her love object unmoored from custom, that she models her behavior for everyone to see, encouraging others to reason and act in a similar manner. Before long the whole cast of characters act according to their own short-sighted interests and those most vulnerable in society (women and servants) find themselves harmed by men and the elite who have much more authority to act as they please. Behn's narrative structure reveals this through its collection and assessment of data, not by authoritative pronouncements.

By Volume III, the data has accrued to a sufficient degree to move to the next stage in the moral experiment. These are no longer abstractions about people in love, but clear-cut assessments of these characters' inability to bridge the gap from moral knowledge to moral action. Like Locke's assessment of human nature in his synthesis, Behn's narrator determines that people act on short-sighted passions much more than for long-term happiness—this means regulations are necessary to usher people towards moral action. Behn's choice to leave behind the emotion-driven, first-person epistles signals the institutional narrator acting as a regulatory structure of control, which parallels the controls referenced by Locke's respect for legally enforced penalties with consequences of God's righteous judgment in the afterlife.



## Behn's Narrator Turned External Regulatory Judge

### *The Narrator Praises Octavio*

No longer interested in exploring the causes of behaviors or the passions motivating abilities, Behn's Volume III narrator relates the story as her critical assessment sees fit; she has transformed into the judge of custom and law. And, showing her transition from an objective, scientific observer, her diction conveys a sense of external judgment. For instance, the narrator somewhat sarcastically relays Octavio's elevated emotions in his belief of gaining Silvia's affections:

Octavio, the Brave, the Generous, and the Amorous, having left Silvia absolutely resolv'd to give her self to that doting fond Lover, or rather to sacrifice her self to her Revenge, that unconsidering Unfortunate, whose Passion had expos'd him to all the unreasonable Effects of it, return'd to his own House, wholly transported with his happy Success. (257)

Behn's narrator exposes Octavio's immoral thoughtlessness regarding the potential impacts of his romantic duplicity. "He thinks on nothing but vast coming Joys: Nor did one kind Thought direct him back to the evil Consequences of what he so hastily pursu'd" (257). In a time when a woman's life would have been dramatically impacted by pre/extramarital relations, the narrator relays that the heedless Octavio "reflects not on her Circumstances but her Charms; not on the Infamy he should espouse with Silvia, but on those ravishing Pleasures she was capable of giving him" (257). He abandons thoughts regarding his own reputation, as:

he regards not the Reproaches of his Friends; but wholly abandon'd to Love and youthful Imaginations, gives a Loose to young Desire and Fancy that deludes him with a thousand

soft Ideas: He reflects not, that his gentle and easy Temper was most unfit to joyn with that of Silvia, which was the most haughty and humorous in Nature,” as he is so immersed in the dictates of his passions for short-term, sensory pleasures. (257)

The narrator’s judgment of Octavio is both understanding of his body being overrun by passions and condemnatory of his flouting of harm to others and to himself.

Because the narrator offers many positive points on Octavio’s personality and behavior throughout Volumes I, II, and III—far more than granted any other characters—the narrative logic has made Octavio into a model character. The narrator turns Octavio’s poor judgments and harmful acts into teachable moments. Before fully declaring his status as a model character the narrator remarks on the “unreasonable Effects” of his passion, which she still qualifies as noble—as it is not fickle—yet censures as excessive, especially as it poses danger to his reason and to the larger community. The narrator’s choice to focus on Octavio’s lack of thought or reflection before focusing on the passions that motivate him mirrors Locke’s emphasis on the situational or constitutional lack of reason that deprives most people of their long term-happiness.

As noted in the above citation the narrator’s focus on Octavio’s lack of “reflection” illuminates the all-too-common failure of an individual’s God-given ability to reason. To Locke, if an individual is unable to reason, the individual is not aware of the “internal Operations of the Minds” and therefore cannot be self-aware (II. I. II, N: 104). As with Octavio this opens an individual up to delusions because reflections furnish the mind with “Perception, Thinking, Doubting, Believing, Reasoning, Knowing, Willing, and all the different actings of our own Minds” (II. I. IV, N: 105), which motivates the internal sense, the will, what Locke describes as the “power to suspend the execution and satisfaction of any of its desires” (II. XXI. XLVII, N:



263). Without developing and adhering to one's internal power to disrupt the heedless satisfaction of sensory or unhealthy desires—especially in the realm of romance—Locke warns that the insalubrious will to self-harm will dictate people's life.

The narrator's judgmental diction employed to describe Octavio's difficulty in subduing his passions presents a formal narrative strategy that differs from the previous volumes. Thus, while Behn's narrator might commend certain traits in Octavio, her commentary exposes her dissatisfaction with Octavio's underdeveloped reason. What's more, the narrator highlights Silvia's mercurial spirit as unsuited for Octavio's gentle temper, noting "that his gentle and easy Temper, was most unfit to joyn with that of Silvia, which was the most haughty and humorous in Nature" (257). The narrator makes a combined critique of the elements of the human passions, as expressed in these bold characters. In Volume II, Silvia's behaviors were reported on and catalogued with little act of narratorial critique, whereas in Volume III the narrator categorically judges Silvia's character.

### *The Narrator Chastises Silvia*

As Volume III's narrative structure dramatizes Locke's regulatory structure through both its almost entirely third-person and its narrator's more condemnatory and judgmental assessment of the characters, it also problematizes Locke's synthesis by illustrating the unduly severe impact on the female character when compared with the critique given to men who engaged in equally if not more poorly reasoned actions, as they at least have access to intellectual training and agency. The narrator comments to the novel readers that Silvia "had all the Charms of Youth and Beauty, that are conquering in her Sex, all the Wit and Insinuation that even surpasses Youth and Beauty, yet to render her Character impartially, she had also abundance of disagreeing Qualities mixt

with her Perfections” (257). Spiraling into specifically unflattering traits, the narrator notes Silvia “was Imperious and Proud, even to Insolence; Vain and Conceited even to Folly; she knew her Vertues and her Graces too well, and her Vices too little” (258). More egregious in terms of her moral philosophy skills, the narrator qualifies Silvia as demonstrating a smug adherence to her own beliefs while causally dismissing the ideas of others, as:

she was very Opinionated and Obstinate, hard to be convinced of the falsest Argument, but very positive in her fancied Judgment: Abounding in her own Sense, and very critical on that of others: Censorious, and too apt to charge others with those Crimes to which she was her self addicted, or had been guilty of. (258)

The narrator continues with this de facto character assassination in equating Silvia’s romantic passions as so out of control at that point that they render her enslaved to said passions.

The narrator adds that the foolhardy Silvia is “Amorously inclin’d, and indiscreet in the Management of her Amours, and constant rather from Pride and Shame than Inclination; fond of catching at every trifling Conquest, and lov’d the Triumph, tho’ she hated the Slave” (258). She attributes character traits to Silvia like “Imperious and Proud,” but she does not stop there; instead, she includes “even to Insolence,” which means rude and disrespectful behavior, which her contemporary readers would interpret as a negative assessment of Silvia’s character. The narrator articulates how Silvia’s inability to reason and, therefore, to self-regulate her passions leads to actions society would see as immoral. She even suggests that Silvia’s constant preoccupation with Philander, which in many ways has been her most redeeming quality throughout Volume II, is due to “Pride and Shame” rather “than Inclination.” These are explicit critiques of her character that dramatize Locke’s conclusions in his final stage of moral thought,

where he asserts that regulatory censure and control become necessary to actually motivate and maintain moral action.

Eventually, Octavio returns to reason and recognizes that his passion-driven relationship with Silvia is disadvantageous. This leads him to take “Pious Counsel” and “Grave Advice,” which he hopes will contribute “to [Silvia’s] future happiness”—a turn of thought and behavior expressive of Locke’s hoped for result in an ideal third stage of his moral dialectic (378). As Octavio releases himself from this obsessive, harmful desire, he feels his abdication of said desire grants him more pleasure “than to have possess her intirely” (378). He loves her and hopes that by joining religious orders he will remove himself from situations that make Silvia’s life tumultuous. By following the “Order of St. Bernard’s” dictates of generosity and kindness, Octavio experiences calm, constant pleasure (380). Octavio’s right reasoning dramatizes Locke’s belief that when people follow authority’s rule, they ultimately experience pleasure from that obedient submission.

### **How the Metaleptic Jump Transforms the Narrator into a God-Fearing and Duty-Bound Moral Judge**

Behn’s Volume II non-engaged, non-judgmental narrator has dramatically transformed in Volume III to become a citizen in this fictional world dramatizing the movement from skeptical probabilistic reasoning to determined external regulator—governmental or Divine. So enraptured by Octavio’s turn to religious orders as a means to achieve moral knowledge, the narrator is gifted by the author Behn with the permission and ability to perform a metaleptic leap from being a narratorial observer external to the story world to a first-person narrator within the story world. With breathless excitement, the integrated narrator walks among the community

members, as she invites the readers into the corporeal experiences of attending Octavio's taking of orders. She relates: "I my self went among the rest to this Ceremony, having in all the time I lived in Flanders, never been so curious to see any such thing: The Order of St. Bernard is one of the neatest of any of 'em" (379–80). By inserting herself into the story world, she destabilizes the persona she develops as a neutral all-knowing gather of scientific data; instead she returns to the humble role cast by Locke as that of all people, limited to certain degrees by their empirical constraints and thus dependent on the God's great goodness.

Just as empirical probabilistic reasoning brings credibility this metalepsis imbues her in-person observation and narration of Octavio's moral action with credibility. Prior to this event, the narrator has shown herself to be the most trustworthy voice in this story to date and now she adds a new layer of credibility by invoking the power of first-person empirical observation. Behn's authorial choice to include her narrator's metalepsis dramatizes Locke's epistemological dialectic. This conscious jumping of diegetic realms highlights the very nature of the reader physically and mentally reading a narrated piece of fiction, which simultaneously destabilizes the readers' submission to the narrator's authority and their immersion within a Coleridgian suspension of disbelief—it heightens the story's realistic or empirical position. This links to Locke's emphasis on clearing the illusory ground of received knowledge by placing the emphasis back on the individuals' observation and therefore narrative role.

At the same time, the world-jumping metalepsis creates a sense of the fantastic and spiritual, which underscores the beauty of the scene the narrator describes and the need for something external—something from "that which is beyond"—which seems to be required to bring about moral change. Having descended from the metadiegetic, or external realm, the fictional narrator, now endowed with her own sensory experience of the diegetic community

realm, links arms with the real-world reader equally immersed in the spiritual revelry. At this point, the narrator has made a full, immersive metaleptic leap into the moment—these pages read more like a diary entry memorializing this day or a letter sent to family or friends of her rapturous personal experience of this ordination ceremony. Adopting the tone of a descriptive essay, Behn's euphoric narrator serves as the eyes and ears of this vibrant day of ordination:

there was never any thing beheld so fine as the Church that day was, and all the Fathers that officiated at the High-Altar; behind which a most magnificent Scene of Glory was opened, with Clouds most rarely and Artificially set off, behind which appear'd new ones more bright and dazzling, till from one degree to another, their lustre was hardly able to be look'd on... (381)

Enveloped in this sunshine and glorious weather, the elated narrator relates her ethereal vision of:

an hundred little Angels so rarely dress'd, such shining Robes, such Charming Faces, such flowing bright Hair, Crown'd with Roses of White and Red, with such Artificial Wings, as one would have said they had born the Body up in the Splendid Sky: and these to soft Musick, Tun'd their soft Voices with such sweetness of Harmony... (381)

The combination of experiencing Octavio's enlightenment through embracing the height of Locke's moral action derived from moral reason, as motivated by the passions and regulated by external structures (here the Church), has manifested in an out-of-body experience for the narrator. She testifies:

that, for my part, I confess, I thought my self no longer on Earth; and sure there is nothing gives an Idea of real Heaven, like a Church all adorn'd with rare Pictures, and the other Ornaments of it, with what ever can Charm the Eyes; and Musick, and Voices, to

Ravish the Ear; both which inspire the Soul with irresistible Devotion; and I can Swear  
for my own part, in those Moments a thousand times I have wish'd to Die... (381)

Just as the Royal Society's Boyle had exhorted readers to mirror his scientific experiments and Locke similarly exhorted readers to conduct their own moral experiments, Behn's narrator experiences a sense of a contact-based enlightenment while attending Octavio's ordination. She culminates her spiritual and emotional sensations reveling in her joy that "so absolutely had I forgot the World, and all its Vanities, and fixt my thoughts on Heaven" (381). Perhaps Behn hopes readers will experience a similar contact-based enlightenment, which reveals the author's instructional intentions within her motivations to dramatize Locke's moral dialectic.

The narrator's immersion in the revival-like atmosphere of Octavio's ordination offers a sense of a contact-based enlightenment towards submitting to moral action and affirms the necessity of religion and its imperatives. However, the narrator becomes overwhelmed by the overstimulating atmosphere of the ordination, which in itself represents an acquiescence to passions. This reinforces Locke's and Behn's drive towards the need for regulation because, even though the narrator is the most trustworthy of *Love-Letters'* characters and her desire to forget the "world, and all its Vanities" are noble, her hyperarousal highlights how humanity's limited and partial knowledge can interfere with moral action. Here, the metalepsis highlights the narrator's conflicting empirical experience which can negatively impact moral knowledge dramatizing Locke's moral and epistemic dialectic. Although moral knowledge is possible, people's passions can easily divert them from moral action.

The narrator's positive opinion of Octavio's choice further dramatizes what theorists would denote as "narrative regulation." The narrator expresses her belief that Octavio, who possesses the means to afford entry into an elite and well-funded religious order, will not be

distracted by the dire poverty of some other religious orders' environments or strictures. In delight, she opines:

... 'tis here a Man may hope to become a Saint, sooner than in any other, more perplex with Want, Cold, and all the necessaries of Life, which takes the thought too much from Heaven, and afflicts it with the Cares of this World, with Pain and too much Abstinence: and I rather think 'tis Necessity than Choice, that makes a Man a Cordelier, that may be a Jesuit or Bernardine, two [of] the best of the Holy Orders. (380)

She describes this wealthier religious order as a place that fosters contemplation on the spiritual, which echoes Locke's idea that often only the wealthier classes can indulge in such comfort and leisure to explore issues of how to bridge the gap between moral knowledge and moral action. These ideas derive from her personal opinions, which are not officially endowed with the certitude of her other authorial statements.

The narrator's assiduous exploration of her experience and idealization of Octavio's choice to join the order have a complex effect, as her narrative authority was previously established, her metalepsis and its new point of view gives even greater force to her portrayal of Octavio as the model of moral behavior. When the newly anointed Octavio connects with the beguiled narrator, she swears that "I was never so affected in my Life with any thing, as I was at this Ceremony, nor ever found my Heart so oppressed with Tenderness; and was myself ready to sink where I sate, when he came near me" (383). In her enchanted view, Octavio has ascended from a mere mortal. When he walks away, she hears "a thousand sighing Hearts behind him (and imagines that)... Had he dy'd, there had not been half that Lamentation; so foolish is the mistaken World to grieve at our happiest Fortune, either when we go to Heaven, or retreat from this World" (383). This again echoes Locke's emphasis on people eschewing the mundane for

the greater rewards of Heaven's delights, as the rapt narrator imagines beatific Octavio "who quitted the World with so modest a Bravery, so intire a Joy, as no young Conqueror ever perform'd his Triumphs" (383).

#### **Part IV: Conclusion**

While there is little doubt that Behn opposed Locke's political theory of contractual government which allows the people to remove its monarch if it is determined that the monarch does not support the peoples' life, liberty, and rights to property, it is highly likely that she valued his scientific principles and his views on women's rights to dissolve marriages and own property. These two stances are not mutually exclusive and Behn's brilliant mind would likely have been able to give space to these two realities at once. Carole Pateman notes Locke's belief that "conjugal power originates in nature" where "the will of the husband and not that of the wife prevails" because the husband is 'the abler and the stronger'(52), does not reduce his surprising level of feminist thinking. Locke repeatedly references the Fifth Commandment wherein both father and mother hold authority to parent their children and Pateman continues to explain Locke's surprising suggestion that a wife can own her own property and might be warranted the right to divorce according to certain marriage situations and that a 'husband does not have the power of absolute monarch' (qtd. in Pateman 52). At the same time, Behn's unorthodox life clearly did not make her a bastion of progressive Whig-leaning ideas. Iconoclastic as both these thinkers were and as they circulated amongst the similar scientific elite communities under Charles II it is more than possible that as with Behn's translation and editorial corrections of Fontenelle's errors in *A discovery of New Worlds* that Behn offers her novel of changing narrative form as a stylized experiment to test, reveal, and correct Locke's stages of moral thought. What becomes painfully obvious as she engages in this experimentation is that Locke's



progressive (for the time) views on marriage and women's rights in marriage could not be sustained when placed within his moral theory. Behn undoubtedly took profound pleasure in *Love-Letters'* portrayal of the scandals and failures associated with the Monmouth Rebellion and its Whig perpetrators, but this chapter argues that Behn took even greater pleasure in engaging in a philosophical thought experiment that made an intervention into Locke's moral theory, illuminating its gender-blind spots.

By the end of the novel, the narrator does not critique her reasonable question of authority and custom, but rather the narrator critiques her impaired reasoning, which is a product of society's poor education of women. As Silvia notes in Volume I, women were not taught to reason but to dissemble. So, when Philander fails to model disciplined reasoning, free of the passions, Silvia lacks the tools to judge the harm of his short-sighted passions. Silvia's lack of the necessary education to be successful in throwing off custom's power, anticipates Locke's philosophical development.

Although Locke's *Essay* dictates the needs for reason as well as what reason is and does, it offers minimal insight into how to help people learn to reason. This becomes the focus of his later projects *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* and *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*. These were published after the *Essay* and, therefore, Behn's text could not yet reflect Locke's philosophy of education—the practical education that could have given Silvia a greater likelihood of accessing reason was unavailable, which is reflected in the structure of *Love-Letters*. Perhaps if Locke had already published his work on education, *Love-Letters* might have reflected another narrative adjustment in a fourth proto-feminist volume. Maybe *Love-Letters* triumphantly would have returned to the epistolary format as a means of her instruction, thereby

revisiting Volume I's initial feminist impulses which affords Silvia the ability to effectively reason and therefore possible moral agency.

## Chapter Two

### To Marry or Not? Wait, Just How Many Rules are There?:

#### How *Pamela* Dramatizes Shaftesbury's Duty-Bound Dialectic

##### Part I: Introduction

In Chapter One, Aphra Behn's *Love-Letters* presents rebellious lovers and the repercussions of their heedless love affairs as a metatextual response that criticizes Locke's political views and the unintended negative impact his moral philosophy has on women. In an opposite metatextual response, author Samuel Richardson crafts his novel *Pamela* as an homage to the philosophy of the third Earl of Shaftesbury, especially in the emphatic support for marriage as a duty-bound expression of moral behavior and a cornerstone of social stability. Kathrine Binhammer highlights a link between early eighteenth-century moral philosophers, including Shaftesbury, and writers such as Richardson. She notes traces of this influence filter throughout Richardson's work, as he "can be seen as a pedagogue in the field, interested in the moral education of his readership, especially through the use of exemplary characters" (Binhammer 289). Binhammer further notes Richardson's *Pamela* dramatizes Shaftesbury's innate ideas proposing that "humans have a sixth sense, a 'moral sense'" (289). This chapter explores how Richardson literalizes Shaftesbury's moral philosophy through the novel *Pamela*. The characters achieve moral knowledge through epistolary dialogue, find grace in soliloquy writing, serve as moral icons of internal and external beauty, and fulfill one's duty to God through honoring marriage regulations.

In the Restoration era previous to Richardson's time, Behn's literary world was filled with saucy women and men who engaged in every means of manipulation to achieve their goals. By 1730, "any kind of religious influence on the case for the gender training of women had all

but disappeared” (Fletcher 389). In Richardson’s day, Nancy Armstrong notes that questions swirled regarding the quality and reputation of novels as sources of artistic endeavors and social importance. For Richardson, he saw novels as realms to rescue women from “the hands of degenerate authors. It was this strategy that Richardson set in motion when, after declaring he was not actually writing a novel, he used fiction for redefining the desirable woman” (Armstrong 96). In his efforts to elevate the status and respectability of novels, his narrative of *Pamela*, as well as the titular character herself, became linchpins in what Armstrong denotes as a feminization process, “whereby certain areas of aristocratic culture were appropriated for the emergent social group” to emulate as virtuous persons (97). In this book’s introduction, multiple conduct codes targeted towards female readers were explored in their content towards directing women’s behavior. In many ways, the narrative and the themes of *Pamela* operate as a conduct code by didactically presenting the titular character as a model woman for the British citizenry to be inspired by to live virtuous lives.

In *Pamela*, Richardson designs his plotlines according to Shaftesbury’s dialectic stages by forging character dilemmas that precipitate decision-making in intense situations. Richardson employs various narrative strategies, many through epistolary vehicles, for the characters to express their stresses, decisions, and reactions in what becomes a fiction-world playing out of Shaftesbury’s dialectic. Consider the overall setting and character interactions established by Richardson. Under the employment of Squire B (Mr. B), the son of the recently deceased Lady B, Pamela endures his continuous sexual advances. Pamela demonstrates her role as a paragon of virtue as she circumvents his lecherous advances and manages to protect her virginity. However, she is kidnapped by the rapacious Mr. B, who is enraptured by her inspiring morality.

She transitions into an allegory for Shaftesbury's theory of the unity of beauty and the unity of identity. Pamela is internally virtuous and, therefore, externally attractive. Furthermore, she is consistently virtuous, regardless of the temptations or intimidations to her virtue.

Richardson designs Pamela as a complex, unified identity who is just as externally attractive as she is internally virtuous—she consistently models moral behaviors for the rapacious Mr. B.

Eventually, Pamela's clever and thoughtful writing is intercepted and read by Mr. B, reforming this lascivious man. This positive outcome dramatizes Richardson's use of Shaftesbury's idea that humanity possesses an innate moral sense, which can be activated by moral contemplation and dialogue, even when only carried out through epistolary means.

After Mr. B marries Pamela, the second half of the novel transitions into an etiquette listing of critiques aimed at Mr. B's sister's marriage. When read with the grain of Richardson's intended meaning, this overt conduct code becomes a fascinating, layered read to construct this perfect wife. The marriage conduct code becomes even more intriguing when read against the grain as a dangerous, near parody of patriarchal strictures and the double-edged sword of unreasonable, unrealistic marital expectations. These rigorous and utopic etiquette requirements for a woman to follow to be considered a good wife serve as guides and warnings to Pamela and the era's real-world readers in general. In considering the moral didacticism of the novel *Pamela* and the readers' many skeptical misunderstandings, this chapter ends with an exploration of how *Pamela*'s dramatization of Shaftesbury's moral dialectic precipitated a proliferation of reactive literary productions. These reactive texts include the critical satires by Henry Fielding *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews* (*Shamela*, 1741), the anonymous *Pamela Censured* (1741), and Eliza Haywood's *The Anti-Pamela; or Feign'd Innocence Detected* (*Anti-Pamela*, 1741). These publications spurred the exasperated Richardson to fashion his response to

append the original *Pamela* and to write his sequel novel *Pamela in Her Exalted Condition* (1742). Richardson's official sequel serves as a summative and, hopefully, silencing word on Pamela's morality and his authorial ownership of her essence and meaning as a social icon of idealized femininity.

## **Part II: The Moral Philosopher the Third Earl of Shaftesbury**

### *The Third Earl of Shaftesbury's Biography and Cross-Cutting Circles*

#### **Shaftesbury's Worldview: Being of the Landed Gentry and Tutored by John Locke**

Born Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury's landed gentry class station and tutorage by Locke influenced his outlook on political and legal matters as well as philosophical ones. In terms of crosscutting circles, the Shaftesburys and John Locke formed formidable intellectual ties between their families. Both Shaftesbury's father and his later tutor Locke fully supported and participated in the Glorious Revolution of 1688, ushered in reforms for a strong constitutional government, and paved the way for parliamentary-based government in the evolving British ruling system. Beyond Shaftesbury's pedigree as grandson to the first Earl of Shaftesbury, the thinker's robust influence on society derives from being John Locke's protégé. According to Robert Voitle, Locke's intellectual influence on Shaftesbury's life began early and included the selection of his governess Elizabeth Birch. She was the "daughter of an ejected nonconformist divine turned schoolmaster" and determined much of his education (Voitle 11). Birch, highly competent in Latin and Greek, likely embraced Locke's educational philosophy to immerse Shaftesbury in conversation and reading of foreign languages. Voitle asserts that Locke

guided Shaftesbury's training in virtue through recommended readings like "Cicero, Puffendorf, Aristotle, and above all Scripture," making foundational impacts on the budding philosopher's world view (8).

### **Shaftesbury's Political Ideas on Estate Laws**

Beyond Shaftesbury's family prominence and his writing, Shaftesbury played an essential role in British politics, which provided a feedback loop regarding the attention paid to his philosophy by the general public. The first Earl of Shaftesbury had a long political career as one of England's most strategic and powerful politicians. He served as an originator of the anti-monarchist Whig party, which was mainly composed of influential nobles, merchants, and financiers who supported, among many platforms, increased religious tolerance. Shaftesbury's life was imbued with political discussions and concerns, which filters through his popular and influential writings. Michael Gill discusses how "in 1711, Shaftesbury collected his mature writings and added to them extensive notes and commentaries (which he called *Miscellaneous Reflections on the Preceding Treatises, and other Critical Subjects*)" (*Miscellaneous*).

This comprehensive collection offers a glimpse into what many of this research project's authors do—create skeptical metatextual responses, criticisms, and clarifications to their own works with the special intentions of guiding and regulating readers' interpretations of their writings. Shaftesbury titled the comprehensive three-volume tome *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times (Characteristicks)*. Up until his death, Shaftesbury continuously

appended his corpus, which was reprinted in 1713 and again in 1714.<sup>9</sup> This influential and distinguished book was continuously published posthumously well into the mid-eighteenth century, with his influential works that include *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit* (1699); *A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm* (1708); *Sensus Communis, An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour* (1709); *The Moralists, A Philosophical Rhapsody* (1709); and *Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author* (1710).

As Shaftesbury matured within the political values of his family and the intellectual influence of Lockean thought, Lawrence E. Klein suggests that Shaftesbury should be described as having had “normative design[s] for modern political culture” (xvi) that was “deeply partisan” (xvii). As a Whig of his grandfather’s ilk, Shaftesbury saw himself as a “defender of the English constitution, liberty, Protestantism and toleration” (xvii) who was committed to law and order for the service of his country. For Shaftesbury, part of what brought him order derived from his lineage of being part of the Ashleys, a family that could be “traced back as far as the thirteenth century” (Voitle 1). Families like the Ashleys secured their sociopolitical status through the inheritance of estates, which prohibited the disintegration of estates and protected their voting rights, with various gendered implications discussed in this book’s introduction. The estate entail practice, linked with primogeniture and strict settlement rules, undergirded Shaftesbury’s commitment to order, species, and nation because it emphasized the importance of society and family as larger social units over the individual.

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<sup>9</sup> William E Alderman “English Editions of Shaftesbury *Characteristics*” in *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, Fourth Quarter, 1967, Vol 61, No 4 pp 315–34



*Shaftesbury's Core Ideas: A Sociable, Practical Philosopher Who Believes in Innate Ideas*

Shaftesbury held pragmatic views towards philosophy's ability to help people understand and move towards virtuous behavior. Expressing his philosophy as persuasive tracts, he wrote in various styles to cast a wide net to convey his ideas that philosophy's role was to "regulate our governing Fancys, Passions, and Humours" (163).<sup>10</sup> According to Gill, Shaftesbury believes that "humans are designed to appreciate order and harmony, and that proper appreciation of order and harmony is the basis of correct judgments about morality, beauty, and religion" (1). Regarding the anatomy of the individual mind, he explains his views on people's innate ideas, the attributes and processes of first- and second-order affections, and the moral sense faculty. He proposes a layered aesthetic theory regarding the relationship between external beauty and internal virtue in conjunction with ideas on the unity of being and the unity of identity. He exhorts his readers to engage in in-person debates and through epistolary relations as the methods to arrive at moral knowledge. Moving away from Locke's moral voluntarism, Shaftesbury proposes moral intellectualism concepts that focus on a divine world designer who established a world wherein humans can ascertain moral knowledge and are charged with acting morally. For Shaftesbury, this intersects with his personal views on the importance of duty and obedience to larger legitimate political and social systems, including marriage with its connections to estate transference and social stability.

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<sup>10</sup> All citations come from *Shaftesbury: Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*. Edited by Lawrence E. Klein et al., Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2000. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy.

## Shaftesbury's Thesis: Affections, and the Moral Sense

### *First- and Second-Order Affections*

Locke's involvement in the Shaftesbury family life and in the budding philosopher's tutorage can be seen in many of the pupil's works. For example, Shaftesbury follows Locke's emphasis on questioning received ideas and on denying blind obedience to custom or authority. They also connect in their empirical strategies to comprehend the inner anatomy of the mind and emotions. He applies the terms of the first- and second-order affections. In first-order affections, people exist in the state of experiencing the emotion in question, whether this is positive or negative—it is a state of immersive being and not one of awareness or contemplation. The second-order affections represent a specific evolution and elevation within the human mind system where the person is aware of that first-order feeling—in effect, the person is a witness to him- or herself experiencing that initial emotion. When experiencing second-order passions, humans are “conscious of our own passions,” which precipitates reflecting on them and developing assessments of our own reactions (Gill 12). Shaftesbury explains:

the Affections of Pity, Kindness, Gratitude, and their Contrarys, being brought into the Mind by Reflection, become Objects. So that, by means of this reflected Sense, there arises another kind of Affection towards those very Affections themselves, which have been already felt, and are now become the Subject of a new Liking or Dislike. (172)

If people feel their assessments are positive, then they experience what is known as *approbation*, within the archaic and philosophical sense of the term explained here. And, if their assessments

are negative, then people qualify the situation with *disapprobation*, with all the resulting issues deriving from that unpleasantness.

### *The Moral Sense*

Essential to this research project, the second-order affections underlie Shaftesbury's concept of the "Moral Sense." As this project progresses, several philosophers' tenets include an idea of an internal moral regulatory apparatus, as will be explored in the upcoming chapters. For some moral philosophers, such as Butler and his idea of conscience or Smith and his idea of the Impartial Spectator, these entities are core aspects of their dialectics. However, Gill notes that, while Shaftesbury includes this concept, he does not overemphasize his idea of the moral sense. "There is little evidence that he thinks the moral sense is a distinct psychological faculty in the way that Hutcheson did" (Gill 13). At the same time, Shaftesbury assigns his conception of the moral sense as the faculty that elicits the person's approbation or disapprobation of his or her first-order affections. From this positive or negative feelings, people can initiate the motivation to act, which will, hopefully, result in virtuous moral behavior. In a critical turn, "Shaftesbury argues that because our sense of morality is a sentiment, it can be opposed only by another sentiment, and not by reason or belief" (Gill 14). Thus, he indirectly labels belief and reason as inert (which Hume will directly assert later) in contrast to affection, which energizes and directs the person to act—this emphasizes Shaftesbury's idea that morality is founded in sentiment.

## Shaftesbury's Antithesis: Developing the Self Through In-person Debate and Epistles

### *Reveling in In-person Repartée*

As previously noted, Shaftesbury believes humans are endowed with innate ideas that facilitate their realization of and attraction to virtue and moral behavior. Of course, he believes that humans require education to cultivate and refine this faculty, which can be tested, developed, and practiced through the art of public debate. Isabel Rivers notes that Shaftesbury “deplored the fact that philosophy had become the property of universities and divines, and sought to rescue it from the cloisters and restore it to the camps and courts” (87). Shaftesbury, believes that interaction and back-and-forth debates spark insight. “Vicissitude is a mighty law of discourse and mightily longed for by mankind. In matter of reason, more is done in a minute or two by way of question and reply than by a continued discourse of whole hours” (34). He does not want people to consider debates as tedious, academic, stuffy affairs.

He encourages participation stating that “if rational discourses (especially those of a deeper speculation) have lost their credit and are in disgrace because of their formality, there is reason for more allowance in the way of humour and gaiety” (37). In fact, Shaftesbury adds that the more people engage in debates, practice logic, and interact with each other, “They need not spoil good company or take from the ease or pleasure of a polite conversation. And the oftener these conversations are renewed, the better will be their effect. We shall grow better reasoners by reasoning pleasantly and at our ease” (37). Thus, Shaftesbury emblemizes the gregarious nature of this era by encouraging interactive debates on the critical topics of the day, bringing abstract ideas into daily life decisions.

Shaftesbury surmises that his contemporaries avoid philosophical debate because it requires skepticism and the suspension of sociopolitical alignments to see the situation from many sides. This type of challenging debate requires a discipline that people are not educated with and do not have the patience for, as people rest comfortably within their self-assured positions. Here, Shaftesbury's connections with Locke's denial of the status quo and constant questioning of received ideas shine through in his exhortations for people to revel in the fruitful, self-examining art of debate.

Shaftesbury argues that criticism, wit, raillery, and humor allow one to critique and clear away external and internal inhibitors to right reason. Furthermore, Shaftesbury posits that social conversation and epistles give space to necessary intellectual moral practices, including analysis, self-reflection, and reason. Meant to be enjoyable, humbling, and mutually enlightening, "It is [*The Moralists*'] dialogic form, its mixture of rhapsody and response, its intention of 'reciting' and recording 'conversation,' which establishes both the philosophy of enthusiasm and the subject of philosophy itself as socially regarded phenomena" (Markley qtd. in Eron 57). In the effort to connect with readers—mainly men of fashion and leisure—Shaftesbury's *Characteristicks* employs multiple sections with various generic approaches that include letters to friends, manuals for writers, a philosophical tract, epistolary novelistic dialogues, and a series of random reflections or critiques.<sup>11</sup> *Characteristicks* models these strategies as much as it advises their use. Although Shaftesbury valued and invested all walks of life with dignity, he maintained a paternalistic social hierarchy based on station and gender. Shaftesbury (and the novelist Richardson, for that matter) sought to use their writing to offer templates and

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<sup>11</sup> For an in-depth discussion of Shaftesbury's use of dialogue, epistles, and enthusiasm see Sarah Eron. *Inspiration in the Age of Enlightenment*. (Newark, U of Delaware P, 2017). 33–76

instructions on debate rhetoric and moral experiments, which they hoped readers would meditate on within their own minds and debate with about within the public spheres.

*Developing Society Through Epistolary Exchanges and the Self Through Soliloquys*

Shaftesbury envisions human society evolving through interpersonal development made possible by debates, which should work in tandem with epistolary correspondences. In Shaftesbury's mind, the epistle provides a platform to participate in a dialogue, promoting reasoning skills that value moral order. Shaftesbury equates the letter-writing experience and the concomitant reasoning process with a dramatic exercise, exploring and practicing thoughts about an issue and the potential paths of action. The moral reasoning arising from epistolary dialogue does double work of reasoning and doubting. Often epistolary writers seek advice and receive critical responses that doubt people's ability to act on their innate approval of moral order, at least until they have sufficiently disciplined their reasoning process (94–6). Turning to criticism's dual role within Shaftesbury's thesis and antithesis, in-person and epistolary dialogue is where people engage in skeptical disputations, reason through ideas and concepts, order their passions, and achieve moral knowledge. Scholar Joe Bray discussed the cross-pollination between Shaftesbury's letter-writing manual, his fiction, and his own correspondence and how epistles can facilitate a "reformation of the public sphere" (165). Shaftesbury believes that interactive correspondences of the sender-receiver dynamic play a central role in forging interpersonal connections and understandings.

At the same time, he deeply values journaling to the self, which he denotes as soliloquist writing. In his text, *Soliloquy, or Advise to an Author*, Shaftesbury includes a critical concept that the speaker-writer becomes "two distinct persons. He is pupil and preceptor. He teaches and he

learns” (72). This advice mirrors the first- and second-order affectations where writers feel their passions and write out their emotional states and rational thoughts. Then, they use the journal writing, a self-created tool, as an extension of their minds to engage their second-order affectations to contemplate their own writings of their first-order affectations. In this reflective act, Shaftesbury calls the “sovereign remedy and gymnastic method” of reflecting on one’s own appetites and ill-humors, ultimately controlling the imbalance that has taken hold of one’s passions (84–85). For Shaftesbury, the self-examining act of memoir writing works in concert with the interpersonal acts of letter writing and lively debates where citizens cultivate their own moral sense skills to become more refined community members. This doubling of the self and the act of soliloquy writing becomes sanity- and virtue-saving in Richardson’s novel *Pamela*.

*Aesthetics: Comprehending External and Internal Unities of Beauty and Identity*

Shaftesbury considers any type of aesthetic response as an immediate first-order affective reaction where the responder engages with the sound, being, object, or person from a reactive faculty. Of course, with experience, education, and reflection, people can engage their second-order affective skills to perform discursive analyses of objects, such as works of art, to assess their approbation or disapprobation of the object of beauty. For Shaftesbury, that which is beautiful is harmonious—and, harmony is central to his conception of virtue. Shaftesbury’s ruminations on and enjoyment of art serve more for a leaping off point to contemplate the common discrepancies between external beauty and internal failings and his drives towards a “*Unity of Design*,” which refers to the unity of external beauty with internal morality (322–323). This concept fosters a unity of a holistically virtuous identity.

The concept of art serving instrumental values to persons—just as novels serve to readers—filters throughout Samuel Richardson’s and Sarah Fielding’s specified intentions in writing their corpus of works. This theory also links to Shaftesbury’s idea that when people react to beautiful objects, they react to the object’s maker. The appreciation is a reaction to the artist and originator of that produced entity or essence. Shaftesbury contends that “[T]here is no Principle of Beauty in Body... [T]he Beautifying, not the Beautify’d, is the really Beautiful” (426). For this research project, this concept links into Shaftesbury’s hierarchy of objects of beauty as well as to the awareness of the potential discrepancies between the outward and inward forms of objects and the relationship to the originators of those objects. For Shaftesbury, he proposes a tripartite hierarchy of beauty which includes human- and nature-made objects, the human mind, and God, in that order.

#### Dis/honest Flattery

Shaftesbury emphasizes that the internal morality of a person will be externally represented, as he writes, “The real honest man..., instead of outward forms or symmetries, is struck with that inward character, the harmony and numbers of the heart and beauty of the affections, which form the manners and conduct of a truly social life” (353). Shaftesbury sees this self-scrutiny as a product of valuing the praise given by others and the desire to continue being worthy of such praise, stating, “Nor are the greatest favourites of fortune exempted from this task of self-inspection. Even flattery itself, by making the view agreeable, renders us more attentive this way and ensnares us in the habit” (208). All people must engage in self-examination—and, flattery poses an opportunity for a person to question whether or not the flattery is justified by the person’s internal motivations and external behaviors.



Shaftesbury finds flattery provokes this self-examination where people can better align their internal and external strives towards holistic virtue, especially if they enjoy being flattered.

The vainer any person is, the more he has his eye inwardly fixed upon himself and is after a certain manner employed in this home survey. And when a true regard to ourselves cannot oblige us to this inspection, a false regard to others and a fondness for reputation raises a watchful jealousy and furnishes us sufficiently with acts of reflection on our own character and conduct. (208)

Of course, this should create a virtue feedback loop of internal motivation, external behavior, offered flattery, internalized flattery, self-reflection, and stronger alignments of virtue unities.

#### Virtue in the Dark: The Knave Versus the Saint

With all of the ways that people can avoid moral behavior—such as biases favoring wealth, class, gender, etc.— Shaftesbury rhetorically asks “*Why shou’d a Man be honest in the dark?*” (58). Gill explains that Shaftesbury believes just asking this question indicates moral wavering, as those who steadfastly adhere to virtue do so consistently and do not descend into these questions. Shaftesbury also stipulates that people should be honest even in the “dark,” meaning people must maintain virtue when not in threat of punishment for immoral acts, as this consistent virtue remains essential for people to enjoy a unified identity and sense of self (146). Shaftesbury considers moral unities connected with an idea of a unified identity. He presents an argument on selfishness and virtue in his parable of the saint and the knave, which will be linked into the discussions on the novels *Pamela* and *Clarissa*. Shaftesbury proposes a hypothetical situation: A Knave only feels motivated towards virtue when facing punishment, or as Shaftesbury notes, *the Gallows*. Yet, this moral shifting links to Shaftesbury’s idea that people should be in a state of

continuous morality—even when in the dark. The virtuous should not have differing senses of motivations when faced with punishment, even death. The Knave’s virtue here at the Gallows is not honest or commendable—it is selfish and fear-based. The Knave’s motivations and virtues are inconsistent and not selflessly designed for community betterment.

Then, Shaftesbury presents the Saint, who is considered an icon of selflessness, as saints are supposedly not selfish like knaves. Yet, if people view the Saint as motivated by rewards in the afterlife of Heavenly paradise, then this undermines the virtue of the Saint’s devotions and sacrifices. In this way, the Knave and the Saint demonstrate that the external elements might deceive the onlooker who does not consider the internal motivations for objectively virtuous acts more deeply. This links into Shaftesbury’s concepts of the unity of beauty and the unity of identity, where people must be seamlessly virtuous from internal motivation to external action. Contemplating these unities proves, for him, that hedonistic concepts of punishment and reward do not necessarily facilitate this unified, authentic expression of virtue. These concepts will play pivotally within this book’s literary analysis of Samuel Richardson’s novels *Pamela* and *Clarissa* as well as the public response to those works, including the formal response proffered by Sarah Fielding that is analyzed in Chapter Three.

In his Moral Stage 2, Shaftesbury’s antithesis emphasizes that certain variables can impede moral action, which fosters his skepticism that people cannot overcome these specified failings. For example, passions can overrule the ability to reflect and reason, interrupting the pleasure derived from mental and moral order (5, 192). People might naively believe they can automatically act on virtue principles or avoid temptations towards vicious acts or situations rife with overwhelming passions. While working-class people often do not have the leisure and training necessary to access moral knowledge fully, some in the leisure class lack application,

leading to laziness that contributes to their “total disorder of the passions” (214). Additionally, while some people’s constitutions do not afford them access to moral knowledge (176), others are misguided by religion or custom (179, 175), which represent social elements that stymie the acquisition of moral knowledge when wrongly intentioned or wrongly structured.

Shaftesbury does contend that there is a possible third stage beyond naïvely trying to be virtuous automatically or avoiding vicious temptations—this relates to a nuanced view of Shaftesbury that allows for ideas of Stoicism to creep into his moral philosophy. While Shaftesbury heavily emphasizes the interpersonal nature of human society with the individual’s duty to foster virtuous acts, some scholars see evidence of Stoicism in his works. Gill writes that “while Shaftesbury clearly emphasizes the concern with the state of one’s own soul, which is within one’s own control, and a resultant withdrawing of concern from everything else” (8). For this research, it seems Shaftesbury’s paradoxical ideas on the retreat into the self and transformation through strong self-control in the face of the pushes and pulls of a vice-oriented society might be the only path towards virtue. The scholar “Jaffro suggests that Shaftesbury believes that the third stage of self-transformation is accessible only to the supremely intellectual few, and that most people can only aspire to the second stage of avoidance” (Gill 8). This point on stoicism might offer a complicated analysis (in Chapter Three) for Richardson’s character Clarissa, as the author wedges his fictional world between Shaftesbury’s and Butler’s ultimate expressions of personal virtue and justice, which itself can be viewed as a collective social state of virtue (Gill 8). Thus, regardless of class or gender, all people must constantly discipline their innate proclivities through the reasoning process, which requires a skeptical eye upon one’s true self and one’s social environment.

## Shaftesbury's Synthesis: God as Designer Requiring Dutiful Marriages

### *External Regulatory System 1: Moral Intellectualism Where God Is the Great Designer*

Rejecting the cynical Hobbesian social contract theory, Shaftesbury optimistically asserts that humans possess innate faculties that direct them to embrace their sociable natures to develop harmonious communities. For Shaftesbury, thoughtful contemplations of the Earth and its systems should impress people with an understanding of the perfect interlocking nature of this extraordinary world system. Gill notes that “proper attention to the magnificent order of natural phenomena, Shaftesbury argues, leads inevitably to the conclusion that the world was created by a perfect being” (65). For Shaftesbury, his conception of God disagrees with Locke’s insistence on the necessity of a punitive God and on the factor and importance of fear of perdition as a motivator to moral action. But, while Shaftesbury disagreed with Locke’s moral voluntarism, the two agreed on religious tolerance, especially in connection with the Latitudinarians. Shaftesbury believes that the deity is the ultimate exemplar of moral order and virtuous beauty through perceived beneficence and in constructing a social world. If religion provides a focus on God’s goodness and order, Shaftesbury believes it can only further moral life in society and that true religion should facilitate “a passionate love for the Divine and its creation” (Gill 65).

In Shaftesbury’s “Miscellaneous IV,” he makes a clear statement on his universal system of order:

since man has been so constituted, by means of his rational part, as to be conscious of this his more immediate relation to the universal system and principle of order and

intelligence, he is not only by nature sociable within the limits of his own species or kind but in a yet more generous and extensive manner. (432)

This quote illustrates Shaftesbury's constant emphasis on people living in relation to greater social connections. Shaftesbury continues, "He is not only born to virtue, friendship, honesty and faith but to religion, piety, adoration and a generous surrender of his mind to whatever happens from that supreme cause or order of things, which he acknowledges entirely just and perfect. These are our author's formal and grave sentiments" (432). Thus, Shaftesbury notes that God has endowed humans with the awareness of God, the ability of moral knowledge, and responsibility towards moral behavior as a society member.

Shaftesbury links the personal understanding of how to promote the greater good and actively participating in these goals with fulfilling spiritual initiatives on Earth: "To love the public, to study universal good, and to promote the interest of the whole world, as far as lies within our power, is surely the height of goodness and makes the temper which we call 'divine'" (20). He considers the microcosm of person-to-person relationships, their production of children, education of families, and communication and correspondences among people as the very foundations of society, which thrives when people serve the greater good. Although Shaftesbury asserts humans are naturally drawn to moral order, the regulatory institutions of marriage, family, government, and church provide structures that facilitate order. These external regulatory structures operate in holistic ways that are more dependable and influential than an individual's ability to act on moral knowledge.

## *External Regulatory System 2: The Individual's Role in Fostering Social Harmony*

While Shaftesbury believes that the Divine creator represents the highest level of beauty and the arbiter of virtue and morality, he adheres to certain social systems as the most accurate mechanisms to guide people towards moral action and social stability. Thus, for Shaftesbury, the most practical external regulatory system remains law and governance where people should dutifully obey ordinances that foster social harmony. This focus on the greater good puts Shaftesbury into the proto-utilitarian mode of advocating for people to consider their actions within the context of their impacts on others, which relates to his ideas on “*Moral Arithmetic*,” (299) which serves as a precursor to ideas that people should be virtuous in order to facilitate “the greatest Happiness for the greatest Numbers” (Hutcheson 1726: 125). Shaftesbury considered something, someone, or an act as good or virtuous if it contributed to the “Existence or Well-being” (218). Ultimately, he seems to believe in an ever-expanding view of the ripple effects of virtuous actions stemming from the individual outwards to the entire global society, from the microcosm to the macrocosm.

As noted in this book's introduction, this era of British history included strict estate inheritance regulations where property passed from generation to generation—hopefully a first son—with entails that prevented estate disintegration. The female body and the security of legitimate parentage was controlled through the strictures held over the wife and women in general, who were legally denoted as property under this social system. For the landed gentry, like Shaftesbury, these estate entails and the accompanying gender legal codes and shadow laws formed crucial, practical systems that guaranteed social stability. The estate entail system became fragile and inconsistent during these decades of major cultural transitions from feudal agrarian societies into what would become industrialized colonial Britain. For Shaftesbury, his

Moral Stage 3 turn to external regulatory structures reveals his focus on the family unit. Thus, he includes in his moral philosophy advice on child rearing. Demonstrating his commitment to the importance of fulfilling one's duty, Shaftesbury made his own choice of wife by deciding upon a person whose lineage likely would preserve his family's estate and would likely help him produce a family to continue the Ashley estate entail.

Shaftesbury was concerned with how parents must create a positive cross-generational cycle of virtuous living by teaching their children proper moral and behavioral codes, which is the particular responsibility of the wife and mother. In fact, as Greenblatt and Jan Armstrong note, during this era, this responsibility is presented as her place of power and respect. Shaftesbury predicts the ill-effects indulgence and mismanagement of children have in adulthood. He suggests there is a "wanton mischievousness and pleasure in what is destructive" that was "usually encouraged in children" and as a result "it is indeed no wonder if the effects of it are very unfortunately felt in the world" (226). Like the novelist Richardson, Shaftesbury offers his own conduct code advice for childrearing when he cites the inevitable links between permissive parenting and immoral behavior.

He believes this type of carefree parenting results in immoral, disturbing adults: "For it will be hard, perhaps, for anyone to give a reason why that temper, which was used to delight in disorder and ravage when in a nursery, should not afterwards find delight in other disturbances and be the occasion of equal mischief in families, among friends and in the public itself" (226). Believing that parental indulgence precipitates unhealthy adults, Shaftesbury warns, "Thus over-great tenderness destroys the effect of love, and excessive pity renders us incapable of giving succor. Hence the excess of motherly love is owned to be a vicious fondness" (172). Parents need to guide children in the path to become moral adults and harmonious citizens, which links

back into Shaftesbury's ideas of the interlocking webs of individual acts and the greater happiness and social harmony of a stable society.

In his daily life, Shaftesbury balanced antithetical modes of existence like the moral order he articulates in his philosophy—he sought a balance between a solitary life of contemplation and a social life imbued with a profound sense of duty and purpose. The philosopher regarded his position as landed aristocracy as equally central, and methodically cultivated his estate, family, and patronage. His commitment to the aristocracy went beyond his political role—he had to continue his family. And, his marital choice was based on these moral and practical precepts.<sup>12</sup> In real life, Shaftesbury married Jane Ewer, a woman he chose for her staid personality and fertile lineage. Yet, he worried that society would criticize him for her lack of wealth and standing. In a letter to Robert Molesworth, July 19th, 1709, Shaftesbury expresses some of his concerns:

What a weakness then... wou'd it be thought in me, to marry with Little or no Fortune, and not into the highest degree of Quality neither? Will it be enough, that I take a Breeder out of a good Family, with a right Education, befitting a mere Wife, and with no advantages but simple Innocence, Modesty, and the plain Qualities of a good Mother, and a good Nurse?...The Experiment, however shall be made. (Voitle 296)

Shaftesbury married a “woman who was simply of good family,” not a woman of “beauty nor wealth” (Voitle 296–98). This marriage decision emulated his belief in the pleasure of fulfilling familial and personal duty over the transitory, selfish pleasure of a love marriage.

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<sup>12</sup> Voitle, “Lord of the Manor 1700–1702” pp 164–213



Shaftesbury married to procreate a robust next generation, as the first Earl of Shaftesbury instructed, so that the practice of the estate entail and strict settlement would prevail. Happy in fulfilling his duty, the newlywed Shaftesbury expresses his convictions in a letter to Wheelock: “There is nothing on Earth wanting to me: & I have fulfilled in all respects the Injunctions of my Grandfather & have taken care of his honour & Name & Posterity,” which was made all the more gratifying when Lady Jane bore their son on February 9, 1711 (Voitle 302). Shaftesbury’s marriage was not grounded in mercenary necessity but one that, while still committed to patriarchy and a landed aristocracy, came from a place founded in deep moral principles for the betterment of all.

Ultimately, Shaftesbury was, like all of the moral philosophers explored in this research, a tastemaker and sociopolitical influencer whose ideas expanded beyond the written page into the hearts and minds of citizens and into the nation’s various formal governing institutions. Gill notes “how Shaftesbury sought to develop the concepts of taste, manners, and politeness in such a way as to provide a moral foundation for British life that would supplant the outdated and unsatisfactory institutional supports of church and court” (46). In conclusion, Shaftesbury’s philosophies center on humanity being implanted with innate ideas and engaging in healthy social and individual dialogues. These tenets all connect with his ideas on how people can serve as moral, dutiful individuals within a larger social schema of God’s macrocosmic perfect design. His ideas represent major movements toward increased parliamentary political systems as well as towards secular moral intellectualism.

### **Part III: The Novelist Samuel Richardson**

#### *Richardson's Background and Family Intersections with the Shaftesburys*

Samuel Richardson's interactions with the era's literary elite and his writings are filled with links to and echoes of moral philosophy's influences, especially those of Shaftesbury. Although Richardson did not personally meet Shaftesbury, their families might have intersected.

Richardson's biographers Eaves and Kimpel suggest that the Shaftesbury and Richardson families might have been neighbors, as the first Earl of Shaftesbury "moved to the City and indeed had an establishment in Aldersgate Ward, where Samuel Richardson, Senior, lived. They could have known each other" (5). Beyond this locational link, the two families connected politically, as the first Earl of Shaftesbury courted people from varying social spheres to advance Whig politics. Because many of the city guildsmen, like Richardson's father, were harassed by James II, Richardson's family likely were sympathetic to the first Earl of Shaftesbury's politics. This sociopolitical issue is what likely prompted Richardson to remark in a letter to his Dutch translator Johannes Stinstra that his father was a joiner who had left London two years before Richardson's birth. As Richardson's father had been preferred by the first Earl of Shaftesbury for "His Skill and Ingenuity, and Understanding superior to his Business," this offers insight into the impacts of larger religiopolitical forces on the Richardson family life (Eaves and Kimpel 4).

#### *Richardson's Intellectual, Artistic, and Business Crosscutting Circles*

As a writer and a printer from 1720–1760, Richardson's personal and professional life naturally included mutually influential relationships with publishing and literary elites. In these roles, he facilitated important publications while publishing his own works, which demonstrated clear links to the moral philosophy of Locke and Shaftesbury. For example, in 1731, Richardson

printed Locke's *Reasonableness of Christianity*, which advocated for religious tolerance. Eaves and Kimpel further suggest Richardson "used Locke's theories on education as a basis for *Pamela*" and "[h]is other references—to Shaftesbury, Mandeville, Bolingbroke, Hartley, Hume, and Bishop Berkeley—show that he knew" these works (571). Richardson's fluency with Locke and his exposure to the philosophers mentioned above led to Richardson, in 1733, becoming the first official printer to the House. As the official printer of government papers,<sup>13</sup> he printed retrospective volumes of the Journal of the House of Commons, which "in its first and most ambitious phase was designed to bring the Journal record from 1547 up to April 1741" (Maslen 24). Pat Rogers highlights the importance of Richardson's government publications:

day-to-day labours in his shop included printing the official records of Parliament, which covered bills, votes, committee reports, and later the issue of the historic Journals of the House of Commons from the time of Edward VI...[a] task, highly important in archiving the course of British politics over the centuries. (129)

This likely means that Richardson read some of the bills passed and put forth by the third Earl of Shaftesbury. Richardson's work in this official capacity instigated his friendship with Arthur Onslow,<sup>14</sup> Speaker of the House, further suggesting his knowledge of Shaftesbury's Whig politics underwritten by his philosophy.

By 1739, Richardson's work as a printer was extensive—which all point to his interactions with formidable thinkers of the day and to his influence in disseminating impactful

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<sup>13</sup> Pat Rogers' "Editing" in *Samuel Richardson in Context*. (pp. 111–2)

<sup>14</sup> Howard D Weinbrot's chapter "Politics" in *Samuel Richardson in Context*. (187–96)

works to the reading public. Linking Richardson to the think tank of the Royal Society, Christopher Flint notes that he facilitated the printing of “the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*...[and] his revised version of Roger L’ Estrange’s *Aesop’s Fables*,” which both illustrate his position within the intellectual science- and fiction-writing elites (120). Catherine Ingrassia’s research reveals that one of Richardson’s many publications included the highly praised *The Works of Pope* (1735), a compendium of Alexander Pope’s (1688–1744) writings. And, his long-lasting friendship with Aaron Hill—one of London’s most ubiquitous literary icons—again reveals Richardson’s interconnections with Locke’s and Shaftesbury’s works. Richardson published and likely read Hill’s *The Northern-Star* where Hill “wrote a poem entitled ‘To Miranda after Marriage, with Mr. Locke’s Treatise on Education,’” again indicating Richardson’s familiarity with Locke’s work (Eaves and Kimpel 41). During this time, Hill had a love-hate relationship with Pope that spilled over into Hill’s writing and Richardson’s printing of Hill’s work.

In the end, Richardson’s connection with Hill brings the printer into critical engagement with Pope’s *Essay on Man*, which includes deep influences from the third Earl of Shaftesbury. Although not a fan of Pope’s satirical style and upset by his complex relationship with Hill, Richardson still is quoted saying that he “considered the *Essay on Man* as evidence of [Pope’s] genius” (Eaves and Kimpel 577). The profound work was described by Bluestocking member and writer Catherine Trotter Cockburn (1679-1749) as “an emotionally compelling account of human benevolence, the congruence of self-love and altruism, and the mysteries of the law of nature” (O’Brien 56). Richardson’s printing of Pope’s *Essay on Man* offers a segue into Richardson’s relationships with women writers, especially in the Bluestockings.

Richardson not only published the male literati's work—he democratically supported and printed several women's works, including those of a few Bluestockings. While modern feminists might have issues with Richardson's portrayals of and choices offered to his novels' heroines Pamela and Clarissa, Richardson was immersed in the Bluestocking community, many of whose works were steeped in the world of moral philosophy, including Butler who influenced Shaftesbury. For example, Karen O'Brien details how Bluestocking member "Elizabeth Carter met Joseph Butler through Catharine Talbot's patron and guardian Thomas Secker," who became the Bishop of Canterbury (57). Secker met Butler, where they "attended the same Dissenting academy in Gloucester before conforming to, and rising within, the Church of England" (57). According to O'Brien, all of these interconnections can be seen in Butler's influence in the women's "own Latitudinarian Christianity" (57). These two Bluestockings were also friends with Richardson, with Talbot being friends with Richardson's friend Dr. Johnson.

Beyond counting women writers as his friends, including Sarah Fielding discussed in this book's Chapter Three, Richardson's openness to print work from both women and men from various religious and moral communities is noted by E. Derek Taylor.<sup>15</sup> The author's friendships and profession made his introduction to and interaction with Shaftesbury's philosophy inevitable. As with many great thinkers, Shaftesbury's ideas were absorbed, modified, and translated by many other intellectuals; therefore, Richardson's understanding of Shaftesbury likely comes through a variety of different prisms. As the salons and clubs of the era were filled with intellectual conversation, many of Shaftesbury's philosophical constructs naturally would have

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<sup>15</sup> See E. Derek Taylor's chapter "Religion" in *Samuel Richardson in Context*, edited by Peter Sabor and Betty A. Schellenberg, (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2017, pp. 296–303).

been debated. And, Richardson, as a man of letters, repeatedly would have been exposed to Shaftesbury's works.

#### **Part IV: Literary Analysis According to Shaftesbury's Moral Stages**

In the novel *Pamela*, Richardson incorporates plotlines, character attributes, and narrative strategies that present central tenets of Shaftesbury's philosophies and world outlook. These core concepts include humanity's innate knowledge, the importance of dialogic interaction (in-person or epistolary), the beauty of design, and marriage regulations and inheritance laws as social safeguards. Richardson dramatizes Shaftesbury's moral stages centered on reflection, skepticism, and external regulatory structures by designing plot circumstances that create moral dilemmas over which Pamela and Mr. B ruminate. Richardson incorporates Shaftesbury's emphasis on the importance of dialogic interaction, whether in person or through the vital platform of sender-receiver epistolary relationships or memoirist-soliloquy diary conversations with the self (which might be read/overheard by intended audiences).

Richardson employs multiple levels of these exchanges, including Pamela's letters with her parents, her diary entries (which are read by Mr. B), and Pamela's reframing of Lady B's reframe "Remember my poor Pamela." The novel follows Shaftesbury's three-stage moral dialectic with an added complexity where Pamela, as Richardson's representation of Shaftesbury's unified ideal moral object, experiences moral stages one and two in her individual psychological plotline that is influenced by and influences Mr. B's moral stages one and two of his individual psychological plotline. The two characters converge in their marriage, which unifies their stage three experiences. Their husband-and-wife synthesis becomes the novel's turn to external regulatory structures that dovetail with character decisions influenced by legal

inheritance codes, as Pamela is gifted a conduct code regarding her expected behavior as a model wife and de facto model of Richardson's ideal British womanhood.

*Richardson's Narrative Choices Facilitate Characters to Experience Shaftesbury's Dialectic*

Richardson designs Pamela's character as an icon of moral virtue who maintains her moral codes, especially as it relates to her virginity, and positively influences immoral characters to transition to moral behavior. She is, in essence, a paragon of moral virtue. As Richardson's novel was intended for a broader audience than Shaftesbury's male aristocratic audience, Richardson imbues Pamela with reason and wit not generally ascribed to a woman. Nancy Armstrong asserts that this imaginative novelist uses the blank page to create a specific type of woman who could represent: an important variation on familiar "Enlightenment themes: they constituted the female subject as she became an object of knowledge in and through her own writing" (98). Richardson does not create a liberated female character, but "in shaping an ideal woman out of the stuff of novels... he used fiction for redefining the desirable woman" (96–7). Profoundly idealized, the titular character Pamela becomes a template for young women's moral intellect and conduct. Richardson's choice of the epistolary novel serves as a platform for a worm's-eye view into Pamela's ratiocinations as she struggles to act morally when faced with Mr. B's intimidations and untoward behavior.

*Narrative Strategies at Play in Pamela's Thesis and Antithesis Stages*

## **Pamela's Thesis Stage: Sender-Receiver Dialogic**

### *Pamela and Her Parents Write Their Views on the Morals Inherent in Her Situation*

Richardson's dramatization of Shaftesbury's belief in the sender-receiver dialogic letter-writing process as a pathway to moral knowledge begins with Pamela's epistolary relationship with her supportive, wise parents. In her first letter, Pamela writes her joys and troubles to her parents. Pamela describes the moments before Lady B passes away and writes of the dying matriarch's requests that her son "remember [her] poor Pamela" (11). This injunction prompts Mr. B to provide Pamela assurances that she will continue working in the house and that he will provide her with money from her Lady's clothes, as custom dictates. (It is argued later in the chapter that her call for Mr. B to remember Pamela had a far different meaning.) Pamela's initial letters primarily report events to her parents, although they also implicitly solicit advice. In her letters, Pamela acknowledges her debt to her parents by referring to how they cared for her when she was a child and to her hopes to care for them during their lifetimes. This emotional commentary suggests Pamela's desire to act in alignment with her parent's values, as she echoes Shaftesbury's emphasis on duty and respect to family above all else.

Pamela's parents' critique of Mr. B teaches Pamela carefully to assess others—Mr. B's station and gender do not place him above criticism. Even though Pamela is a female and of a lower station, she should reason through and evaluate the actions of others as they should do the same for themselves. Her parents' response critiques her situation based on their values and their privileged point of view as elders and parents. Lady B's death saddens them. Nevertheless, and more importantly, they are worried about Pamela's situation. They are worried that Lady B has



educated her above her station, and as a result, she might be tempted to assume airs by Mr. B's platitudes and material promises.

Her parents shine a spotlight on Pamela's possible weakness—the passions of vanity and pride—which become repeated themes of vices to avoid in oneself and to identify in others in the attempt to sway them from indulging in immoral ways. Using Shaftesbury's language of reflection, delight, and beauty to explain the joy of ordered living that “the most natural beauty in the world is honesty and moral truth” (65), her parents encourage her not to focus on the loss of material goods if she follows their advice and refuses Mr. B's gifts. Instead, she should remember that true beauty is “Virtue and Goodness” (20). Her parents also respond to Mr. B's potentially immoral motivations of lust, licentiousness, and pride. They pick apart what she describes in her letter to them as Mr. B's excessive interest in Pamela's writings and reading as undue attention to her. Their carefully worded letters suggest that his attentions are disproportionate to what her situation warrants, therefore implying his emotions are disordered and potentially unregulated. Pamela's parents' teachings shift society's expectations as they model and encourage Pamela to apply analytical skills to assess Mr. B's behaviors, focusing Pamela's attention on the ordered hierarchy of moral behavior. Instead of expecting Pamela to be an ornament and blindly obedient, Pamela's parents desire her to think and reason. Moreover, through that process of contemplation, she finds her role in an ordered society.

These dialogues mediated through Pamela and her parents' epistles model skepticism and encourage self-scrutiny and fair criticism of others. Although it troubles Pamela that her parents are skeptical of Mr. B's good intention, she is even more bothered by what she interprets as her parents' “mistrust” of “the Honesty of [their] Child” (15). However, their critique encourages Pamela to redouble her commitment to her honesty, and it implants her father's critical

conscience in her mind as she interacts with and analyzes Mr. B's actions. In an epistle to her father, she explains that even though she and Mrs. Jarvis believe Mr. B's actions are well-intentioned, his "kind fatherly Cautions" break in upon her (19). Even if the caution is unnecessary, she believes that they serve the beneficial purpose of keeping her humble. She reflects that "so I will make myself easy; and indeed, I should never have been otherwise, if you had not put it into my Head; for my Good, I know very well. But, maybe, without these Uneasinesses to mingle with these Benefits, I might be too much puff'd up" (19). Pamela's parents teach her reasoning skills, they encourage her to push aside prejudice to access truth and in so doing they arm her with skills that empower her and give her agency.

*As Shaftesbury Would Encourage, Pamela Dismisses Insincere Flattery*

Richardson makes determined narrative choices to convey Mr. B's encroaching danger. As Pamela attempts to hold him at bay and preserve her virtue, both her moral behavior and physical virginity are at stake. When her parents' skepticism of Mr. B's intentions proves true, the narrative presentation of dialogue moves from Pamela's correspondence with her parents to the dialogue reported by Pamela as the character-narrator. Richardson narrates the events from Pamela's perspective to the readers, just as she relates the situation to her fictional parents. As Pamela is designed to echo Shaftesbury's philosophies, Pamela skeptically rebukes Mr. B's unmerited and unwanted sexual attention. She attempts to represent the situation as close to empirical reality as possible. In doing so, she precisely recalls her dialogues with Mr. B from memory. In this dialogue, the reader hears Pamela echoing her parents' scrutiny and criticism.

She comments on the disorder Mr. B's excessive affections cause both of them when she says, "Well may I forget that I am your Servant, when you forget what belongs to a Master" (23).

What's more, she is not afraid of placing Mr. B under the same inquiry she faces from her parents. In her writing, she questions his preferential treatment: "Why, if I have done amiss, am I not left to be discharged by your House-keeper, as the other Maids have been?" (58). She bristles even at his very noticing her, adding "And if Jane, or Rachel, or Hannah, were to offend, would your Honour stoop to take Notice of them? And why should you so demean yourself to take Notice of me?... For indeed I am not of Consequence enough for my Master to concern himself and be angry about such a Creature as me" (58–9). As designed by Richardson, Pamela has no patience for false flattery targeting her external beauty; instead, she piercingly scrutinizes Mr. B's affections as ill-intentioned.

For Pamela, who exhibits genuine morality, her recording of flattery proffered by her peers dramatizes Shaftesbury's assertion that flattery results in helpful self-scrutiny. Pamela's good reputation brings her to moments of critical reflection, especially as a part of the self-analysis. In a letter written to her parents, Pamela describes the genial relationship she has with all her fellow servants, she recounts an interaction where Mr. Longman is saddened to hear that her conflict with Mr. B may cause her departure. Flattering Pamela, Mr. Longman suggests her problems lie in her being "too pretty...and, may-be, too virtuous" (50). Pamela values his approbation: "Now this pleases one, my dear Father and Mother, to be so beloved.—How much better, by good Fame and Integrity, is it to get every one's good Word but one, than by pleasing that one, to make every one else one's Enemy, and be an execrable Creature besides!" (50). Hearing her fame and integrity lauded by honest, hardworking Mr. Longman, whose authority in the staff gives him a platform to speak for others, encourages her to reflect on her actions and affirm her moral code. This process of dialogue and self-reflection promulgated by flattery results in Pamela's pleasure and recommitment to the behavior that gains her attention in the first

place. This affirmation dramatizes Shaftesbury's idea of the feedback loop of genuine flattery reinforcing moral behavior. She assures herself that it is better to be praised by virtuous people than to cower to please one influential person, Mr. B. Continuing to live out her parents' instruction, Pamela knows she cannot tarnish their principles in her own eyes nor in the eyes of those who share her principles. Thus, what might present as Pamela's superficial self-indulgent transcription of Mr. Longman's praise is actually a springboard for the intellectual work advocated by Shaftesbury and dramatized in Pamela's epistolary dialogue.

Pamela's epistles to her parents function both on a level of form and of content. Their epistolary form provides her reason to recount her dialogues with Mr. B. Their content posits the moral concerns and the skeptical turn the dialogue inevitably takes in Pamela's path of reasoning through this moral dilemma. Her questioning and reasoning from those stressful issues show a mind committed to understanding motives and reasons for actions, as well as her disapproval of Mr. B's thinking that disrespects the moral beauty of order and cohesion. Further, Pamela's critique of Mr. B dramatizes Shaftesbury's concerns for social cohesion as she implies that by teaching her to "forget" herself, Mr. B "lessen[s] the Distance that Fortune has made between" their stations, which will negatively impact social structures (23). Pamela's mind has expanded through self-reflection, and she has no interest in losing this gained moral insight, which can be seen in her courageous moral decisions.

### **Pamela's Antithesis: A Written Soliloquy on Suicide**

As Pamela shifts from Shaftesbury's stage one thesis to the stage two antithesis, Richardson transitions away from the sender-receiver dialogic epistolary form. After her abduction, Pamela is aware that her parents will no longer receive her letters. However, she continues to write of her

despair while contemplating the act of suicide. On one level, these writings become letters to herself. She turns into a memoirist, or what Shaftesbury would describe as a soliloquist, who psychologically divides her mind into her witnessing self and her original self. While isolated and under extreme duress, this psychic division facilitates her ability to apostrophize to herself to understand her thought processes. David Marshall explains the process of soliloquy, as explored by Shaftesbury with the narratology concept of *dédoublement*. In this psychological schism, the writer-speaker transitions into a doubled identity of being the self and witnessing the self. This elevated being objectively views the thoughts and actions of the primary—here, deeply troubled—self in a system of self-care, contemplation, and, hopefully, awakening.

In the act of *dédoublement*, Pamela divides herself with one side observing the other. She records this process of self-talk: “Hitherto, Pamela, thought I, thou art the innocent, the suffering Pamela; and wilt thou be the guilty Aggressor? and, because wicked Men persecute thee, wilt thou fly in the Face of the Almighty, and bid Defiance to his Grace and Goodness, who can still turn all these Sufferings to thy Benefits? (174). Pamela’s soliloquy dramatizes what Shaftesbury had called the “sovereign remedy and gymnastic method” of taking an intense moral inventory where a person writes reflective journal entries to the self (84–85). It is the ultimate self-critiquing act, representing both his thesis (reasoning) and antithesis (skepticism as part of reasoning). Pamela’s *dédoublement* continues as she scolds herself for doubting that God has a plan, which includes pain and suffering. In this moment she has split herself into two theologians in dialogue harkening back to Locke’s assertion that there are things in this world that we cannot know:

And how do I know, but that God, who sees all the lurking Vileness of my Heart, may not have permitted these Sufferings on that very Score, and to make me rely solely on his

Grace and Assistance, who perhaps have too much prided myself in a vain Dependence on my own foolish Contrivances? (Richardson 174)

Pamela's self-questioning allows her to draw conclusions; she determines that her excessive pride has disorganized her moral constitution. However, this process of self-reflection based in skepticism brings her passions back in line translating into moral action.

Before continuing our exploration of Richardson's dramatization of Shaftesbury's soliloquized narrative in Pamela's diary, let's recall that Pamela knows Mr. B reads her writing. After Lady B's death Pamela writes to her parents suggesting that Mr. B, who "was mean enough to do bad things," was likely stealing and reading her letters she writes to her parents (22). As time passes she hopes that what he reads of her accounts of his bad behaviors will make him "asham'd of his Part" (84). Later, Mr. B confirms Pamela's suspicions and reveals that he has "seen more of" Pamela's "Letters than [she] can imagine" and that they have been impactful, even bringing him a certain pleasure (84). While Pamela sincerely reflects on her moral quandary she likely has it in her mind that her writings might serve to instruct not only herself, and her parents, but also Mr. B.

Pamela empathically considers her family when she imagines the pain her parents would endure at her suicide, demonstrating the intellectual work Shaftesbury advocates in order to gain moral knowledge:

Then again, thought I, wilt thou suffer in one Moment all the good Lessons of thy poor honest Parents, and the Benefit of their Example, (who have persisted in doing their Duty with Resignation to the Divine Will, amidst the extreme Degrees of Disappointment, Poverty and Distress, and the Persecutions of an ungrateful World, and merciless

Creditors) to be thrown away upon thee;... that their beloved Daughter, slighting the Tenders of Divine Grace, desponding in the mercies of a gracious God, has blemish'd, in this last Act, a whole Life, which they had hitherto approv'd and delighted in? (174)

Pamela sees herself as existing within a network of people and communities. Recognizing that she owes much to her parents, their love, care, and hard work, and that they who have endured so much would not flout their duty to the Divine will, she questions the reasonableness of her own despair. By questioning her place within and among others, she also explores the validity of her emotions, identifying them as disproportionate. Gaining this moral knowledge translates into her moral action, as Pamela vehemently urges herself to “Quit with Speed these guilty Banks, and flee from these dashing Waters, that even in their sounding Murmurs, this still Night, reproach thy Rashness!” (174). She even recognizes the power of her ratiocinations, “Divine Grace, and due Reflection” to help her return to the Charge” of life (174). Resolved in her rejection of suicide, Pamela finds strength in her faith Her contemplation has facilitated her arrival at determined moral action. Mr. B’s continued reading of Pamela’s journal causes him to reflect on her reflections against suicide, which also demonstrates that an individual’s self-reflective thoughts can extend benefits to other individuals and, by extension, impact more significant social concerns.

Throughout Pamela’s soliloquy on suicide, she reaches back to her moral touchstone of Lady B. Pamela meditates on the Lady’s hail to Pamela’s moral compass in the soliloquized apostrophe to “remember my poor Pamela.” This statement functions as a criticism to Mr. B, whom Lady B correctly anticipates harming the vulnerable Pamela after the matriarch’s death. Pamela’s reminiscence of Lady B’s call to “remember my poor Pamela” is a form of internal conscience, where Pamela reflects on Lady B’s moral instruction. The harrowing experiences

Pamela endures and reflects on in her diary highlight the “religious Education” Lady B had provided Pamela and its immense social value (241). According to Pamela, Lady B set moral ground rules and expectations. Pamela recalls when Lady B said, “she would be the making of” her, if she “was a good Girl” and learned her lesson, to “be virtuous, and keep the Men at a Distance” (200). As Pamela has internalized and reproduced Lady B’s and her parents’ religious teachings, these combined teachings and Pamela’s modeling of them in action exemplify social order and regulate its corrections.

Richardson’s engagement with Shaftesbury’s moral sense philosophy causes the author to place Pamela’s commitment to her virginity center stage in her dialogues and soliloquies. In a later journal entry, marked as “Journal Entry Twelve O’Clock Saturday Noon,” Pamela rebuts Mr. B’s articles for keeping Pamela as a mistress (190). She vehemently writes:

I dare to tell you, that I will make no Free-will Offering of my Virtue. All that I can do, poor as it is, I will do, to convince you, that your offers shall have no Part in my Choice; and if I cannot escape the Violence of Man, I hope, by God’s Grace, I shall have nothing to reproach myself, for not doing all in my power to avoid my Disgrace; and then I can safely appeal to the great God, my only Refugee and Protector, with this Consolation, That my will bore no Part in my violation. (190–1)

In this chilling and furious response, Pamela cites her complete unwillingness to have sexual relations with her kidnapper Mr. B. She states her prayer that she is not leading Mr. B towards his expressed intentions of sexually violating her. Moreover, she finishes her angry appeal that her conscience is clear if she should be raped by Mr. B.



The concerns of Pamela's parents, Lady B, and Pamela regarding preserving her virginity intersect with greater society's (including Shaftesbury and Richardson) concerns with the female body being a conduit to produce legitimate heirs that would protect the family's status by ensuring estate transferences. Pamela's virginity markers her social value; it can elevate her and her family's status, ensuring their lifelong security. In Letter II from Pamela's father, he writes that "we are, 'tis true, very poor, and find it hard enough to live; tho' once, as you know, it was better with us. But we would sooner live upon the Water and Clay of the Ditches I am forc'd to dig, than to live better at the Price of our dear Child's Ruin" (13). If Pamela were raped and "ruined," this situation would erode her social value.

*Mr. B's Thesis and Antithesis Stages: Analyzing Narrative Strategies at Play*

**Mr. B's Thesis Stage: One Who Is Written to by Being Written About**

Richardson's epistolary structure affords Mr. B pleasure when he reads Pamela's honest criticism of him in her journal entries. In terms of narrative strategy, Richardson could not have this demure captive character of Pamela directly criticize Mr. B, nor could a character such as the licentious, selfish Mr. B acknowledge her open critiques on his personhood. Much like her parents' letters served as a model of dialogic critique that Pamela ingests and rearticulates, Pamela hopes that the letters she ostensibly writes to her parents will positively impact Mr. B. Thus, Richardson has Pamela use her passive agency to process her suicidal thoughts, at the same time her entries help make Mr. B understand her perspectives on flattery, and indirectly criticize Mr. B, especially through the posthumous voice of his mother, Lady B. As Mr. B presents as an ego-driven, inconsiderate character, he probably would not embrace Pamela

directly critiquing his actions. Her indirect criticisms—delivered via epistles not even ostensibly directed towards him—allows his defensive psyche space to process the critical content of her writing.

Mr. B enhances his moral knowledge by engaging with Pamela's private thoughts, as conveyed through her journal entries. He is "touch'd... sensibly" by her "mournful Relation, and [her] Sweet Reflections," which, in essence, serves as a model for how to inspect his actions in order to self-regulate (240–1). As noted earlier Mr. B reads Pamela's soliloquy contemplating suicide. Sheila C. Conboy suggests that "When [Pamela] rejects the temptation to self-annihilation, she begins to write the way to wholeness for both herself and Mr. B... it is only after he has read Pamela's letters and journal that Mr. B can perceive their situation from her perspective" (82–82). Furthermore, Conboy posits that Pamela's

views cause [Mr. B] first to review his actions and then to submit to her imaginative reconstruction of experience. Mr. B is the original reader of Pamela's novel, and eventually, the heroine's perception of his character appears better to him than his perception of himself. Pamela not only achieves self-knowledge by utilizing language, but also discloses to Mr. B his best self, and makes him strive to realize it" (83).

Richardson's epistolary structure makes it possible for Mr. B to observe Pamela's process, which in turn helps guide Mr. B's process of disciplining his thoughts and actions. Pamela models moral behavior for herself and Mr. B in a way that forges a bizarre yet powerful psychological union between them in this bizarre relationship.

### **Mr. B's Antithesis Stage: His Passive Reception Sees Him Accept Pamela as Inspiring**

While modern readers of Pamela might revolt at the thought of this kidnapping situation with constant threats of sexual violence, Richardson seems to feel he is empowering Pamela. She determines her moral behavior and adheres to her sense of virtue while inspiring morality in Mr. B. In fact, Mr. B transitions into an audience for Pamela, who applies Scheherazade's strategy to stave off her captor's attack through storytelling. Mr. B becomes enthralled with reading about himself, commenting, "there is such a pretty Air of Romance, as you relate them, in your Plots, and my Plots (231–2). Psychologically, Mr. B experiences Marshall's *dédoublement* where the immature man is a distanced-self reading about his true-self, as presented through Pamela's authentic assessment of his immoral behavior. Because Mr. B is both character and reader, he is doubly affected by this process in much the same way Marshall discusses Shaftesbury's conception of a Soliloquy, an act of turning into one's own witness. Accordingly, Mr. B understands his actions with greater clarity, a process that dramatizes Shaftesbury's first stage of moral thought. As Mr. B reads about himself, he experiences the second half of the contemplative thesis stage. He moves towards the pivotal second stage, where behavior and action become the focus. Will Mr. B sexually attack Pamela, or will he be inspired and converted by her teaching him moral knowledge through her journals?

One of Mr. B's major moral turns occurs through reading about her ruminations on being flattered by her peers. The innate approbation and attraction Pamela's peers feel for her moral order dramatizes Shaftesbury's theories on flattery. However, Mr. B initially scoffs at the flattery that Pamela reports receiving from her peers. He reads it as a form of perverse self-aggrandizement and hypocrisy because he seeks further motivation for his disordered actions. Pamela's soliloquized reflections and her dialogue's witty repartee converts him into an acolyte

who comes to praise her insight and perspicacious writing. He writes to her that “those Letters, added he, that I did see by John’s Means, were not to your Disadvantage, I’ll assure you; for they gave me a very high Opinion of your Wit and Innocence” (229). These delightful sections serve as the sugar to make the medicine go down when she issues criticisms against Mr. B’s vicious behavior.

Furthermore, the pleasure Mr. B derives from reading Pamela’s diary does not diminish when he comes across her “harsh Reflections” on his “conduct” (229). In fact, Mr. B has already become a devoted fan, avidly awaiting the next installment in her journal where he is a star figure. Of her journal entries, he writes to her that “I must see them, Pamela, or I shall never be easy” (231). While Mr. B may have initially diminished Pamela’s virtuous behavior as arrogant conceit and wanted to read her diary to gather information to attack her, Mr. B is transformed by Pamela’s authenticity as a moral icon. Her logical consistency and clever rendering of the situation effectively engage his opinion. She successfully ignites Mr. B’s moral sense, where he is able to engage with his critical self and contemplate his morality, which links Richardson’s narrative strategies back to his dramatizations of Shaftesbury’s theories on the existence of the innate moral self and the powerful impact of soliloquy writing and dialogic epistolary exchanges.

*Lady B or Pamela? Mr. B Contemplates his Mother’s Words from Beyond the Grave*

Pamela’s letters and diary writings continually return to Lady B’s deathbed injunction to “remember my poor Pamela,” as a haunting yet motivational refrain that bolsters Pamela in her darkest hours. Pamela’s reflections on the differences in the morality expressed by herself in contrast to Mr. B drive her thoughts to question Lady B’s differing approaches to educating her two children and herself. Pamela notes that Lady B’s religious instruction on chastity and virtue

has served her well. In contrast, Lady B's permissiveness in rearing Mr. B has eventuated in producing Mr. B's vicious, selfish indulgence of his excessive passions. This point dramatizes Shaftesbury's admonition to parents to not be lenient parents, as the children will grow into difficult adults causing chaos in society.

Mr. B realizes Lady B's parenting failures while reading Pamela's diary. One of Pamela's diary entries highlights this perspective where she denies one of Mr. B's negative comments on her moral outlook. With the retort "Oh sir, said I, I have Reason, I am sure, to bless my dear Parents and my good Lady, your Mother, for giving me something of a religious Education" (241). Pamela draws focus to Lady B's indulgence of her children's undisciplined passions and spoiled desires. Pamela writes, Lady B "spoil'd" her son such that "Nobody must speak to him or contradict him," making him unused "to be controul'd" (242). The more Mr. B reads of Pamela's diary, her reflections, criticism, and reasoning, the more he begins to see the difference in the education he and his sister received when compared with Pamela. Through the safety of the distanced soliloquy epistle, Richardson has designed a narrative platform for Pamela to co-opt the voice and authority of Lady B over Mr. B, as Pamela intellectually steers Mr. B to virtue while protecting her own virtue.

Lady B's deathbed request to Mr. B to remember Pamela asks him to consider Pamela's perspectives and to reflect upon her moral knowledge. Lady B seems to have been encouraging Mr. B to contemplate what Pamela can teach and offer the supercilious Mr. B, as he sorely lacks personal development. Dramatizing Shaftesbury, Lady B requests her son to engage his second-order affections to witness his mind and actions as secondary to his primary acting self. This psychological schism again represents the narratological act of a character experiencing Marshall's *dédoublement* with all its revelatory impacts. Shaftesbury asserts that "the heart

cannot possibly remain neutral...it find[s] the difference, as to beauty...between one heart and another, one turn of affection, one behavior, one sentiment and...in all disinterested cases...approve[s] ... what is natural and honest and disapprove[s] what is dishonest and corrupt” (173).

However, throughout the narrative’s progress and the characters’ evolutions through the Moral stages one and two, this injunction takes on layers of meaning and power. Pamela embraces Lady B’s posthumous injunction as her own mantra, using it as a rhetorical refrain in her dialogues and soliloquies to make moral knowledge attractive for Mr. B in his spiritual evolution. Pamela’s role as educator and guide to Mr. B renders her a powerful intellectual force. Mr. B’s moral knowledge develops and grows due to reading Pamela’s dialogic epistles. With the instructive parameters of Pamela and Mr. B’s relationship filtered through the epistolary platform, their interaction process becomes pedagogical, as it aids Mr. B in minimizing his excessive passions. Mr. B explains he “conquer’d” his passions and is not “so much the Victim of [Pamela’s] Love, ... as of [Pamela’s] Virtue” (341). Because he reads and reflects on her affects, Mr. B “boldly promise...[him]self [a] stable foundation for [his] Affection” (341). Exposure to Pamela’s moral vision offers an undeniable model and mode of analytic import, as he engages with her moral outlook and embraces her teachings. Pamela has ignited his critical self to begin a journey of moral living.

#### *Mr. B’s Positive Reactions to Pamela’s Soliloquy and Epistles*

Even though Pamela’s mimetic epistolary dramatization of Shaftesbury’s thesis brings about moral knowledge, Scholes et al. suggest that mimesis lacks the controlled meaning found in more didactic forms, such as romance, which are often more illustrative and use allegory and

symbolism to infuse moral meaning (105–7). The initial epistles and journal entries are purposefully less controlled because they are mimetic. However, Pamela’s writing eventually becomes an object of pleasure in itself for Mr. B. They function along the lines of a romance novel, an interpretation noted by Mr. B in his acknowledgment of the pleasure he derives from her writings. In this way, the letters—serving as the platform for a romantic interaction between Pamela and Mr. B—take on a symbolic regulatory role, as they are attractive in a way similar to Shaftesbury’s argument that marriage’s regulations are attractive to people who view them as opportunities to fulfill their moral duties.

When Mr. B claims that he co-authors Pamela’s work by directing the action, he contends that he is a character in the narrative who acts out the author’s direction. His psychology reveals he is evolving into a person capable of the complex contemplative process of Shaftesbury’s critical self. Mr. B perceives himself as the living being directing his daily life and co-developing Pamela’s narratives. Simultaneously, he is the character inside her narratives, which his higher self can view with dis/approbation that facilitates personal awareness and growth.

Pleased by Pamela’s journal, Mr. B encourages her to “continue [her] Scribbling,” which presents a fascinating and complex meta moment of Mr. B’s self-awareness (240). This act represents Mr. B setting himself up for an instance of personal approbation, as he has established a situation where he has told Pamela of his deep desire to read her writing. He knows she will include a vignette of their interaction where he encourages (demands) her to write about it. This pre-emptive move engenders a situation where he will be able to re-experience the entire interaction from the vantage point of his higher-self approving of his second-order affections. He is like a child doing the correct action and then enjoying the fact that he is doing the correct action where he perceives enjoyment from reading Pamela’s moral instructions. In essence,

Richardson makes reading symbolic; it symbolizes Shaftesbury's stages of moral thought. Shaftesbury's thesis argues that moral knowledge arises from the "various turns, inflections, declensions and inward revolutions of the passions" (132). And this self-examination turns to action as one "redresses and improves" behavior by "regulation and government of those passions on which the conduct of a life depends" (132). As epistolary writing and reading become both the mimetic means to moral knowledge and the illustrative or symbolic regulation of passions, Richardson's *Pamela* dramatizes all stages of Shaftesbury's moral thought.

Mr. B and Pamela circulate and share portions of her journal with others to reflect on the passions Pamela has recorded and explored. During the Romantic era, journal writing represented the thinking person's retraction from worldly distractions into the meditative self. However, letters during Richardson's time were much more open affairs. Just as Pamela's letters were a shared affair among her two parents, many families read letters sent amongst themselves more as newsletters sharing details of life experiences. Thus, it is in no way unexpected for readers of Richardson's novels that Mr. B would plan to circulate Pamela's letters. Also, distributing Pamela's letters presents another level of her serving as a moral icon for British society and for dramatizing Shaftesbury's emphasis on epistles shaping the British culture. Pamela's writings reach audiences near and far, including:

1. Mr. B sharing a psalm Pamela wrote with Lady Jones (315–7),
2. him allowing Pamela's parents to read the journal in its entirety (as Pamela originally intended) (324),
3. and Lady Davers, Mr. B's sister, reading them (454).



Lady Davers further circulates Pamela's writing, as "she intends to entertain Lady Betty with [Pamela's journals], and another Lady or two, her Intimates, as also her Lord" (457–8). Pamela's writings composed into a book form embark on a life of their own in their circulation, reception, and praise, which is symbolic and allegorical of her role in British society and the impact of her moral modeling. In sum, Pamela's epistolary narrative, presented through the framing technique of epistles, becomes a powerful regulation for moral order.

*The Narrative Collapses into Marriage Rules: Pamela and Mr. B Marry for the Synthesis*

**The Legalities of Wedded Bliss—Social Station, Will, and Heirs**

For all her feminist agency, Pamela's height of private and public impact ends with her transition into a married woman, into a *feme covert*. Pamela's brilliance as a philosopher-character diminishes as her narrative role turns to pure recording. She presents her reading of the compendium of marriage regulations established for her to follow in order to function as a matriarch of the home and hearth. As Pamela becomes a *feme covert*, Richardson no longer allows for her extreme indulgences into the complexity of her thoughts and emotions. She reads material presented to her and is allowed minor asides in response to the conduct code. In reading against the grain, this narrative turn presents as an ironic event. Pamela had been the directing force in the narrative, as she held fast to her virtue and guided Mr. B towards his moral awakening. However, now Pamela has become the moral icon being inducted into the extensive marriage system. At this point, Richardson indeed uses his character of Pamela to present didactic gender lessons to readers. Pamela transitions from being a character endowed with the agency to being a passive conduit for Richardson's marriage codes intended to instruct the

British public on Shaftesburean ideals for wedded harmony in creating strong family units that produce dutiful offspring.

Therefore, even though Mr. B is attracted to Pamela's morality, the more powerful motivations for marrying Pamela are family, his estate, and the tranquility and order they provide. Mr. B insists that it is not the impulse "of a new Passion for" Pamela that has brought about his change of heart; but rather, "if [he] can answer for [his] own Mind," his change of heart "proceed[s] from a regular and uniform Desire of obliging [Pamela]; which, [he] hope[s], will last as long as [her] Merit lasts; and that [he] make[s] no doubt, will be as long as [he] lives" (357). Mr. B's submission to marriage demonstrates Shaftesbury's idea that institutions as regulatory apparatuses draw people to participate in them because they find their ordered state attractive.

Mr. B admits his desire to marry Pamela is motivated to avoid the misery he would experience if Mr. B and Pamela had a child out of wedlock and his estate were to fall to other members of his family:

I began to consider, that it would have made you miserable, and me not happy... if you should have a dear little one, it would be out of my own Power to legitimate it, if I should wish it to inherit my Estate; and that, as I am almost the last of my Family, and most of what I possess must descend to a strange Line, and disagreeable and unworthy Persons. (269)

Married life will produce a legitimate heir, fulfill his duty to care for his immediate family, and provide him the tranquility that he has secured his estate. Therefore, Mr. B's desire to bring himself and his "Manners," his "Sentiments," and his "Actions, to a Conformity with" Pamela

demonstrates the regulation implicit in marriage unions (408). Richardson uses Mr. B's transformation to dramatize Shaftesbury's idea that people must moderate their impulses and merge with regulating and balancing institutions to foster and maintain an ethical living. As an external regulation, marriage solidifies moral order and diminishes the need for constant vigilance, as the institution's structure emphasizes hierarchy and legally instantiates social order.

Richardson returns to the realist genre nature of his writing platform to include accurate reflections of the marriage process, with Mr. B drawing up a will that now includes Pamela. Mr. B considers his family's situation. "At present, my Line is almost extinct; and a great Part of my Estate, in case I die without Issue, will go to another Line, and other Parts of my personal Estate, will go into such Hands, as I should not care my Pamela should lie at their Mercy" (492). He expresses his duty to protect the integrity of his family estate by producing a legitimate heir who fulfills the estate entail requirements. He notes that he needs to revise his will to include her to protect both her and the estate in the event of his death. Mr. B's reflection illuminates Shaftesbury's belief that the married state encourages morality, concern for others, and the species' well-being while also emphasizing Pamela's position in the hierarchy. Mr. B explains the details of his revised will to Pamela:

I have therefore, as human Life is uncertain, made such a Disposition of my Affairs, as will make you absolutely independent and happy; as will secure to you the Power of doing a great deal of Good, and living as a Person ought to do, who is my Relict; and shall put it out of any body's Power to molest your Father and Mother, in the Provision I design them, for the Remainder of their Days: And I have finish'd all this very Morning, except to naming Trustees for you; and if you have any body you would confide in more than another, I would have you speak. (493)

In this statement, Mr. B indicates his husbandly duty to care for his in-laws (Pamela's parents) and his organization of Trustees to officiate the direction of the estate allotted to her as his wife. Interestingly, Richardson does not include negotiations on pin money for Pamela. Skinner notes that "For Samuel Richardson, ...pin money makes a wife independent, and destroys love, by putting it out of a man's power to lay any obligation upon her, that might engage gratitude, and kindly affection" (95). This series of lines highlights the requirement for Pamela, as a *feme covert*, to have Trustees attached to the financial allotment accorded to her usage. As noted in the introduction, these Trustees might very well be helpful, honest officiants. However, they often held personal motivations in taking this role and securing the funds for their own purposes, as was a common trope in epistolary novels.

### **Marriage Rules for Him and Her, Well, Mainly for Her**

Shaftesbury's synthesis reaches a full dramatization in the event of Pamela's marriage. This climactic act does not end the fairy tale narrative—it serves as the opening point for Richardson to introduce his conduct code for marriage regulations. When Pamela becomes a *feme covert*, the novel's narrative structure changes because the institution's hierarchical structure gives voice to some and restricts the voice of others. While Pamela continues to record her story, her narrative shifts from records of her spoken dialogue and complex self-analysis. Instead, the narrative turns to heavily focus on Mr. B's advice to Pamela on topics instructing her how to achieve the behavior of an ideal wife. Her epistles become the fodder for pedagogical application, where they symbolically function as the externalization of her moral reasoning.

After marriage, Pamela writes to her parents that her attentions have turned to the "indispensable Duty of a high Condition" and the "satisfactory and pleasing" reflection as she

concentrates on “administer[ing] Comfort and Relief to those who stand in need” (363). She accepts the vertical organization of society. While Pamela has increased voice due to her station and education, she transitions from a thinker and influencer into a reader and acceptor of received knowledge. Richardson does not even maintain the pretense of a narrative in the marriage code section—the last segment of his novel sold for widespread consumption devolves into a didactic conduct code. According to a patriarchal perspective, the described regulatory measures codify and enforce the rules to establish ordered marriages. Pamela becomes the model woman who absorbs the indoctrination that her agency rests in being the matriarch of her home where she finds power in supporting her husband and raising their children according to the socially prescribed ideals in Richardson’s marriage codes.

#### *How the Wife Must Acquiesce to the Husband*

In Richardson’s code, the husband dictates the terms when any woman marries, be it into the gentry or not. These marriage codes consist of regulations on appropriate dress, times for administering meals, child-rearing instructions, and details on how to receive guests (448–52). Pamela comments to her parents that she takes note of Mr. B’s injunctions to “better Regulate” herself if her memory were to fail. The exhaustive, self-nullifying list of rules demonstrates the radical regulatory structure she must strive to attain to be a paragon of wifely perfection. Overtly targeting the husband’s emotional and psychological dominance in the marital relationship, the list of strictures demonstrates that Pamela must continuously regulate her thoughts and behaviors, putting her husband’s psychological comfort foremost, regardless of his actual correctness in thinking or behavior.

The perfect wife must maintain these niceties both within the privacy of their marriage and during interactions with others. As a model of wifely support, she “must never make a Compliment to any body at his Expense” (R.4, 448) and must ensure he knows that he is the paragon in her life and that she “gives her Husband Reason to think she prefers him before all Men” (R.23, 449). Moreover, if he ever accuses her of “any Acts of wilful Meanness” (R.5, 448), she chastises herself that “I must say nothing, tho’ in Anger, that is spiteful or malicious; that is disrespectful or undutiful” (R.5, 448). Thus, Pamela, the perfect wife, is silenced. Readers can note Pamela’s emphatic acquiescence to these regulations in her italicized emotional agreements, which act like contract “signatures,” to these relationship parameters.

In general, strictures for the wife and the husband do not appear to be a two-way street. This regulation nullifies the wife’s ability to place requirement on her husband’s behavior, while the husband may demand demure submission from his wife. In Rule 47, she notes, “That *his* Imperfections must not be a Plea for *hers*” (R.47, 451). For example, she must “be as flexible as the Reed in the Fable;” if she hopes to convince him of something, then “it must be by Sweetness and Complaisance; *that is, by yielding, he means, no doubt*” (R.24, 450). Furthermore, as these rules are meant for her to internalize and repeat them as if they were her own thoughts, the personal pronoun “I” filters throughout these regulations for docility, as in Rule 2 “I must think his Displeasure the heaviest thing that can befall me. To be sure I Shall,” which is followed by her italicized acquiescent agreement “*To be sure I shall*” (R.2, 448). She must not criticize him; yet, “Some Gentlemen can compromise with their Wives, for Quietness-sake; but he can’t.—*Indeed I believe that’s true!—I don’t desire he should*” (R.20, 449). Rule 20 alludes to the husband’s freedom to not compromise with his marriage partner. The italicized aside offers an

interesting subtext where Pamela responds in agreement, demonstrating her internalization of this submissive status.

*Richardson Echoes Shaftesbury: Instructions on Childrearing*

As a regulatory structure, this marriage conduct code includes all manner of instructions for the wife to raise the children to model this perfect gendered relationship to develop and further a society filled with such like-minded persons. Shaftesbury notes the naturalness of married couples bearing and rearing children within the context of the parent's moral outlook: "If there be anything of nature in that affection which is between the sexes, the affection is certainly as natural towards the consequent offspring and so again between the offspring themselves, as kindred and companions, bred under the same discipline and economy" (51). Pamela indoctrinates herself with these child-rearing regulations to "accustom them to bear Disappointments and Controul." Her self-talk links to ideas of self-control and self-regulation, probably as envisioned in Richardson's concepts of Shaftesbury's dialectic. The children should "not be too much indulged in the Infancy," "Nor at school," and nor should they be spoiled "when they come home" (R.10–12, 449).

With male-determined child-rearing regulations espoused for women to enact throughout the child's life, these child-rearing methods should culminate in an ideal, functioning, and procreating society. This child-rearing method proscribes "undutiful and perverse Children make bad Husbands and Wives...That not being subject to be controuled early, they cannot, when marry'd" endure one another's company and form a harmonious union (R.15, 449). In these Rules 13 and 15, Richardson echoes Shaftesbury's worry and imagines the domino of adverse effects of poor home instruction poisoning all social relationships. The horrors include perverse

children mistreating their nannies and teachers, making educators annoyed with parents.

Richardson imagines how these “undutiful” children might mature into undisciplined adults who make poor life partners and poor masters and mistresses to their servants and workers.

This frightful narrative is presented in the opposite with an optimistic scenario when Shaftesbury’s idea of a domino of positive effects of healthy child creation and rearing. Shaftesbury writes that whereby “thus a clan or tribe is gradually formed, a public is recognized, and besides the pleasure found in social entertainment, language and discourse, there is so apparent a necessity for continuing this good correspondency and union” that society will continue to evolve (51). The marriage compendium represents one of the overt didactic elements that Richardson includes in his novel, demonstrating his two-pronged usage of Pamela as a model moral icon for the immoral individual, as represented in the initially vicious Mr. B. Then, Richardson transitions Pamela’s role from an active agent of moral change to one who represents the docile female receiver of social education on how to serve as a proper wife to her husband.

### *Reading Against the Grain: Are There Feminist Asides Still Whispering Through?*

At the same time, nuanced reading of these italicized asides exposes an unexpected feminist rebellion that peeps through her acknowledgment of what is required of her as a married woman. Of course, the research acknowledges that Richardson designed the entire narrative; yet, Pamela’s character does not seem to acquiesce entirely to the marriage code. Her asides to Rule 6 demonstrate wavering in her compliance to quietly follow her husband, “even when I find him Wrong” with the italicized aside “*This is a little hard, as the Case may be!*,” which possibly illustrates rebellion against this muting instruction and her submission to this relationship parameter (R.6, 448). Much more interesting, just below this aside, Pamela silently exclaims, “I



*wonder whether poor Miss Sally Godfrey be living or dead!"* (448). This remark holds volumes of interpretive potential, as Pamela, now captured in marital bonds, thinks upon Mr. B's former disgraced lover Godfrey with whom he had a premarital affair, leading to her pregnancy.

Godfrey represents a powerful contrast to Pamela's pedestal-siting, as this disgraced woman had to establish her illegitimate daughter's financial care before fleeing to Jamaica in repentant shame. In this colonial outpost, this fallen woman presented herself as a widow and remarried, which marks Godfrey as a woman who is Other to the virtuous, bonded Pamela. At the same time, Pamela still thinks of this woman who would brook the marriage regulation to bear her husband with smiling alacrity, even if she found him in the wrong.

Another similar aside illustrates a remnant of rebellion towards Rule 30 "That if the Husband be set upon a wrong Thing, she must not dispute with hum, but do it and, expostulate afterwards. —*Good sirs! I don't know what to say to this! —It looks a little hard, methinks! —*" (R.30, 450). However, Pamela nullifies her aside that this would elicit a "a smart debate, I fancy, in a Parliament of women" for Rule #31. "Supposing they are only small Points that are in Dispute.—*Well, this mends it a little. For small points, I think, should not be stood upon*" (R.30, 450). These regulations on unrequired compromise and unquestioning support are emphasized by the regulation 37 that she "draw a kind Veil over her Husband's Faults," which repeats Rule 6, and that "his Virtues she should place in an Advantageous Light" (R. 37, 451) which echoes Rule 4 and Rule 23, where she must elevate his ego and reputation (R.39, 451). In some ways, the repetitive and emphatic nature of these strictures, which Pamela should repeat using the personal pronoun "I" might remind modern readers of brainwashing techniques. Of course, all of these mental perspectives and external behaviors must be done with alacrity, "Love," and with both partners having "the words COMMAND and OBEY...blotted out of the Vocabulary." To

this last point on both husband and wife needing to obey each other, the seemingly naïve Pamela exclaims in her aside, “*Very good!*,” as if this means that she will not be commanded and she will be obeyed in equal measure as her husband.

Finally, most of this project’s research interprets the works with the grain according to the ideologies of their respective eras. However, this set of marriage regulations ascends to such an extreme that a moment can be taken to read against the grain. Perhaps Richardson’s extensive marriage codes could be viewed as a form of parody on the impossible. For example, Rule 21 states “that Love before Marriage is absolutely necessary,” which was a central issue contemplated in Aphra Behn’s Volume II that devolved into the romantic chaos of Volume III. Moreover, with this love and silent female devotion, the rules still require her natural interactions are neither “slavish” in her devotions “as should seem the Effect of her Insensibility, than Judgement or Affection” (R.25, 450). Of course, in a glance towards regulating husbandly behaviors, Rule 28 clarifies, “That a man should desire nothing of his Wife, but what is significant, reasonable, just” (R.28, 450). Pamela asserts in an aside, “*To be sure, that is right*” (450), to this vague regulation put upon the husband (man) in his treatment of his partner. Again emphasizing the feminine ideal of alacrity, the following regulation requires “that she must not shew Reluctance, Uneasiness, or Doubt, to oblige him” (R.29, 450). Again, this entire list of redundant strictures, as placed upon the virtuous Pamela by formerly lascivious Mr. B, can be read with the grain in the former, inspiring the innate moral sense towards engaging in a healthy, happy life union. Or, the list of strictures can be read against the grain as a parody—perhaps imagined by Mary Wollstonecraft—on the impossibility of any woman either wanting to or being able to achieve these marital ideals.

## Part V: The Public's Responses and the Authors' Attempts to Control Reception

### *Shaftesbury Struggles to Moderate Reader Reception of His Works*

Because Shaftesbury's multiple techniques for reaching moral order are fluid (as they need to be for genuine self-reflection and analysis to take place), many of his readers misinterpret his meaning and wrongfully criticize him for being a libertine, revolutionary, or atheist.<sup>16</sup> The misinterpretations by his readership regarding content and form overlaps the misinterpretations Shaftesbury believes stymies progress from moral knowledge to moral action in everyday life (his antithesis). For these reasons, Shaftesbury emphasizes the importance of external regulatory structures. In light of the potential for misunderstanding, Shaftesbury appended a third volume of "Miscellaneous Reflections on the Preceding Treatises" to his *Characteristicks*. In his attempt to regulate readers' interpretations, he writes as a third-person apologist for the material in the previous two volumes, which serves as a structural manifestation of his synthesis. These miscellaneous tracts rearticulate the ideas previously presented in different terms, regulating possible misinterpretation.

Shaftesbury's contemporaries misinterpreted or critiqued his *Characteristicks* with equal vehemence, and for similar reasons, that they misread and critiqued Richardson's *Pamela*. As with *Pamela*, the force and vivacity of the competing dialogues do not necessarily lend themselves to a clear moral message. Some readers balked at Pamela's advanced rhetorical mastery, while others simply preferred the salacious behavior of Mr. B in the novel's early sections. At other times, critics were troubled by the dialogue's lack of realism, which was also a

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<sup>16</sup> See Brian Cowan's article "Reasonable Ecstasies: Shaftesbury and the Language of Libertinism." in *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (Apr., 1998) pp 111–138

concern for readers of *Pamela* as they did not believe the character Mr. B's attitudes on marriage and morality in the last third of the book were reflective of someone from his social status. However, Richardson need not have feared the public's reaction more than that of the novelists who wrote parodies of his beloved *Pamela*.

*Richardson Deeply Struggles with Reader Reception and Reinterpretations of His Work*

Scholar Eva Tavor Bannet calls the hubbub negative of reactions to *Pamela* "the 'anti-pamelist' position, [which] was inscribed in Pamela's citations of Mr. B's *Criticisms and Complaints*" (141). Although Richardson was not a proponent of gender equality, Richardson's business acumen and literary aspirations opened his life to interactions with people from all walks of life. Richardson engaged with women in many capacities and (as noted in his biography) supported several female writers in their books' publishing (as noted in his biography). Richardson intended *Pamela*'s moral teachings to practically impact people in stations never envisioned by Shaftesbury, who anticipated his writing audience to be composed of persons of his landed gentry class. While Shaftesbury's and Richardson's intended audiences differed, their goals were quite similar. With reason's guidance, both authors sought to cultivate contented but ordered families and domestic lives.<sup>17</sup>

Why and how did Richardson's valuation of Shaftesbury's focus on order through marriage and family become a central point of misunderstanding? As noted, Richardson intends his work to affect the youth of all walks of life, while Shaftesbury envisioned elite aristocratic men as his audience. The fact that Richardson adopts Shaftesbury's principles to educate and

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<sup>17</sup> See Toni Bowers' chapter "Family" in *Samuel Richardson in Context*. 239–46)

convert eighteenth-century youth (men and women) means that he privileges the morality of all classes, not just that of the aristocracy. Thus, readers can deduce that Richardson intends for them to consider not only the consistent Pamela as a model of a virtuous woman but also Mr. B as a model of a virtuous man, as he transforms so dramatically throughout the narrative.

### **Richardson's Readers Skeptical of Pamela's Intelligence and Virtue**

Richardson's pedagogical intentions motivated his selection of the epistolary novel format, which offers an unmediated view into the writer's mind.<sup>18</sup> And Richardson applies Shaftesbury's moral thought stages to emphasize Pamela's intellect and wit. Richardson designed a female character of a lower station and empowered her with intellectual skills believed the sole province of men. However, her intellect and rhetorical skills complicated Pamela's reception. Many in the reading public distrusted or did not believe in Pamela's reasoning, reflection, and self-scrutiny skills. Even though Richardson's dramatization ends with Pamela controlled under the institution of marriage and subordinate to Mr. B, audiences found it challenging to discover Shaftesbury's early stages of moral thought in Pamela's intellectual prowess.

In several of Pamela's letters, the readers' suspicions were peaked by her intellectual precocity, as in Pamela's reflections on Lady Davers' critique of her marriage to Mr. B. This precociousness becomes further complicated in that Pamela's response to Lady Davers seeks to level the pretensions of those in higher social stations. Pamela skewers the arrogance of the landed wealthy:

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<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of Richardson employment of educational epistolary writing see Bonnie Latimer's chapter "Educational Writing" in *Samuel Richardson in Context*. (169–177). For discussion of the popularity of Richardson's "Letters," see Catherine Ingrassia's "The Literary Marketplace" in the same publication. (111–2)

This is a sad Letter, my dear Father and Mother; and one may see how poor People are despised by the Proud and the Rich!... with all their Vanity; a Time is coming... when he looked upon the Skull of a King, and that of a poor Man, that he saw no Difference between them...the richest of Princes, and the poorest of Beggars, are to have one great and tremendous Judge, at the last Day. (258)

In this selection from one of her passionate apostrophes, Richardson provides Pamela with impactful rhetoric steeped in Christian equality for God and Judgement Day. He endows her with the mental and lyrical skills to echo Biblical events and values within an elevated metaphorical tone. In her rhetorical fury, she rails against class prejudice. She points out that while upper-class families might have records that validate their lineages, the lower class have just as long bloodlines.

She turns to highlight the vicissitudes of life, expounding on the changeability of fortunes, which could see a high-class family suddenly reduced to nothing. She continues, "...one hundred Years hence, or two, some of those now despised upstart Families may not revel in (the upper classes) Estates, while their Descendants may be reduced to the others' Dunghils!—And, perhaps, such is the Vanity, as well as Changeableness, of human estates..." (258). Furthermore, in thinking of the prejudices among the classes and of Lady Davers, Pamela intellectually interprets Shaftesbury's ideas on the ugliness and poverty of the Prideful. Pamela adds, "These Reflections occur'd to my Thoughts, made serious by my Master's Indisposition, and this proud Letter of the lowly Lady Davers, against the high-minded Pamela. Lowly, I say, because she could stoop to such vain Pride; and high-minded I, because I hope I am too proud ever to do the like!—" (258). In this section, Pamela rhetorically refers to herself and her hopes to retain her humility and morality. She repeatedly and exuberantly calls upon God's aid in this

endeavor. Her written words nearly scream to the heavens when she cries out, “But, after all, poor Wretches that we be! we scarce know what we are, much less what we shall be!—But, once more, pray I, to be kept from the sinful Pride of a high Estate” (258). Readers analyzed this level of rhetorical content, skill, and artistry and felt Richardson had not crafted a believable heroine in Pamela. Thus, while Richardson seems to have designed Pamela as an ultimate moral object of instructive purity for his readers to admire and emulate, they seem to reject her as a woman of her low class and basic education level.

### **Let Boys Be Boys: Readers of the Era Preferred the Naughty Mr. B**

Many of Pamela’s readers do not find Mr. B’s ordered thoughts as compelling as his earlier disordered licentiousness because they are less entertaining as well as more philosophically rigorous. Richardson’s epistolary structure dramatizes Shaftesbury’s dialectic in hopes of leading men to moral action similar to Mr. B’s decision to marry. However, as readers generally found Mr. B’s earlier behaviors acceptable or at least part of a social norm, readers found Mr. B’s pivot from desiring Pamela’s beauty to desiring her moral order (virginity until marriage) difficult to believe. Richardson wrote to a colleague George Cheyne regarding this particular segment of negative feedback. Richardson notes that “the principal Complaints against me by many, and not Libertines, neither, are, that I am too grave, too much of a Methodist, and make Pamela too pious” (74).<sup>19</sup> They could not imagine that Mr. B, an aristocrat, would be brought to value Pamela as an emblem of order.

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<sup>19</sup> *The Cambridge Edition of the Correspondence of Samuel Richardson: Correspondence with George Cheyne and Thomas Edwards* Edited by David E. Shuttleton and John A. Dussinger.

### **Readers Skeptical of Mr. B Falling in Love with and Marrying Pamela**

Readers struggled to share Mr. B's deep affection for Pamela's virtue. They were unconvinced when he expressed that "I see you so watchful over your Virtue, that tho' I hope'd to find it otherwise, I cannot but confess my Passion for you is increased by it" (Pamela 213). Readers doubted when Mr. B reflects on Pamela's "try'd Prudence and Truth" and the "Dangers and Trials" that she undergoes at the hands of his unregulated passions (269). He might state that his affection for her grows, but that is not the case for many of Pamela's readers. They preferred chronicles of Mr. B's days of sowing his oats and did not conceive of him valuing Pamela's morality more than bodily pleasures (269). However, Richardson designed Mr. B to echo Shaftesbury's ideals regarding the true pleasures of virtuous behavior over the fleeting, unhealthy pleasures of vicious ones:

The pleasures of the mind being allowed, therefore, superior to those of the body, it follows that whatever can create in an intelligent being a constant flowing series or train of mental enjoyments or pleasures of the mind is more considerable to his happiness than that which can create to him a like constant course or train of sensual enjoyments or pleasures of the body. (Shaftesbury 201)

This idealistic commitment to the flow of internal spiritual morality towards external moral behavior, with its impacts on relationships, represents the intersections of Shaftesbury's moral dialectic as dramatized in Richardson's fictional world of Pamela.

Richardson's preface admits that Mr. B's act of internal moral scrutiny, produced by reading Pamela's diary and reflecting on his actions, is a process he wants to instantiate in his readers. Richardson's goals for people's introspection likely intersect with changing views on



masculinity. Addressing the changing roles of men further complicates the reader's ability to relate to the pleasure Mr. B derives from reflecting on Pamela's virtuous actions.<sup>20</sup> Because *Pamela* effectively represents Mr. B as the desultory, elite male youth whom Shaftesbury would like to convert, readers find it difficult to believe that Mr. B could be persuaded to marry the low-stationed Pamela. This representation represents another major criticism against Richardson's *Pamela*. They point to Mr. B's early statements against ever marrying, as he found the idea distasteful on several levels. He states, "Consider the Pride of my Condition. I cannot endure the Thought of Marriage, even with a Person of equal or superior Degree to myself; and have declin'd several Proposals of that kind" (213). Critical readers assert this indicates the unlikelihood of his union with Pamela, especially of when considering her low-class status. Additionally, the real-life unlikelihood of Mr. B's and Pamela's union moves away from the mimesis that was so compelling initially and mitigates the reader's ability to commit to this outcome. Therefore, the readers likely disregard Pamela's disclosure about her parent's station to Lady Davers towards the novel's end.

Readers dismissed Pamela's recounting of her family's hardships during which (she emphasizes) they maintained their honesty and diligence. While, like Richardson's readers, Shaftesbury might not have imagined elevating someone like Pamela to the level of a Lady, Shaftesbury would have preferred Mr. B's final conversion as Pamela's husband over his continued affective disorder. However, readers contended that Mr. B disapproves of the marriage state in general, especially to someone of a lower degree. The only models of marriage that he has are those aristocrats "trained up in a Course of unnatural Ingratitude, and who have been

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<sup>20</sup> For a discussion on changing gender norms in Richardson's time see Kathleen M. Oliver's chapter "Gender" in *Samuel Richardson in Context*. (247–254)

headstrong Torments to every one who has had a Share in their Education, as well as to those to whom they owe their Being” (444). Based on these examples, Mr. B’s ideas of the wedded state were less than appealing. Knowing these disordered passions to be the general disposition of his class, Mr. B further recounts that married couples “pursue, and carry on, the same” self-indulgent and “tormenting manner” joining “most heartily to plague one another;” (444). Mr. B’s exposure to marriages of “Convenience, or Birth and Fortune,” as “the first Motives,” and marriages of “Affection the last (if it is at all consulted)” only further cements his aversion (444). Mr. B cannot imagine changing his passionate nature to create a marriage of affection. He thinks it better to satisfy his sexual needs out of wedlock, without considering society’s order.

Mr. B’s drawn-out fight against moral action further enflamed the reader’s incredulity at his marriage. For most of the novel, Mr. B misunderstands Pamela’s moral position as “Obstinacy” (104). He struggles to come to moral knowledge through Pamela’s commitment to her virginity. Only after the kidnapping and reading her journals does he understand that her resolve to protect her chastity serves as a metonym for the protection of social order, the legitimacy of family, and to the affective regulation that sustains happiness. However, readers felt that Mr. B’s earlier repeated attempts to violate Pamela’s virginity and her reports of his invectives, insults, and disbelief of her self-command planted doubt in the readers’ minds that he could ever transition to a bastion of moral rectitude.

As discussed in Shaftesbury, marrying a person who accorded with his sense of duty and social harmony, the philosopher would likely have agreed with Mr. B’s reasons for why his marriage to a woman of a lower station is acceptable when it would not be the same for his sister. Reflecting the structural sexism of the era that pervaded legal codes and shadow laws, Mr. B highlights the difference in impact between a man marrying a lower class woman instead of the

opposite situation. When a higher class man marries a lower class woman, his ranking is usually not negatively impacted, whereas her station markedly rises. He summarizes, “The Difference is, a Man ennobles the Woman he takes, be she who she will; and adopts her into his own Rank, be it what it will” (422). In contrast, a woman who marries a lower-class man is intensely negatively impacted regarding her social status in society. Also, the rules of patriarchy extend within her home, where she is under the rule of her lower-class husband. Mr. B explains:

But a Woman, tho’ ever so nobly born, debases herself by a mean Marriage, and descends from her own Rank to his she stoops to... When a Duke marries a private Person, is he not still her Head, by virtue of being her Husband? But, when a Lady descends to marry a Groom, is not the Groom her Head, being her Husband? And does not the Difference strike you? (422)

A husband, regardless of class, is always the ruler and head of the house.

Porter comments upon the role of marriage in social mobility for men. She states, “in moneyed men’s attempts to become gentlefolks, a good marriage could often do the trick” (Porter 74). This issue also links into class-based feelings of “vanity and emulation,” as Porter comments upon the upper classes’ disdain for manufacturers and petty bourgeoisie who rushed to join the landed class and be able to have Esq. attached to their surnames (73). The public’s reaction against *Pamela* indicates many of the gender attitudes of Britain during Richardson’s era. The main sets of reactions derive from the standpoint of questioning a low-class woman’s intellect and rhetorical wit; preferring the normalized, patriarchal coercion and violence of the dilettante Mr. B; and doubting that Mr. B would become enamored of Pamela on account of her

virtuous behavior. In terms of affective studies, these public reactions reflect the embroiled issues of gender, class, education, and inheritances.

*The Pamela Craze: Pamela's Unwelcome Literary Reimaginings*

Beyond the reading public's questions on Pamela's narrative believability, novelists themselves jumped into the fray of the anti-pamela craze. To fully appreciate the long-eighteenth-century readers' misunderstanding of Richardson's moral message or recalcitrance to the moral message, a brief catalog of the responses to Pamela's cause célèbre demonstrate the public furor. In her chapter "The Literary Marketplace," Catherine Ingrassia explains, "Pamela was praised or partially reprinted in some of the leading periodicals of the time...[O]ver time, such publications, proliferate[d] so quickly that Richardson could not keep track of them" (112). Sören Hammerschmidt suggests that "the 'Pamela craze' that swept Britain and parts of the European continent" took the form of "spin-offs, prequels and sequels" (54). Richardson seems to have put his authorial finger on the anxieties of a society bridging from the libertine Restoration gender relations into what became the mid-1700s move towards categorizing women as moral icons of the British home. Specifically, misreadings of *Pamela*, sarcastic or not, open multiple interpretive pathways of thought regarding the implementation and impacts of the era's gender codes of conduct.

The brother of Sarah Fielding, Henry Fielding (H. Fielding) had a particular bone to pick both with the epistolary genre and with Richardson.<sup>21</sup> (Both of these factors are explored in

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<sup>21</sup> Henry Fielding. "An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews." *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of His Friend Mr. Abraham Adams: And, an Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews*, edited by Douglas Brooks-Davies, Revisions and a new introduction. ed., Oxford, Oxford UP, 1999, pp. 306–44.

Chapter Three.) As *Pamela*'s fame and notoriety spread, H. Fielding seems to have seen his opportunity to stoke the fire of his mildly contentious relationship with his sister's friend and mentor Richardson. H. Fielding began a long line of successively disruptive readings of *Pamela* when he published the novel *Shamela*. This parody targets specific elements of Richardson's use of Shaftesbury's larger schema and amplifies several of the significant misreadings of *Pamela* outlined above. H. Fielding, a marginal member of the aristocracy, lambasted Pamela's obsessive focus on preserving virginity until marriage. Some readers felt Pamela sexually teased Mr. B, as Abrams notes that "the combination of a high moral tone with sexual titillation and a minute analysis of the heroine's emotions and state of mind proved irresistible to readers" (2066). H. Fielding rewrote *Pamela* as *Shamela*, a narrative chronicling the escapades of a woman driven by base and fleshly desires who is happy to seek upward mobility along with pleasure.

In his text, Fielding critiques Pamela's presumption that a woman should value her virginity until marriage, as *Shamela*'s manipulations of her sexuality facilitate her rise to aristocratic levels. Additionally, H. Fielding undermines Richardson's Mr. B by rewriting him as intellectually enfeebled and unable to discern *Shamela*'s deceptions. Because *Shamela* does not serve as an exemplar, Mr. B does not learn from her and is unable to access moral knowledge. Fielding's rendering of Mr. B accentuates the reading public's incredulity towards Mr. B's conversion. Additionally, H. Fielding counters Richardson's use of Shaftesbury's philosophical position on flattery. Fielding attacks the flattery extended to Pamela the character and *Pamela* the novel. In his parody, H. Fielding establishes a framing apparatus titled "The Editor to himself" and "John Puff."<sup>22</sup> These two framing prefatory annotations mock Richardson's

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<sup>22</sup> Henry Fielding, *Shamela*, 309–10

flattering preface to his own novel. H. Fielding turned Pamela, the moral icon, on her head and transitioned her into Shamela, who represented all that Richardson distained in vicious women who applied their sexuality in lascivious bids for marriage and social advancement.

The anonymous *Pamela Censured* followed Shamela “some three weeks after *Shamela*’s publication.”<sup>23</sup> Much like *Shamela*, *Pamela Censured* attacks Pamela’s presumed eroticism. This production undermines *Pamela*’s dramatization of Shaftesbury’s final stage of moral thought with the commitment to virginity until marriage. *Pamela Censured* assails Richardson’s text as being purposefully pornographic. According to *Pamela Censured*, Richardson uses Pamela’s commitment to her virginity for the plot payoff of multiple moments of prurient pleasure. Ironically, as *Pamela Censured* denounces what it argues is *Pamela*’s pornographic nature, it becomes almost pornographic itself by cataloging the offensive passages with great assiduity. This scandalous text provides *Pamela*’s readers with a road map of all the most salacious moments in the text.<sup>24</sup>

Eliza Haywood’s *Anti-Pamela* also promoted misreadings of Richardson’s *Pamela*. Haywood’s saucy novel chronicles the anti-heroine in the process of “feign’d innocence detected; in a series of Syrena’s adventures... (and) by a vast variety of surprising Incidents, arms against a partial Credulity, by shewing the Mischiefs that frequently arise from a too sudden Admiration.”<sup>25</sup> Unlike *Shamela*, Haywood’s *Anti-Pamela*, known by the character name

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<sup>23</sup> See Keymer and Sabor, (32) and Charles Batten. *Pamela Censured*. Project Gutenberg, 2010. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/33735/33735-h/33735-h.htm> Accessed 24 Aug. 2019.

<sup>24</sup> See *Pamela Censured*; 8

<sup>25</sup> Publish’d as a necessary caution to all young gentlemen. London, M.DCC.XLI. [1741]. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Gale. The Claremont Colleges Library. 24 Aug. 2019. <http://find.gale.com.ccl.idm.oclc.org/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=claremont>

of Syrena, does not take pleasure in her manipulative sensual acts. As a result, she is not sexually frustrated like Shamela when her male prey are not responsive. Instead, Syrena presents a genuine social climber with no other agenda than personal advancement. Her commitment to virginity and order are only for show, giving her access to wealth and power.

Syrena is an adventurer, as the full title of Haywood's piece suggests: *Anti-Pamela or Feign'd Innocence Detected; In a series of Syrena's Adventures*. Haywood squelches any ambiguous reading of Syrena's acts by creating a hybrid novel. Haywood's work is primarily epistolary in style with an obtrusive third-person narrator who interjects in the narrative clearly to expose the truth behind Syrena's innocent appearance. Syrena's innocent persona comes across as a purely performative overture that whitewashes her culpability. Most importantly, Haywood's piece undermines any hopes of order as a final goal. Because Syrena disassembles and, therefore, does not struggle or reflect on her disordered state, she cannot bring about moral order. The rewards Pamela's reasoning afford are lost on Syrena, who becomes banished from the city with no husband and, therefore, no wealth or power. The narrative of *Pamela* lifts Shaftesbury's moral philosophy to great heights in Pamela's ability to maintain her virtue, inspire Mr. B to morality, and engender a union of two people. Haywood's piece undermines all of these elements through Syrena's mercenary self-advancement that comes to no fruitful end.

Richardson anticipated the above critical satires; however, *Pamela's* moral message was further persecuted by the continuous proliferation of works using *Pamela's* name. Richardson's sensibilities found the ongoing parodies and variations less tenable. Attributed to John Kelly, the

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unauthorized, “anonymous” sequel titled *Pamela’s Conduct in High Life* (1741),<sup>26</sup> proved too much and provoked Richardson’s anxiety to control his moral message as the so-called sequel reframes Shaftesbury’s dialectic. Instead of maintaining Pamela’s commitment to her virginity despite her social position, this reframing novel raises Pamela’s birth to a “Gentlewoman, by many Kings Reigns of more ancient Descent, from more noble Blood, than the imperious Lady Davers, the haughty Viscountess” (Kelly 215). This reframing alters Richardson’s goal to teach all stations how to access moral knowledge. Additionally, Kelly’s novel erodes the import Richardson, following his interpretation of Shaftesbury, places on the family as a means of order and, therefore, morality. Kelly’s vision debases her pregnancy, which is downplayed in the novel, except in moments that suggest pregnancy wards off drunkenness. This last element would likely horrify Richardson’s sensibilities in designing his original vision of Pamela as a paragon of moral virtue.

#### *Richardson Writes a Sequel to Reassert his Presentation of Pamela*

Although less direct and more cajoling than Shaftesbury, Richardson appends texts to his original work to provide a regulatory apparatus to guide readers to take away the correct (intended) message from his writing. To further bolster his moral message, Richardson’s second edition of *Pamela*, printed February 1740, includes a letter sent to him by Aaron Hill.<sup>27</sup> This

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<sup>26</sup> John Kelly. *Pamela’s Conduct in High Life. Publish’d from her original papers. To which are prefix’d, several curious letters written to the editor on the subject.* London. MDCCXLI. [1741]. Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale. The Claremont Colleges Library. 24 Aug. 2019.

<[http://find.gale.com.ccl.idm.oclc.org/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=claremont\\_main&tabID=T001&docId=CW3313434021&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticle&version=1.0&](http://find.gale.com.ccl.idm.oclc.org/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=claremont_main&tabID=T001&docId=CW3313434021&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticle&version=1.0&)

<sup>27</sup> See Samuel Richardson and Sheridan W. Baker, Jr. *Samuel Richardson’s Introduction to Pamela.* (William Andrews Clark Memorial Library. Univ. of California, 1954).



impassioned letter affirms all the instructive qualities Richardson feared would be missed by casual or impudent readers of his novel. Richardson writes, “What is there, throughout the Whole, that I do not sincerely admire!... I admire, in it, the noble Simplicity, Force, Aptness, and Truth of so many modest, economical, moral, prudential, religious, satirical, and cautionary, Lessons.”<sup>28</sup> In a fascinating turn of events, Hill warns Richardson against earnestly trying to control readers’ interpretations. Hill prognosticates the readers’ adverse interpretations that this very same letter was meant to forestall. In a letter that became printed in the preface to the second edition of *Pamela*, Hill writes:

I am only apprehensive, for the Interests of Virtue, lest some of the finest, and most touching, of those elegant Strokes of Good-breeding, Generosity, and Reflection, shou’d be lost, under the too gross Discernment of an unfeeling Majority of Readers; for whose Coarseness, however, they were kindly design’d, as the most useful and charitable Correctives” might be misinterpreted.<sup>29</sup>

Like Richardson’s narrative strategy of soliloquy where one imagines the counterargument, Hill’s epistle and his soliloquy implant the exact misreading it intends to forestall. Peter Sabor notes because of the backlash—such as H. Fielding’s scathing satire *Shamela*’s targeted comment on *Pamela*’s preface—against Hill’s effusive praise of *Pamela*’s didactic purpose and of the “wonderful AUTHOR of Pamela,” Richardson’s sixth edition drops the recommendatory letters (20). Sabor further suggests that the actual success of *Pamela* made these prefaces by

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<sup>28</sup> Richardson, Samuel. *Correspondence with Aaron Hill and the Hill Family*. Edited by Christine Gerrard, (New York, Cambridge UP, 2013) 64

<sup>29</sup> Richardson, Samuel. *Correspondence with Aaron Hill and the Hill Family*. Edited by Christine Gerrard, (New York, Cambridge UP, 2013) 64

famous literati of the day unnecessary. However, in their place, Richardson includes a synopsis of the novel's plot, noting the edition "includes an 'Epitome of the Work' in thirty-six pages" (qtd. in Sabor 21). This appendage mirrors Shaftesbury's appended "Miscellaneous" volume, as Richardson's added pages summarize in different terms the principal messages. The novelist intended to clarify ambiguities caused by the epistle, soliloquy, or dialogue and defend its positive effects (Prince 68–73).

Richardson further attempts to direct his readers' moral understanding by making edits that contend with readers' skepticism of Pamela's pretensions to virginity until marriage and the likelihood that Mr. B's attraction to Pamela's morality convinces him to marry her. Edits are made to close the social gap between Pamela and Mr. B for those readers skeptical of Pamela's pretensions. Richardson achieves this closure of class ranks by restraining Pamela's language, which suggests she has a higher education level than previously implied in the first edition. Additionally, in the second edition, Richardson establishes early in the novel in Letter V, Pamela's middle-class background. This preemptive strategy varied from his narrative strategy in the first edition to reveal Pamela's background later in the first edition's second volume.

In addition to the prefatory and textual alterations, Richardson writes *Pamela's* sequel, *Pamela in Her Exalted Condition* (*Exalted Condition*, 1742),<sup>30</sup> which emphasizes the moral order founded through the family. *Exalted Condition* directly addresses critics' concerns that Pamela and Mr. B's union would have a deleterious effect on social order often caused by people

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<sup>30</sup> Samuel Richardson, and Albert J. Rivero. *Pamela in Her Exalted Condition*. Cambridge University Press, 2012. EBSCOhost, search.

Ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=438969&site=echost-live&scope=site.

who marry outside of their station. In Richardson's official sequel, he designs a scene when Mr. B is directly asked if he was worried about setting an example for such unions. Mr. B stresses that his situation is quite particular, as Pamela had qualities that set her out as an ideal partner.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, as Karen Lipsedge asserts in her chapter "Social Hierarchy and Social Mobility," *Exalted Condition's* recorded dialogues highlight that "Pamela's social and domestic elevation is beneficial for the household and the family" (307). Lipsedge describes how Pamela moves from her ambiguous station, where she was vulnerable to moral disorder, to household manager and producer of heirs for the estate where her exemplary morality powerfully maintains the family. Pamela is pregnant for over half the novel with Mr. B's potential son and heir, and eventually, she gives birth to seven children. *Exalted Condition* highlights Pamela's reproductive connection to the economic stability of Mr. B's estate and future, as Mr. B's estate is secured through strict settlement. If Pamela does not produce a healthy heir, Sir Jacob Swynford will inherit the property. To emphasize the urgency of solidifying moral order through the family, Swynford is portrayed as a less than desirable landlord who was designed as a stereotypically unpleasant character who frequented these inheritance-based epistolary novels.

Richardson's sequel also dramatizes familial institutions of order promoted by Shaftesbury's synthesis as Richardson exerts patriarchal control over Pamela. Richardson rescues her (his textual daughter) from the textual marauders who stole her character and refashioned her for their financial gains. Richardson claims her as his literary child by

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<sup>31</sup> For a discussion of *Pamela in Her Exalted Condition's* refutation of criticism see Simon Stern's chapter "The Law." *Samuel Richardson in Context*, edited by Peter Sabor and Betty A. Schellenberg, (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2017, pp. 231–38)

identifying the sequel as “Printed for S. Richardson.”<sup>32</sup> While Richardson does not claim authorship, by stamping his name on the text, he asserts his approval of this sequel. Ultimately, this sequel offers a more authoritative synthesis than what he attempted in the last third of the original novel. The narrative blends both the institution of marriage and family thematically and symbolically when Richardson associates himself with the text. He asserts his patriarchal control saving his literary daughter from the ravages of the market like Shaftesbury’s turn to external regulatory structures of marriage to assure moral order.

## **Part VI: Conclusion**

Richardson’s novel *Pamela* dramatizes Shaftesbury’s importance placed on epistles as platforms for moral self-contemplations and interpersonal discussions. Richardson applies narrative strategies that serve as realistic methods of discourse among the characters, both in terms of practicalities of setting and situation, but also in terms of the characters’ personality attributes, as assigned by Richardson. Richardson uses Pamela’s first-person voice in her letters to her parents who respond in their conjoined first-person opinions. Then, Richardson uses Pamela’s first person-voice where she expresses her opinions and writes out her retellings of conversations from memory. Pamela’s character possesses a high level of credibility with readers who follow the narrative from her point of view.

However, just as Pamela’s asides to her marriage codes reveal an unexpected ongoing rebellion to these gendered strictures, some diaries provide insight into women’s tense existence between secularity and spirituality. For example, in her diary entries added from 1666 to 1673,

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<sup>32</sup> Samuel Richardson, and Albert J. Rivero. *Pamela in Her Exalted Condition*. Cambridge University Press, 2012. EBSCOhost, search. Ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=tru&AuthType=sso&db=438969&site=echost-live&scope=site.

the Countess of Warwick “records various occasions when she was struggling to repress her strong will...But she did not always manage so well” (Fletcher 357). Her diary entries show clear understandings of the conduct books’ advice for women to sublimate themselves to men’s God-given authority, writing that ‘There is an obedience must belong from the wife to the husband and ’tis great reason it should so be, since we are commanded by those that are above our capacity of reason by God himself’ (qtd. in Fletcher 338). Paralleling Pamela’s requirements to submissively acquiesce to her husband’s decisions, even if she disagrees, the Countess notes that “Women have to accept this: They must be able to feel ‘esteem of such a person so as to value his judgment and in matter of consequence to yield to his counsel’” (qtd. in Fletcher 338). And, just as in Pamela’s paradoxical requirements to be a perfect and honest companion: “At the same time she should be able to stand up to him, not by showing the awe of a servant to his master but by having ‘an affection and love to him as to a friend and so to speak their mind and opinion freely to him yet not value him the less’” (Fletcher 338).



### Chapter Three

A Busy Lady: Sarah Fielding Dramatizes Shaftesbury, Appends Her Own Work,  
and Defends Richardson's Novel *Clarissa* in Its Proto-Feminist Dramatization of Jodeph Butler

#### Part I: Chapter Introduction and Thesis

As Richardson continued his Sisyphean struggle against unwanted interpretations of *Pamela*—only one year prior to publishing his first two volumes of *Clarissa*, Richardson yet again published a new edition of *Pamela* with alterations in 1746—Sarah Fielding published *Familiar Letters Between The Principal Characters In David Simple To which is added, A Vision and Remarks on Clarissa*, two genre-bending epistolary texts engaged in metatextual affirmation of Richardson's preferred narrative form, the epistle. In *A Political Biography of Sarah Fielding*, Christopher D. Johnson echoes the belief in the affinity between these two authors' moral outlook and literary approaches. In fact, one might conjecture that S. Fielding's *Familiar Letters* follows in Richardson's footsteps by virtue of its epistolary structure, its status as a sequel, its title (Richardson also produced a work titled *Familiar Letters*), and its dramatization, like *Pamela*, of Shaftesbury's moral philosophy. While imitation is often viewed as the greatest form of flattery, defending a fellow author's writing in print is a heady sign of admiration and loyalty. Johnson asserts that Fielding “understood Richardson's purpose and came to his defense almost immediately, publishing *Remarks* just a few weeks after the final volumes of *Clarissa*” (143). Linda Bree notes that “one of the interesting features of *Remarks* is that it acts as a reminder of the moral interests that [S.] Fielding and Richardson shared; indeed there is evidence that contemporaries saw Richardson as building on [S.] Fielding's example” (75). This illustrates a

feedback loop of mutual influence between the two authors themselves and between them and various moral philosophers.

To explore these intersections and reactions among the authors and philosophers, this chapter analyzes S. Fielding's purposeful imitation and development of the epistolary structure and its subsequent dramatization of the moral philosophy as modeled by Richardson. S. Fielding wrote *Familiar Letters* (1747), and it presents as an epistolary miscellaneous work without a direct plot. The book relates the ethical ruminations expressed in various letters sent among the characters associated with S. Fielding's previous novel, *The Adventures of David Simple* (1744), which demonstrates an internal conversation within S. Fielding's own writings. These morality-based letters advocate for benevolence and friendship, a stance which she later distills in her appended allegorical segment that echoes John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress, from this World to That which is to Come*.

Published on the coattails of Richardson's final volumes of *Clarissa*, S. Fielding's *Remarks*, a work of criticism which is structured as a letter sent by an anonymous writer to Richardson, transcribes discussions she overhears about his novel, *Clarissa*. The final section of this chapter will focus on a discussion between a Miss Gibson, who defends *Clarissa* and its eponymous heroine, and Bellario, a skeptic. After summarizing their disagreement, the anonymous letter writer incorporates an epistolary exchange between the two debaters, where the latter concedes to the former's position. Continuing with the intertextual and metatextual nature of *Remarks*, Fielding uses the anonymous letter writer's voice to explain that she has included all this material in her letter in an effort to offer Richardson a fair understanding of the reasonable critiques of his text. However, this chapter emphasizes Miss Gibson's effective conversion of the



skeptical Bellario as S. Fielding's affirmation of Richardson's move towards Butler's ethics, in *Clarissa*.

This chapter argues that S. Fielding's command of Shaftesbury's philosophy, as displayed in her writings, her familiarity with Richardson's moral project and Richardson's continuous ruminations with S. Fielding and his other friends on his readerships' misunderstanding of his moral message, motivates S. Fielding's defense of Richardson's *Clarissa*. Because *Remarks* attempts to regulate readers' interpretation and application of *Clarissa*'s moral message, it reproduces Richardson's narrative dramatization of Shaftesbury's thesis and Butler's dialectic. Johnson explains that "*Remarks* is an astute commentary that seeks to train readers to find in Richardson's polyvocal novel the same practical guidance that S. Fielding builds in her own fiction" (143–4). Emily C. Friedman emphasizes this instructive intention, writing that S. Fielding's work seeks to "promote achievable good in an imperfect world" (309), which echoes Binhammer's focus on Richardson as "a pedagogue in the field of" moral sentiments who is "interested in the moral education of his readership" (*Richardson in Context* 289).

Tracing the interplay between Richardson, S. Fielding, and their dramatization of the moral sense dialectic reveals S. Fielding's affirmation of Richardson's pivots from Shaftesbury's to Butler's synthesis. As noted throughout the previous chapters, this research also explores not only how the epistolary form dramatizes the moral sense philosopher's dialectics, but also how the authors construct their plots as thought experiments. Each author's thought experiment reveals a variety of possible outcomes when the philosopher's regulation stage of moral thought is applied to specific circumstances. While this chapter argues that both S. Fielding and Richardson approve of the regulations that emerge from applying Shaftesbury's thesis and

Butler's two part synthesis, conscience and the law, to Clarissa's experience, this research project also intends to demonstrate that the moral sense dialectic in general, and specifically Butler's version as dramatized in *Clarissa*, opens space for women's moral knowledge and action through their conscience; Clarissa's personalized program for emotional regulation, her proffering of forgiveness, and her conversion of both Belford and Lovelace provides a model of female agency. But, Butler's two part synthesis unintentionally negates women's agency and voice when the practical application of his synthesis dictates that should people's conscience fail to regulate moral action (which it likely will), a woman must rely on people's flawed (because Butler's theology presents human nature as fallen), regulatory judicial system, which links to this research's assertion that the synthesis stage of regulations eventuates negative repercussions for women.

## **Part II: The Moral Philosopher Joseph Butler**

### *Butler's Biography and Cross-Cutting Circles*

Joseph Butler's rise to become a leading philosopher of his time began at an early age. For Butler's early education, his Presbyterian father enrolled him in a dissenting academy, where he read the works of Locke and Samuel Clarke, whom he greatly admired and befriended. After Butler officially decided to join the Church of England, his father then enrolled him "as a commoner at Oriel College, Oxford, in 1714" (Penelhum 1). Butler continued to make meaningful connections at Oxford, where he became friends with Edward Talbot. Unfortunately, Edward died young; however, Butler had become close with his family, including Talbot's father, the Bishop of Salisbury.

Impressed by Butler's acumen, the Bishop of Salisbury recommended him for Preacher at the Rolls Chapel, where Butler crafted and published his famed *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel (Sermons)* in 1726.<sup>33</sup> As The Talbot family had embraced Butler, he maintained a strong relationship with Edward's daughter Catherine Talbot, a Bluestocking, who became the ward of Thomas Secker, Archbishop of Canterbury. Butler's relationship with the Talbots soon brought him in contact with Catherine's best friend Elizabeth Carter. Both these Bluestockings corresponded with S. Fielding. These academic, professional, and social intersections advanced Butler's career, culminating in Butler and Secker collaborating on Butler's philosophical tract *Analogy of Religion* (1736). This writing and Butler's overall work and numerous recommendations drew the attention of Queen Caroline. By 1736, Butler, "the accomplished consort of George II and friend of Leibniz," became Queen Caroline's "Clerk of the Closet...Her main interest in him seems to have been to have him take part in regular evening gatherings of learned men, to discuss philosophical and theological topics" (Penelhum 1). Queen Caroline was so impressed by Butler that she urged on her deathbed for his advancement, which saw him rise to become the Bishop of Bristol and then of Durham in 1738 and 1750, respectively.

During Butler's career, he carved a niche for himself by being able to work for and with persons of different religious denominations and by being able to speak to the common parishioner. Jeffrey R. Wigelsworth comments that Butler's patron Sir Joseph Jekyll, the master of Rolls Chapel, was a prominent Whig who was well-acquainted with Shaftesbury's politics and thinking. In light of this, Butler, a member of the Anglican Church, likely constructed his sermons in such a manner as to respect Jekyll's political and religious leanings while at the same

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<sup>33</sup> All references to Butler's *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel* come from Gloucester, Dodo Press, 2009.

time aiming to realign them.<sup>34</sup> Although Shaftesbury was no longer alive when Butler began his major works, it is unquestionable that Shaftesbury made a deep impression on Butler, whose works indicate his philosophical responses to Shaftesbury's thinking. For example, Butler's preface to his *Sermons* includes critiques of Shaftesbury's "Inquiry concerning Virtue," indicating Butler's nuanced agreements and disagreements with his predecessor.

Butler's religious positions can be seen in his middle-ground approach that emphasizes how ordinary people can enact the daily practice of Christian values within a secular world. Penelhum explains that "Butler writes as a Christian priest who sees the social and intellectual life of his time as presenting dangerous challenges to the faith he represents" (4). As a result, Butler approaches his purpose practically. He wants to "bring his hearers and readers to the acceptance, and above all to the *practice*, of 'virtue and religion'" (Penelhum 4). Butler does not see virtue and religion opposing secular morality. Instead, "he sees secular morality...as a necessary part of" virtue and religion (Penelhum 5). Furthermore, "Butler sees his teaching function as a bishop as strengthening the religious cement which holds a civilized society together and provides it with shared assumptions and a common moral discourse" (Cunliffe 49). Thus, Butler's ability to work among various social and political circles enabled him to continuously work on his moral philosophy, which still bears importance on the Western concept of morality, especially in his development of the theory of the human "conscience."

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<sup>34</sup> See Jeffrey R. Wigelsworth's chapter "The Specter of High Church: politics and theology, 1709–19" 109–41. Also see Tennant, pp 46–7 for a discussion of the sermons and their printing in 1726, and again in 1729 with the edition of the preface 47–8.

*Butler's Core Ideas: Able to Overcome Differences Between Denominations and Classes*

Butler serves as a strong role model for bridging divides among religious groups and people in disagreement in general, as he approached developing sermons from the standpoint of considering people's practical spiritual needs. As Butler sought to extol humanity's natural inclination towards benevolence, he was "quite willing to argue from the position of his opponent if in doing so he can elicit agreement" (Penelhum 5). This open-mindedness towards cross-connections among different groups can be seen in his collaboration with people of various faiths while retaining his Anglican precepts, as well nimble borrowing from and application of fellow philosophers' theories. For example, Butler joins Locke and Shaftesbury in developing theories to describe the anatomy of the human mind in the struggle to achieve moral knowledge and moral behavior. Except Butler proposes that humans, albeit in a corrupt, fallen state, can apply their God-endowed faculty of conscience to arrive at moral knowledge.

Furthermore, for Butler, ideas of self-love and benevolence did not sit opposed but were, in fact, mutually reinforcing. This combining of seemingly disparate sentiments occurs again in Butler's theory of the heart, mind, and spirit using anger and just resentment as learning tools for personal benefit to evolve to a state of cool reflection and compassion. For Butler, Aaron Garrett asserts that "these particular moral psychological inquiries are followed by a discussion of love of God...this was a central and unifying sentiment that showed the continuity between morals and natural religion" (4). This evolution links to Butler's religion-based theory that people should first seek justice for injury within their own reflective spaces. In Butler's view, seeking redress through the external regulatory structures of the law and courts leads to the loss of individual liberty and the submission to a corrupt system. Butler's theory of people achieving

agency through cool reflection centers pivotally in this chapter's analysis of Richardson's *Clarissa* and the controversy the eponymous heroine's decisions engendered in the 1700s.

### **Butler's Thesis: Knowledge Acquisition According to the Three Senses of Nature**

Butler agrees with Locke's view that people are limited in their empirical knowledge and ability to understand God's design. However, like Shaftesbury, Butler asserts humans are implanted with innate ideas, which combine with conscience as a person progresses towards moral knowledge and moral behavior. In building his theory of the human mind's process of understanding, Butler turned to the philosopher Samuel Clarke (1675–1729) to include his concept of eternal *fitnesses*, which refers to essences related to human morality “that entail necessary moral obligations and duties insofar as actions accord with or fail to accord with eternal and immutable realities” (Garrett 4). Once the virtues and vices associated with a situation were assessed according to Butler's hierarchy of sentiments, a person's final judgments results in a moral obligation to adhere to the thoughts and actions associated with virtue.

In considering how the human mind, heart, and spirit intersect in forming judgements and actions, Butler proposes that human nature drives and guides them towards acts based on self-love, benevolence, and conscience. Butler describes a formula of Natures, which include an assortment of base-level, individualized forces that motivate people (appetites), affects like resentment and pride, and finally organizing principles like benevolence and self-love. In Butler's vision, principles serve pivotal functions in this assessment process, as they clarify the relation of the other base-level individualized appetites with affects. Butler believes that the principles of benevolence and self-love mainly function as safety valves to prevent affect from overwhelming a person with its passionate nature. Butler's concepts, Benevolence and Self-love,

sort, align, and unify all of these principles under the umbrella principle of conscience as the guiding principle towards genuine moral action. Conscience is where reason intersects with the person's acknowledgment of his or her obligation to God in performing moral actions.

### **Butler's Antithesis: Conscience and the Hierarchy of Moral Sentiments**

#### *Virtue and Vice*

Butler's moral thought does not admit vice as being beneficial in any way. Vice is an imperfection; it is a part of human's fallen nature and is not condoned by God. In his famed *Sermons*, Butler asserts that "Virtue is naturally the interest of happiness and vice the misery of such a creature as man" (S. Pr 23). Butler attacks Shaftesbury's assertion that humans are drawn to virtue and repulsed from vice, as he believes this implies that those drawn to vice have no remedy. For Butler, this would mean that those people are in some way defectively created, as they do not adhere to Shaftesbury's concept of humanity's innate inclination towards virtue. When Butler explores human's negative affects, he does not suggest that they are right. He seeks to understand how they might, in our fallen state, be able to help people live up to conscience's rubric. While Butler believes people should embrace their limited knowledge, Butler adds that people should act according to their best assessments and intentions, as inaction or other less virtuous actions could be more harmful than their best attempts at virtue.

#### *Hierarchy of Moral Sentiments*

According to Butler, humans have an emotional hierarchy with conscience as its authoritative yet powerless head, as it lost its power in the biblical fall from grace when Adam and Eve ate of the

forbidden apple. Terence Penelhum explains Butler's nuanced belief that "So the Fall of man...did not have the effect of eliminating any components of our moral constitution; it disrupted their relationships, so that strength rather than natural authority commonly determines whether we follow an inclination or not" (21). This antithesis resides in his description of conscience as having authority while at the same time lacking strength: "Had it strength, as it has right; had it power, as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world" (*S.* ii 20). According to Butler, because of people's fallen state, their perfectly ordered internal constitution has fallen into disorder—it is the practice of religious ethics that will help bridge the gap from knowledge to action.

### **Butler's Synthesis: Internal Regulatory Structure of Conscience Trumps External Ones**

#### *Butler's Groundbreaking Theory of Conscience*

For Butler, conscience functions as a reflective principle that surveys the appetites, affects, and principle and approves or disapproves the corresponding alignment and subsequent actions based on that alignment. For Butler, "conscience is closely connected to autonomy: when we act according to conscience we act as a law unto ourselves or according to a law of our own nature" (Garrett 10). Butler explains this concept of people being a law unto themselves by writing, "We are agents. Our constitution is put in our power: we are charged with it: and therefore are accountable for any disorder or violation of it. Thus, nothing can possibly be more contrary to nature than vice; meaning by nature not only the several parts of our internal frame, but also the constitution of it" (*S.* Pr 13). For Butler, conscience operates as an internal legal system, an internal regulatory system where each person's conscience functions as a law system guiding his



or her actions. While Butler does not believe people God endows people with evil, he believes they require internal and external guidance. In Butler's theory, this guidance occurs through the internal regulatory system of the conscience. If this system fails to achieve a satisfactory result, Butler agrees that people can use the external regulatory system of justice. However, he considers the law as a corrupt machine working within the human-designed world systems. Thus, conscience functions as a God-endowed, personal adjudication system for Butler. It operates as a rebalancing system within the human mind, heart, and spirit.

*External Regulatory Structure of Human-Designed Law:*

*The Lesser Form of Justice, where People Surrender True Power to a Corrupt System*

This subsection details his perception of the flawed process of people seeking redress through the courts, emphasizing the complex, sometimes hypocritical intentions with which people bring their cases. Then, the section contrasts this ersatz justice with Butler's concept of the spiritually and psychologically beneficial internal regulatory process of just resentment, cool reflection, and forgiveness. Butler's concepts of agency through forgiveness represent this project's philosophical apex of individual agency among these moral philosophers' theories, especially in terms of the impacts on women's empowerment.

Butler minces no words agreeing that people experience suffering in life and that these tribulations can result in personal physical and spiritual struggles, precipitating immoral feelings and behaviors. In his Preface, Butler explains that "poverty and disgrace, tortures and death, are not so contrary to our constitution" (S. Pr 13)). He acknowledges that people, just as animals, experience instinctual affects, like fear when under threat, but this does not mean they should be allowed to act violently: "After an Injury is done and there is a Necessity that the Offender

should be brought to Justice; the cool Consideration of Reason, that the Security and Peace of Society requires Examples of Justice should be made, might indeed be sufficient to procure Laws to be enacted, and Sentence pass'd" (*S. Vii* 69). However, for Butler, "might" represents the key word. He not only questions the outcome of the court case, but also suspects the good intentions presented in court when they bring cases against others. He asks:

But is it that cool reflection in the injured person, which, for the most Part, brings the Offender to Justice? Or is it not Resentment and Indignation against the Injury and the Author of it? I am afraid there is no Doubt, which is commonly the Case. This however is to be considered as a good Effect [of resentment]." (*S. vii* 69)

The fair-minded Butler sees both sides in a legal case, especially as indignant fury is often a motivator in propelling people towards further immoral acts.

Butler explores how this volatile anger fosters a society driven by internecine dynamics that fuel a punishment-focused law system. People magnify the sense of injury and consciously or subconsciously exaggerate the injury: "Thus, from the numberless partialities which we all have for ourselves, every one would often think himself injured when he was not, and in most cases would represent an injury as much greater than it really is; the imagined dignity of the person offended would scarce ever fail to magnify the offence" (*S. ix* 73). Contending that these court cases fuel a cycle of ongoing injury between the harmed and harming sides in the case, Butler explains "Malice or Resentment towards any Man hath plainly a tendency to beget the same Passion in him who is the Object of it, and this again increases in the Other" (*S. ix* 72). Butler sees this as a self-fueling and never-ending cycle of combustive negativity where the injured party can commit worse acts than the original aggressor's. "It is the very Nature of this Vice to propagate itself, ... as well as what is done in consequence of it...Neither is at all

uncommon to see Persons, in this Progress of Strife and Variance, change Parts; and Him, who was at first the injured person, become more injurious and blameable than the Aggressor” (S. ix 72). A person might start as an innocent victim. But, through indignantly seeking redress, they may take immoral tactics to ensure victory over their enemy.

As noted above, far from being impartial, rational court proceedings, court cases can devolve situations where the wronged party commits such vicious acts in the course of vengeance that the position of victim and aggressor becomes unclear. Just as Butler views individuals as inherently flawed in a Christian sense, he views the law system as inherently flawed—fallen humans design it. For Butler, the law cannot compare with “the unchanging and immediate moral authority of conscience” (Garrett 17). However, Butler’s synthesis argues that the authority of conscience and the Christian obligation to obey God encourage people to produce juridical structures that construct socially responsible citizens.

#### *Butler’s Views on Self-Empowerment in Achieving Cool Reflection and in Truth-Telling*

For Butler, his opening of the Pandora’s box of resentment as a moral sentiment and passion teeters on embracing vice as beneficial. But, Butler addresses people’s abilities to keep just resentment from boiling over into vicious resentment through the disciplining authority of conscience. If people maintain resentment and let it fester or transgress into vicious resentment, they will suffer immeasurably. Butler sees that “though injury, injustice and oppression...are the natural objects of...resentment ...yet they are likewise the object of compassion, as they are their own punishment, and without repentance will forever be so” (S. ix, 79). If people remain within boiling states of resentment, they cause mental anguish to themselves. Butler considers the process of reflecting on the just resentment as vital to the forgiveness process, as he steers people

towards the next stage of cool reflection and impartiality in decision making. Just resentment, in this schema, is a self-affirming act that demonstrates appropriate valuation of oneself and one's emotive economy.

Garrett summarizes Butler's points: "We ought to attempt to view injuries to us from as distant and unprejudiced a human viewpoint as possible—with full awareness of our own future non-existence and final judgment" (23). Each person is a complex amalgamation of intertwined experiences and passions. From this vantage point of cool reflection, people can assume a holistic assessment of the situation where they can "recognize that our enemies are as often as not mistaken or acting inadvertently" (23). Of course, Butler exhorts injured persons to turn this reflective eye of compassion back into the passion of self-love to consider one's own personal complicated nature, which is filled with hopes, contradictions, and flaws.

This evolution represents an awakened view of others derived from an elevated sense of consciousness, which facilitates the enlightened state of forgiveness. Butler felicitously asserts that "the good influence which this passion, has, in fact, upon the affairs of the world, is obvious to every one's notice. Men are plainly restrained from injuring their fellow-creatures by fear of their resentment; and it is very happy that they are so, when they would not be restrained by a principle of virtue" (*S.* viii 69). Forgiveness becomes possible as the wrongdoers receive appropriate punishment. Additionally, forgiveness is also necessary to refrain from further resentment or vengeance, which represents the abuse of resentment.<sup>35</sup> According to Butler scholar Charles Griswold:

Forgiveness accepts that the past is unchangeable but asserts that our responses to it are not (including our decisions about the future). [Forgiveness] denies that the alternatives

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<sup>35</sup> Tennant, pg 63.

to vengeful violence are either condonation or resigned and submissive acceptance. And it claims to express... respect for self. (*Forgiveness* 29)

Butler's final stage of moral thought asserts that human's conscience—when reinforced by the daily discipline and practice of faith—can bridge the gap between moral knowledge and moral actions. However, Butler anticipates that the human conscience must work collaboratively with juridical regulatory systems to enforce moral action. In finding private and public justice, Butler emphasizes the role of testifying to one's experience in the revealing of truth.

Griswold suggests "truth-telling" is essential to Butler's ideas of achieving empowering self-respect and of achieving agency in offering forgiveness to a wrongdoer. It means the one doing the forgiving refrains from the abuse of resentment or vengeance, leading to cycles of internecine violence. Butler believes speaking truth is "of Service towards regulating our Conduct" and should "not be disowned, or even concealed" (*S. iv* 35). Forgiveness is essential not only for individual emotional health, but as Butler's philosophy looks to the good of society, it is good for others as well. Butler asserts "it must be allowed," as speaking the truth "shall do a Piece of Service to Society, by letting such a one's true Character be known" (*S. iv* 35). Griswold believes Butler counsels "proper resentment at a wrong-doer be expressed in punitive action when and as judged appropriate by independent agents, in accordance with established principle" (*Forgiveness* 32). Griswold argues Butler makes a crucial "distinction between public and private expressions of anger and demands for right" (*Forgiveness* 32). In this account, just resentment constructs the apparatus for public justice, which allows private sentiments of anger, compassion, and forgiveness to work themselves out in a healthy manner for society. Connecting with this epistolary research project, the evidentiary and corroborative nature of letters as

epistolary documentation serves as a liaison between Butler's privileging of an individual's emotions and the objective, external means of establishing justice.

### *The Ultimate Regulatory Principle: God*

Butler sees a unifying continuity between individual moral psychology linked to interpersonal relationships and, most importantly, to personal love for God. In Butler's view, the love of God rests above conscience as an internal regulatory system, crowning his entire hierarchy of moral sentiments. Ultimately, Butler asserts that God has implanted conscience in humans so that they can both access moral knowledge and can make moral choices with the practiced tools of self-discipline, self-awareness, and religious guidance. In this way, humans can be, and indeed must be, agents of their own moral actions. Butler's final stage of moral thought serves as an apex of privileging individual agency within the moral sense school, as it asserts human conscience can bridge the gap between moral knowledge and moral action.

### **Part III: The Novelist Sarah Fielding**

#### *S. Fielding's Background: A Family Torn Apart Part by Inheritances, and Her Early Writing*

S. Fielding presents a fascinating personality as an intellectual, financially independent female writer who seems to have been a proponent of gender conformity. Sarah's early years were marked by trauma, when at the age of seven, she, her brother Henry, and their siblings lost their mother. Sarah's maternal grandmother, Lady Gould, began a complicated custody battle, as both sides of the family had personal interests in parenting the children. An estate was at stake.

Leaving Henry with his father, Lady Gould collected the Fielding girls and sent them to Mrs.

Mary Rookes's boarding school in Salisbury. Lady Gould lodged a complaint against Sarah's father in Chancery and won the Lord Chancellor's favor. As the battle over the estate waged on in Dickensian style, the judge determined that the Fielding girls would remain at Mrs. Mary Rookes's under the guardianship of their grandmother.

During her adolescence, S. Fielding resided in Salisbury, where she enjoyed an intellectually robust environment and developed life-long friendships. In Salisbury, she frequently interacted with members of the Bluestockings,<sup>36</sup> who were deeply invested in discussing and writing about moral philosophy, among the fashionable topics of the day. During this time, S. Fielding included among her early circle of intellectual friends: Jane Collier; Jane's sister, Margaret, and brother, Arthur; James Harris, and John Hoadly, the youngest son of the Bishop of Salisbury.<sup>37</sup> As S. Fielding's artistic and intellectual prominence grew, Linda Bree notes Elizabeth Carter and Catherine Talbot took an interest in Fielding's work, as she and Richardson existed in second- and third-order Bluestocking social circles (23). S. Fielding began making a name for herself in her writing. Clive T. Probyn comments upon meeting the literary coterie that he nicknamed the Salisbury set, including Jane Collier, Dr. Arthur Collier, Henry Fielding, and S. Fielding. Probyn notes, "all four had made, or were about to make, a literary career among the shining lights of literary London" (73–4). Sarah counted many people in supporting her writing and publishing, including her brother Henry, Richardson, and several Bluestockings. For her novel *David Simple* and *A Vision*, she also found support in her friend and

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<sup>36</sup> See Linda Bree's *Sarah Fielding*, Chapter One.

<sup>37</sup> See the following texts for insight into the Bluestocking community, Johnson's club, and his interaction with Hester Thrale and the Dissenters in Sylvia Harcstark Myers, *The Bluestocking Circle*; Deborah Heller, *Bluestockings Now!*; Leo Damrosch, *The Club*; Bate, *Samuel Johnson: A Biography*; James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*; Janet Todd, *Mary Wollstonecraft's a Revolutionary Life*.

mentor James Harris, the third Earl of Shaftesbury's nephew and an avowed Shaftesbury acolyte and apologist.

Researcher Bob Tennant notes S. Fielding's friendship with Richardson and Harris likely led to a cross-pollination between her knowledge of Shaftesbury (aided by Harris) and her exposure to Butler. Both Richardson and Harris worked with the brilliant Bluestocking writer Elizabeth Carter and with Thomas Secker, Archbishop of Canterbury (a friend and collaborator with Joseph Butler) (Tennant 42-45). On a collaborative and literary level, Richardson mentored S. Fielding and Carter among others.<sup>38</sup> Scholar Bree notes that "by 1748, Sarah had acquired a new literary friend in Samuel Richardson... Within a year of her departure from her brother's house Sarah had developed a close social and professional relationship with Richardson... she admired Richardson as a writer and moralist, as well as a friend and adviser" (13-4). Thus, it is easy to comprehend the alacrity with which Sarah wrote her metatextual responses to Richardson's detractors regarding his novels *Pamela* and *Clarissa* in her efforts to regulate readers' interpretations.

While S. Fielding had a community of artistic and intellectual support, she adhered to her interpretations and ideas. Harris worked extensively with her on her translation of Xenophon's *Memoir of Socrates*. Probyn notes that Harris was highly helpful in this endeavor, which is proven in that "Harris preserved twenty letters from Sarah Fielding... from the period 28 September 1751 to 15 March 1762... [that show his] deep involve[ment]" (133). Probyn explains that "Harris subsequently gave her help with the style of the translation..., with etymologies, and

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<sup>38</sup> For a discussion of Samuel Richardson's support of Sarah Fielding and promotion of Carter see Bree. For information on Richardson's relationship with Carter see Eaves, pp. 215-16. For a fascinating discussion of Richardson's cultivation of women thinkers see E.J. Clery's *The Feminization Debate*. Chapter 6 "Out of the Closet: Richardson and the Cult of Literary Women" pp. 132-170.



with particularly difficult concepts such as divination. He finally corrected her translation in his own hand but nevertheless insisted that she should make up her own mind about disputed passages” (135). This intellectual relationship illustrates the fecund cross-cutting of social circles where Harris supported Fielding in her work and encouraged her to maintain her unique perspective.

Sarah and her brother Henry’s history of collaboration was beneficial for Sarah, if complicated. Their collaborative relationship began with Sarah’s contribution to his novel *Joseph Andrews* (1742), including Sarah’s letter “From Leonora to Horatio.” Two years later, Sarah published her wildly popular novel *The Adventures of David Simple* and the second edition included a Preface written by Henry. After the death of Henry’s wife, Sarah lived in London with her brother for three years, from 1744 to 1747. By 1748, Sarah had become friends with her brother’s rival Samuel Richardson. Once again, Henry contributed a preface to Sarah’s second literary work *Familiar Letters* where he included sharp remarks on the epistolary style. Sarah’s miscellaneous letter-based work also included a contribution from her brother and from Harris, nephew to the third Earl of Shaftesbury, whose moral philosophy undergirds several of her plot threads and character interactions. Although Henry eventually praised Richardson’s *Clarissa*, Sarah’s brother seems to have had a complicated relationship with the epistolary genre. However, Sarah obviously enjoyed this style, as she consistently used it as the central mode of expression in her writing.

Sarah and Henry’s sibling rivalry continued to bubble up to the surface when she began her translation of Xenophon’s *Memoirs of Socrates*. Martin C. Battestin reports that Henry offered no assistance, as he disliked female writers who demonstrated knowledge of the Greek language (381). S. Fielding used this publication as another opportunity to earn money through

her writing. *Memoirs of Socrates*, like *Familiar Letters*, was published by subscription. In researching the subscriber list, Bree notes that “the list provides testimony to the longstanding loyalties of [Sarah] Fielding’s friends: it includes Ralph Allen, Dr. Arthur Collier, James Harris, Dr. John Hoadly, Samuel Richardson, and Mrs. Rookes” (22). The subscription list also included her Bluestocking associates Catherine Talbot, Elizabeth Carter, Elizabeth Montagu, and Sarah Scott. Thus, while S. Fielding wrote in support of Richardson’s *Pamela* and *Clarissa* (even in light of the questionable marriage of the former and the de facto suicide of the latter), S. Fielding remained an independent, self-supporting woman who never married and continued writing throughout her life.

#### **Part IV: The Literature Analyzed as Dramatizations of the Moral Philosophy Dialectics**

##### *Familiar Letters: Ruminations on Obedience, Motivations, and Satan Having Compassion*

The following exploration of *Familiar Letters* asserts that S. Fielding’s command of Shaftesbury’s philosophy and imitation of Richardson’s epistolary structures results in a dramatization of Shaftesbury’s stages of moral thought. By creating a text that shares similarities with *Pamela*, S. Fielding prepares for her later role as *Clarissa*’s defender and regulator of Richardson’s reading public.

As noted earlier, *Familiar Letters* takes its characters from S. Fielding’s earlier novel, *David Simple*, which she termed a moral romance. These characters ended *David Simple* with a double marriage, David to Camilla and Valentine to Cynthia. Because of ill health, Cynthia and Valentine set out to Bath, leaving Camilla and David in London. *Familiar Letters* captures the correspondence between these characters as a result of their separation. While Cynthia and Camilla are the primary writers, David and Valentine, as well as new characters like Delia and Leonora join the group of correspondents.

This epistolary novel must be distinguished from *Pamela* and *Clarissa* in several ways. *Familiar Letters* lacks any coherent and unifying plot. As a result, it can be considered a miscellaneous along the lines of Addison's and Steele's work which promoted, like Shaftesbury, politeness and conversation. These letters do not enter into intimate experience and feelings in any great depth. Rather, the character-writers superficially share their daily activities for the larger purpose of observing the follies of others and offering moral insights. Because these epistles primarily serve as a description of others, or stories told by others which they transcribe, they tend not to reveal personal emotions. However, this does not mean they refrain from judgment. In fact, the criticism these character-writers offer of those they observe, often times engages both a gentle raillery, as advocated by Shaftesbury, and sentimental appeals to the mutually shared moral code of the other character-writers.

Although, on the surface Richardson's *Pamela* and S. Fielding's *Familiar Letters* are very different, some pivotal shared points do exist. Both *Pamela* and *Familiar Letters* emphasize Shaftesbury's thesis and antithesis as explored in Chapter Two through the sender-receiver dialogic—its proffering of advice and critique. *Familiar Letters* fictional epistolary writers often imagine of their corresponding fictional audiences responses which parallel David Marshall's narratology concept of *dédoublement* where the writer-speaker transitions into a doubled identity of being the self and witnessing the self, but instead the writer-sender imagines how the receiver-audience would respond to the writer-sender's thoughts. This process of skeptically reviewing one's thoughts affords the fictional epistolary writers to move towards moral knowledge and hopefully moral action. Finally, both *Pamela* and *Familiar Letters* turn to Shaftesbury's external regulatory principle of marriage and family which is dramatized in the two texts changing structures. *Pamela*'s letters lose much of the dialogic self-reflective elements, and transition into

Pamela's transcription of Mr. B's enumeration of the aristocracy's ethical failures when it comes to marriage behaviors followed by instructions for the ideal married life. And *Familiar Letters* ends with an allegorical vision presented in the third person that outlines humanity's moral failings and the best means of recuperating an ethical life—benevolence found in family. These similarities demonstrate S. Fielding's familiarity with Shaftesbury's dialectic and suggests her engagement with this philosophy manifested in a narrative structure that parallels *Pamela's* structure.

### ***Familiar Letters* Dramatizes Shaftesbury's Thesis: Narrative-Framing Strategies**

The following section explores two specific epistles that dramatize Shaftesbury's thesis. In an epistolary exchange between Delia and Leonora, characters external to *David Simple's* story world, Delia expresses sadness at having to remain with her father in the country but seeks to reinforce her decision by dialoguing with Leonora, one of the very elements that make her long so much to leave the country and return to London: "You know I love London, not because I am very fond of great Gaiety and public Diversions; but because it is so much easier there to come at the Conversation I like" (148). In response, Leonora sympathizes with Delia's dissatisfaction, at the same time as she lauds Delia's "resolution to submit to what" is reasonable; "Cheerful resignation to" duty and obedience to her father (163). As Leonora suggests, Delia's continuance in the country is motivated by obedience to the institution of family.

When composing her letter to Leonora it is likely that Delia knows Leonora's intellectual temperament and she anticipates a response reflective of Shaftesbury's value for dialogue and critique. And, Leonora does not disappoint, as she constructs several framing devices as a means

of creating an intertextual conversation on the pleasure gained from doing for something for others. Leonora begins these frames with a maxim:

If the human Mind has any passion or Sensation to which we can properly give the Name of Love, that Passion must be gratified, whenever the Object of it is pleased, even though we have no further share in such Pleasure but what Reflection brings us. And this does not at all contradict the Maxim, That Self-Love is the Source of all our Actions.” (Letter XIII 163)

This perfectly selected sententia provides a philosophical look into the internal anatomy of the mind and emotions much like that advised by Locke and Shaftesbury. Specifically, it advances a theory of second-order affects. It is intended by Leonora as a scaffold for Delia to frame her sacrifice within a healthy ordered moral hierarchy. Because Leonora does not promulgate a declarative position, but instead asks Delia to consider her situation in the light of the wise saying, Leonora pushes Delia to engage in self-reflection, a cornerstone in Shaftesbury’s theory for accessing moral knowledge. S. Fielding’s reader can imagine Delia receiving this letter and engaging in a cognitive exercise where she thinks of her father, whom she loves, as being happy and that thought of her father’s happiness, even if she does not directly have the same emotion, creates a second-order affect of happiness. Therefore, if she acts out of hedonist impulses to attain happiness, and her second-order affect of happiness derives from thinking of a loved one as happy, selfishness and benevolence unite.

After suppling Delia with this maxim, Leonora associates this philosophical line of thinking with a remembered conversation between two men. At which point, Leonora’s epistle turns to recount their dialogue exactly. Leonora does not interject her interpretation of their conversation, nor does she critique it because the two framing devices that have come before, 1)

sympathizing with her friend's feelings about staying with her father, 2) approving of her sacrifice, both in her own sentiments and through the maxim, serve as an implied critique of the dialogue she relays to Delia.

The conversation Leonora recounts provides two distinct positions; the first gentleman argues that man's actions are motivated by pride and self-love only, while the second gentleman argues man cannot be motivated by pride alone but that love of others also motivates action. Interestingly, these are not diametrically opposed positions; rather, the second gentleman's argument is an argument of degree. Leonora's retelling of this dialogue importantly helps her affirm her mixed response to Delia's circumstance: "That you are confined to the Country, when you would chuse to be in Town, must give me some Uneasiness; and yet your chearful Resignation to your Duty, in obeying your Father, not only alleviates that Uneasiness, but makes me rejoice in your Resolution to submit to what you think reasonable" (Letter XIII 163). The dialogue that Leonora retells, as well as her motivation for repeating the conversation, dramatizes Shaftesbury's thesis, reasoning to moral knowledge because Leonora seems to feel skeptical of the power of her maxim alone to reassure Delia. Therefore, she turns to the tool of dialogue as held between the two men with differing perspectives on benevolence and its ability to motivate action. Gentleman one (G 1) assures Gentlemen (G 2) that words like "Benevolence," "Good nature," and "Love" have no meaning as men "love nothing but themselves" (164). To which G 2 responds that whatever he feels for himself, he can also feel for others, which means that words like love do have a great deal of meaning as he definitely loves himself. In this conversation G 1 shows disdain and sneers at G 2. But G 2 does not take the bait and models reasoned responses that indicate a true desire to understand G 1's position. Shaftesbury would have been proud of G 2's deep probing of G 1's idea, because his insistence

pushes G 2 to explain his thinking. At which point, G 2, identifies pride as the strongest passion implanted in man by the “Great Creator” so that individuals will “emulate each other in great and noble actions” (165). This however, did not satisfy G 2 as it does not explain G 1’s original declaration that the term Love has no meaning. In turn, G 2 agrees that individuals do feel pride, but that does not exclude the passion of love or benevolence from motivating individuals to great and noble actions, as well. Leonora recounts that neither gentleman seems persuaded by the other: “Here the two Gentlemen parted, the one with a heavy Heart, that his Companion was, in his opinion, in an error, and the other triumphing and exulting in the superior Penetration he was convinced he possessed above his Friend” (Letter XIII 166). Nor does she directly pass judgment on which is right, or which is wrong however, the structure and fully flushed-out thoughtfulness of G 2’s argument suggests Leonora’s general agreement with him, as does her initial framing of their conversation. Shaftesbury’s thesis argues that dialogue is an epistemological process by which individuals achieve moral knowledge, although that moral knowledge does not come by way of certainty; but rather, by way of exploring the indeterminacy of conversations left in aporia.

Again, Leonora’s epistle demands her audience, Delia, intellectually engage with these overlapping frames and think for herself, because Leonora does not explicitly state her position on the gentlemen’s conversation. Next, she associates another text with their conversation: “Those Gentlemen who positively deny any Pity or Compassion to inhabit the human Brest, make their Fellow-Creatures a worse compliment than Milton made even his Satan for he allows him some Mixture of the softer Passions, tho’ outweigh’d by Revenge and Pride; as appears plainly by the following Speech” (Letter XIII 166). According to Leonora, Milton designs his concept of Satan as complex, with positive attributes, such as compassion, intermixed with

negative passions, such as revenge and pride. This association offers an oblique commentary on G 1's belief that only one emotion, and it is not love, motivates human behavior.

After this comment her epistle includes the excerpted speech from *Paradise Lost* (*PL*). With this intertextual inclusion of Milton's quotation, S. Fielding jumps between fictional worlds, playing with readers' perception of the intensity of the moral implications of these debates and quandaries. *PL* supports Leonora's critique of G 1 because of the assertion that if the Devil—that so many Puritans ascribe as pure evil, and Milton is a devout Puritan himself—could be imagined as a bundle of emotions, then people, too, could experience various emotions, including secondary affects, which leads to benevolent acts like Dalia's decision to remain with her father in the country.

This epistle's complex framing continues when after transcribing the Devil's soliloquy, Leonora recounts a discussion she had about this speech with a lady who claims to be a Milton expert. Leonora recounts that the lady declared "she was 'sure Milton did not mean, that the Devil had any Compassion, but only that he was deceitful'" and walks away, to which Leonora offers a rejoinder to this comment for Delia's pleasure ("This Lady forgot, that there was no body near enough to hear Satan when he spoke this speech,") because at the time of Leonora's encounter with this woman she made her no answer, "but left her to enjoy her own judicious Criticism without a Rival" (Letter XIII 168). Leonora's conversation with this lady ends much like that of the two gentlemen, without a meeting of the minds. Essentially, Leonora suggests that the lady's reading of *PL* is incorrect, as Satan would unlikely attempt to deceive others when "no body was near." What Leonora's reflection shows is her understanding of Shaftesbury's perspective on soliloquy as a strategy for viewing and reflecting on one's self in order to reason one's passions into alignment; sadly for Satan, his passions of pride and revenge won out, but in



that soliloquy Milton demonstrates that it did not have to be so, as he was not bereft of love for others. Incorporating, Satan's soliloquy, learning from it, and engaging another in dialogue about it, dramatize Shaftesbury's thesis that man can achieve moral knowledge, even though acting on it is not a certainty.

***Familiar Letters'* "A Vision" Dramatizes Shaftesbury's Antithesis: Valentine's Doubt**

*Familiar Letters'* final epistle argues love is the human emotion most likely to bring sustained happiness. However, Valentine's argument is not without its detractors. S. Fielding purposefully establishes these opposing viewpoints to engage the readers in rational thinking. While satisfied with his argument, Valentine fears he was not as effective an advocate for love as he would have liked and asks Cynthia to provide her own points on this position. Valentine's final sentiments afford doubt and skepticism a space in his discourse. Furthermore, similar to Leonora's complex letter that provides multiple framing devices within one letter to engage readers intellectually in the process of synthesizing several sources in order to come up with their own position, Valentine's letter frames the appended allegory on humanity's ethical failings.

Before launching into his transcribed speech, Valentine sets up the argument. He explains, that many men act embarrassed to say they love their wives, imputing such a sentiment to "weakness of the mind" (225). Taking issue with this position, he establishes his view that "Love appears alone capable of bestowing" the "highest degree of human felicity" (225). Valentine walks Cynthia through his inductive reasoning beginning from his personal empirical observations: "when I am in possession of my wife, my happiness wants no addition" (226). Then he defines his terms. According to Valentine true happiness is designed by its ability to satiate. As avarice and ambition are based on want and the constant need for more he eliminates

them as passions that bring true happiness. Although he concedes some individuals find the greatest satisfaction from the passion they value the most, and for some that might be avarice or ambition even if these passions do not satiate them. However, he determines that the highest degree of happiness is ultimately a matter of definition; therefore, no one has the right to call love folly or a “weakness of mind,” which is what initially provoked him to this soliloquized defense.

In Shaftesbury’s *Characteristics*, he illuminates a skeptic’s views on the various passions and varying dispositions that may privilege experiences other than love and marriage: “Nor can anyone truly judge the value of any immediate sensation otherwise than by judging first of the situation of his own mind. For that which we esteem a happiness in one situation of mind is otherwise thought of in another” (251). Shaftesbury’s process by which he chose his wife reflects a similar experience. As noted in chapter two, Shaftesbury chose to marry a woman who was a sound and wise choice, but who did not elicit great excitement from his peers and friends. One might even wonder if she elicited great excitement from Shaftesbury. But Shaftesbury, like Valentine, seeks sustained happiness, and he took a global account of the “situation of his mind” at that moment, as well as into the future, determining that his choice in bride will bring long-term happiness. While Shaftesbury did not wax poetic about the passion of love, he did esteem the institution of marriage as a structure that would provide the greatest, most stable experience of calm joy and he anticipated his sound choice in a wife would bring his view of the truest happiness to life.

Unfortunately for Valentine, his audience does not comprise Shaftesbury alone. Therefore, *Familiar Letters*’ last epistle dramatizes Shaftesbury’s antithesis as Valentine despairs over his need to improve his argument: “I have some apprehension that you might think me a

weak advocate in so good a cause, which you yourself could, I am convinced, defend so much better” (230). This letter leaves doubt in Valentine’s mind that his words had their intended impact on the audience at the gathering. Valentine’s skeptical ending leads to the allegorical form of “A Vision,” one that is not open for interpretation, which dramatizes Shaftesbury’s final stage of moral thought, his synthesis—the need for moral regulation.

### ***Familiar Letters’* Synthesis in “A Vision”: Allegorical Didacticism**

As noted in Chapter Two’s subsection on Shaftesbury, Shaftesbury saw God in the ordered universe. At the center of that order, Shaftesbury situated individuals’ benevolent impulses in their connection to others. But, as Shaftesbury doubted man’s ability to translate those impulses into action, he designated marriage as the regulatory structure needed to create a microcosms of benevolent actions. S. Fielding’s moral romance, *David Simple*, and by extension *Familiar Letters*, reveals a shared sympathy for Shaftesbury’s belief in married life as the structure that brings benevolent action to the forefront. *Familiar Letters’* dramatization of Shaftesbury’s first and second stage of moral thought moves towards Shaftesbury’s third synthesis stage with its appended allegory. S. Fielding’s “A Vision” constructs an allegorical descent into a hellish world where hard truths are revealed to the willing witness.

The effectiveness of “A Vision” comes as much from the vivid and intense language of the allegory itself as from Valentine’s letter which has already been explored. As Valentine employs inductive reasoning from observation to defend those who believe love to be the passion that brings the greatest happiness against the imputation of being “weak of mind,” he draws the conclusion that love achieves the greatest happiness because that passion continues for the love object even after it has been obtained; because Valentine believes avarice and ambition

constitutively require more, he rejects them as passions that bring about the greatest happiness. However, he also admits that an individual's temperament has much to do with what passion is of greatest importance to him and so some may indeed value avarice or ambition above love. But, he finally concludes that those who prefer other passions are no different than a "drunken Fellow over his nasty Porter in an Alehouse" who critiques another party for becoming intoxicated over Champaign (230). In short, those who prefer avarice and ambition and critique those who prefer love are analogized to the drunk over his nasty porter and Valentine judges them as individuals whose senses are befuddled and who have poor taste. The allegory "A Vision" comes on the heels of Valentine's message and restates his argument with a visual clarity and authorial conviction that Valentine doubts his argument had on his audience.

As noted in the introduction's section on narratology, Scholes, Phelan, and Kellogg in *The Nature of Narrative*, argue that narratives make meaning by creating a relationship between the fictional world and the real world where illustrative narrative renderings serve allegorical purposes, which invite polysemous interpretations. "A Vision" is a highly structured and thoughtfully patterned allegory resembling John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress, from this World to That which is to Come*. Like *The Pilgrim's Progress*, "A Vision" seems to dramatize a process of moral conversion. However, unlike "The Pilgrim's Progress," its concerns are largely ethical rather than religious. The narrator of "A Vision" takes a journey through deceptive spaces where she alone can see the truth of circumstance. Like Shaftesbury and his appended "Miscellaneous Reflections," (which corrects readers' possible misinterpretations of his previous volumes), S. Fielding's appended allegory provides authorial clarity to *Familiar Letters'* previous epistles. Because of the allegory's direct, albeit fictional, method of "A Vision," its

form orders and focuses the reader's moral landscape on this illustrative world that is a stylized environment replete with polysemous symbolic grammar.

The ethical concerns of "A Vision" are illustrative and are revealed immediately by its didactic nature. The preceding letters to "A Vision," which frame and embed narrative structures, mediate emotions, create space for wit and criticism, and require analytic connection across narrative levels, contrast sharply with the visceral rendering in "A Vision" of human ills and the narrator's discomfort: "I was so uneasy at this dismal Spectacle, that I fled from it" (248). It didactically illustrates the problems that befall individuals who do not scrutinize their own emotions and actions allowing for individuals' to control their particular passions.

S. Fielding designs a powerful narrator-witness whose authority to convey what she experiences in this underworld and the meaning for readers speaks to a deep credibility and authority imbued within this narrator. The narrator of "A Vision" delivers a first-person account of her journey where her sight is powerful, magical, and has access to what is hidden to others. She has access to the internal anatomy of the emotions that motivate people's actions. The narrator's moral authority comes from her ability to "observe" words "written in such small Characters, that...were difficult to be distinguished" and her observations symbolize the moral knowledge that Shaftesbury hopes reason acquired through dialogue and soliloquy can make known to man (232). Her position as a "Spectator," and the "Curiosity" she exudes exemplify Shaftesbury's desire for individuals to practice criticism in their daily lives, through their dialogues at clubs, epistles, and soliloquies (234). The ticket that normally blinds travelers' eyes to the truth of their destinations such as the "Palace of Pleasure," which is actually home to the monster "Disappointment" "could not blind [her] Eyes," because she seeks understanding (234). Her enhanced vision allows her to see that the travelers' actual destinations were to places like

“Avarice, Ambition, Disappointment, and Pride.” These destinations were “overlook’d by almost every Person there” but herself. Her sight allows her to observe and ask questions. Through this process she reasons and disapproves of what she sees and she responds with horror and disgust. In truth, she pities the multitude of “mankind assembled together” in her vision (232). She observes the traveler’s easy self-deception and the churning of the passions in a way that most people who are too busy going about their daily lives cannot. By clearly indicating the horrors of places like “Avarice,” and the fact that they are duplicitously shrouded in concepts of “pleasure,” the narrator leaves little room to argue for avarice’s benefits, differing tremendously from Valentine’s reasoned consideration of alternative views. Where he gave credence to people finding pleasure in avarice, the allegory clearly illustrates that pleasure derived from avarice is fraudulent.

The narrator’s vision brings the intangibility of people’s motivations, those passions that often stop people from acting on what they know is moral, to the forefront. Unlike moral philosophers, who are anatomists of the inner emotional world, but who can only come at this through the labor of dialogue and soliloquy, because people’s emotional worlds and innerworkings are held deep within the psyche and they need to be reasoned through, the form of “A Vision,” and its personification of the human passions, casts the emotions that disturb virtuous action and the pain that befalls misguided actions out into the open:

Here every thing which we call Diversion was lost; for those who before seemed pleased and satisfied with what they enjoyed, now so eagerly grasped at so many kinds of Pleasure, that they turned themselves giddy with the Variety, and rendered themselves incapable of the Enjoyment of any. (246)

S. Fielding's narrator of "A Vision" informs readers that activities that are perceived of as satisfying entertainment become enervating hyperactive diversions devoid of genuine pleasure. She continues to detail a grotesque, horrifying visual of a beast reveling in its physical power and dispensing physical pain to those enslaved to their shallow diversions.

... At the very Roof of this Room, across a Beam, sat perched a little ugly Monster called Disappointment. From its nasty Claws descended numberless Wires, and at the end of each was fastened a Hook, which the Monster could command, so as to hitch it in the Bosom of whomever he pleased. (247)

She also notes how this does not represent simple one or two persons, but that this is a crisis of human behavior that also seems contagious, as the Monster skewers more and more willing victims.

When by this means he had, one by one, got into his Clutches the whole Company, he discovered himself by a scornful Laugh; and tugged at once his Wires, to make the Hook more tormenting to their Bosoms...(247)

After these harrowing details of visceral torture, the authoritative narrator, who has returned from the hellscape to the world of the living, explains the powerful truth she learned on this visionary journey.

I could not help inquiring how long these miserable Wretches were to suffer thus. When Illusion... informed me, they might all be free, whenever they would consent to be touched by a Wand, which would immediately make them see the Impossibility of staying in the great Hall, where Pleasure presides. (247)

The humans are not physically imprisoned in this hellscape—it is merely a psychospiritual veil that can be immediately lifted by their rejecting shallow pleasures for moral behavior.

Although the narrator's knowledge of the underworld she encounters is limited (everything is new to her) she is gifted privileged access to the truth of these people's experiences, a truth that many of them who endure the consequences of their passions do not see. Unlike Valentine, the allegory's narrator concedes no space to the possible positives of this world.

Similar to Bunyan's celestial city, the narrator's respite from the morass comes when shame and guilt are filtered through reflection leading to moral knowledge and moral action. She is "Delivered by Patience over to Truth, who conducted [her] to the Palace of Benevolence" (256). Patience and truth, guides that are essential in the dialogues found in the letters, bring her to the goddess "Benevolence or real Love" who works tirelessly to "enhance the Pleasure of her Followers" (257). The people of this palace follow the Gospel, and Christianity was taught and practiced, but this does not banish error, infirmity, grief, and suffering. These continue to exist as a reality of life and they are part of the larger affective system, as they "promote the Humility and Penitence of the Offenders, and exert the Compassion and Good-Nature of all the rest" (257).

The allegorical structure of "A Vision" dramatizes Shaftesbury's synthesis, and external regulatory structures, as it, like Shaftesbury's "Miscellaneous Reflections" delivers a sharper moral message than the original text. Its concluding sentiments encourage readers to seek structured benevolence in an ordered domestic space where:

"every relative Duty, such as that from Parents to Children, and that from Children to Parents, etc. were so exactly performed that no Complaints of heart-breaking Torments from ill Usage of others were ever heard...and, consequently, all the real Happiness Human Nature is capable of, was here enjoyed, and doubled by the Hopes of yet greater." (258)



S. Fielding renders Shaftesbury's reorganization of individuals' potential into the well-regulated certainty of domestic community.

*Pamela's Literary Sister: Clarissa Navigates Similar Treachery and Narrative Strategies*

### ***Clarissa*: Richardson's Renewed Dramatization of Shaftesbury's Thesis**

Through narrative variety, Richardson's *Clarissa* compels readers to construct meaning; meaning that is open to interpretation because of the lack of authorial clarity. A prolific letter writer, Richardson's real-life correspondence mirrored his narrative practice. He often debated with friends, collaborators, and admirers over their interpretations and objections to his titular character Clarissa's development. These letters highlight his committed desire for *Clarissa*'s readers to work out the moral message for themselves. Once one correspondent faulted Clarissa for coquetry and another correspondent faulted her for being a prude, and instead of answering either he decided "to send each the other's letter for a full answer of her's."<sup>39</sup> In many cases, Richardson does not directly respond to criticism; but rather encourages re-reading of passages. His commitment to process, the expectation that readers will interpret, critique, and judge for themselves, is similar to the process many of his characters, including Clarissa, undergo; it dramatizes Shaftesbury's assertion that moral knowledge comes through just such a process.

Like S. Fielding, Richardson, a moral pedagogue, desires to educate his readers in an entertaining manner to aid in their access to moral knowledge and encourage their moral action. Jocelyn Harris suggests that Richardson's ambition was "to contribute, though but by his mite, to

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<sup>39</sup> See *The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ed. Ann Laetitia Barbauld, 6 Vols. (1804). pg 82.

mend” the morally moribund (1–2). As S. Fielding’s *Familiar Letters*’ narrative form dramatizes the process of reaching moral knowledge through dialogue, negotiation, criticism, and self-scrutiny, Richardson continues to advance the critical work of Shaftesbury’s dialectics thesis through *Clarissa*’s narrative form.

*Clarissa*’s literary sister *Pamela* provides a narrative template for dramatizing Shaftesbury’s thesis. In *Clarissa*, Richardson exchanges Pamela’s parents for Anna Howe as the voice of criticism and raillery. The lascivious Mr. B is exchanged for the violent Lovelace, both predators reformed by paragons of virtue; although, Mr. B lives a life of happy reform, while Lovelace’s death accompanies his reformed conscience. However, *Clarissa* also expands on many of the narrative strategies Richardson introduces in *Pamela*. Whereas Pamela’s early epistolary dialogues with her admonishing parents are brief and therefore must be internalized to resurface in her diary as she soliloquizes, dividing herself in two in performing her father’s cautioning voice in conversation with her own concerns, *Clarissa* advances beyond techniques of soliloquizing self-scrutiny with a genuine dialogic practice. Best friend and confidant, Anna is a true critic. Like Pamela’s parents she does not allow her affections to lessen her observational prowess or her desire to bring forward Clarissa’s inconstancies. Anna’s friendly interrogations are a narrative advancement from Pamela’s self-interrogations predicated on the early and brief insights from her parents because Anna continuously questions Clarissa’s evolving motives; additionally, Anna’s reproving letters demand a response. Therefore, unlike Pamela simplistically imagining her auditor, Clarissa must compose pieces that take her goals and rhetorical situation into account, creating a dynamic discourse. In turn, real-world-readers engaged more intensely in the more realistic, and mimetic sender-receive dynamics of the epistolary exchange. As Phelan describes, mimetic texts move real-world readers to associate

themselves with characters, engaging in predictions about the story and the character's fate based on the character's past actions and thoughts.

Richardson's dialogic formal innovations do not stop with Anna. Lovelace, the Mr. B-like libertine character, is given his own voice and epistles. No longer does the audience hear of the heroine's detractors from the heroine herself. While Lovelace writes occasionally to Clarissa and Anna, he predominantly showcases his compelling rhetoric and style in letters to his friend, Belford. Lovelace's letters to Belford recount the same events described by Clarissa but with a radically different perspective on the proceedings. Like Anna, Belford serves as a critic of Lovelace's thoughts and actions. The additional letters sent from Clarissa's, Anna's, and Lovelace's families are also interspersed to heighten the novel's compendium of views and causes of action. As a result, *Clarissa*'s various dialogues and the opposing viewpoints require the reader to negotiate a myriad of information to come to a moral determination.

### **A Confounding Surprise: *Clarissa* Dramatizes Butler's Antithesis and Synthesis**

Before moving forward with the analysis of how *Clarissa* dramatizes Butler's dialectical stages two and three we will review a brief summary of the plot. As a result of Clarissa's rejection of her family's choice of suitor, Roger Solmes, and Lovelace's rejection of Clarissa's sister Arabella, Clarissa's family (the Harlowes) bully and browbeat her until she seeks Lovelace's help, which results in her fatally running away with him. Importantly, Clarissa's grandfather bequeathed her an inheritance which her family wants to retain, making them particularly implacable to her pleas. Clarissa's naivety allows her to be ensconced in a brothel portrayed as a fine house. The brothel's madam, Mrs. Sinclair abets Lovelace's plans to rape Clarissa. After her violation, Clarissa escapes, only to be placed in debtors' prison by Mrs. Sinclair who thinks this

will ingratiate her to Lovelace. Clarissa's imprisonment ignites her illness which will be her end. Lovelace asks Belford to care for Clarissa as he dares not go near her. The remainder of the novel traces Clarissa's physical decomposition and mental courage as she rejects the now repentant Lovelace's solicitation to marry. Throughout the events of the novel Clarissa corresponds with her best friend Anna and Lovelace corresponds with Belford.

As already noted, *Clarissa*'s narrative structure relies heavily on Anna's intensely inquisitional epistles, and Lovelace's parallel recounting of events, which provides an alternative perspective; however, Richardson's inclusion of Belford's letters to Lovelace, which describe Clarissa's slow death and religious preparations, Clarissa's letters to friends and family explaining her Christian choices, and finally, letters of instruction directing the compiling of her history and her last will and testament greatly expands on and deviates from *Pamela*'s narrative structure. By giving greater voice to Belford's narration, his interactions with Clarissa and Clarissa's religious writings, Richardson turns Belford's epistolary narrative into the moral center of the novel, and pivots from Shaftesbury's thesis and antithesis stages of moral thought to dramatize Butler's antithesis and synthesis. Although Butler and Shaftesbury, as do all the moral sense philosophers, share similar antithesis stages of moral thought, doubting the ability of man to bridge the gap from moral knowledge to moral action, the regulatory stages of moral thought diverge not in terms of their goals but their methods for achieving the regulation. *Clarissa* dramatizes a narrative structure which fulsomely reject Shaftesbury's turn to marriage as a harmonious institution that brings about order and sustained happiness for the agency provided by individuals' disciplined consciences and epistolary truth-telling.

### **Antithesis: Consciences' Struggle Within Clarissa's Story World**

As argued in this chapter, the final third of *Clarissa's* structure dramatizes Butler's second and third stages of moral thought, Clarissa's letters, as well as Belford's letters describing Clarissa's journey, enact Butler's antithesis through the struggle she endures to discipline her affects.

Similarly, Clarissa's and Belford's letters, which describe her conscience's mastery of her resentment, allows her to forgive Lovelace (Butler's regulatory synthesis of last resort), before she seeks legal recourse (Butler's regulatory synthesis of first choice). This section explores the epistolary strategies which illuminate Clarissa's Christian-driven self-scrutiny.

Richardson employs Anna's epistolary advice to Clarissa to set up Butler's two-part regulatory synthesis. First, he has Anna advise Clarissa to "take legal vengeance of the infernal wretch" not only for Clarissa's sake but "for the sakes of innocents who otherwise may yet be deluded and outraged by him" (1014). It is important that Anna, with her impassioned temperament, be the first to advise such a step. Because Butler argues that administrative justice should mitigate vengeance and be enacted through cool-resentment, Miss Howe's impassioned pleas need conscience's authority to reorganize and temper the passions motivating her advice. Next, Anna delivers her "mother's" belief that Clarissa "ought by all means to set on foot a prosecution against" Lovelace, as "society requires that such a beast of prey should be hunted out" (1016). Mrs. Howe's framing of justice comes slightly closer to Butler's desire for the regulatory apparatus of legal recourse when she invokes the benefit to "society" of such an action; however, her description of Lovelace as a "beast of prey" strips Lovelace of his humanity, undermining Butler's insistence that one should act out of cool-resentment. Mrs. Howe's language suggests she sees Lovelace simply as an animal, purely motivated by violent instinct, and Butler's theological approach does not accept that there is no recourse for men with

violent tendencies. Negative affects, like positive affects, are part of the human condition and must be regulated. Therefore, Clarissa's objection to Anna's "earnestly recommended prosecution" (1019). The Howes' insistence on prosecuting Lovelace do not come from regulated emotion. Vengeance can beget vengeance and Clarissa "would sooner suffer every evil (the repetition of the capital one excepted), than appear publicly in a court" with passions so high (1019). Instead, of the narrative's epistles being busy with legal plans, they turn to focus on Clarissa's process for regulating her emotions.

Importantly this chapter argues that Clarissa's narrative form turns to Butler's regulatory conscience, and the reordering of her passions dismisses Shaftesbury's regulatory apparatus of marriage. Clarissa's fulsome rejection of the Howe's advice to take Lovelace to court, leaves Anna in search of other ways to aid her beloved Clarissa. After meeting with Lovelace's relatives, Anna writes Clarissa, describing his relatives as having "the highest sense of [Clarissa's] merit" and that they serve as "guarantees" that Lovelace will marry Clarissa (1042). Anna's interactions with Lovelace's family moves her to advise Clarissa "to take the wretch for your husband...the alliance is splendid and honorable" (1043). In essence, Anne exchanges one form of court for another. By sharing Lovelace's family's plans for their estate and her well-being, Anna, like Lovelace's family, serves as proxy suitor, courting Clarissa. But just as Clarissa is uninterested in taking Lovelace to a court of law, which in an ideal world would offer some prison time for his crime, she does not wish Lovelace to court her, which would result in a lifetime of imprisonment for herself.

Lovelace begins to desire Clarissa for his wife, but his past schemes undermine the plot's movement towards a marriage settlement. After Mrs. Sinclair has Clarissa arrested, everyone but Belford believes Lovelace directly orchestrated the imprisonment to force Clarissa out of hiding

and into marriage. While the thought that Lovelace would so degrade Clarissa enrages Anna, she sees no other way to quell Lovelace's persecution than to insist "marriage is now the only means left" for Clarissa to make her "future life tolerably easy" (1087). Anna's resentment bubbles up with spiteful ruminations: "—happy there is no saying—In the eye of the world itself, his disgrace, in that case, will be more than yours—and to those who know you, glorious will be your triumph" (1087). The epistolary platform provides our insight into her innermost thoughts, although shared with Clarissa. This worm's-eye view reveals Anna's precocity is not easily tamed; her anger is reasonable, but because she feels that her friend has not received earthly justice, her reasons for wanting to see Clarissa marry Lovelace are colored with vengeance. Just as with the court proceedings, marriage proceedings predicated on malice are not motivated by regulated emotions.

Clarissa's epistolary response to Anna's thoughts provide Clarissa a platform to articulate her Christian ethic as well as model her process of self-discipline for Anna's education. Clarissa responds to Anna's advice by admitting some of her "pride," which makes the prospect of marrying Lovelace "not unreasonable" is also a product of resentment. Furthermore, if she were to marry Lovelace based on advice from those filled with vengeance, while she herself is filled with resentment, the marriage would undermine the "penitence" she seeks for her role in her own tragedy (1115–1117). Clarissa rejects Shaftesbury's vision of hierarchical unity and reputation for Butler's regulated internal emotional world under the authority of conscience. Unlike *Pamela's* final narrative structure that converts into a marriage conduct book dramatizing Shaftesbury's marital regulatory thesis—and conventional happy ending, *Clarissa's* theological focus on self-alignment and self-possession literalizes Butler's regulatory conscience. This structure improved on the misreadings caused by Pamela's happy ending and change of status.

This time, Richardson keeps the focus squarely on the moral conversion through conscience's discipline of Clarissa, as well as Belford, and finally, although belatedly, Lovelace.

Clarissa's rejection of Anna's advice clears narrative room for her to focus on disciplining her inner emotional life and advancing conscience's authority. The readers observe this process by reading both Clarissa's and Belford's letters. However, as Belford becomes Clarissa's confidant in order to keep track of her for Lovelace, we learn much about Clarissa's process and its impact on Belford from his epistles. Belford first comes upon Clarissa "arms crossed upon the table, the fore-finger of her right hand in her Bible" and conjectures she had been "reading in it, and could read no longer" (1065). These observations note Clarissa's self-denying commitment to the Biblical text. Belford turns from his quiet observation to meet the task at hand, removing Clarissa from where she was held for her debt; however, as soon as Belford's connection to Lovelace is known by Clarissa, she experiences emotional swings of gratitude, doubt, rage, and self-reflection. Belford traces these swings and her struggle to submit these emotions to her control. In response to Belford's insistence that Lovelace did not have Clarissa imprisoned, Clarissa responds in anger:

Nay, Sir, if you swear, I must doubt you!—If you yourself think your Word insufficient, what reliance can I have on your Oath !—O that this my experience had not cost me so dear! But, were I to live a thousand years, I would always suspect the veracity of a swearer. Excuse me, Sir; but is it likely, that he who makes so free with his God, will scruple any thing that may serve his turn with his fellow-creature? (1071)

Clarissa's emotions fluctuate quickly, allowing Belford to trace her struggle for emotional control. Shortly after her angry outburst she reflects on her hasty generalizations: "Nay, Sir, don't be angry with me. It is grievous to me to question a gentleman's veracity. But your friend



calls himself a gentleman” (1071). Clarissa repents her words as she is self-aware and identifies the true target of her rapprochements—Lovelace, not all men. However, this calm insight does not last when overwhelmed by her sorrow and the pain she apostrophizes vehemently before Belford of undeserved usage she endured from Lovelace: “—You know not what I have suffered by a gentleman !” and Belford notes that “then again she wept” (1071). Still reasonably dysregulated by her traumas, Clarissa struggles to discipline her affects in order to bring them under what Butler describes as conscience’s authority. But, even in her understandable state of tumult she allows her conscience (even if intermittently) to lead her towards benevolence, exclaiming “Give him, good God! repentance and amendment; that I may be the last poor creature, who shall be ruined by him!—And, in thy own good time, receive to thy mercy, the poor wretch who had none on me!” (1071). Belford’s letter clearly captures Clarissa’s disordered state of emotions and the effort she exerts to bring them under control.

Serving as Lovelace’s reporter, Belford begins to draw conclusions and construct opinions from his observations of Clarissa, opinions that Clarissa will have a large impact on his character. Struck by Clarissa’s reflections on Lovelace’s duplicity, her quick repentance for projecting such duplicity onto all men, his knowledge of the ill-treatment Clarissa receives at Lovelace’s hands, and her desire to see God’s mercy bestowed on Lovelace, Belford wonders at Clarissa’s courage, writing: “She had not her Bible before her for nothing. I was forced to turn my head away, and to take out my handkerchief. What an angel is this! ... Again, I wish thou hadst been there, that thou mightst have sunk down at her feet, and begun that moment to reap the effect of her generous wishes for thee; undeserving, as thou art, of any-thing but perdition!” (1071).

Eventually, Clarissa trusts Belford and writes to ask him if he would compile and edit her story, to bring her “character justice” and be the “executor” of her will as she believes she will die (1176). Because, Belford is close to the incidents of concern, having been an important recipient of Lovelace’s epistles, he has access to many of the needed documents and a means to retrieve them from Lovelace. One can imagine Belford reading and rereading the various documents relating to the story as he compiles and curates it into a unified narrative. This detailed and dedicated process of study seems to parallel Butler’s advice to study scripture when one seeks to support one’s conscience’s authority. In a previous letter to Lovelace he recounts seeing a meditation that Clarissa transcribed from the Bible and how its beauty overcame him, which lead him to ruminate on how as a child he performatively read the Bible without any real understanding, but, as a result of his interactions with Clarissa, now desires to turn to it as a font of wisdom (1125). Paralleling Belford’s new interest in the Bible, Clarissa’s and her friends’ correspondence will become like a holy text that Belford valorizes and studies.

### **Butler’s Synthesis: Clarissa’s Will Becomes Her Testimony and Forgiveness, Her Justice**

#### *Clarissa Denies the Court’s Efficacy, Analyzing Society as Butler’s Fallen Construction*

The epistolary form lends itself to characters engaging in contemplation, and as an organic platform for readers to access the characters’ private thoughts, but it also serves as an important means of relaying information, a platform for truth-telling. Butler advocates a multi-pronged process for achieving cool-resentment. It includes self-reflection, so as to realign one’s disordered affects. It also requires the support of scripture and prayer. He posits the additional strategy of truth-telling for bringing one’s resentment under control: “truths, which are of service

towards regulating our conduct, are not to be disowned, or even concealed” (*S. iv 35*).

Furthermore, Butler believes telling the truth about others is “of great importance to the good of society,” for “the characters of bad men should be known” as should “the characters of good men,” so that individuals may protect themselves as well as regulate themselves through the other affects of shame, pride, and desire for community (*S. iv 35*). Griswold explains, “truth-telling is an essential component of that expression of respect” (29), as “truth-telling” promotes forgiveness. Truth-telling actively negotiates with the situation, empowering the teller to take a stake in the narrative’s outcome” (29). Because Clarissa designs her letters to circulate through society as public documents, Richardson’s narrative structure turns the epistles into an approved public medium, much like Mr. B’s and Pamela’s desires to use her letters and diary as publicly circulated educational pamphlets. However, unlike the happy ending Pamela’s documents teach others to achieve, Clarissa’s epistolary compilation narrates the wrongs committed against her and warns others against similar circumstance, thereby allowing Clarissa agency so she can forgive Lovelace. Additionally, she hopes her documents will bring Lovelace’s bad actions to light in his own conscience therefore helping him to re-regulate his disordered emotions. In essence, her documents seek redress; redress is a process of telling one’s truth and respecting one’s self.

In Butler’s theory, being able to forgive is also about respecting oneself, because forgiveness is tied to the ability to remove oneself from harm’s way. Therefore, after Lovelace writes Clarissa, imploring her to both forgive and marry him (1185), Clarissa replies that she “will not be” his wife, but explains her contemplations of scripture, prayer, and “Religion enjoins [her] not only to forgive injuries, but to return good for evil” (1191). Because Clarissa expects to have no further contact with Lovelace, and her conscience as implanted by God has helped her

reach a “state of mind” that no longer villainizes him, Clarissa feels she has the necessary agency to forgive Lovelace (1191). She can therefore “cheerfully obey” the dictates of her well-aligned “state of mind” going as far as to “wish” him “happy” (1191). Clarissa respects her needs for safety, which allows her to see Lovelace as a whole person, not just his crime, and wishes him well.

By electing to have Anna bring up legal procedures against Lovelace, only to have Clarissa summarily dismiss the idea, and then return to the subject a hundred pages later, after Clarissa’s conscience regains authority, Richardson’s narrative dramatizes Butler’s two-part synthesis, including his preference for conscience’s regulation and willingness to use legal proceedings as a last resort. About a month after Anna’s first letter urging legal recourse, Clarissa’s conscience has regulated her errant emotions. Even though the reverend’s desires, like Clarissa’s, are in line with Butler’s synthesis stage of moral thought, Clarissa reframes Rev. Dr. Lewen’s position privileging conscience’s agency as a moral authority, to be skeptical of the court’s ability to administer justice, paralleling Butler’s own preferences and critiques.

Importantly, Rev. Dr. Lewen and Clarissa engage, albeit via letter, in an important back-and-forth dialogue that allows reason to bring moral knowledge to the forefront. He implores Clarissa to consult her “conscience” explaining that as a reverend he “is in the way of his duty,” which establishes the theological nature of their conversation and his profession (1251). Furthermore, the reverend enters into his discourse in good faith, sympathizing with the “difficulty” he imagines Clarissa will experience having her “modesty” questioned as she appears “against him in open court” (1251). However, even though he admits it will be difficult, he firmly believes that the “blushes of the most naked truth” are necessitated by “justice and honor” as administered through the courts (1251). Touching on the Christian virtue of

forgiveness he casts it in a light similar to that presented by Butler when he explains that properly pardoning someone first requires “the power to punish them” (1251). In this light forgiveness is possible only when Lovelace is no longer able to harm Clarissa and others of her sex.

While Clarissa may agree with many of the reverend’s sentiments, she responds by reframing Rev. Dr. Lewen’s conclusion that a trial against Lovelace would produce justice. She explains her assessment of the situation—the public would parade her around in a salacious manner with sensationalized attention delegitimizing the horrific, sensitive nature of gender violence:

Little advantage in a court, (perhaps, bandied about, and jested profligately with,) would some of those pleas in my favour have been, which out of court, and to a private and serious audience, would have carried the greatest weight against him—Such, particularly, as the infamous methods to which he had recourse. (1253)

Because of custom’s inclination to blame woman for their lack of caution and obedience to parents Clarissa anticipates, “It would, no doubt, have been a ready retort from every mouth, that I ought not to have thrown myself into the power of such a man, and that I ought to take for my pains what had befallen me” (1253). Working in opposition to Clarissa’s desire to tell her truth, the public nature of a court case would place her story squarely into the powerful sphere of custom’s discourse, unjustly removing her agency. Additionally, the court’s justice is easily influenced, according to Clarissa. She explains that the power of Lovelace’s social position and his family’s influence would not only mar her ability to receive a fair hearing, but in the unlikely event that Lovelace were judged guilty, his upper class family would have the wealth and connections to easily secure his release and pardon for his crimes. Not only does Clarissa

reframe the reverend's position on justice, Clarissa places Butler's analysis in a distinctly gendered space, as the flawed courts, like society, serve the interest of men, not women. If Clarissa went to the court for public redress, the opposite would happen, as her voice and her story would be silenced.

Butler's view on compassion and forgiveness factors prominently into Clarissa's epistolary response to Rev. Dr. Lewen as she laments that no court-administered punishment would likely create the outcome that would foster forgiveness and compassion; questioning what is to be gained by such prosecution. Clarissa weighs the costs of prosecuting Lovelace, the harm that would befall her reputation, the unlikelihood that any sentencing would keep Lovelace in prison, and most perilously, the likely inciting of further factional vengeance between the two families:

And had he been pardoned, would he not then have been at liberty to do as much mischief as ever?... he would not have been sorry to have had an opportunity to confront me, and my father, uncles, and brother, at the bar of a court of justice, on such an occasion. In which case, would not, on his acquittal, or pardon, resentments have been reciprocally heightened? And then would my brother, or my cousin Morden, have been more secure than now? (1253–4)

Clarissa, like Butler, sees the courts as a last resort, because human-constructed courts are as flawed as humans are fallen. They often do not administer justice, even though they are society's last resort for mitigating peoples' vengeance when settling grievances. However, because of society's flawed nature, if not employed with caution, courts can stoke passion's flames rather than quell them. For this reason Clarissa, like Butler, places greater faith in an individual's God-implanted conscience and an individual's desire to allow conscience to exercise its authority and

regulate emotions. At the time Clarissa writes to Rev. Dr. Lewen her conscience's authority has established her agency and she hopes that the circulation of her story through another legal apparatus, the execution of her will, may engage Lovelace's God-implanted conscience, bringing him to account before the divine law within himself.

*Through Epistolary Means, Clarissa Achieves Justice on Earth*

Despite the fallibility of the human-designed court and legal systems, Richardson's Clarissa exacts justice on Earth. Once again, the power of the pen in the hands of the characters presents a mighty weapon. Clarissa issues instructions for her letters to be collated as evidence, where they will be posthumously circulated in exacting justice upon Lovelace. Clarissa explains, "It behoves me to leave behind me such an account as may clear up my conduct to several of my friends who will not at present concern themselves about me: And Miss Howe, and her mother, are very solicitous that I will do so" (1173). Clarissa's dramatization of Butler's synthesis highlights the difficult choices women who would turn to the legal system must face. If a public trial further exacerbates the already dysregulated passions of men when women seek its support, then it does not meet the expectations of Butler's regulatory system and women must seek the support of Butler's conscience and truth-telling regulatory structure:

The warning that may be given from those papers to all such young creatures as may have known or heard of me, may be more efficacious, as I humbly presume to think, to the end wished for, than my appearance could have been in a court of justice, pursuing a doubtful event, under the disadvantages I have mentioned. (1254–5)

By employing cool-resentment and Christian ethics and legal contracts such as her will, Clarissa comes close to Butler's vision of truth-telling as a helpful social regulation. As Butler views it,

people are instilled with resentment to protect themselves and others, and by circulating her story to private and serious groups who take her seriously, the credibility of her story will grow and people will know of Lovelace's misdeeds instead of castigating Clarissa for her too "sanguinary" view of men. Furthermore, it is likely that Lovelace will feel the shame of his actions and want to regulate himself.

Although Clarissa does not take Lovelace to court, she turns to a legal process she deems effective, the writing of a will, where she requests Belford to circulate her letter amongst her friends, because they tell her tragedy and will clear her name:

Having been pressed by Miss Howe and her mother to collect the particulars of my sad story,...in order to do my character justice with all my friends and companions... it is my desire, that he will cause two copies to be made of this collection; one to remain with Miss Howe, the other with himself; and that he will show or lend his copy, if required, to my aunt Hervey, for the satisfaction of any of my family. (1418)

Clarissa's narrative form, as her will and testament is given substantial space in the text, dramatizes both means of moral regulation put forth by Butler. Clarissa's just-resentment means she turns to the legal apparatus to collaborate with her conscience so that the other affects remain balanced and proportional. Her desire for proportional affective responses is modeled by her will's requests that "John Belford of Edgworth in county of Middlesex, Esq., the sole executor of my last will and testament...studiously endeavor to promote peace with, and suppress resentments in everyone; so as that all farther mischiefs may be prevented" (1417-8). The will serves as appropriate punishment, which allows Clarissa to foreswear abuses of resentment, an abuse that seeks to privately administer injury to a wrongdoer. Citing she wishes no confusion among her family members as to her dying wishes, Clarissa's will publicly asserts her aspiration



for justice and peace for her family and those connected with this case, noting “I have heard of so many instances of confusion and disagreement in families, and so much doubt and difficulty, for want of absolute clearness in the testaments of departed persons” (1412). Again, Richardson endows his female paragon with the rational skills of rhetoric and legalese, as she seeks to prevent any posthumous questions on her sanity in drawing up her will. She clearly writes to emphasize her soundness of mind in all these proceedings, writing “that this last act...should be the result of cool deliberation...of a sound mind and memory...All pretenses of insanity of mind are likewise prevented when a testator gives reasons for what he wills: all cavils about words are obviated (1412). This public and legal redress makes forgiveness a possible and necessary step for all. Clarissa’s death, evidentiary letters of suffering, and “will” as documentation of her conscience, instead of a turn to the happy marriage plot found in *Pamela*, marks the narrative’s structural rejection of Shaftesbury’s synthesis for Butler’s.

*Meta-Antithesis: Readers Skeptical that Clarissa Achieved Spiritual Enlightenment or Justice*

Many readers like Lady Bradshaigh were unable to accept the “noble Reflections... and inward Pleasure” Clarissa derives from her just-resentment and conscience; Lady Bradshaigh critiques Richardson for giving Clarissa “nothing but Misery” (Correspondence 33). In particular, Lady Bradshaigh seems to think that the married state can order Lovelace’s disordered passions. In fact, Lady Bradshaigh even goes so far as to imagine a possible alternative ending to Clarissa where Lovelace daily “Endeavors” to make himself a good penitent husband which brings “[Clarissa’s] generous Heart” to love (Sabor, 57).

Lady Bradshaigh’s argument falls on deaf ears. Richardson rejects Lady Bradshaigh’s suggestions, instead advocating Clarissa’s forbearance necessary for people in a fallen world:

“The Case therefore is not what we should like to bear, but what, (such is the Common Lot) we must bear, like it or not. And if we can be prepared by remote Instances, to Support ourselves under real Afflictions, when it comes to our Turn to suffer such, is the Attempt an unworthy one?” (37). As everyone suffers from life’s vicissitudes, striving for conscience’s authority to regulate our responses to trials and tribulations should be our daily goal, as it might bring some peace and happiness into people’s complex lives.

However, Richardson’s own sentiment about *Clarissa*’s structure wildly underestimated his readerships’ frustrations with his dramatization of both Shaftesbury’s and Butler’s moral philosophy. Friend and correspondent Hester Mulso expressed frustration with what she believed was Richardson’s portrayal of Clarissa as disobedient for not marrying her parent’s choice for a husband:

[Clarissa] was not only commanded to sacrifice her happiness but her innocence: the marriage they would have forced her to, would not only have plunged her into misery but guilt; a guilt no less black than that of solemn perjury before the alter of God. Can it then be made a doubt whether she had a natural right to refuse her obedience in this case, and, when brutal force was designed, to use every method her own prudence could suggest to get out of their power.” (Page 175)<sup>40</sup>

Mulso’s frustration with Richardson’s portrayal is partly a product of the novel’s form. Because the novel’s letters capture all character’s opinions and criticisms, and many of the characters in Clarissa’s immediate family, as well as Anna’s mother, Mrs. Howe, critique both Clarissa and

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<sup>40</sup> From *Clarissa: The Eighteenth-Century Response 1747–1804 Volume I Reading Clarissa* Edited And Introduced by Lois E Bueler. (Page 175)

Anna for not immediately acquiescing to her parents' choice of husband, one can easily see how Mulso took this as the novel's larger message.

Although in Richardson's correspondence with Mulso, Richardson does articulate a firm and at times passionate stance on the mandatory obedience and diffidence children owe their parents, *Clarissa's* epistolary form convolutes a clear position on how much unwavering submission Clarissa owes her parents. On this issue, Mulso takes a strong stance against many of characters within the story world, as well as against Richardson, who believe Clarissa's refusal to submit to her parents' desires are the cause of her tragedy:

...they had first cast her out of their protection, and forced her to seek another guardian.

You think I expressed myself too strongly with regard to forced marriages; and perhaps I did; for I always considered marriage in a more solemn light than the generality of people do; and as I think highly of the felicity of the state, where it is a marriage of souls as well as persons, so have I a dreadful idea of the misery of being "*joined*, and not *matched*."(page 181)

Because Clarissa's parents had already abdicated their role as their daughter's protector, Mulso sees hypocrisy in a duty-bound argument against Clarissa's choices. Mulso believes that parents must execute their responsibilities if they expect their children to do so as well.

At the core of these disputations are ethical concerns addressed by the moral sense philosophers. For example, Shaftesbury believed, and lived his belief, that marriage is the ultimate regulatory structure to aid people's moral behavior. When Shaftesbury married, he choose a spouse he thought would help him continue his lineage and create a peaceful life within their means—something his grandfather specifically requested, and therefore his duty. These are ethical concerns that are equally in dispute in Clarissa's refusal to marry Mr. Solmes. Some

readers might view Clarissa's parents' request for her to marry someone wealthy above all else in order to raise their family's rank as falling within Shaftesbury's regulatory system. However, other readers might also view Clarissa's dislike of her parents' choice as emblematic of a desire to respect status, as she was disgusted by her family's social climbing aspirations. In any case, these are important ethical and moral questions that Shaftesbury's thesis moral stage, its valuation of debate, dialogue, soliloquy, and reflection invites without providing a clear resolution.

Lady Elizabeth Echlin, like her sister Lady Bradshaigh disapproves of Clarissa's rape and Lovelace's death. While she does not resolve the novel into a happy marriage plot like Lady Bradshaigh desires, she does attempt to soften the implications of sexual violence. In order to suggest that Clarissa has feelings for Lovelace and joins him of her own volition, therefore making the rape an unneeded plot element, her letter to Richardson identifies discrepancies between Clarissa's actions and behaviors prior to being taken to Hampstead and those after: "from the time Lovelace finds her at Hampstead, her conduct is quite inconsistent with her character" (985).<sup>41</sup> Because Lady Echlin believes Clarissa was never "unguarded" before; rather she was "carefully cautious, & Reserv'd" in her deportment with Lovelace, she "cannot then suppose [Clarissa] was less guarded, after she had plainly discover'd his Evil intention— therefore she cou'd not be so unpardonably silly as to accompany him to London, with two flirting strumpets, who, tho' they had assum'd the names of his kindred, their affected airs, & over acted part, wou'd not suffer Clarissa to imagine them the real well-Bread Ladies of quality"

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<sup>41</sup> Appendix III of *The Cambridge Edition of the Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*: Correspondence with Lady Bradshaigh and Lady Echlin Volume 3:1758-1762 Edited by Peter Sabor

(985).<sup>42</sup> Echlin's inductive logic undermines the assertion that Clarissa does not have feelings for Lovelace, as it seems unlikely a woman of her capacity would allow herself to be so fooled without other motivating factors.

Another of Richardson's friends and correspondents, Mrs. Pilkington, wrote to Richardson to recount Mr. Cibber's agitation at Clarissa's demise:

I passed two hours this morning with Mr. Cibber, whom I found in such real anxiety for Clarissa, as none but so perfect a master of nature could have excited... 'What! (said he) shall I, who have loved and revered the virtuous, the beautiful Clarissa, from the same motives I loved Mr. Richardson, bear to stand a patient spectator of her ruin, her final destruction?'...In this manner did the dear gentleman, I think I may almost say rave.  
(128)<sup>43</sup>

Echoing Lady Bradshaigh's frustration with the Clarissa's tragic ending, Mr. Cibber's similar sentiments reflect Phelan's proposition that narrative operates as a rhetorical device as various readers are moved to the same experience. Because an epistolary novel has many epistolary narrators who are also characters, readers struggle to identify one authorial message and instead sympathize with one or another of the character-narrators. As Clarissa's epistles advocate her need to die, but other characters like Anna and Lovelace rail against her death, real-life readers may easily take their cues from one character over another. This complex proliferation of possible authorial messaging means that there are equally as many reader responses as character-narrators that develop into camps of interpretations amongst Richardson's contemporaries.

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<sup>42</sup> Appendix III of *The Cambridge Edition of the Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*: Correspondence with Lady Bradshaigh and Lady Echlin Volume 3:1758-1762 Edited by Peter Sabor

<sup>43</sup> Anna Laetitia Barbauld: *The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson* Vol. 2

*S. Fielding's Remarks Regulate Detractors of Clarissa's Triumph and of Butler's Synthesis*

In a letter to Richardson, Fielding expresses her emotional response to *Clarissa*, exclaiming “when I read of her, I am all sensation; my heart glows; I am overwhelmed; my only vent is tears” (Barbault 60–61). Peter Sabor emphasizes that Fielding’s emotional response was not unusual and that many of Richardson’s intimates wrote to him sharing similar passionate outbursts to those of Mr. Cibber’s, noted above. Observing the opposing camps of interpretation regarding *Clarissa*’s fate, S. Fielding took pen to paper to model her process for understanding Richardson’s narrative’s dramatization of Shaftesbury’s and Butler’s dialectics, thereby correcting interpretation of Richardson’s novel. At the same time, the independent thinking S. Fielding still found areas to criticize her dear friend Richardson, as she felt *Clarissa* lacked an emphasis on the philosophical concept of benevolence.

Fielding’s *Remarks on Clarissa*, parallels Richardson’s initial dramatization of Shaftesbury’s process for accessing moral knowledge, and Richardson’s pivot to Butler’s external regulation. Because Fielding visited and corresponded with Richardson, interacted with their shared crosscutting intellectual circles, and was fluent in the moral thought of her time, Fielding was well aware that *Clarissa*’s open structure and its intentional development of opposing positions on *Clarissa*’s situation had varying effects on its readers. Consequently, *Remarks* emerges out of Fielding’s skepticism that Richardson’s readers will understand *Clarissa*’s intended moral message. Johnson suggests Fielding is “attracted to [*Clarissa*]... because of its complexity. By teaching her reader to find meaning and purpose in *Clarissa*, Fielding enables...readers...to navigate the vicissitudes of difficult texts and by extension, daily life” (147). Therefore, S. Fielding intends *Remarks* as an external regulation to *Clarissa*, as

*Remarks*' narrative structure dramatizes *Clarissa*'s movement from Shaftesbury's to Butler's dialectic and teaches the readers how to access the moral message.

### **How Fielding's *Remarks* Regulates the Interpretation of Richardson's *Clarissa***

*Remarks* follows several conversations that take place after the publication of *Clarissa*, as well as an epistolary exchange between two of the participants in the conversations. Two characters become the focus of *Remarks* and they espouse opposing opinions, during their conversations. However, Miss Gibson's defense of *Clarissa*'s moral choices eventually persuades Bellario's skeptical interpretation of *Clarissa*'s motives and actions. Of note, *Remarks*' hybrid structure resembles Shaftesbury's "Miscellaneous Reflections" at the end of *Characteristics* and resists generic classification. Framed as an anonymous letter to Richardson, the letter writer explains her "Design is fairly to lay before [him] all the Criticisms" on the "History of *Clarissa*," "as far as [she] can remember them" (1). Fielding's promise to deal with the criticisms fairly ("if the Grounds for the Objections [to *Clarissa*] are found to be deducible from the Story, I would have them remain in their full Force" (1)) highlights her intent to model an authentic rational and rigorous reading practice that E.C. Friedman suggests is "designed to produce personal application and behavior alteration" (183). In fact, Linda Bree observes that the dialogues in *Remarks* pay close attention to the "importance of benevolence" (75), which Johnson believes is a form of criticism, because benevolence is not as pronounced a focus in *Clarissa* (151). Therefore, *Remarks* dramatizes Shaftesbury's thesis by representing multifarious perspectives from characters within the story-world and readers outside the story-world; these varied perspectives produce disputations, contestations, and reasoned self-reflections much like those

generated by *Clarissa*'s lack of authorial control, while also engaging in the criticism Shaftesbury believes is necessary for self-scrutiny and virtuous living.

S. Fielding structures *Remark*'s epistolary format similarly to *Familiar Letters*, as it is an epistle that records other people's dialogues verbatim. The epistolary presentation of Miss Gibson's and Bellario's dialogue permits readers to organically overhear the interaction, which is styled as a debate of points and counterpoints. This fictional rendering of readers responding to *Clarissa* reflects Scholes, Phelan, and Kellogg's assertion that the epistolary genre's propensity towards "highly individualized" characters facilitates a high degree of mimetic responses in readers. As Phelan notes, mimetic responses are reflective of how a reader feels towards a character's ideational function. Therefore, Bellario's critique of Clarissa's want of "Affection for her Lover," (6) and his frustration with Clarissa's inability to bring herself to marry Lovelace aptly represents real-life mimetic responses to Clarissa's ideational role (as a woman who should love). While Bellario's story-world critiques echo many of *Clarissa*'s real-world critics including Richardson's friends Aaron Hill and Lady Bradshaigh who align with Shaftesbury's advocacy of marriage as an external regulatory institution, Miss Gibson contextualizes Clarissa's relationship with Lovelace in a manner that lauds Clarissa's commitment to her own conscience, dramatizing Butler's synthesis. In essence Miss Gibson reframes Clarissa's ideational role (as a woman with agency). Miss Gibson highlights Clarissa's "Complaints of a Character Wounded...Declarations of increasing Regrets of meeting [Lovelace]... Resentment never to be got over" as a positive and necessary emotional response (Remarks 7). According to Miss Gibson, Clarissa's reflective conscience manifest in Clarissa's commitment to "watch her own Mind, that Prejudice may not get Possession of it, nor her Imagination run away with her Judgment" (9). In this light, Clarissa is the exemplar of Butler's conscience, because "few People, like Clarissa, can poise the Scales



with an even Hand, where one Grain of Self is placed in either Scale” (9). Defending Clarissa’s choice to seek Lovelace out after the “outrage” (14), Miss Gibson declares that the “whole Scene, as it now stands, is what it should be” because it depicts the “conscious Innocence” of “Manner in which a young Woman, without Fear or Confusion beholds the Man who dared imagine his Guilt could baffle all her Resolutions, and sink her Soul to Cowardice” (14). Consequently, Clarissa “injured beyond the Power of Reparation” conducts herself “in direct Opposition” to many a woman of the time who would “blubber out an humble Petition to be joined for Life to the Men who have betrayed them” (14). Miss Gibson’s reasoned analysis of the novel helps Bellario access *Clarissa*’s moral message dramatizing Shaftesbury’s dialectical thesis that moral knowledge comes through dialogue. Miss Gibson assists Bellario in a correct reading of *Clarissa* in the same light that *Remarks* proposes to help real-world readers correctly interpret *Clarissa*.

### **Fielding’s Dramatization of Richardson’s Stage Three Pivot to Butler’s Synthesis**

The epistolary exchange between Miss Gibson and Bellario gives their interaction an authoritative tone; their discourse has been recorded and collated as physical evidence of this debate and its resolution in the praise of *Clarissa*. Although Bellario’s dialogue with Miss Gibson brings him in alignment with her praise of Clarissa’s character, it is through their epistolary exchange, included at the end of the pamphlet, that the last stage of Butler’s moral thought emerges. Bellario’s letter fulsomely states he has accessed Richardson’s authorial intent. In fact, S. Fielding seems intent on didactically highlighting this concept of authorial intent through Bellario’s repeated statements. For example, Bellario extols “the Author’s Design is more noble, and his Execution of it much happier, than I ever suspected till I had seen the whole”

(15). Bellario echoes his newly found understanding, yet again: “in the same Manner could I go through the Scenes all as essentially different, and rising in due Proportion one after another, till all the vast Building centers in the pointed View of the Author’s grand Design” (18). Elevating Bellario’s conversion and clear-sighted understanding of Richardson’s authorial purpose to extreme heights, S. Fielding has Bellario—on the point of obsequious adoration—praise Richardson: “Finely has the Author of *Clarissa* set forth what is true, and what is false Honour” (20). S. Fielding uses her character Bellario—as a result of his instructive dialogue with Miss Gibson—to not only praise and support *Clarissa*, but to extend high praise to Richardson, whom Bellario elevates to the point of a spiritual thinker: “The true Difference between the Virtuous and the Vicious lies in the Mind, where the Author of *Clarissa* has placed it” (21).

Like the narrator of Fielding’s appended allegory “A Vision,” Bellario assumes a privileged sight and understanding; he sees what others seem to miss and makes it clear for both Miss Gibson and readers of *Remarks*. Bellario’s defense continues in pointed stridency when he sutures himself even further to the Author and “the Author’s Postscript,” which Bellario believes “rightly” observes “Vain would be the Comforts spoken to the Virtuous in Affliction, in the sacred Writings, if Affliction could not be their Lot” (21). With Bellario’s new-found authority he highlights Richardson’s good reasons for turning to a “Christian System” to explore *Clarissa*’s tragedy. Bellario’s letter does not admit of disputation, it is certain, authoritative, and invested with an omniscient understanding of Richardson’s intentions and correct moral system, which dramatizes the regulatory structure, checking alternative interpretations.

Miss Gibson delights in the controversy, as it forms a crucible that proves the strength of Richardson’s writing. Bellario reveals, “I confess I was not displeased that the Report of this Catastrophe met with so many Objections, as it proved what an Impression the Author’s favorite

Character had made on those Minds which could not bear she should fall a Sacrifice to the Barbarity of her Persecutors” (24). After readers have embraced these ideas on how to interpret *Clarissa*, Miss Gibson hopes “that now all the Readers of *Clarissa* are convinced how rightly the Author has judge in this Point” (24). Because of Miss Gibson’s privileged access to the Author’s thoughts, one can assume her praise of *Clarissa*’s “Christian Philosophy,” which shows “its Force to ennoble the human Mind” mirrors Richardson’s own beliefs (25). These letters, unlike the dialogues, are declarative and mutually affirming. They presume to see undisputed truth, much as Fielding’s narrator of “A Vision” sees the moral truth of the world. Their insights are deeply aligned with Butler’s convictions that Christian duty to conscience is the greatest means by which man acts virtuously. Fielding’s narrative decision to give Miss Gibson’s and Bellario’s letters authority and omniscient knowledge of Richardson’s intent dramatizes Butler’s synthesis, or regulatory structure.

## **Part V: Chapter Conclusion**

As an intimate of Richardson’s, a friend of Shaftesbury’s nephew, and an author enmeshed within the Anglican-Bluestocking philosophic community, S. Fielding knowingly observes Richardson’s pivot away from Shaftesbury towards Butler’s regulatory structure as seen in *Clarissa*’s turn to prayer and scripture, which helps her emotions align with her conscience. However, S. Fielding’s understanding was not matched by the general reading public. *Clarissa*’s dialogic epistolary structure opens it up for multiple interpretations and undermined Richardson’s authorial intentions. Normally, as narratives progress, readers infer the story’s internal logic. However, the complex polyvocal epistolary structure leaves readers unsure which character’s epistolary rendering of events to trust. This is even more so the case because

Richardson's structure dramatizes Butler's conscience as the regulatory apparatus, moving characters from moral thought to moral action, and conscience is an internalized process making it difficult to decipher its authority. As a result, *Clarissa*'s readers are influenced by the seeming subjectivity of *Clarissa*'s various characters' epistles, which creates instabilities and tension resulting in readers developing judgments and expectations in alignment with their preferred characters.

Many readers, including Richardson's intimates, developed intense hypotheses about the characters and their narrative authority, causing them to be conflicted in their determination as to the regulatory structure best suited for bringing about moral action; marriage institutions, legal institutions or an individual's conscience. Thus many readers critiqued *Clarissa*'s deferment to her conscience, not understanding that *Clarissa*'s turn to her conscience provides her agency and a voice with which to manage the legal system in order to tell her story. Inspired by the crosscutting circles of thought, S. Fielding's *Remarks* creates a sophisticated fictional hybrid-pamphlet that engages in a cross-textual conversation with Richardson's *Clarissa* in order to teach readers how correctly interpret his open-ended epistolary text, ultimately constructing a regulated reading of *Clarissa*.

## Chapter Four

The Ambiguous Feminist Versus the Staunch Feminist:

Frances Burney and Mary Wollstonecraft Battle Over Butler, Hume, Smith & Bentham

### Part I: Introduction

England's transition from the eighteenth-century into the nineteenth-century is marked by the French Revolution and its reverberating effects. Radical British thinkers inspired by the early moments of the French revolution, like Thomas Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, and Percy Shelley espoused similar visions of political transformation for England. However, as the Jacobin movement purified their new French Republic, purging its enemies through horrific massacres and the imprisonment of nobility, the initial support for ideas similar to those that inspired the French revolution were rebuffed by British Parliament's increasingly repressive measures. These conservative measures and continued geopolitical conflict with France, ending with the Battle of Waterloo, furthered British nationalistic impulses that privileged the British home, putting pressures on women's roles. According to this nationalist narrative, British women and their duties as wives, mothers, and private educators for England's boys became a public issue. Wollstonecraft capitalized on this nationalist sentiment and overlaid a feminist agenda on to the more orthodox argument about providing women with better education so they could educate civically minded British boys. Wollstonecraft housed her unorthodox goals within conservative nationalist impulses, symbolizing the complex tensions over women's roles and the unusual synthesis of ideas that are advanced by various female intellectuals and artists. Even amidst these volatile political and social changes the epistolary genre maintained its popularity. In fact, many of the Jacobin sympathizing authors embraced the freedom to design their fictional worlds and to express their perspectives, especially on the era's popular moral philosophy,

through the narrative authority of epistolary characters. Furthermore, the political ramifications of historical events and the moral philosophy translated into a focus on juridical proceedings and their evidentiary nature to which the epistle becomes an essential component. Therefore, writers continued to turn to the epistolary genre, manipulating their story's framing and narrative levels to control the presentation of information and their readerships' response. The specific texts at stake in this chapter's analysis include Frances Burney's works *Evelina, Or, the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (*Evelina*) and *The Wanderer, Or, Female Difficulties* (*The Wanderer*), and Mary Wollstonecraft's *The Wrongs of Woman, Or, Maria*.

Just as Richardson and Fielding published intertextual works that clarified, extended, and appended their own and each other's works, Burney engaged in a similar act of qualifying her own work in a way to regulate readers' understanding of her earlier published novel *Evelina*. And, just as multiple novelists reimagined Richardson's *Pamela* and rewrote the tragic fate of *Clarissa*, Burney and Wollstonecraft engaged in an indirect repartée with each other and with various moral philosophers—including Hume and Butler—resulting in Burney's refashioning Wollstonecraft's *Maria*. Except, where Fielding admired, emulated, and espoused many of Richardson's ideas and styles, this chapter's analyses of Burney's and Wollstonecraft's works reveal an intense philosophical argument, which debates gendered legal codes and women's place and agency in their era. Specifically this chapter argues Burney's philosophical views evolved to reflect the changing historical and philosophical times during which she wrote, resulting in her final novel of four, *The Wanderer*, reflecting back on *Evelina*'s Butler-aligned narrative form and Wollstonecraft's hybrid epistolary novel *Maria*'s literalization of Butler's and Hume's conflicting regulatory views, to offer an ambivalent, yet forward-looking acceptance of Hume's final stage of moral thought and a critique of Butler's preferred regulation, conscience,

through *The Wanderer*'s third-person omniscient intertextual critical rewriting of *Evelina* and *Maria*.

Burney began her foray into public writing with the anonymous publication of *Evelina*, an epistolary novel modeled after Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*. *Evelina* follows the eponymous character's entrance into late eighteenth-century London and her naïve progress through a complex world of manners, social ambition, and gender violence. But through it all she provides her guardian, Mr. Villars, a detailed recording of the occurrences, offering purposeful and occasionally unintended criticism of her London life and the state of her affairs.

After publishing *Evelina*, Burney continued to keep private journals and to publish novels, which reflected her world outlook that seemed attuned to the possibilities expressed by feminist contemporaries, but resigned to the power of patriarchal structures. In 1782, Burney published *Cecilia, or Memoirs of an Heiress*. This third-person narrative follows the titular character's life and reflects the era's gender bias in terms of marriage, lineage, inheritance, and customs and rules. Burney's third novel *Camilla, or A Picture of Youth* (1796) also adopts a third-person voice and centers on a gender-focused plotline that follows the trials and tribulations of the eponymous character and her sisters' experiences with love and matrimony. The themes of love, marriage, and inheritance filter throughout all of her works, regardless of the narrative style or voices she applies to her work. This reflects the writer's preoccupation with these gendered issues, especially expressed through plotlines following the inheritance trope.

In between *Evelina*'s and *Wanderer*'s publication Burney's life took many twists and turns, which might account for her altered life outlook and the contrast in form between her first and last novel. By 1814, the artist community and the reading public were thirsty for Burney's new work. Claudia L. Johnson notes that "The long-awaited appearance of *The Wanderer*

promised to be an event of importance in the literary world, and the likes of Godwin, Byron, Madame de Staël, and Austen were eager to get copies” (166). Reflective of the time in which *The Wanderer* was written and not the time in which it was published *The Wanderer* follows the protagonist who flees the turbulent French revolution by sneaking aboard a ship headed to England, where she disembarks and traverses the land without Burney providing the real-world readers her name or background, nor even the reason for this secrecy. However, the third-person narrator does alert the real-world reader to her strategic dissembling, whereas the story-world characters suspect she goes by a pseudonym, but are not given authorial certainty of her dissimulation. The real-world readers have the wanderer’s identity revealed to them two-thirds of the way through the novel, while many of the story-world characters remain in suspense for longer, some until the end of the story. *The Wanderer*’s protagonist obfuscates her identity in order to avoid being snared by her rapacious Robespierre-like French husband who she was forced to marry while in France in order to save the life of a dear family friend.

Like Burney, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote in a variety of styles and structures to achieve different effects and to convey various messages to diverse readerships. After writing *A Vindication of the Rights of Man* (1790) and *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)—both political philosophical tracts that engaged with moral philosophers and Enlightenment thinkers—she turns to a reflective epistolary mode in her travel writing, *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796). Wollstonecraft’s husband William Godwin posthumously publishes his wife’s fictional companion to *Rights of Woman*, *The Wrongs of Woman, Or, Maria*, which received divisive reactions from the artist community and the reading public. In *Maria*, Mary fused biting sociopolitical commentary with fiction in designing the legal-based narrative of the titular Maria. Beginning in medias res the third-person



narrator begins with Maria's realization that she has been placed in a mental institution by her husband, who wanted to replace Maria as the authority in control of their child's finances. Maria quickly makes friends with Jemima, the institution's warden, and finds a romantic partner, Darnford (a man of learning but questionable morals—by his own admission). She passes her time with their conversation while also crafting a memoir to give her daughter for instructive purposes. Upon discovering her daughter's death, she hands her memoir over to Darnford where the real-world reader consumes it as a direct document, unmediated by the narrator. With the memoir's conclusion the third-person narrator reestablishes authority and tells of the three friends' escape from the institution. The narrator suggests that Maria and Darnford continue their socially unsanctioned union until her husband sues Darnford for their affair; at which point Maria goes to court to defend Darnford while he is away in France. The unfinished novelette ends with Maria delivering her written statement to the court and the judge's condemnatory reply, denouncing her new-fangled French ideas of divorce or separation as a consequence of a husband's mistreatment of a woman's body or a woman's emotional inner worlds and desires to remarry. Like Burney's, Wollstonecraft's texts demonstrate anxiety over inheritance and gender violence.

These abstract concepts are transformed into life-and-death issues when the characters grapple with circumstances colored by Hume's general rule and law. The same crucial dramatizations occur when the authors place characters at the crossroads of Butler's ideas on conscience, resentment, forgiveness, and various forms of justice and reparations. When *The Wanderer's* protagonist grapples with Hume's regulatory stage, Burney collapses her female character's agency; while Wollstonecraft attempts rebellion through her female character's final epistolary act; sadly, Wollstonecraft's struggle is to no avail, as Maria suffers under the judge's

sexist articulation of Hume's regulatory structure. Wollstonecraft's narrative dramatizes Hume's regulatory marriage, where the woman's individual agency is sacrificed to the collective benefit. Burney and Wollstonecraft might seem to represent diametrically opposed female thinkers. However, a nuanced view of Burney's work reveals an ambiguous resignation in her acquiescence to patriarchal norms. And, a similarly nuanced view of Wollstonecraft's work reveals her intense criticisms include a forlorn resignation to the triumph of patriarchal norms in the prevalent social acceptance of Hume's ideas on social roles and gender equity.

## **Part II: The Moral Philosopher David Hume**

### *Hume's Biography and Cross-Cutting Circles*

David Hume's strict Calvinist upbringing seemed to have had the unintended effect of pushing him away from the church. At Edinburgh University, where he started studies at age ten, Hume felt dissatisfied with the Calvinist teachings and was drawn towards skepticism. Leaving Edinburgh University without a degree, Hume traveled to France, where he read continental scholars who influenced his philosophical thought. These influences can be seen in his *A Treatise of Human Nature: Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects* (*Treatise*, 1739–40),<sup>44</sup> which he began writing at age twenty-three. In 1737, he began to ready his *Treatise* for the press. However, in hopes that moral philosopher Joseph Butler would read his *Treatise*, Hume edited out several chapters that questioned the role of the church and religion in people's lives. Even though Hume thought he

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<sup>44</sup> David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge and P.H. Nidditch 2nd ed, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992), 499; all references to the *Treatise* will come from this text.

had sanitized the work of its most scandalous, irreligious elements, it retained aspects that troubled the reading public. As he became associated with atheism, it became impossible for him to hold a position in academia. In 1745, he accepted a position as a private nobleman's tutor and a year later became a secretary for his cousin, joining him on diplomatic missions to Austria and Italy. By 1751 Hume began his life-long friendship with Adam Smith and "Although Hume's more conservative contemporaries denounced his writings as works of skepticism and atheism, his influence is evident in the moral philosophy and economic writings of his close friend Adam Smith" (Morris and Brown 1). Eventually, Hume took a position as the Librarian to the Edinburgh Faculty of Advocates, where he was able to do the extensive research necessary to write his *The History of England* (1754–1761). In 1763, Hume became Secretary to the British Ambassador to France, which led to his position as Secretary to the Embassy and chargé d'affaires. Gregarious and affable, Hume took Parisian salons by storm, fostering relationships with famous European intellectuals. At his death in 1775 from intestinal cancer, Hume had made his mark on European thought in the world of ethics and in philosophical naturalism, which would evolve into modern cognitive science.

### *Hume's Core Ideas: Eradicating Speculations for Facts According to the General Rule*

In the British Moralism debate, one recurring theme centers on tensions between faith-based ideas conflicting with the era's expanding scientific knowledge and approaches to understanding humanity as a species with people living in diverse cultures. Hume serves as a critical marker in the continuum towards secular social systems, as he focuses his moral philosophy on investigations of human nature. Adopting a strict, fact-based empiricist position, he seeks to eradicate "traditional *a priori* metaphysics" (Morris and Brown 12). For him, this denies

hypotheses derived from imagination, speculation, invention, and—most importantly for Hume—religious, fear-based superstition.

### **Hume's Thesis: The Mind Operates in Terms of Perceptions, Impressions, and Ideas**

#### *Hume's Anatomy of the Mind: Remembering the Experience of Cutting One's Finger*

As Locke admired and emulated Boyle's scientific methodologies, Hume respected and incorporated Sir Isaac Newton's experimental perspectives. Hume approaches the human mind's operations from a mechanical standpoint where he views the brain as an anatomical machine that functions with various lobes connecting information into unified thoughts—especially ideas derived from experience. Hume labels the broad category of “mental content” as *perception*, which he subdivides into *impressions* and *ideas* (Morris and Brown 13). Impressions include emotions, passions, sensations, and desires. Ideas include “the faint images of these in thinking and reasoning” (*T* 1.1.1, S-B/N: 1). In Hume's conception, he differentiates between *feeling*, for example, the pain of a present cut on a finger, versus *recalling* the pain of a previous cut.

Hume continues with his subdivisions where *impressions of sensation* refer to feelings experienced through the five senses along with pleasure and pain. Hume also calls these *original impressions*, as they derive “originally, from unknown causes,” meaning they result from experience from something innately unknown that is learned about through experience (*T* 1.1.2, S-B/N: 7). Then, Hume offers *impressions of reflection*, or *secondary impressions*, to refer to human emotions, passions, sensations, and desires. These include the reactions and responses to the initial responses. Hume's system presents clear intersections with Shaftesbury's first- and second-order affections, where people initially are immersed within their emotions and then

evolve to be contemplative witnesses to their emotions. Returning to the cut finger example, Hume calls memories of the finger cut as copies of the original impression encoded from the original cut experience. He explains the human learning process through the human mind recalling those negative associations, which instill a preventative *fear* within the person. This fear should create an impulse to avoid similar circumstances that precipitated the injury.

### *Virtue and Vice; Pleasure and Pain*

How does this all work to produce moral knowledge and moral action? For Hume's idea of the human mind, all moral knowledge derives from experiences that produce perceptions in the mind. He states that "it has been observ'd, that nothing is ever present to the mind but its perceptions...The mind can never exert itself in any action, which we may not comprehend under the term of *perception*" (T 3.1.1, S-B/N: 456). After the perceptions are produced in the mind, the human mind undergoes a process in which it approves of the perception as positive or disapproves of the perception as negative. Hume connects pleasurable associations with virtue and painful ones with vice.

### **Hume's Antithesis: Sympathy as Contagious and Requiring the General Point of View**

Sympathy provides the potential for pleasure derived from collective acts of benevolence. However, however Hume doubts individual's abilities to unify this process. Because sympathy is a process that facilitates emotions, much like Hume's conception of reason, it is not certain to always work for the collective good.

According to Hume, sympathy is contagious: "The sentiments of others can never affect us, but by becoming, in some measure, our own; in which case they operate upon us, by

opposing and increasing our passions, in the very same manner, as if they had been originally deriv'd from our own temper and disposition" (T 3. 3. 2, S-B/N: 593). For example, if John emotes discomfort over a wound, and Joe thinks about the wound, associating a preconceived negative idea with the wound, Joe will experience the discomfort only when the idea has turned into an impression in his own mind. As Hume posits that Joe would feel a similar pain to that which he observed John feeling because of Joe's own mental perception, Hume asserts sympathy is contagious.

Some of the criteria that make sympathy possible are also what place sympathy's effectiveness at bringing about moral knowledge in doubt. Hume acknowledges the intensity of the association of shared sympathy depends on *contiguity*, meaning proximity in space and time, and people's temper of mind at the moment. Hume states that "all sentiments of blame or praise are variable according to our situation of nearness or remoteness, with regard to the person blam'd or prais'd, and according to the present disposition of our mind" (T 3.3.1, S-B/N: 582). Shared sympathy also depends on *causality*, meaning familial or social closeness: "We sympathize more with persons contiguous to us, than with persons remote from us: With our acquaintance, than with strangers: With our countrymen, than with foreigners" (T 3.3.1, S-B/N: 581). Hume's assertion regarding sympathy being stronger amongst those with associative relations has elicited calls of exclusionary attitudes, a criticism that also plagues Adam Smith's moral philosophy.

It is in part due to the sympathy's potential deficiency to generate care and concern for all—including those not yoked to one by causality and contiguity—that Hume theorizes the "general point of view." In other words, the general point of view functions as a corrective, creating a standard for moral approval.

### **Hume's Synthesis: Submit to the General Rule, Emphasizing Property Protection**

While Hume rejects Hobbes's dire view of humans as near bestial in their selfish drive towards power, the pragmatic Hume questions individual and larger social groups' abilities to follow their will to enact moral behavior. Hume asserts that "nature has not provided us with all the motives we need to live together peacefully in large societies"—meaning that humans require a large-scale system of artificial virtue known as the justice system to ensure that people do not take each other's property, as resources are scarce. Of course, this represents Hume's turn to his external regulatory system of the law of property for this project.

#### *External Regulatory System: Large-scale Benefits of Everyone Adhering to the General Rule*

For Hume, implementing a standardized and generalized system of justice facilitates equity and—critical to Hume's outlook—helps secure property rights and ensures stable property transference: "And thus justice establishes itself by a kind of convention or agreement; that is, by a sense of interest, suppos'd to be common to all, and where every single act is perform'd in expectation that others are to perform the like" (*T* 3.2.2, S-B/N: 498). People are then held accountable to these conventions by the threat of punishment or justice: "Without such a convention, no one wou'd ever have dream'd that there was such a virtue as justice, or have been induc'd to conform his actions to it" (*T* 3.2.2, S-B/N: 498).

At this point Hume suggests that the individual put aside their self-interest, no matter how reasonable in the particular instance, for the general rule, which insures the greater good of society:

But however single acts of justice may be contrary, either to public or private interest, 'tis certain, that the whole plan or scheme is highly conducive, or indeed absolutely requisite,

both to the support of society, and the well-being of every individual. 'Tis impossible to separate the good from the ill. Property must be stable, and must be fix'd by general rules. (*T* 3.2.2, S-B/N: 497)

Hume believes the General Rule will eliminate inconsistent, corrupt, and subjective law decrees.

Acknowledging that the General Rule may be unfair in particular contextualized circumstances, he asserts that the General Rule offers better social rewards. Hume extends this response to cases where money is awarded to a selfish or rude person. In Hume's view, even if it superficially appears that this legal decision harms the public while upholding the letter of the law, the decision still serves the greater good. Even "when a man of merit, of a beneficent disposition, restores a great fortune to a miser, or a seditious bigot, he has acted justly and laudably" (*T* 3.2.2, S-B/N: 497). Hume acknowledges this might seem bitterly unfair in this particular instance, as "nor is every single act of justice consider'd apart, more conducive to private interest, than to public; and 'tis easily conceiv'd how a man may impoverish himself by a signal instance of integrity, and have reason to wish, that with regard to that single act, the laws of justice were for a moment suspended in the universe" (*T* 3.2.2, S-B/N: 497).

From Hume's pragmatic view, the General Rule might allow a few instances of what feels emotionally unfair. However, he asserts that individualized justice leads to inconsistent enactment of the law. Therefore, he adheres to the stability offered in his General Rule. Of course, Wollstonecraft has competing ideas on this theory, especially concerning women experiencing the General Rule when existing in the status of *being* property. Wollstonecraft and M. Shelley also have critical points on how these General Rules might target minoritized groups more than Hume acknowledges in these pronouncements of stability and fairness.



In everyone submitting to the General Rule, Hume also advocates for submission to large government structures and not fostering pockets of rebellion. Of course Hume acknowledges, that “tho’, on some occasions, it may be justifiable, both in sound politics and morality, to resist supreme power,” he adamantly asserts that “’tis certain, that in the ordinary course of human affairs nothing can be more pernicious and criminal; and that besides the convulsions, which always attend revolutions, such a practice tends directly to the subversion of all government, and the causing an universal anarchy and confusion among mankind” (*T* 3.2.X, S-B/N: 553). As Hume lived during the tumultuous long-eighteenth century, these were real concerns. In keeping with his overall view on the practical need for and benefits of a central government, he continues that “as numerous and civiliz’d societies cannot subsist without government, so government is entirely useless without an exact obedience” (*T* 3.2.X, S-B/N: 553). Hume fervently advocates against “the doctrine of resistance [as] The common rule requires submission,” which he encouraged for England and for France, where the bloody Reign of Terror took many lives as the nation’s revolution gave birth to modern France (*T* 3.2.X, S-B/N: 553).

*Supporting Secondary External Regulatory Systems: Education and Repetition of Customs*

Education centers primally within Hume’s system as it, like custom, helps to habituate people to obey property laws, which all uphold artificial, human-designed constructions of justice:

“Education, must so far be owned to have a powerful influence, that it may frequently increase or diminish, beyond their natural standard, the sentiments of approbation or dislike; and may even, in particular instances, create, without any natural principle, a new sentiment of this kind” (*E* 5.1, S-B/N: 24). Hume believes that children can develop their reasoning skills in understanding their perceptions and impressions. In his theory of the mind, this practicing of reasoning skills

improves accuracy in arriving at moral knowledge, increasing the chances of people following moral guidelines towards moral behavior. These agreed-upon codes of moral virtue and behavior form the cornerstones of human society: “Nothing has a greater effect both to encrease and diminish our passions, to convert pleasure into pain, and pain into pleasure, than custom and repetition” (*T* 3.3.5, S-B/N: 422). He asserts that the schooling process habituates people from childhood into adulthood towards understanding, embracing, and enacting social customs: “Custom has two *original* effects upon the mind, in bestowing a *facility* in the performance of an action or the conception of an object; and afterwards a *tendency or inclination* towards it” (*T* 3.3.5, S-B/N: 422). As people move throughout life, the repetitions of these accepted social patterns culminate in a stable, harmonious society.

#### *Critical Concepts Underlying the General Rule: Resource Scarcity and Property Protection*

Contrasting Butler’s internal regulatory structure of conscience with its individual spaces of emotional reflection and self-regulation, Hume constructs an external regulatory apparatus enforced by customs and property laws. Hume believes laws are produced in response to scarce resources and the need to protect property. Hume uses the example that people learn to quell their natural passions towards the desire of other’s property or other desires that might lead to damaging another’s property. Hume asserts that people learn to respect others’ property with the expectation that they will in kind respect his property: “All they can pretend to, is, to give a new direction to those natural passions, and teach us that we can better satisfy our appetites in oblique and artificial manner, than by their headlong and impetuous motion” (*T* 3.2.5, S-B/N: 521). The more custom requires humans to invest in different forms of property and to respect other people’s property, the more people commit to these schemas of justice. Hume explains the

mental process: “Hence I learn to do a service to another, without bearing him any real kindness; because I foresee, that he will return my service, in expectation of another of the same kind, and in order to maintain the same correspondence of good offices with me or with others” (*T* 3.2.5, S-B/N: 521). While Hume’s ideas on material property might seem common sense and mutually beneficial, the issue of property controls becomes different when applied to married British women, who were considered property of their husbands during this era.

As noted in this book’s introduction on the long-eighteenth century’s gender codes, married women were viewed as property under the law. While this project does not analyze the social reasons for how and why this citizenship status evolved, explanations have been put forth regarding the desire to control the female body as a vessel for giving birth to legitimate heirs in connection with the motivation to control estate inheritances. Hume explains that “men...must believe, that the children are their own, and that their natural instinct is not directed to a wrong object, when they give a loose to love and tenderness...and therefore ’tis reasonable, and even necessary, to give them some security in this particular” (*T* 3.2.7, S-B/N: 571). These legally and socially accepted heirs held the power, duty, and privilege of facilitating the continuation of families, keeping their large estates intact over generations.

This hypothesis offers one reason why female virginity and chastity figured as a vital national interest and intersected with Hume’s ideas on punishment for adultery. For all his extolling of the General Rule, Hume acknowledges that “this security cannot consist entirely in the imposing of severe punishments on any transgressions of conjugal fidelity on the part of the wife; since these public punishments cannot be inflicted without legal proof, which ’tis difficult to meet with in this subject” (*T* 3.2.7, S-B/N: 571). Although an illegitimate child might present

with physical features alerting of the wife's infidelity, extramarital relations are notoriously difficult to prove, especially without modern paternity tests.

Hume wonders, "What restraint, therefore, shall we impose on women, in order to counter-balance so strong a temptation as they have to infidelity?" (*T* 3.2.7, S-B/N: 571). In an interesting slide away from his strict legal code, Hume advocates for the power of shadow laws where society informally punishes a transgressor, which he asserts can be psychologically devastating. He claims, "there seems to be no restraint possible, but in the punishment of bad fame or reputation; a punishment, which has a mighty influence on the human mind" (*T* 3.2.7, S-B/N: 571). He even goes so far as to say that these shadow laws of social recrimination and exclusion can be more potent than court punishments, stating "at the same time is inflicted by the world upon surmizes, and conjectures, and proofs, that wou'd never be receiv'd in any court of judicature" (*T* 3.2.7, S-B/N: 571). Hume states that "in order, therefore, to impose a due restraint on the female sex, we must attach a peculiar degree of shame to their infidelity, above what arises merely from its injustice, and must bestow proportional praises on their chastity (*T* 3.2.7, S-B/N: 571). Hume's ideas on shadow laws and male chivalry and gallantry in connection with social gender codes will be discussed further in the literary analysis connected with Burney's and Wollstonecraft's works.

### **Part III: Burney's Crosscutting Circles, Philosophical Mentors, and Youthful Ponderings**

#### *Whom She Knew and How She Knew Them*

Frances Burney's father, Dr. Charles Burney, preeminent music historian and musician of the eighteenth century, cultivated an intellectual and artistic home. Additionally, after the publication

of *Evelina*, which coincided with her father's growing renown and expanding group of friends, Burney became a regular member of Hester Thrales "Streathamites," placing Burney firmly in the company of Dr. Johnson, who in 1779, began to teach Burney Latin alongside Hester Thrale's daughter.<sup>45</sup> Included in the Streathamites were James Harris, Edmund Burke, James Boswell, David Garrick, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Joseph Baretti, Dr. Beattie, Catharine Macaulay, Mrs. Montagu, and Elizabeth Carter.<sup>46</sup> In effect this was a gender-diverse shadow club to Johnson's literary club. Burney regularly interacted with these intellectuals, in particular Johnson, Boswell, Burke, and Garrick; and, as her father's amanuensis, Burney transcribed letters of important and intimate detail to them. Burney's brilliant circle of friends cannot be overlooked when considering Burney's knowledge of contemporary moral issues.

### *Philosophical Mentors*

At the Thrales' Dr. Johnson became a mentor to Burney and she soon found herself under his tutelage. Dr. Johnson exposed Burney to works he found moral. In a diary entry Burney recalls: "[Johnson] then told us of two little productions of our Mr. Harris, which we read;—they are very short, & very clever: one is called *Fashion*, the other *Much ado*, & they are both of them full of a sportive humour, that I had not suspected to belong to Mr. Harris, [the learned grammarian]."<sup>47</sup> This selection by Harris, a moralist himself, had been written to assist his friend

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<sup>45</sup> Hester Lynch Thrale, *Thraliana: The Diary of Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale* pg. 393.

<sup>46</sup> See *Thraliana* 330–31 for a chart of the friends; Also see The Project Gutenberg EBook of *The Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay* Vol I (of 3), by Fanny Burney. Release Date: June 2004 [EBook #5826], (pp. 133, 77, 81, 194, 126, 21) and Last Updated: March 15, 2018

<sup>47</sup> See Fanny Burney *The Early Journals and Letters Volume III The Streatham Years: Part I, 1778–1779*, 106.

Sarah Fielding in her literary work *Familiar Letters Between the Principal Characters in David Simple* (explored in Chapter Three). One can imagine that the reading of this piece was discussed again, with Harris himself continuing Burney's moral education.

Much of Dr. Johnson's ruminations resembles moral sense philosophy's intellectual contours, as much as it pushes against them. In particular, he is deeply indebted to Locke's sensational theory of morality, that we are motivated to act based on our desires for pleasure and our desire to avoid pain. But what's more, he apes Locke's assertion that reason helps man turn to religion as the external regulatory structure. Because man desires pleasure and avoids pain, religion's promise of future pleasure motivates man to control his immediate desires.<sup>48</sup> Familiar with Hume, Dr. Johnson's Locke-inflected moral sense rejects Hume's decoupling of God from morality. Therefore, Dr. Johnson does not approve of Hume and by extension Adam Smith (both Hume and Smith are Scottish and hold similar philosophical perspectives, although Smith is much more circumspect about decoupling God from morality). However, Johnson's disagreements with Hume and Smith does not mean he did not have the pleasure of their society. Quite to the contrary, Smith became a member of Dr. Johnson's Literary Club in 1755<sup>49</sup> affording Dr. Johnson many opportunities to interact with Smith.

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<sup>48</sup> See Claudia L. Johnson, "Samuel Johnson's Moral Psychology and Locke's 'Of Power,'" 563–82. Also see Peggy Thompson's Chapter 7 "Habit and Reason in Samuel Johnson's Rambler" in *Beyond Sense and Sensibility: Moral Formation and the literary Imagination from Johnson to Wordsworth*.

<sup>49</sup> Johnson, who was a founding member of the literary club of London, was well documented by Boswell as having engaged with and having strong opinions on both Hume and Adam Smith, who were moral sense theorists of the same nature. Clyde E Dankert, in his article "Adam Smith: Man of Letters," 212–22, records Smith's intellectual curiosity motivated his wide reading interests, as well as fondness "of being in the company of literary persons" (215).

*Burney's Butler-aligned Youthful Ponderings*

Melissa Pino points out, in her article “Burney’s *Evelina* and Aesthetics in Action,” that Burney’s readers should expect Burney to respond “intelligently to a complex of ideas whose contributors include Burke, Locke, and Hume” (267).<sup>50</sup> Burney’s journal entries reveal that she read and contemplated complex moral pieces even before her foray into intellectual circles. At the age of 16, Burney writes she was “charm’d and shocked” by Dr. Johnson’s moral novel *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*. However, she found it “dreadful” to be told by a man of “genius and knowledge” that happiness was an unlikely proposition in this life.<sup>51</sup>

Burney’s journals continue to illuminate her moral training when she counters Dr. Johnson’s pessimistic moralizing with a positive view of humanity. Like Butler, she seems to aver that humanity is put on this earth for benevolent purposes and, therefore, does not like Dr. Johnson harsh critique of youth’s ignorance (143).<sup>52</sup> She sees man as innocent, not ignorant. Of course, humanity’s fallen nature inevitably mars their innocence; but, Burney believes humanity’s moral constitution effectively endures difficulties. In fact, Burney views the ills and passions that attend life’s struggles as enhancing the blessings. Burney channels Butler when she urges people to “find that the still, small Voice of Conscience,” will help guide them through grief, which can imprint an overwhelming “impression on the mind” (Lars E. Toride 229).

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<sup>50</sup> Melissa Pino, “Burney’s *Evelina* and Aesthetics in Action.” 263–303.

<sup>51</sup> See Fanny Burney *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney: 1768–1773*, 15.

<sup>52</sup> See Fanny Burney *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney: 1768–1773* edited by Lars E. Toride (Montreal, McGill-Queen’s UP, 1988): “But it seems to me to be very unjust to impute to folly the wonder of inexperience at the Works of man. It should rather be called Innocence. What can one think of the natural Disposition of a young Person who, with an Eye of suspicion, looks around for secret Designs in the appearance of kindness, and evil intentions in the profession of friendship?...I do, I will hope that Instances of these kinds are uncommon enough to authorize and create Wonder in All” (144).

Sounding very much like a moralist, Burney implies the value of the human conscience as an authoritative and directing moral organ—one that, as Butler would argue, helps people to regulate their various passions and to find moral and spiritual well-being, even when in turmoil. Burney strikes a philosophical tone (even as a young journalist). And, this tone carries over to Burney's epistolary novel *Evelina*, which explores the human condition with an attention to Butler's moral sense philosophy.

#### **Part IV: The Literature Analyzed as Dramatizations of the Moral Philosophy Dialectics**

Frances Burney's early diary entries sound like Butler's reflections on life sorrows and people's ability to regulate their emotions. Burney writes in praise of people who "subdue" their intense "feelings and permit themselves" to find consolation in their affliction," as her father always calls a person's ability to "accommodate" themselves "without murmuring" to their fortune, true philosophy (Toride 157). In his Preface, Butler explains that "poverty and disgrace, tortures and death, are not so contrary to our constitution" (S. Pr 13). He acknowledges that people, just as animals, experience instinctual affects, like anger when under threat, but this does not mean they should allow themselves to dysregulate. By acknowledging that life is filled with these complications, neither Butler nor Burney suggest abject resignation, but rather, as this chapter argues, Burney, like Butler, believes disciplining one's emotions gives one agency to act beneficially for society and oneself.

This chapter reads the causes for Burney's titular character Evelina's tragedy as a cautionary tale against allowing one's passions to go unregulated, which can end in settled resentment. As a cautionary tale, someone in *Evelina* must fail to self-discipline their emotions resulting in harmful consequences; this analysis suggests it is Evelina's guardian Villars. A letter



from Villars to Lady Howard expresses the shame, pride, fear, and anger which has colored his handling of Evelina: “Thus it has happened that the education of the father, daughter, and granddaughter, has devolved on me. What infinite misery have the two first caused me! Should the fate of the dear survivor be equally adverse, how wretched will be the end of my cares—the end of my days!” (17). The grandchild of Villars’ original ward, Evelina is only one in a succession of intense relationship Villars has had with her family. Under Villars’ watch Mr. Evelyn, Evelina’s grandfather, fell in love with a French woman of the lower classes and died. In this time of tumult and growing national pride, Mr. Evelyn’s marriage to a woman of French dissent and of a lower class reflects a true failure on Mr. Villars part. However, as Mr. Evelyn’s will and trust leaves his daughter Caroline in Mr. Villars charge while leaving his fortune to his wife, Villars’ has an opportunity to make up for his previous mistakes. Sadly Villars’ wards’ tragedies continue when at the age of eighteen, Caroline’s French mother calls her to France with plans to orchestrate a forced marriage to a Frenchman. To avoid this forced marriage, Caroline clandestinely marries Sir John Belmont, a dashing rake who without compunction burns their marriage certificate and abandons Caroline, pregnant with Evelina. Devastated, Caroline returns to Villars, attempts to get proof of their marriage—to no avail—and dies shortly upon giving birth to Evelina. Yet again, Villars’ duties to this family are undermined. However, he has one last chance to rehabilitate himself. Before dying, Caroline asked Villars to retain the care of Evelina while young and expressly requests that Villars only part with Evelina upon Belmont’s acknowledgement of Evelina as his lawful successor. What can go wrong?

Villars presents as a mild-mannered respectable country cleric, but is it possible he has modeled unregulated passions which might encourage his wards’ poor choices. While readers do not have access to the details of Villars’ care for Mr. Evelyn, or Caroline, readers do have insight

into his care for Eveline. At the time of Evelina's entry into London society, Belmont has not claimed her and she lives a quiet and secluded life. Did Villars not try to press for Belmont's recognition of Evelina as his child? And, if not, why? Butler's theory of emotional dysregulation might help answer this question. While Villars does not present as widely passionate, dysregulated emotions comes in many forms. In fact, when deep emotions are steadily felt, but not regulated, they can settle into deliberate resentment bordering on vengeance. Take for example Villars' extreme language in a letter to Lady Howard where he describes his care for Evelina: "That Child, Madam, shall never, while life is lent me, know the loss she has sustained" (17). Villars does not reflect on his role in alienating her grandmother and denying her a father as he has chosen not to reach out to these other parties. Furthermore, it sounds like he projects his own pain regarding his role in the loss of Evelina's grandfather and mother onto Evelina. This chapter section argues that after Caroline's death Villars does not regulate his emotions, subduing them to his conscience's authority; instead, Villars holds on to his resentment, which prevents him from forgiving Belmont and pursuing Caroline's request that Belmont own Evelina for his child.

Reading Villars' failure as a cautionary tale, it should be assumed that there are further negative repercussions. Villars' unwillingness to publish the truth of Caroline and Evelina's story set in motion Dame Green's decision to present her child to Belmont under Evelina's identity, effectively stealing Evelina's identity. Villars' actions result in Evelina's obscure life, without a father or her rightful position in society. In fact, Villars admits to the tragedy of her circumstance without reflecting on his role in it when he writes to Lady Howard:

Consider, Madam, the peculiar cruelty of her situation. Only child of a wealthy Baronet, whose person she has never seen, whose character she has reason to abhor, and whose

name she is forbidden to claim; entitled as she is to lawfully inherit his fortune and estate, is there any probability that he will *properly* own her? And while he continues to persevere in disavowing his marriage with Miss Evelyn, She shall never, at the expense of her mother's honour, receive a part of her right as the donation of his bounty. (20)

It is only when Caroline returns from the grave through her posthumous letter which proffers Belmont forgiveness as long as Belmont owns Evelina that readers become aware of Villars' true role in Evelina's tragedy.

### *Burney's Novel Evelina's Narrative Dramatization of Butler's Dialectic Thesis*

*Evelina's* epistolary narrative dramatizes Butler's dialectic, as its narrative structure provides a platform for his first moral stage of reflection. As *Evelina's* narrative whole cautions against devaluing and depreciating individual feelings of resentment by ignoring them and/or identifying them as bad and not appropriately part of the human constitution, the narrative ultimately argues for engaging and understanding one's emotional anatomy. According to Butler this self-awareness also allows one to view a wrongdoer with greater compassion. It affords realistic control over one's emotions so as not to be motivated by pride into believing one's self wholly good or right, while viewing others as wholly bad and wrong. As mentioned in Chapter Three, Shaftesbury's and Butler's theories differ over the role negative affects play in an individual's emotional economy. For Butler, negative emotions can always be reregulated, and, on occasion, they can also serve important protective duties. Therefore, an individual should face them directly, understand their cause and assess their emotional response's effect on the larger social good. Importantly, regulation of one's affects to conscience's authority provides an individual with agency while also taking the larger community into consideration.

Upon analysis, Lady Howard's letters parallel Pamela's parents epistles encouraging Pamela to reflect on her circumstances and actions. While Chapter Two argues that Pamela's reflections prompted by her parents dramatizes Shaftesbury's and not Butler's dialectic their thesis stages of emotional self-awareness are similar. With Lady Howard's advice that young people should not be kept "too rigidly sequestered" from the world but rather guided into it so they can develop realistic expectations, that it is "equally shared by pain and pleasure, hope and disappointment" (19), Mr. Villars is prompted to reflection. Not accustomed to having his choices regarding Evelina's care questioned, he bristles under Lady Howard's inspection. In fact, he seems to read harsher thoughts into her letter than what she actually said. Villars' belief that he incurs Lady Howard's "imputation of selfishness" might, in reality, be a projection of his own sense of guilt (19). Paralleling Pamela's emotional negotiation of her parents reflections, Villars' pride is pricked, he responds with guilty projections, but eventually he comes around to the wisdom of her advice: "the time draws on for experience and observation to take place of instruction...let her then enjoy it!" (20).

### *Antithesis*

Villars' resentment dramatizes Butler's antithesis—illustrating how, in the worst of circumstance, with years of wrongs endured, even the best of men (those most likely to be able to access moral knowledge), like Villars, can fall prey to their (dysregulated) passions and stymie moral action. Instead of engaging in "truth-telling," Villars hides both Evelina's and Caroline's truth from the public. Villars expresses what Butler describes as a "resolute bent of mind, not to be convinced or set right" (68) when he explains to Lady Howard "so deep is the impression which the misfortunes of her mother have made on my heart, that she does not even for a

moment, quit my sight, without exciting apprehension and terrors which almost overpower me. Such, Madam, is my tenderness, and such my weakness!” (18). Prejudice warps Villars’ perspective reflecting Butler’s observations on self-deceit and individuals’ “general ignorance of themselves” and “wrong ways of thinking and judging in everything relating to themselves” (S x 83). He fools himself into thinking that he was complying with Carline’s request that either Villars or her “acknowledged husband” take charge of Evelina (126). The facts place his narrative into question as Caroline’s posthumous epistle, which presumably she wanted delivered to Belmont, makes a claim on Belmont. Villars allows his resentment to fester such that he has deluded himself and disproportionately resents, or in his terms “abominates” Caroline’s “destroyer” (126). His entrenched resentment—“For many years, the name alone of [Belmont] accidentally spoken in my hearing, almost divested me of my Christianity, and scarce could I forbear to execrate him”—impairs his judgment of the circumstances (126). Presuming Belmont would only bring further harm, clearly countermands Caroline’s wishes. Caroline wanted Villars to take charge of Evelina’s education through “her early life,” but not in perpetuity.

### *Synthesis*

Eventually, Lady Howard’s reflections on Villars’ choices and their subsequent detrimental consequences to society suggests her disapprobation of Villars’ conduct. By questioning Villars’ reasons for “so carefully concealing” Evelina’s “birth, name, and pretensions” and “forbearing to make any claim upon Sir John Belmont,” Lady Howard pushes Villars’ to consider the potential harm it has brought (125). Furthermore, Lady Howard makes a recommendation for moral action as her reason is not colored by entrenched resentment. Unbiased by years of festering, Lady Howard presumes goodness in Belmont: “Surely Sir John Belmont, wretch as he has shewn

himself, could never see his accomplished daughter, and not be proud to own her and eager to secure her the inheritance of his fortune” (125). Appearing to allow for life’s realities or acting from what Butler calls common sense—the allowance for “inadvertency, misunderstanding, some real mistake of the case, on one side however, if not on both”—Lady Howard (*S* ix 78) compassionates Belmont and assumes he will be proud of Evelina once he sees her. This compassionate stance allows Lady Howard to advocate for good faith action.

What form does Lady Howard’s good faith action take? She urges Villars “to commence a law-suit with Sir John Belmont, to prove the validity of his marriage with Miss Evelyn; the necessary consequence of which proof, will be securing his fortune and estate to his daughter” (124). Lady Howard, motivated by just-resentment as she “esteem[ed]” Caroline and feels that “the memory of that excellent lady has but too long remained under the aspersions of calumny” desires to “vindicate her fame” (133). Butler’s thesis urges that “After an Injury is done” there is a “Necessity that the Offender should be brought to Justice” as reason makes clear “the Security and Peace of Society requires Examples of Justice should be made” and if no other option presents itself there may be sufficient reason “to procure Laws to be enacted, and Sentence pass’d” (*S*. Vii 69). Lady Howard turns her attention to achieve justice through the courts only because Villars has not regulated his emotions, forgiven Belmont, and as a consequence he has never given Belmont an opportunity to correct his wrongs.

However, upon reading that Evelina’s French grandmother recommends the law-suit first (although seconded by Lady Howard), Villars’ conscience begins to regain authority. Lady Howard’s epistles function in multiple ways; her probing and prodding pushes Villars to reflect on past choices; they make him uncomfortable as his emotional anatomy pushes and pulls against each other to lessen his resentments in order to see his role in the conflict; they also

model healthy cool-resentment guided by reason which allows her to engage external regulations for just-resentment such as recommending the law-suit. Lady Howard's epistles help him recognize he has been flattering himself "that to follow [his] own inclination, and to secure her welfare, was the same thing" (127). And, he realizes that a law-suit is necessary only because he never approached Belmont.

As Villars' affective anatomy regulates, he, like Clarissa, values an individual's agency above that of the court: "Let milder measures be adopted; and—since it must be so,—let application be made to Sir John Belmont; but as to a law-suit, I hope, upon this subject, never more to hear it mentioned" (129). Furthermore, Villars, who has come closer to a regulated state, sees the potential for an acrimonious fight as both he and Evelina's grandmother do not seem fully under conscience's authority. Contending that these court cases fuel a cycle of ongoing injury between the harmed and harming sides in the case, Butler explains "Malice or Resentment towards any Man hath plainly a tendency to beget the same Passion in him who is the Object of it, and this again increases in the Other" (*S.* ix 72). Butler sees this as a self-fueling and never-ending cycle of combustive negativity where the injured party can commit worse acts than the original aggressor's: "It is the very Nature of this Vice to propagate itself,... as well as what is done in consequence of it...Neither is at all uncommon to see Persons, in this Progress of Strife and Variance, change Parts; and Him, who was at first the injured person, become more injurious and blameable than the Aggressor" (*S.* ix 72). A person might start as an innocent victim. But, through indignantly seeking redress, they may take immoral tactics to ensure victory over their enemy. Villars' letter clearly reflects these concerns when he writes "the long and mutual animosity between her and Sir John, will make her interference merely productive of debates and ill-will" and he "wholly declines acting" as his resentment is also settled (129), but he is happy to

have Lady Howard's reasoned assistance in the matter. This choice reveals strong insight and continued emotional repair.

Correctly, Villars believes the best advocate for Evelina is her mother Caroline and therefore encloses for Lady Howard her posthumous letter, "which his much injured lady left to be presented to him" if he ever met Evelina (130). The epistolary structure dramatizes Butler's philosophy of appropriate resentment, as Caroline's epistles become a platform for truth-telling. Because according to Butler resentment requires that one speak out against wrongs and the perpetrators of those wrongs, Caroline's epistles offer the space to make these claims and then to send them to Belmont to hold him to account; if Belmont does not recognize his wrongdoing, or denies his wrongful acts, Caroline's epistle can be turned into a document with the power to publicize their abuser's actions. Butler believes speaking truth is "of Service towards regulating our Conduct," and should "not be disowned, or even concealed"; rather, Butler asserts "it must be allowed" as speaking the truth "shall do a Piece of Service to Society, by letting such a one's true Character be known" (*S* iv 35).

If all else fails, the courts are still an option—even if not the preferred option—and epistolary documents would be part of the legal process. Butler scholar, Griswold believes Butler counsels "proper resentment at a wrong-doer be expressed in punitive action when and as judged appropriate by independent agents, in accordance with established principle" (32). Perhaps in Evelina's case the established principle includes giving Belmont the opportunity to review the document, to have the claim made upon him so that he has the chance to act morally. However, if Belmont rejects his duty, Butler's system allows Evelina to pursue justice. Cool and regulated sentiments would allow Evelina, if necessary, to seek public justice, which in turn would allow her private sentiments of anger, compassion, and forgiveness to further regulate themselves in a



manner that is healthy for society.<sup>53</sup> Letters and epistolary documentation (their evidentiary and corroborative nature) serve as a liaison between Butler's privileging of an individual's emotions and external means of establishing justice.

### **Women's Posthumous Forgiveness and the Men's Emotional Collapse**

As mentioned in this project's opening, this idea of women offering posthumous forgiveness to men, and the receivers' inability to emotionally embrace this offering filters as a literary trope throughout these epistolary novels, which dramatize moral philosophy experiments. Caroline asks Belmont, through her posthumous letter, to hear the "cry of nature" (339), to "clear, then, to the world the reputation [he] hast sullied" (339), and to "receive as [his] lawful successor the child who will present [him] this dying request" (339). As Belmont reads this he exclaims "Yes, with my heart's best blood would I acknowledge thee—oh that thou couldst witness the agony of my soul!—Ten thousand daggers could not have wounded me like this letter" (385). Because Caroline searches for justice and her epistle brings Belmont's wrongs under the review of his conscience, Belmont experiences pain and self-recrimination. Butler's synthesis, conscience's moral authority disciplines emotions to bring about moral action, is dramatized by the posthumous letter and its subsequent effect on Belmont, which precipitates his acknowledgement of Evelina as his heiress.

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<sup>53</sup> See Butler's "Sermon VIII. Upon Resentment and Forgiveness of Injuries" in *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel*: "After an Injury is done and there is a Necessity that the Offender should be brought to Justice; the cool Consideration of Reason, that the Security and Peace of Society requires Examples of Justice should be made, might indeed be sufficient to procure Laws to be enacted, and Sentence pass'd: But is it that cool Reflection in the injured Person, which, for the most Part, brings the Offender to Justice? Or is it not Resentment and Indignation against the Injury and the Author of it? I am afraid there is no Doubt, which is commonly the Case. This however is to be considered as a good Effect [of resentment]" (69).

Caroline articulates this psychological process as her mind and heart move from bitterness to compassionate pardoning. She writes “Oh Belmont, all my resentment softens into pity at the thought! What will become of thee, good Heaven, when with the eye of penitence, though reviewest thy past conduct” (339). Belmont’s “voice scarce articulate” claims “My God! Does Caroline Evelyn still live!” (372). Evelina’s appearance resurrects Caroline, making it impossible for Belmont to disown Evelina as his heiress: “I see, I see thou art her child! She lives—she breaths—she is present to my view!—Oh God, that she indeed lived!” (372). Belmont’s self-condemnation compounds when he reads Caroline’s posthumous letter. Scholar Susan Greenfield suggests the posthumous letter “functions as a certificate of birth and a replacement for the burnt marriage certificate,” that broke Caroline’s heart (312). Seeing Evelina’s profound resemblance to her mother, reading Caroline’s letter activates his trauma. As Butler explains “no one ever did a designed injury to another, but at the same time he did a much greater to himself” (*S* ix 79). In the same way Lovelace finds himself struck and repentant by Clarissa’s Posthumous letter of forgiveness, Belmont is doubly so as he had believed he had already repented and done justice by Caroline’s name. In either case women are given agency through epistolary form as it allows women the authority to communicate the wrong they endured and the autonomy to forgive the wrongdoer through a means that has the potential to bring about individual justice.

Retaining the importance of the individual and honoring resentment as part of what leads to public good ultimately yokes Butler’s moral sense philosophy to the epistolary format. Butler’s dual regulatory structure, conscience and the law, is, of all the moral sense philosophers’ final stage of thought, most conducive to the epistolary novel and women’s agency—if the conscience effects regulation, then no external apparatus is needed.

## Part V: Mary Wollstonecraft's Crosscutting Circles and Intellectual Background

While Wollstonecraft's biography does not begin with the intellectually elite circles traversed by Burney, it does not take long for this passionate precocious intellectual to enter the British world of letters. Wollstonecraft found herself under the tutelage and mentorship of Dr. Richard Price and the publisher Joseph Johnson. Dr. Price helped mold Wollstonecraft's thinking while J. Johnson helped forward her writing career. J. Johnson commonly held gatherings of robust thinkers and artists. Wollstonecraft found herself surrounded by Dr. Price and Hewlett from the Green (Newington Green being where she first met Dr. Price) as well as new acquaintances like Anna Laetitia Barbauld, William Blake, Horne Tooke (old radical and philologist), Thomas Paine, George Fordyce, Thomas Holcroft, Godwin, and occasional visitor William Wordsworth; all of whom thought deeply about politics and philosophy as well as being men and women of letters.<sup>54</sup> Dr. Price's role as Wollstonecraft's mentor, in many ways parallels Dr. Johnson's role with Burney, and cannot be underestimated. Scholar Rivers explains Price's "acknowledged debt to Butler in argument and terminology" is clear (232); consequently, this chapter argues Butler's imprint is equally visible on Wollstonecraft's work *Maria* as she embraced Price's iteration of Butler's articulation of reason's role in morality and conscience's authority, if not mandate, to approve moral action and disprove immoral actions.

Wollstonecraft's relationship with Godwin (her husband) and his philosophical development further impacted her moral evolution. Although Godwin and Wollstonecraft met as early as 1791, it was not until 1796, that Godwin (besotted by Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written*

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<sup>54</sup> Janet Todd's *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Revolutionary Life*

during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark) and Wollstonecraft (recovering from a broken heart) began their romance. It is important to highlight the effect Godwin's evolving rationalism, as presented in his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, likely had on Wollstonecraft. Originally published in 1795, *Political Justice* went through a second and third publication during their romance. Reasonably familiar with Hume's philosophy at the time of *Political Justice*'s first publication,<sup>55</sup> Godwin's continued study of Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*, and *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals* effected a change to his third and fourth additions.<sup>56</sup> As the couple studied Hume and modified their understanding of their own philosophies, we can conjecture she was well versed in Hume's *Treatise* and *Enquiry*

#### **Part IV: The Literature Analyzed as Dramatizations of *Maria***

##### *Literary Analysis of Wollstonecraft's Works in Connection with Moral Philosophers' Ideas*

Wollstonecraft constructs *The Wrongs of Wrongs of Woman, or Maria* as a literary compliment to *Vindications of the Rights of Woman*. Like many writers of her time Wollstonecraft was intent

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<sup>55</sup> Susato explains that "Hume's descriptions of the uncivilised, barbarous and factious state of the past England were also utilized by Wollstonecraft's husband William Godwin. In his *Considerations on Lord Grenville's and Mr. Pitt's bills*, Godwin compares Grenville's attempts to introduce oppressive legislation (the Treasonable Practice Bill) to Elizabeth's arbitrary maxims of government. He does this by citing at length (the description occupying six pages of the eighty-six page pamphlet) Hume's depiction in the *History*, of Elizabeth's repressive responses to a move made by a puritan ([1795] 1993:61-7)" (249).

<sup>56</sup> Frank B. Evans III, "Shelley, Godwin, Hume and the Doctrine of Necessity" *Studies in Philology* 37.4 (Oct 1940), 632-40, for a clear delineation of Godwin's use of Hume on the doctrine of necessity: "Having expounded the doctrine of necessity with the help of illustrations drawn from an earlier section of Hume's book, Godwin returns to the plan of Section VIII, Part I, of the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*" (634).

upon making her complex and rich intellectual thinking accessible to a wider reading public. Turning to literature as a means of spreading her message while also constructing a meta-critique of a medium (sentimental novels) she believed culpable of many wrongs against women because they support Hume's regulatory apparatus of custom, Wollstonecraft spends the last days of her pregnancy with Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley attentively crafting a complex hybrid narrative for her novelette *Maria*. Clear to Wollstonecraft was the danger of placing too much credence in Hume's analysis of an individual's emotional anatomy, as Hume's third-stage of moral thought suggests that collective advancement through "the general rule" must supplant an individual's conscience and individuals' interpersonal negotiations. This chapter section asserts that while Wollstonecraft felt there was much to be learned from Hume's first stage of moral thought, in its disentangling of human emotions, *Maria*'s complex narrative dramatizes Wollstonecraft's deep concern with and struggle against Hume's third-stage of moral development, which illuminates women's agency; their self-regulation, their truth-telling, and their being heard. Specifically, *Maria*'s narrative structure advances Wollstonecraft's preference for Butler's final stage of moral thought through a narrator who criticizes Hume's general rule as regulatory structure, dramatizes Butler's conscience as an authority who wants Maria the character to analyze her emotional motivations to action without the power to guide Maria toward moral action, and provides Maria's memoirs and court statement (which this chapter analyzes as epistolary documents) narrative authority. At the same time, *Maria* dramatizes the advancement of Hume's regulatory apparatus when the character Maria falls prey to custom's double-bind, making women intellectually impotent while demanding extraordinary virtue (Wollstonecraft argues virtuous or moral actions result from reasoning) as well as when the judge minimizes her well-reasoned truth-telling epistolary testimony by condemning her lived and embodied experience as

a wife through Hume's nationalistic patriarchal lens of the "general rule," which denies British women's authority over their own marriage experiences and status.

### **Wollstonecraft Criticizes Hume**

*Maria's* mixed narrative structure—including memoir, court document, and third-person narrator—dramatizes the tension caused by Wollstonecraft's preference for Butler's dialectic at the same time she experiences a forlorn resignation to the triumph of Hume's patriarchal regulatory structure, the "general rule." Wollstonecraft outlines her goal to privilege Butler's conscience's authority as a third stage of moral thought in her preface's declaration that she will critique "customs," "manners," and "partial laws"<sup>57</sup> all of which fall under Hume's regulatory structures (157). Importantly, she critiques these Humean regulatory structures for engendering dysregulated passions within women while they demand obedient resignation to the "general rule" (157). By critiquing Hume's system, which according to him should control dysregulating at the larger social level, Wollstonecraft dramatizes Butler's thesis that individuals must understand their emotional structure in order to achieve moral action. Wollstonecraft achieves this complex allegorized critique of Hume by drawing a parallel between Hume's social system—explored in his final stage of moral thought—that relies on law, marriage, and custom—and an emotional system. She urges society to examine the social regulatory structures promoted by Hume which she argues encourage unbalanced passions in place of Butler's conscience.

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<sup>57</sup> Partial laws references marriage laws of her time that consider women to be property of their husbands.

Wollstonecraft's preface sets the stage for her novelette's goals, to struggle against the wrongs Hume's regulatory theory inflicts on women, through narrative techniques available only in the "best novels" (159). Critiquing those who implement stringent regulatory structures as oppressors who believe their oppressive tactics necessary for society, Wollstonecraft expresses resentment towards claims like those found in Hume's regulatory synthesis stage that privilege the general rule where "a single act of justice, consider'd in itself, may often be contrary to the public good; and 'tis only the concurrence of mankind, in a general scheme or system of action, which is advantageous" (*T* 3. 3. 1, S-B/N: 570). In essence, *Maria's* narrative dramatizes Hume's artificial regulatory structures and their harmful effects on women's minds and bodies. Furthermore, she draws attention to Hume's arrogant dismissal of philosophers like herself who take issue with his gender norms because the norms are "for the interest of society" (*T* 3. 3. 1, S-B/N: 577), as Hume believes society trumps women's agency.

The novelette's narrator establishes Butler's and Hume's competing regulatory structures in its first two chapters. The third-person character Maria engages in two activities while imprisoned; reading and writing. As the books she "obtained, were soon devoured" Maria turns to "writing" (169). In particular she turns to "circumstantially" relating the "events of her past life" to "instruct her daughter, and shield her from the misery" of her life (169). The narrator describes Maria's frame of mind while engaging in these two activities quite differently. Maria's reading habits are described as escapist and enervating to Maria's already "intoxicated sensibility" (169) while she describes Maria's motivation for writing her memoirs as a product of a "matured reason" (169). The seductive and mindless quaffing of books stimulates Maria's fancy, while her instructional writing engages reason. This chapter section will explore these diametrically opposed activities as representative of Butler's and Hume's respective regulatory

structures. *Maria*'s content and narrative structure associates writing with Butler and reading with Hume. And, the narrator is essential in establishing these associations and championing Butler's regulatory process above Hume's while acknowledging the futility of the struggle.

*Maria*'s narrator and content suggests reading fiction colludes with Hume's vaunted artificial virtues and regulatory system in turning women's passions against them. In other words, custom teaches women to be daft, sentimental, and easily bamboozled. Wollstonecraft explains in her companion piece, *Rights of Woman* that custom and law directs women "by their dependent situation and domestic employments" to acquire "manners before morals, and a knowledge of life before they have, from reflection, any acquaintance with the grand ideal outline of human nature" (*Rights of Woman* 93). Echoing these observations on women's manicured realities, the narrator obliquely critiques the charm Maria finds in the marginalia she discovers while reading Dryden's *Fables* by juxtaposing her comment that "Maria had often thought" that "to charm, was to be virtuous" (173) and Maria's thoughts "they who make me wish to appear the most amiable and good in their eyes, must possess in a degree...the graces and virtues they call into action" (173) with Maria's subsequent act of picking up and quickly putting down a book on "the powers of the human mind" because her "attention strayed from cold arguments on the nature of what she felt" (173). Tracing these associated comments, thoughts, and actions reveals the narrator's character Maria, like the women Wollstonecraft describes in *Rights of Woman*, associate morals with the performance of manners. As these women perform their manners for a spectator (being dependent on others in the domestic realm) not because they have had the opportunity to cultivate interest in understanding and reflecting on their own emotional anatomy and its role in directing conduct, the narrator suggests that Maria's reading of fictional texts facilitates this superficiality as books model manners as well as the



pleasure fictional characters receive from the story-world's social approbation of those manners. In all of these cases, women's understanding of themselves are sacrificed to Hume's constructed virtues and "general rule" and the narrator carefully associates morals, understood as manners, with fiction.

While this section argues that Maria's narrator and narrative choices as well as content associates writing with Butler, there is an exception which needs explanation. The books that Maria has the pleasure of reading while imprisoned come from another inmate, Henry Darnford and while reading she mindlessly comments with "compassion and sympathy" on one of his marginalia (178). In response, Darnford slips a note of introduction into one of the books. The narrator provides this very brief note of two short paragraphs to the reader; however, all subsequent notes are summarized in a short third-person narrative statement: "Another and another succeeded, in which explanations were not allowed relative to their present situation" (179). This analysis suggests that narrator and their narrative choices criticize these epistles because they elide the materiality and the content of the other notes, except to state what they do not address, as these notes are inspired by the fictions being read. At some point in time Darnford read "Rousseau's *Heloise*" commented on it in some charming way which caused Maria to absentmindedly respond to Darnford's marginalia sympathetically. Never having met Darnford before he becomes a mysterious character in Maria's mind as she does for Darnford. Furthermore, *Heloise* is itself an epistolary romance so their epistolary communications mediated through novels function as literalizations of the novel being read. Therefore, this analysis posits the narrator suppressed the content of the notes that came one after another as a criticism of their performativity, and association with Hume's general rule.

The narrator frames the evolution of Maria and Darnford's imitative epistolary correspondence into a real life love story with a description of poor choices women Maria's age often make, only to regret ten or fifteen years later, to dramatize the harm custom causes women by superficially educating them with sentiments that return to harm them. The narrator explains that young women often "sigh after ideal phantoms of love" even though "experience ought to have taught them" of what true happiness consists (186). Observing that these youthful women are so dependent "on the objects of their affections" for their pains or pleasure that they "seldom act from the impulse of a nerved mind" making them mutable, the narrator's diction offers subtle criticism of young women; suggesting that what is preferred and "ought" to have been "taught" through the times period's vaunted empiricist tool "experience" is derailed by Gothic-infused "phantoms" that have no relationship with the knowledge of probability and fact. This critique extends directly to the narrator's character Maria after Darnford attempts a kiss. Although Maria's modesty prevented the kiss, the narrator's description of the scene overwhelms the reader with romantic sentiments, at which point the narrator stops the ebullient sentimental rhetoric to ask, "but could he, feeling her in every pulsation, could he ever change, could he be a villain?" (187). The ironic and critical intentions behind this question are unquestionable, as five paragraphs earlier the narrator explains whereas Pygmalion formed an ivory maid to fall in love with, fate provided Darnford a real life statue that she filled with the "qualities of a hero's mind" to love (187). Everything about this love affair is fictional, including her hero, so of course he could also be a villain. However, Maria's weak mind as instantiated by society's need for insipid curated women who are easily tricked by tales of romantic love into submitting to being exchanged as property, would not or could not identify the possibility that Darnford does not have her best interests at heart. The narrator's critical commentary dramatizes Butler's

conscience and the work conscience, as dramatized by the narrator, would do for Maria, if it was not constrained by its authority without power because of man's fallen nature and if it was not in conflict with Hume's regulatory structure.

The narrator affirms Maria's writing and its association with Butler's regulatory conscience by dedicating the remainder of Vol. I and the first two-thirds of Vol. II, to its unmediated content, which was prompted by the news of Maria's daughter's death, her desire to be alone, and her sending the memoirs to Darnford in her stead. Maria's memoirs are action-packed, but the narrator did not include the entire memoir purely for its entertainment value. Instead, this section argues that the narrator privileges her writing because it dramatizes Butler's reflection and process of self-regulation, which advances conscience's authority over a person's emotional anatomy, providing them agency, while providing a platform for the real-world readers to witness Maria the character in the narrator's story, unreflectively repeating Maria the character in the memoir's poor choices, even after Maria the memoir-narrator seems to show insight and growth which sets up the narrator's continued critique of Hume's general rule.

Looking back on her life, Maria reflects on what attracted her to her husband Mr. Venables, and her insights are telling. She explains that her "romantic turn" of mind read unintended passion into his continued attention to her on the dancefloor (215–6). Before she knew it she had Pygmalion-like infused this man with "disinterestedness, fortitude, generosity, dignity, and humanity" like a "hero" and had fallen in love with a man of her own fancy's creation (216). At this very moment life conspired against her, making her home life miserable, motivating Maria to turn to her wealthy uncle to support her desires escape her father's house by marriage. As "George Venables had the reputation of being attentive to business" (223) her uncle promised George five thousand to marry his niece. However, Maria recounts not knowing of that

transaction, George “seemingly anxious for [her] happiness” urged her to leave her father’s house for his, filling her heart with gratitude for his concern and protection (224).

Maria’s socially cultivated and condoned ignorance became painfully apparent as her husband reveals his character. George proved to be a poor money manager leaving them impecunious which required Maria to solicit money from her uncle. George is slovenly, unfaithful rapacious, manipulative, a rapist and a failed pimp. Offering poignant reflections on society’s expectation that wives perform their conjugal duty at their husband’s command no matter what the wife desires, Maria critiques society’s duplicity when it “inculcate[s] partial morality” by turning virtues into customs associated with particular stations of gender norms (242). It should be no shock that a husband willing to rape his wife was also willing to sell her to pay off his unsettled debts. After discovering her husband’s plot she describes her decision to leave her husband as not one of “resentment” but of “judgment” (256) reflecting Butler’s language for appropriate action. The remainder of her memoir recounts how upon leaving her husband, due to British laws on marriage she was “hunted like a felon” (261).

Maria, the narrator of her memoirs, provides thoughtful reflections on Hume’s constructed virtues; manners, customs, and marriage laws. As a narrator she understands that these regulatory structures inhibited self-reflection which would have helped her regulate her emotions, guiding her towards better choices, suggesting that the regulatory norms which according to Hume benefit all of society do so expressly at the expense of women. However, when Maria, the memoirist narrator, is replaced by the third-person narrator’s character, the real-world reader is confronted by the incongruity of Maria’s behaviors towards and feelings for Darnforth. *Maria*’s structural hybrid dramatizes Wollstonecraft’s critique of Hume’s regulatory structure while also being resigned to it, as the memoir reveals the insights possible through

Butler's dialectic of reflection, emotional regulation, and conscience are imprisoned and regulated by Hume's "general rule."

*Maria's* narrative commences with Maria, the character writing her memoir, reflecting and achieving insight as to how custom and social training taught her to imagine her husband to be the hero he was not, all the while, according to *Maria's* narrator, she duplicates those same unreflective behaviors with Darnforth. Is it habituation? Is it incapacity? Or is it the sheer strength of the general rule that undercuts Maria the memoirist's Butler-like conscience? Perhaps Wollstonecraft designs the narrator to dramatize conscience's authority without power as she relates Mr. Venables egregious treatment of Maria, which should provide empirical materials from which to reason and proceed skeptically when courting another, but Maria assumes Darnford will treat her better (even though he ignores the fact that she is already married). The real-world reader can now look back with clarity on the narrator's ironic description that Darnford "seemed" to want to "protect [Maria] from insult and sorrow—to make her happy" (187). Now those comments offer an intense criticism to Hume and frustration with whatever is undermining Maria's personal reflective faculties, conscience's authority and her agency.

Even though the narrator desires Maria to employ her agency, to stop being fooled by her passions, remarking "We see what we wish, and make a world of our own...he was then plastic in her impassioned hand—and reflected all the sentiments which animated and warmed her" (274), Maria nonetheless submits to Darnford's urging that they "might soon be parted;" and, therefore, they should "put it out of the power of fate to separate them" with a pledge of marriage (274). Maria the character's thoughts that Darnford (a man who has already revealed a checkered past in another part of the novelette) would provide her with greater safety, stability, and love than Mr. Venable, her own husband bound by custom and law to protect her, are irreconcilable

with the wisdom of Maria the memoirist. Instead Maria the character's behaviors emphasize that momentary appetites and passions motivate Maria's actions, as the narrator's assumption of conscience's role lacks the power to discipline Maria the character's passions.

### **Wollstonecraft's Third-Person Narrators Are Not Reserved for Maria Alone**

Wollstonecraft uses the third-person narrator's authority and insider's view on the character Maria's world as clear condemnation of the hypocrisy and devastating impacts of gendered shadow laws. By the final third of Volume II Darnford and Maria escaped the mental hospital and were living together. On a visit to the city she attempted to visit some old acquaintances but was "refused admittance" (277). The narrator comments, "Had she remained with her husband, practicing insincerity, and neglecting her child to manage an intrigue, she would still have been visited and respected" (277). Remaining in a loveless marriage and falsely presenting a face of happiness would have elicited false reflections of inclusion and happiness from this social circle. This is custom's double-bind, it indoctrinates insincerity at every level. Women must dissemble to themselves, convincing themselves that they are in love so as to marry. Once in a detestable marriage they dissemble harmony so as to find pleasure in another partner's arms while still being admitted by society. The narrator observes and remarks on all these moments of socially constructed duplicity and just as the narrator criticizes Maria's unreasoned passions, she also critiques society's hypocritical structures that produce unchecked vanity, pride, and avarice.

### *Butler's Conscience as Dramatized in the Memoir and Can't Catch a Break*

Within Butler's dialectic Maria's memoir, like Clarissa's compiled letters and Caroline's posthumous letter would have provided Maria agency because it reflects a process of emotional

regulation and it is an act of truth-telling. Just as Clarissa's letters were meant to warn others of the harm that might befall them, Maria's memoirs were meant to achieve a similar purpose but for a specific audience, her daughter. Maria's memoir informs the real-world reader that if her daughter had lived she would have been the sole heir to Maria's uncle's fortune. Maria the memoirist takes great pains to establish the gender issue related to inheritances: "He had left the greater part of his fortune to my child, appointing me its guardian; in short, every step was taken to enable me to be mistress of his fortune, without putting any part of it in Mr. Venables' power" (267). Providing this information to her daughter highlights the extreme assiduity need to ensure that legal structures work to benefit women. Furthermore, it implies that her daughter must persist with such assiduity in order to retain control of the money and the authority her inheritance will provide.

Maria's memoir reads like a moral tract against women binding themselves, if not necessary, to a system meant to disable their authority both morally and legally, as well as a caution against the fairytale that women can find independence and security within a system fashioned by men to purposefully devalue women. Maria intends her daughter to look at the institution with circumspection. Explaining to her daughter that "the tender mother cannot *lawfully* snatch from the gripe of the gambling spendthrift, or beastly drunkard, unmindful of his offspring, the fortune which falls to her by chance; or (so flagrant is the injustice) what she earns by her own exertions" (248). Further impugning Hume's general rules which sees the benefit of injustice done to a minority community for the justice done the larger society, Maria remarks "the laws of her country—if women have a country—afford her no protection or redress from the oppressor, unless she have the plea of bodily fear" (248). By sharing with her daughter the ill treatment she suffers at the hand of her husband, Maria's resentments would forestall wrongs.

However, this epistolary memoir also invokes legal protection, Butler's regulatory structure of last resort, in case of a court proceeding enacted by Mr. Venables to usurp his daughter's wealth.

*Maria's* third-person narrator manifests her respect for Maria the memoirist's epistle and its Butlerian truth-telling by affording it so much uninterrupted space. The narrator even pulls from the real-world knowledge of it to critique custom's deleterious effects on Maria and others, but because it is a document that does not reach its intended audience (Maria's daughter), it also functions as an allegory for the ascension of Hume's regulatory theory and its ability undermine women's personal agency advocated by Butler. Furthermore, by denying Maria's memoir and her reflections from reaching her daughter, *Maria's* narrative dramatizes laws' effective derailment of women's agency made possible through Butler's conscience. In a way, this doubles the narrator's lack of power to affect Maria's behavior. In both instances, the person who would benefit from conscience's interpersonal disciplining is denied access and the document is rerouted to a proxy, Darnforth and the real-world reader.

### *Court Testimony Falls on Deaf Ears*

With the death of her daughter, Maria attempts to address her husband more directly. But that, too, is attenuated as she delivers her written statement against her husband to a judge and a jury (not of her peers). Maria's written statement to the court resembles pleas for justice made by Caroline, Evelina's mother. Like Caroline, Maria's court statement offers a truncated version of the pains she suffered—which already fill the pages of her memoir in great detail—her forgiveness (“pardon”), and then a request for redress. The movement of Maria's epistle through the court system where it is denied the intended auditor Mr. Venables, for whom the epistle could affect the self-regulatory emotions that could lead Mr. Venables to moral action, must



instead seek to generate sympathy from the judge and jury. Maria's epistle fails to gain the sympathy of her auditors and this reflects Hume's assessment that sympathy is easier to experience when the object of the sympathy is closer, more like one's self and sharing similar ideas. Maria's courtroom auditors are not intimately connected with the situation, nor are they women. The judge and the jury are propertied men. There can be no genuine sympathy between men and women on a particular level, because they do not recognize each other within Hume's system. Instead, sympathy is extended only to women if it pertains to the security and safety of property and its transference, which means women are valued, not as individual subjects with important truths to tell, but as property.

### **Wollstonecraft Criticizes Hume**

Wollstonecraft's rerouting of the epistles from the intended audience to proxies who are less invested in the emotions of the sender stymies Butler's synthesis which requires that conscience use negative emotions such as shame, guilt, and resentment to discipline behaviors and encourage moral action. In essence, Maria's epistles place Butler's dialectic within Hume's final stage of moral thought; where a person's behavior is regulated (by property laws) and as a result the individual's pain is necessarily absorbed and disappeared by the larger systemic push for generalized happiness. Hume explains: "a single act of justice is frequently contrary to public interest; and were it to stand alone, without being follow'd by other acts, may, in itself, be very prejudicial to society" (*T* 3.2.1, S-B/N: 497). Hume then offers a complicated example where objectively the act performed follows the law; yet the reality reveals this act benefits a person who does not act for the benefit of others. As noted earlier, Hume discusses how people can

adhere to and implement the letter of the law while in fact harming innocent persons or engaging in actions that harm larger public interest.

Maria's harrowing story bears reviewing in the light of Hume's concepts of right according to the law versus right according to human rights and compassionate interpersonal relations. Consider the experiences of Maria's life:

- being passed over in importance by her parents for her elder brother (*Maria* 211);
- her uncle's bestowing five thousand pounds on Mr. Venables to marry her (224);
- the necessity to extort additional money from her uncle to "save" her "husband" from "destruction" (234);
- her discovery that Mr. Venables had a child out of wedlock and was unwilling to care for the poor creature (a task Maria takes upon herself) (238);
- defending her family's property at the death of her father—from falling "prey" to her "brother's rapacity" (239);
- and, in doing so, made a "sworn foe" of her brother (240);
- the law's command that a wife must submit to sex with a husband even if she finds him grotesque (which equates to marital rape) (241);
- her husband's dissembled affection to extract more money from her (234, 244);
- being prostituted by her husband to pay for a loan of five hundred pounds that he admitted he would renege on (251);
- her husband's hunting her out "like a felon" when she sought refuge elsewhere (261);
- her elder brother's resentment that upon their uncle's passing, said uncle "left the greater part of his fortune" to Maria's daughter and "appointed Maria her guardian" (267);

- her husband's threats to claim their child if she did not make over her fortune to him (267–70);
- being drugged by her husband in order to be placed in a madhouse (272);
- and, finally the abduction and death of their child (271–2).

Echoing the trials of Job, each of these life events represents an example of the marginal space mandated for the individual personal experience of women.

### ***Maria's Narrative Dramatizes Hume's Ill Effects on Women when Viewed as Property***

According to Maria's narrative structure Butler's valuation of an individual's constitution must take a back seat in Hume's larger structure. Hume's synthesis of stable property and general rules requires that women submit to oppression for the larger system's health. Women's secondary place is not a byproduct of this philosophy; but, it is constitutive of this system. In much of the trauma outlined above, Maria is victim to the laws that ensure stable property and the general rule. Her brother, the rapacious, poor money manager that he is, inevitably inherits his father's property because of primogeniture. Her very legal existence is suspended once married to Mr. Venables, making Maria and her husband "one person in law," giving her husband total right to his property—meaning Maria and their child. She could not divorce him, regardless of his adultery, because the law was aimed at protecting a man's right to legitimate heirs.

Furthermore, this economic system's denying of women equivalent rights—supposedly for the greater good—extends beyond civil laws to the shadow laws of custom, which include the double-edged swords of modesty and chastity, as Hume recognizes that no legal means of punishing women for infidelity exists because no way of identifying paternity existed at the time.

Maria's plight cannot be publicized as grievances worthy of redress because her experience of injustice is both anticipated by and disappeared by the system for the greater good. For Hume's system of secure property, "the sense of justice and injustice" is not "deriv'd from nature, but arises artificially, tho' necessarily from education, and human conventions" (*Treatise* 483). In this rendering, Hume's negative perspective on education calls it artificial, with its operation akin to that of liars, who "by frequent repetition of their lies, come at last to remember them" (117). This process of internalization impacts women who sub/consciously apply the shadow law to themselves and to other women. If a woman does not adhere to these customs of modesty and chastity, she would be socially and, probably, legally punished. While that era's science lacked the legal apparatus, such as paternity tests, of biological science to identify women's accused infidelities, greater society enacted various forms of informal and formal punishments.

Hume's shadow law applies normative structures on women which I will further explore at a larger scale as developed by Adam Smith in this project's fifth chapter. Women punish each other by ostracizing those who do not conform. And, they punish themselves in what might seem like a personal injustice, which can be found in the outward behaviors of being modest and chaste and of not seeking love from others—even though they are pimped, beaten, or raped by their husbands. Hume ignored the concept that abusive spousal relations harm the public, as abusive spouses can be rapacious, cruel, self-indulgent, and treat others as they treat their wives. According to Hume, the laws of stable property require an unbending commitment to the marriage contract, where a woman's existence qualifies as property. In returning to this research project's literary analysis, this legal point represents the place in Wollstonecraft's work where the third-person narrative moves. The work's narrative structure becomes the shadow law that

applies society's harsh judgmental and self-punishing apparatus of manners, custom, habit, and education to its characters to support stable property and social structures.

Returning to *Maria's* final narrative attempt to advance Butler's conscience, Maria (voiceless secondary citizen) begs for "a paper, which she expressly desired might be read in court" in order to tell her truth (*Maria* 281). This plea expresses her dire affective state and powerfully critiques both the shadow controls of custom and the legal system of property. She explains her relationship with Darnford as voluntary and that she "never consider[ed] [herself] as any more bound to transgress the laws of moral purity, because the will of [her] husband might be pleaded in [her] excuse, than to transgress those laws to which [society has] annexed punishments" (282–3). Additionally, she applies Butler's language of conscience when she explains: "While no command of a husband can prevent a woman from suffering for certain crimes, she must be allowed to consult her conscience, and regulate her conduct, in some degree, by her own sense of right" (283). As when invested with authorial power and agency as a memoirist, Maria invokes her ability to make judgments that are guided by reason and not resentment. Writing offers her a space to think clearly through her emotions and regulate her responses as much as telling her truth. The truth that she respects herself, and will not place herself back in harm's way, a critical requirement for anyone, under Butler's dialect, to be able to forgive their aggressor: "The respect I owe to myself, demanded my strict adherence to my determination of never viewing Mr. Venables in the light of a husband" (283). Because the heft and might of Hume's justice and legal system do not care about true emotive regulation, only the performative artificiality that allows society to continue humming, she declares she must turn to Butler's conscience as her own "sense of justice, to "declare that [she] will not live with the individual, who has violated every moral obligation which binds man to man" (283).

Maria's plea to value her affects and allow her conscience to approve or disapprove her own conduct falls upon the faceless judge who represents the nothingness of a cruel system. His verdict is neutrally rendered by the third-person narrator. The judge, in summing up the evidence, alluded to

the fallacy of letting women plead their feelings, as an excuse for the violation of the marriage-vow. For his part, he had always determined to oppose all innovation, and the new-fangled notions which encroached on the good old rules of conduct. We do not want French principles in public or private life—and, if women were allowed to plead their feelings, as an excuse or palliation of infidelity, it was opening a flood-gate for immorality. What virtuous woman thought of her feelings?—It was her duty to love and obey the man chosen by her parents and relations, who were qualified by their experience to judge better for her, than she could for herself... (284)

Dismissing Maria's individual feelings as unworthy of being heard, the judge turns to the British collective "we" invoking its nationalist superiority advancing Hume's valuation of the stable transference of property made possible by a venerated monarch in opposition to newfangled republican "French principles." Under these regulations, a woman should not think of her own feelings nor should she speak of her experiences as reasonable and valid. Infidelity on the part of women is intolerable, as it would undermine stable property.

In another "court," a judge "might...entitle the lady" to "separation from bed and board, during the joint lives of the parties" (284). However, Maria's judge—a true representative of English values—"hoped that no Englishman would legalize adultery, by enabling the adulteress to enrich her seducer. Too many restrictions could not be thrown in the way of divorces if we wished to maintain the sanctity of marriage" (284). Marriage and maintenance of stable property

are essential in this assessment. Property must stay affixed to the original owner, or the transference must be determined by the property owner (husband)—not the wife. The judge's final words robustly echo Hume's holistic set of interlocking social systems, which eschew the individual for the greater schema: "though [these obstacles thrown in the way of divorce] might bear a little hard on a few, very few individuals, it was evidently for the good of the whole" (284). In the judge's opinion, so few individuals have personal grievances and resentments that it is unlikely to even matter that those who do, would need redress. At this point the narrator's critical voice falls mute, dramatizing the overpowering and silencing ascendancy of Hume's synthesis.

#### **Part VII: Burney's *The Wanderer*: A Corrective Dramatization of *Evelina* and *Maria***

This research project explores how *The Wanderer*'s third-person narrative's use of custom can be shown to support the shadow laws of modesty and chastity. These unofficial laws aid the legal apparatus of property and undergird the official socio-legal systems in the ostensible furtherance of the greater good. Burney's text can be read as reinforcing these norms that silence individual truths and a person's opportunities to testify to experience. *The Wanderer*'s third-person narrative's plot transition makes a clear pivot against the first-person testimonies of epistles, as it censures and forbids this self-expressive platform for narratives of individual experience, especially those that would disrupt customs and laws of property. Finally, the third-person narrative subsumes epistles into the system, by giving them value only as legal documents that support laws of property and inheritance, thus culminating in Hume's synthesis.

The narrator in *The Wanderer* offers a worldly-wise, normative voice that is not found in epistolary novels and is in part a corrective to *Evelina*, as it provides explanations for how

customs work and why they are necessary. In fact, *Evelina*'s epistolary structure was meant, by Burney's own words, to put forth the natural passions of an unschooled student of the world. Burney explains in her diary "[Evelina] had been brought up in the strictest retirement...she knew nothing of the World, & only acted from the impulses of Nature...in short...read the preface again, where she is called 'the offspring of Nature, & of Nature in her simplest attire'" (Scribbler 131). While epistles advance the individual's passions and the ability to self-discipline, these individual passions have been found harmful in the new schema and are condemned by custom.

Some of Burney's journal entries on custom play out the drama found in *The Wanderer*: The strange counterintuitive mixture of pleasure and pain which constitute custom, the chains of servitude it places society under, while at the same fostering order, beguiles Burney's imagination "Custom—which is so woven around us—which so universally commands us—which we all blame—and all obey, without knowing why or wherefore—which keeps our better Reason, sometimes dares to shew its folly in subjection—And which, in short, is a very ridiculous affair, more particularly as it hath kept me writing on it till I have forgot what introduced it" (Toried 73). According to Burney's journal entries, custom is ever present, it wraps around people and operates as an external force requiring obedience; for when one breaks with custom, one disoblige, "incurring...censure" (Toried 84). These entries echo both the resigned tone of *The Wanderer*'s narrator and the narrator's analysis of the tension between individual passions and the general system supported by customs. But, Burney's entries also signal the chafing and frustration voiced by characters, such as Harleigh and Juliet, when custom inconveniences their personal passions or creates a personal injustice. In 1769, well before she wrote *Evelina*, Burney remarks in her journal that "laws of custom" control her life and that she



hates “vile custom which obliges” one “to make slaves of “oneself” (Toried 72). Furthermore she believes custom’s hold on civil life is tyrannical because “those who shall pretend to defy this irksome confinement of our happiness, must stand accused of incivility” (Toried 72). In these early entries, Burney shows the impulse that the narrative voice in *The Wanderer* will take on—one that demonstrates the need for custom while highlighting the particular and individual wrongs that custom enacts.

*The Wanderer*’s narrator echoes Burney’s journals, but in a more even-handed analytical tone. The narrator’s analysis tackles custom’s ever-pervasive presence in all walks of life, including the patronage system, its role in different ranks of society, and its ubiquitous influence on female reputation. In an episode in the novel illustrative of custom’s restrictive regulating role in society, the narrator comments on the Juliet’s potential and options to financially support herself by working as a music tutor. As Juliet meets a potential patron, the narrator critically assesses the situation:

she was more a woman of quality than a woman of the world; and the circle in which she moved, was bounded by the hereditary habits, and imitative customs, which had always limited the proceedings of her ladyship’s, in common with those of almost every other noble family, of patronizing those who had already been elevated by patronage; and of lifting higher, by peculiar favour, those who were already mounting by the favour of others. To go further,—to draw forth talents from obscurity, to honour indigent virtue, were exertions that demanded a character of a superior species; a character that had learnt to act for himself, by thinking for himself and feeling for others. (229)

The narrator's analysis of custom's effects on the patronage system relates to Hume's views on custom as educating and habituating people so as to control them—the narrator describes “habits” and “customs” as binding, especially in fostering a system of stable security.

Through sympathy with others of the same rank and class, women of quality approve or disapprove familiar artists. There is no condemnation in this description; rather, the narrative voice opens up the inner working of the patronage system. However, as in Burney's journals, the narrator places custom's stable security in tension with the particular good act of “drawing forth talents from obscurity.” Such a kind act would be based on a particular passion, an approbation of a particular “indigent virtue,” which likely does not best serve the system, but instead favors the marginal individual who acts outside of the general schema of regulatory customs. While language like “superior species,” used to describe the thinking person, may imply the narrator's alignment with the privileging of individuals above a system of stable custom, the lack of criticism and the unbiased explication of the system seems to suggest a profound ambivalence. This equivocation can be found in Hume's works where the philosopher seems to honor the pleasure and power of individual good acts while still ultimately privileging the necessity of the larger system.

The narrator's descriptions of Juliet's wanderings serve as a vehicle for Burney to place custom under the microscope. As Juliet wanders through rural parts of England seeking refuge from the French commissary, the narrator notes how much easier it is for an “unknown” to survive in this rustic sphere than amongst the gentry. Upon Juliet's favorable reception of safe harbor, the narrator states:

the real obstacle, that of aiding an unknown traveler, occurring neither to the advocate nor to the opponent. Free from the niceties of custom in higher life, and unembarrassed

by the perplexities of discriminating scruples, the good women, often lonely travelers themselves, saw nothing in such a situation to excite distrust; and regarded it therefore simply as a claim upon hospitality. (660)

A stranger's unknown status in a propertied community posits numerous potential dangers—being unknown disrupts the system and makes possible potential missteps in the transference of property and lineage. The “unknown” could be a fortune hunter, or—worse yet—could be married, immodest, or not chaste. The customs of higher life force discriminating scruples to function as a shadow law. Where law itself could not empirically detect and punish immodesty and a lack of chastity, discriminating scruples preemptively punish women, which preemptively stops the need for the law before it is formally engaged.

While all of these social issues filter through social interactions, in this particular rural life community, where property is not as great a factor and people are more transient to begin with, custom is not a barrier to individual acts of kindness. In stark contrast with the narrator's description of the freedoms afforded an individual in this type of rural space, the narrator describes the gentry as bound by custom's control. As a companion to Mrs. Ireton, Juliet was expected to join her on an excursion. Juliet could not initially be found; but, on the discovery that Mrs. Ireton's son was to stay behind, Mrs. Ireton assumes Juliet's disappearance relates to the young woman's nefarious pursuit of her son.

As a result, Mrs. Ireton verbally lashes Juliet; to which the narrator observes “If, at the opening of this harangue, the patience of Juliet nearly yielded to resentment, its length gave power to reflection—which usually wants but time for checking impulse,—to point out the many and nameless mischiefs, to which quitting the house under similar suspicions might give rise” (536). In the world of the gentry, unlike in a rural space unencumbered by pretension to property,

custom manages to supersede the value of individual “resentment” privileged by Butler. Juliet must suffer individual “wrongs” as Harleigh observes she must endure “inhuman attempts upon [her] liberty [her] safety, [her] honour,” because it is custom’s and law’s will (777). Juliet must endure the harangue to maintain the presumption of modesty and chastity, so as not to disrupt the stability of property and justice.

Just as the third-person narrator colludes with and supports custom and laws of stable property, *The Wanderer*’s plot echoes this sentiment at every turn, embedding continuous opportunities to censure epistles. The plot critiques epistles’ impulse towards truth-telling and valuation of both negative and positive passions. Except for a smattering of notes used only to further plot points, epistles are demeaned—in fact, correspondence is forbidden even between friends. No longer do characters offer reflective self-probing assessments of their affective state and motivations. Instead, the narrator and the plot’s logic offer the larger moral message, a message which, in the case of *The Wanderer*, seems to suggest that while custom and law are imperfect and grievously flawed, they are what allows society to function. Echoing Hume’s moral theory, Burney proffers messages to readers to choose associates carefully, live virtuously, and make the best of life’s situation. Unlike Maria’s powerful rages against this flawed system, *The Wanderer* projects an ambivalent message that teeters between neither being a full-throated endorsement nor a passionate condemnation. *The Wanderer* keenly evinces the bland compromise Hume offers society for its safety and general well-being—a society where the individual is marginalized for the betterment of the institution.

Burney’s ambivalent acceptance of Hume’s artificial structure, which suppresses the individual’s emotion for the well-being of the general scheme, is most visible in her return to *Evelina*’s plot of secret parentage and not speaking the truth. This manifests in characters not

delivering the truth through epistles, which had served as a private conduit to express forbidden or painful topics amongst involved persons. *The Wanderer's* secret parentage, like the secret parentage in *Evelina*, is a product of the repressed voices of women who, because of the strict nature of property laws and customs which support aristocratic allegiances, are initially denied recognition of their relationship to men. Caroline's marriage license was burned; and, Juliet's mother's marriage certificate was hidden and then accidentally burned. In *Evelina*, this initial denial of Caroline's marriage and her death after childbirth leads to Villars' intense, disproportionate resentment, which causes him to keep Evelina hidden to both punish Belmont and to retain her for his own. Villars' secretive intervention prevents Caroline's epistle from revealing her own resentment. In a like manner, Juliet is denied the ability to share her resentment with those who attempt to keep her familial relationship secret.

Secrecy and the suppression of Juliet's experience permeate *The Wanderer*. Mrs. Howell, who is tasked by Lord Denmeath with the care of Juliet's half-siblings Lady Aurora and Lord Melbury, is remorselessly unsympathetic to Juliet's plight as an "unknown" and fears Juliet is a fortune hunter. In order to break from Juliet without incurring public scrutiny, Mrs. Howell demands that Juliet "solemnly engage to hold no species of intercourse with Lady Aurora Granville, or Lord Melbury, either by speech, or writing, or message" (132). If Juliet does not follow this request, Mrs. Howell promises "every punishment" her "resentment can inflict," as Juliet has made them suffer by her "surreptitious entrance into" her "house as a young lady of fashion" (132). This process of avoiding public notice directly correlates to the need to support and enforce modesty in women, keeping them marriageable and forestalling public scrutiny of the means taken to maintain stable property maintenance and inheritance.

To curtail private planning and social support, correspondence is forbidden by the rules of justice and property—and, Juliet knows custom's catechisms. Mrs. Howell's injunction not to speak or correspond is endemic of the constitutional necessity of the general scheme to marginalize individuals' experiences and emotions. When in profound distress, Juliet's "first impulse was to write to Lady Aurora, and implore her protection; but this wish was soon subdued by an invincible repugnance, to drawing so young a person into any clandestine correspondence" (287). In Burney's world that dramatizes Hume's ideal realm, the general system's health requires the subsummation of individuals' personal justice or emotive spaces. These individual rights are trampled and stymied by customs that have powerfully infiltrated everyone's lives, including those they most afflict.

Illustrative of Burney's deeper ambivalence regarding epistle-based communication on socially sensitive topics, the few letters that do make it through the plot's control argue for the personal injustices faced by individuals. In a letter from Lady Aurora to a group of acquaintances, she argues on behalf of Juliet's personal qualities and likely unjust circumstances: "'if,' says she, in a letter to Lady Barbara, 'it is not her own desire, don't let any body be so cruel as to urge her. We know not her history, and cannot judge her objections; but she is so gently mannered, so sweetly well bred, so inexpressibly amiable, that it is impossible she should not do every thing that is right'" (302). In a moment of female unity, Lady Aurora does not force Juliet into secrecy, respects her privacy, and trusts her judgment. The letter allows reflection on Juliet's behavior and circumstance, a reflection that guides Aurora's responses unlike the novel's larger structure that usually censures epistles and curtails moments of individual truth-telling and advocacy.

During this era's transition from the power of first-person epistles to the Victorian diminution of this expressive letter form, Burney's re-writing of *Evelina* renegotiates the epistle's value. *The Wanderer* disadvantages epistles, as they advocate for the individual in a system that has no room for individual passions and affects. Because society rejects Juliet (nameless and without history), she seeks means of self-maintenance initially through work as a music tutor and then as a performer. While Harleigh hope to marry Juliet, he is just as bound by customs of modesty and chastity to ensure his family's property control. He worries about Juliet's reputation if she performs publicly, which would cast further negative shadows on her already compromised class standing and would only further damage her influence on the stability of secure inheritance lineages. He writes:

If, then, there be any family that you quit, yet that you may yourself desire should one day claim you; and if there be any family—leave mine alone!—To which you may hereafter be allied, and that you may wish should appreciate, should revere you, as you merit to be revered and appreciated—for such let me plead! Wound not the customs of their ancestors, the received notions of the world, the hitherto acknowledged boundaries of elegant life! Or, if your tenderness for the feelings—say the feelings, if you please,—the prejudices, the weaknesses of others,—has no weight, let, at least, your own ideas of personal propriety, your just pride, your conscious worth, point out to you the path in society which you are so eminently formed to tread. (343)

The complexity of this letter both in terms of its content (the social norms it upholds and breaks) and the response it generates, illuminates the difficult and uneasy struggle between Butler's moral sense and Hume's ascending synthesis. This letter takes on all the self-probing capacity

demonstrated in *Evelina*. Harleigh calls on Juliet to reflect on her actions, to think of her own worth, and to let her conscience intuit right action.

But, truthfully, he wants her to reflect on and approve of Hume's system of justice—not Butler's belief in the individual's ability to regulate. This letter places Butler's and Hume's moral sense philosophies in tension. While the letter engages in the epistemological understanding of individual passions that is foundational to both Butler and Hume, Harleigh's letter argues for the cultural and social system that will extinguish his means of expressing personal passions and, therefore, his ability to make this very argument. The letter ostensibly argues for people to be adhere to current social norms; to respect past precedence, as shown in ancient regimes; and to not succumb to individualism. However, Harleigh's schizophrenic stress bursts through in his very act of letter writing. It breaks with the bounds of propriety, modesty, and chastity and could negatively affect Juliet's reputation—the very issue at stake that could negatively affect their union.

Because Harleigh's epistle demonstrates Butler's valuation of the individual's passion (Harleigh's) and advances the individual's cause (Juliet's), Juliet's response explores the tensions between Butler's valuation of individual emotions and Hume's system, which requires custom to support property at the exclusion of individual women's emotional experiences. Juliet knows that her public performance would contravene custom's expectation that she be modest and chaste. This public display of her body and her talents in her efforts for self-sufficiency suggests her financial independence from men and, of course the much more dangerous, potential sexual liberty. Even Juliet's anger towards society's judgement itself serves as a problematic instance of awareness of the unfairness of this suffocating system. Indignant, she questions "What is woman,—with the most upright designs, the most rigid circumspection,—



what is woman unprotected? She is pronounced upon only from outward semblance:—and, indeed, what other criterion has the world? Can it read the heart” (344)? Yet, under Hume’s construct, Juliet seems to understand why society must be so judgmental. Therefore, she appreciates Harleigh’s warnings. At the same time, Harleigh’s warnings are generated by his approval of her particular virtues (which in themselves are not necessarily good for society, unless she is made to conform). The all-aware Juliet values Harleigh’s perspective, as he contravenes society’s attempts to curtail her as a potential threat to society and custom, in approving of her particular virtues and not judging her background and aims towards personal betterment:

Then, again perusing her letter, [she apostrophizes] You, alone, O Harleigh! She cried, you, alone, escape the general contagion of superficial decisions! Your own heart is the standard of your judgment; you consult that, and it tells you, that honor and purity may be in the breasts of others, however forlorn their condition, however mysterious their history, however dark, inexplicable, nay impervious, the latent motives of their conduct! (344)

Although Harleigh does believe artificial structures are beneficial and must be observed, Juliet sees Harleigh as guided by purer motives than artificial structures. At this point the plot returns the reader to the ambivalent moral structure of Hume’s theoretic. Juliet dislikes a woman’s circumstance and values Harleigh’s ability to ignore custom’s superficiality. But, she also knows that these social structures, for better or for worse, are to be followed. Paralleling the tensions between the moral rhetoric of Butler versus Hume, Juliet exists in this philosophically turbulent moment of fraught allegiances. She “lift[s] the letter up to her lips; but ere they touched it, start[s], shutter[s], and cast[s] it precipitately into the fire” (344). This letter must be burned. It

brings Juliet to the brink of physical impropriety—freeing individual passions from their bounds of custom—and, she kisses the proxy for a man, a man not her husband. This letter and the feelings it invokes are a danger to Hume’s system of female modesty and should not exist. However, it was requisite for exploring the counterintuitive reality that for Juliet to achieve potential long-term viability in a system, she must resist her own private needs, submitting herself to emotional and financial privation if necessary.

These tangled emotions only become more entangled when Juliet then meets Harleigh face-to-face and forbids him to write to her. She gravely intones: “your letters I can never answer, and must not receive: we must have no intercourse whatever, partial nor general” (345). These characters are creating and living out emotionally tortured paradoxes where Harleigh breaks with custom by corresponding with Juliet that she must adhere to custom and where Juliet breaks with custom by meeting Harleigh to tell him to stop engaging with her regarding his emotions. This negating of interpersonal communication reflects Mrs. Howell’s previous forbidding of Juliet from writing to Aurora, which could have unraveled tightly secreted emotions and information.

While inspired by his actions, Juliet’s motivations to censure Harleigh’s communication derive from her seeking to realign his support of this subsummation of the individual to the state systems:

you pleaded to me just now... in one point, the customs of the world; you must not so far forget them in another, as not to acknowledge that a confidence, a friendship, such as you describe, with one so lonely, so unprotected, would oppose them utterly... forego every species of correspondence, and hasten, yourself, to finish an intercourse which, in the eye

of the world, and of those prejudices, those connections to which you appeal, would be regarded as dangerous, if not injurious. (347–8)

Letters—often written in private with the time and space for self-reflection and rumination—represent too personal a conveyance of thought and emotion, which Burney implies serves to advance the here pejorative individual good. For Burney’s dramatization of Hume’s dialectic, the characters need to work towards supporting the schema’s good. This authorial intention explains this third-person novel’s obsessive focus on forbidding correspondences and condemning individuals who publicly advance their personal causes. Illustrating Burney’s message, Juliet internalizes this concept and becomes the purveyor of her own self-censorship and submission. This logic forecloses the power of the personal epistle’s truth-telling platform; The denied epistles are no longer allowed to offer the individuals’ conscience a place of reflection and emotional self-regulation—all persons, regardless of personal circumstances or desires, must live up to the virtuous law they hold within themselves (Butler). Thus, while Butler’s dialectic does not advocate for women specifically, but rather for individual agency which could include women, Hume’s dialectic embraces legal regulatory institutions, which are designed specifically to serve men’s interests.

Here marks a massive psychological and intellectual transition within the British world of interpersonal communication and interactions—the usurpation of the personal epistles’ form for a new iteration in the formal legal document. This complex, top-down system functions as the repository for the larger schema’s proposed concept of a generalized happiness. Fortuitously, it incorporates the codified process to instantiate, maintain, and evolve the external processes believed to be required to achieve this internal happiness. Nowhere in Burney’s *The Wanderer* is this better illustrated than by the Admiral, whom the plot reveals to be Juliet’s maternal uncle

and the keeper of Juliet's father's codicil to the will, which proves Juliet's lineage and assures her inheritance. Upon discovering that Juliet is married but separated, the Admiral declares "God forbid I should uphold a wife in running away from her lawful spouse, even though he be a Frenchman! We should always do right, for the sake of shaming wrong" (842). Juliet is pained by her uncle's inability to understand the injustice of the law that requires she stay married to a husband who in the Admiral's words is "a sorry dog" (843). To add insult to injury, the Admiral makes no attempt to intervene in the marriage, even though he is not "surprised" by its tragic nature (843).

Instead, the Admiral satisfies whatever remorse he feels for his niece by turning to the general system of property and affective space of mitigated happiness brought about by the steady transference of property. In a thoughtless fulfillment of the legal codes, he asserts: "I'll tie up your fortune, and won't let him touch a penny of it, but upon condition that you come over for it yourself once a year. And now I have you safe and sure, I shall carry my codicil to Lord Denmeath,—a fellow of steel, they say!—and get you your thirty thousand pounds; for that, I am told, is the portion of the lady of quality's daughter" (843). Believing in the system's power to regulate all person's behaviors, the Admiral feels secure that this transference of property will regulate the scoundrel husband's behaviors, which will eventuate in Juliet's happiness in a trickle-down effect of the greater good. The will's codicil functions as a *de facto* epistle, ensuring the conveyance of the larger system, regardless of the actual benefits to the individual female person of Juliet. Burney's confounding plot for Juliet holds the potential of enflaming the commissar's avarice and with expanding his mistreatment of her as his spouse in name only, as was tragically explored by Wollstonecraft in *Maria*.

However, Burney seems driven to override this gendered repercussion to have Juliet's uncle, like the narrator, demonstrate the core of Hume's moral theory. At the novel's beginning, the Admiral (who at the time is unaware of his avuncular relationship to Juliet) advocates to help this downtrodden female in her unknown, individual, and ragged state "Nay, since she is but a woman, and in distress, save her, pilot, in God's name!" (12). The Admiral's nod to Juliet's position as a woman deals with and alludes to the value women play in the larger system of security and property. While an unknown woman is destabilizing to a community, women in general are essential to Hume's vision of society's survival. The Admiral echoes this both in his approbation for and benevolence towards Juliet in this early moment as well as at the end of the novel when the Admiral again advocates for Juliet.

Yet, in marked contrast to the Admiral's early intentions to support this lone female who can be used for procreative gains and as a family matriarch, the Admiral's later intentions seem to spring from different intentions. At this later stage, he entertains to support her through the systems that he most esteems, which include property, law, and marriage. He argues most effectively for the value of esteeming customs for the sake of steady property when he critiques his sister's marriage to Lord Granville a man above her station:

My sister did but a foolish thing, after all, in marrying that young lord...You would never have been smuggled out of your native land, in that fashion, if she had taken up with a man in her own rank of life...see the difference of those topsy-turvy marriages!—a worthy tar would have been proud of my sister for his wife; while your lord was only ashamed of her! For that's the bottom of the story, put what dust you will in your eyes.  
(843)

His words cut right to the heart Hume's structure. While Juliet's father loved his wife, custom dictates he should not have married her because that was not the way to build and transfer property and it showed a lack of respect for custom. And while he did marry her, and he did intend (and left evidence as to his intention) to rightfully own her as his wife, his break with custom was almost too much for him to face and he never owned her publicly for fear of his father's anger and the harm it would do his health. Stepping outside of custom, in the pursuance of individual passions, created the circumstance that led to Juliet's harrowing experience. However, the novel's final moves ameliorate these wounds by absorbing Juliet into justice's schema by killing off her French husband and allowing her new-found position as Lady Granville to make her union with Harleigh an appropriate match of wealth and status.

## **Part VIII: Chapter Conclusion**

In a final meta-textual gesture, which can be read as a farewell to one of the earliest epistolary mixed-genre texts, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), the narrator articulates the reabsorption of the "particular" into the "general" or the personal passions to the general schema. Robinson Crusoe, in many ways represents the first novel about a British wanderer, one who like Juliet defied social norm—his father's advice to maintain his social position and employment—to stay within his rank. Both Crusoe and Juliet are figuratively cursed by their parents (Crusoe because he defied his father, Juliet because her mother defies society and the consequences fall to her daughter). As her Uncle, the Admiral, a perfect stand-in for Hume, notes Juliet's mother should have stayed among her kind but instead she married up the social ladder (resulting in Juliet's need to hide her identity). Hume echoes the value of social status when he writes "here are certain differences and mutual submissions, which custom requires of the different ranks of men

towards each other;... 'Tis necessary, therefore, to know our rank and station in the world, whether it be fix'd by our birth, fortune, employments, talents or reputation. 'Tis necessary to feel the sentiment and passion of pride in conformity to it, and to regulate our actions accordingly" (598–9). In part, Juliet's wandering is punishment for her mother's breaking with Hume's regulatory structure; Juliet is haunted by the sins of her mother to the very last pages of the novel. Additionally, Even though society's economy is changing such that it is making space for the female milliner, the haberdasher or even the occasional musician, that does not mean that society approves of these women wandering into the economy; rather, simultaneously needing their work and scorning their entrance into previously male dominated territories as though they were a dangerous and foreign wanderer. But as the texts notes that Juliet, the "female Robinson Crusoe" who like Clarissa and Caroline and Evelina, for parts or all of their journeys, was forced to find resources "independently, in herself," though her reason and reflection is brought under the care of the general rule. But here is where the analogy to Crusoe ends, because when he had a chance to stop wandering and enter into the general will of society, he would not, nor did he half to because he was a man. The individual epistolary mode undergirded by the epistemology of sensory perception, passions, affects, appetites, approbation, and disapprobation is re-routed through Hume's structure and regulatory apparatus (custom, laws of property/justice and marriage) for the general good, establishing the third-person narrative's social dominance.

## Chapter Five

Frankenstein and Their Monstrous Gender Ambivalence Rejects Smith in Favor of Bentham

### Part I: Introduction

Tragically, the gendered, metatextual battle between Frances Burney and Mary Wollstonecraft was halted by the latter's post-partum death due to septicemia. However, Wollstonecraft's equally talented daughter Mary (M. Shelley) took up the mantle of her fierce mother. Although M. Shelley wrote many fiction and essay works with sociopolitical implications, this chapter focuses on her Gothic allegorical novel—the famed *Frankenstein: or, the Modern Prometheus* (*Frankenstein*, 1818). Greenblatt asserts that:

Gothic horrors gave many writers a language in which to examine the nature of power—the elements of sadism and masochism in the relationships between men and women, for instance. And frequently the Gothic novelists probe the very ideas of historical accuracy and legitimacy that critics use against them, and meditate and who is authorized to tell the story of the past and who is not. (26–27)

Indeed, questions of gender dynamics and authorial agency filter throughout M. Shelley's text. This perennial classic represents a specific opportunity to analyze how M. Shelley employs structures of epistles, allegory framing narratives, and shifting of character voices to further her mother's critique of Adam Smith's moral sense dialectic and offer Bentham's socio-legal moral dialectic as an alternative. Specifically, through *Frankenstein's* narrative structure M. Shelley continues M. Wollstonecraft's evaluation of Smith's dialectic and its normative regulatory synthesis third-stage, as unrealistically utopian and therefore, when applied in real-life, harmful to women; furthermore, this chapter will explore how *Frankenstein's* narrative structure



dramatizes Bentham's social-legal reform-based regulatory synthesis as a preferable structure for women.

In her allegory, M. Shelley creates a complex narrative where the various characters present their perspectives and memories of the events that transpire between Victor and the Creature. Walton's epistle provides the ultimate framing device and serves as the archival apparatus for evidentiary testimonies, much like those accrued for a court case. The author fashions her narrative through the "use of multiple diegetic frames" to convey the flaws of Smith's theory and the potentials in Bentham's theory's. In her narrative, "the frames of the novel organize the relationships between the characters, listeners to the tales, and, finally, Shelley's own readers, to achieve literary depth" (Martin 559–600). Each character's voice is heard in the narrator position, coloring the events from their perspective.

To provide clear literary analysis this chapter will begin with a recounting of the narrative levels and their salient points.<sup>58</sup> In this framed allegory told in the epistolary mode, Walton initiates the tale, which is conveyed to readers through his four letters to his sister Margaret. Walton, an explorer leading a team to the North Pole, recounts the shocking finding in this wasteland of Victor, who identifies Walton's obsessive relationship with success and fame as parallel to his obsession with the Creature. However, letter four becomes reminiscent of Pamela's turn to a diary during her captivity under Mr. B, as it begins to compile entries from several different days. By Walton's entry on Aug. 19<sup>th</sup> Victor commences his narrative and the text marks the narrative transition to Victor's framed flashback narrative with the paratext

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<sup>58</sup> All references to *Frankenstein* are from *Frankenstein: The 1818 Text, Contexts, Nineteenth-century Responses, Modern Criticism*. Edited by James Paul Hunter, New York City, Norton, 1996.

denotation “Chapter I,” which gives Victor’s recounting particular authority; it becomes his biography. This analysis will focus on particular parts of his narration including his privileged, yet tragic, upbringing filled with death and unresolved grief, his hubristic experiment resulting in the Creature that he abandons because physiologically disgusting, and his brother William’s death at the hands of the monster and the subsequent consequences, as the family’s nanny Justine Moritz, who likely hails from Jewish-Germanic heritage, stands accused of this heinous crime. Victor does not expose the Creature as his brother’s murderer as he assumes Justine’s gender, low-class status, and his bizarre tale of the Creature as the guilty party will induce no clemency, which proves true in the innocent Justine’s hanging.

Volume II Chapter I continues with Victor’s narration. Ravaged by his guilt over Justine’s execution Victor explains he looks for respite in Mont Blanc’s Mer de Glace, where he encounters the Creature. Volume II Chapter II begins with Victor describing his meeting. At this point he retains narrative control and the Creature is only a character in his story. But the abandoned experiment implores his maker to hear his biography and perspective, which endows this hybrid undead entity narrative control of the readers’ understanding of this overall sequence of events. Again, the following elements of his story will serve the later analysis. After initially living in towns where people brutally reject him as monstrous, the Creature lives in the forest where he sees his reflection in the river. This primal moment serves as a moment of self-identification as “Other.” The Creature recounts his peaceful, yet painfully marginalized voyeurism of a wood-dwelling family, the De Laceys. With growing sympathy for the De Laceys, the Creature discreetly performs helpful chores, such as collecting firewood. Through his observations of the family and Felix’s love interest Safie, the Creature learns to read and listens to discussions on aspects of society and family life by overhearing them. However, the

Creature's time of learning from texts and observing compassionate interactions is thwarted when the Creature attempts to engage the blind patriarch of the family. While not afraid, because he could not see the Creature, his son Felix's early return home set in motion the end of the Creature's hopes of cultivating a community with the De Laceys. Aghast at the Creature's monstrous visage, Felix attacks the Creature, who does not physically attack back. The entire situation escalates with the villagers chasing the Creature. Later, the Creature tries to save a drowning child, only to be shot in the shoulder by the fearful father. These multiple forms of rejection spur revenge in the Creature, who seeks to reveal Victor's and society's corruption and hypocrisy. The narrative includes the Creature's telling of his perspective on the killing of William and the framing of Justine.

Volume II ends with Chapter IX which returns the narrative reins to Victor. Victor narrates his conversation with the Creature which results in Victor agreeing to make a female humanoid to be the Creature's companion. Volume III begins with Victor narrating his worry that creating a partner for the Creature might cause them to reproduce a new unnatural race of beings. Victor describes how in a frenzy he destroys the female partner, only to be caught by the Creature, who swears revenge upon Victor. The doctor sails to Ireland, where he is arrested for the murder of his colleague, whom the Creature murdered to frame Victor. In a dramatization of the class and gender bias of the English legal system where Justine had been executed on the slightest bit of circumstantial evidence, Victor easily convinces the receptive prison guards of his innocence. Victor marries Elizabeth, who is strangled on her wedding night by the Creature. This tragedy precipitates Victor's father's death from stress. Now enraged, Victor pursues the Creature northward across the frozen European continent to their wretched meeting on the Mer de Glace.

Walton's epistle diary entries to his sister conclude the novel as he details how his ship becomes trapped in the packed ice. With several crew members dead and others demanding Walton's return to safety, Victor rallies his last strength to chastise the crew to continue their mission. However, the crew remains unimpressed, and Walton indeed turns south. Victor dies just after, and Walton finds the Creature mourning the doctor's corpse. The Creature tells Walton that he is miserable due to his crimes, feels no peace at the doctor's death, and will immolate himself to end his pitiful existence. The novel ends without a firm conclusion as Walton watches the Creature float away on an iceberg.

This chapter asserts that M. Shelley designs the narrative's events and formulates the shifting of narratorial responsibilities and power to dramatize her criticism of Smith's dialectic as too utopic. M. Shelly remains skeptical that people—especially the vast majority of ordinary folks—can act out of sympathy and employ the impartial spectator for honest self-assessment to promote a socially benevolent society. Her critique of Smith also presents as the narrative's dramatization and privileging of Bentham's dialectic when the narrative structure returns to Walton's letter. Because this chapter posits that M. Shelley presents Walton, Victor, and society (as manifested in the De Lacey family) as representatives of the failure of people to achieve moral knowledge and moral behavior through Smith's internal regulatory system of the impartial spectator, while also privileging Walton's epistolary form as a dramatization of M. Shelley's turn to Bentham, Walton's letter must be analyzed as doing double work. Its material nature, being a letter that sends evidence to his sister, literalizes Bentham's regulatory reforms. But, the structure of his letter, its superficiality, and lack of reflection, presents the flaws of Smith's moral theory and normative regulations. In particular, Shelley dramatizes the inadequacy of Smith's theory of

sympathy through Walton's and Victor's failures to understand their flaws and regulate their behavior

Because Shelley carries on her mother's critique of Smith's theory of sympathy and the impartial spectator as unrealistic and therefore harmful, this chapter argues Shelley's Creature presents as a woman marginalized by Smith's very theoretical program. Shelley uses the Creature to demonstrate the pain of not finding sympathy in a society that negativizes him. She also shows his feelings of disgust for a hypocritical legal system that minoritizes others. The Creature's ability to easily manipulate the legal system as the institutional vehicle for his revenge dramatizes M. Shelley's second thesis that advocates for Bentham's law system reforms. As her own evidence to prove this criticism, M. Shelley challenges readers to consider the mistreatment of the marginalized characters within her narrative—these include Justine, Safie, and the allegorical Creature, who serves as an archetype of the feminized, feared, and minoritized Other. Exploring humanity's lack of sympathy, M. Shelley designs an ignorant, excluding community of people whose deadly mistreatment of Justine and violent marginalization of the Creature devolves his worldview from an innocent, knowledge- and companionship-seeking being into a murderous outcast. After observing and experiencing human society, the Creature embraces his interpellated, negativized identity and applies his justice system knowledge to manipulate the prejudicial court process.

M. Shelley criticizes Smith's impartial spectator as the internal regulatory structure as actually just the voice of hegemonic society. She criticizes the impartial spectator as contributing to society's corrupt and prejudiced regulatory systems of education, commerce, and the law. Her framed allegory literalizes how the impartial spectator fails to foster sympathy among individuals and how it fails to enact consistent, equitable justice for those brought before the court. M.

Shelley positions the Creature not, as theorist David Marshall would assert as the “ideal sympathetic spectator” (*Sympathy* 197), but as what competing theorist Colene Bentley would assert—the being seeking family and community, only to be cast aside as Other. In this chapter, M. Shelley gives voices to competing viewpoints and conflicting characters (as they struggle to convince readers of their perceptions of the events) and gives voices to the feminized and marginalized, as seen in the socially silenced Justine, Safie, and the Creature. Bentham’s utility principle, which considers the fairness of actions and contracts for all persons involved and for the greater good of society is advanced by the narrative’s return to Walton’s evidentiary epistle as the final and his sister’s potential review of the matter.

## **Part II: The Moral Philosophers Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham**

### *Smith’s Biography and Cross-Cutting Circles*

It is important to note that Smith ushered in the formal end of the moral sense school of philosophy. But to fully understand how Smith is the culmination of the school’s dialectical patterning, we must trace his absorption and deep interactions with those philosophers discussed in the preceding chapters. A product of the Scottish Enlightenment, the studious Adam Smith benefited greatly from a fellowship that afforded him a six-year stint at Oxford. This education laid the foundation for a life immersed in thought that led to him producing some of the era’s most influential theories that are still impactful in their modern iterations. His early studies at Glasgow University in 1737 brought him under the tutelage of Francis Hutcheson, who was Hume’s professor. Hutcheson had evolved Shaftesbury’s concept of moral sense into the epistemological philosophy that knowledge comes through our affects before reason. Along with many other ideas from Hutcheson, this thinker’s theories created a strong impact on Smith’s developing philosophy. Additionally, while at Oxford, Smith is believed to have read Hume’s

*Treatise*, although Smith might have encountered it in his final years at Glasgow, which influenced his composition during those years of *The Principles Which Lead and Direct Philosophical Enquiries* (Rasmussen 40).<sup>59</sup> This work reveals Smith's early moral sense disposition and his familiarity with Hume's *Treatise*, where the two thinkers intersect on ideas of custom and imagination in the process of inferring cause and effect.

After Oxford, Smith began a career as a freelance lecturer in Edinburgh. During this time, the young philosopher likely met Hume, as Smith's academic reputation spread, earning him a position at Glasgow University. Smith eventually became the Chair of Moral Philosophy, a position once held by Hutcheson. Arguably, this was the most prominent position in academia in all of Scotland. James Boswell, Johnson's biographer and member of his club, enjoyed his instruction under Smith's guidance during this time. While Smith remained in Glasgow teaching and Hume moved to Edinburgh, they maintained their intellectual ties via epistolary correspondences. Their correspondence carried on even as Smith found himself in London in 1775, where he became a member of and frequently attended Johnson's club. These social gatherings provided him interaction with the intellectuals like Charles Burney (Frances Burney's father), David Garrick, Edmund Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dr. Goldsmith, and George Fordyce, to name a few. Even after meeting and befriending such great men, Smith's friendship with Hume remained his most enduring. In 1776, about two months after the publication of *The Wealth of Nations* (WN),<sup>60</sup> Hume drew up a new will that left Smith with all his manuscripts. The continuance of WN's cultural impacts more than two centuries later cannot be overstated.

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<sup>59</sup> According to Rasmussen, The first part of *The Principles Which Lead and Direct Philosophical Enquiries* are referred to by the "original editors, Joseph Black and James Hutton, and the editors of the modern Glasgow edition of Smith's works" as *The History of Astronomy* (FN: 267).

<sup>60</sup> The full title of WN is *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*.

*Adam Smith's Core Ideas: Valuing Every Person's Internal Moral Judgments*

Carl Dennis Rasmussen notes that because Smith did not publish a second work for seventeen years after *The Theory of Moral Sentiments (TMS)*, this impactful work “secured his reputation as an important man of letters” (87). *TMS* “was an immediate hit. Intelligent and thought-provoking yet less abstruse than the *Treatise*..., the work found an eager audience throughout Europe’s republic of letters” (87). Smith’s overall theories demonstrate a “strong commitment to the soundness of the ordinary human being’s judgments, and a concern to fend off attempts, by philosophers and policy-makers, to replace those judgments with the supposedly better ‘systems’ invented by intellectuals” (Fleischacker 1). Smith’s emphasis on formulating theory from ordinary, daily moral judgments and on considering life from an internal to external experience can be seen in his famed concept of how sympathy works through his imagined internal entity of the Impartial Spectator, which will be detailed below and figures centrally within This Chapter’s *Frankenstein* analysis. “In Smith’s view all moral theories prior to his own were not so much incorrect as one-sided, seeking to base right and wrong too exclusively on a single feature of our moral lives” (Rasmussen 88). Smith seeks to understand the complexity of issues with all their particular elements from individual people’s perspectives. Thus, Smith naturally developed his moral philosophy with people’s own judgments in mind and connects it with political theory in his ideas of a laissez-faire, non-interventionist government.



## **Smith's Thesis: A Particularist View that Values Intentions**

### *Smith as a Particularist: His Anti-reductionist Views*

Smith's moral philosophy can be described as "the *phenomenology* of morals, describing the workings of our modes of moral judgment as carefully as possible from within, and believing that the comprehensive view that results can itself help guide us in moral judgment"

(Fleischacker 3). While Smith respected his teacher Francis Hutcheson, the student disagreed with his teacher's proto-utilitarian concepts of morality being reducible to a simple code of divine or natural laws that would foster "the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people." As Smith evolved into an anti-reductionist who questioned the utility principle, he falls into the philosophical category of being a particularist, which matches the thread of his emphasis on exploring the complex individual's mind and experiences. Rejecting the consequentialist perspectives, Smith felt that people's motives or propriety for actions superseded the consequences. His theory invokes the Stoics which refuse reducing virtue to a single cause, principle, or set of laws in favor of contemplating the many factors that contribute to and comprise an overall moral dilemma.

### *Virtue and Happiness: Derived from Mutual Emotional Adjustment*

Smith asserts that the main drive in human life revolves around the desire to connect with others, which leads people to engage in constant emotional modulation and adjustments of expressions. People must assess and understand their internal sentiments, assess and understand their social circle to determine how others will receive their external expressions. Smith believes this internal to external feedback loop fosters a positive regulatory system whereby people constantly interact

in systems of *mutual emotional adjustment*. As people balance their impulses with a concern for others, this results in consciously negotiating one's impulses increasingly towards virtuous behavior. For Smith, sympathetically considering one's behavior in relationship to others and their likely interpretation or response to one's behavior is moral knowledge.

Consider a situation where one person is furious and feels on the verge of exploding with rage. When the person sympathetically considers the impact of the fury on an observer or listener, that person, hopefully, will modulate the anger by a calmly explain its cause. If the person does not achieve control of the anger, the observer or listener might notice and be inclined to abandon the person, meet fire with fire, or have some other unhelpful reaction. Instead if the person presents to the observer or listener in a more regulated manner the listener might sympathetically consider the other person's perspective and offer some relief, even if it is only compassionate listening. In this manner of self-restraint, both persons arrive at moral virtue by negotiating against their initial unhelpful reactions.

For Smith, this normative guide of virtue encompasses both the agent of action (as in the enraged person) imagining about, thinking about and understanding the emotional responses of the observer. In this way, both participants struggle to deny their initial reactions through the goal of interconnecting with one another. In striving to achieve this goal of connecting, they arrive at virtue. In this simple example, the two participants engage in virtuous benevolence, inspiring happiness. Thus, Smith proposes a social system wherein happiness becomes interconnected with virtuous or moral behavior.

## Smith's Antithesis: Exploring a Projected Sympathy through the Impartial Spectator

### *Smith's Definition of Sympathy*

Just as other philosophers embraced methodologies from the hard sciences, Smith and his contemporary “Scottish moral philosophers attempted through empirical inquiry to describe where actual moral judgments come from, given ordinary people as they behave in the world as it appears” (Forman 58–9). Taking an empirical approach, Smith follows in the footsteps of Hutcheson and Hume to develop a sociological type of theory detailing how humans arrive at moral judgments. Smith develops his iteration of sympathy from this rational framework. Smith does not delve into a weepy sense of sympathy as a parallel identification of the same emotions. Instead, Smith’s “sympathy does not dissolve the sense of separateness of either party;... it reflects our fundamental separateness as subjects... (and) it also permits the spectator ‘emotional space’ in which to comfort and assist the actor” (Griswold *Adam Smith* 88). Smith rejects Hume’s definition of sympathy as a contagious experience where the perceiver might even feel the other person’s feelings originated from within his own heart, body, and mind. For Smith, sympathy does not devolve into imagining the feelings and remains a cognitive, distanced act and experience.

### *The Impartial Spectator*

David Marshall ascertains that previous moral philosophers influenced Smith through tracing linguistic and philosophical echoes in Smith’s works. For example, Marshall details: The characterization of the impartial spectator as the ‘man within the breast’ recalls Butler’s discussion of ‘the witness of conscience’ and Hume’s discussions, in his *Enquiry Concerning the*

*Principles of Morals*, of the moral value of considering how we appear in the eyes of those who regard us (Marshall *Figure of Theater* 177). Thus, the influence of Butler's and Hume's ideas shine through in his concepts and language. Marshall then emphasizes, "but it is Shaftesbury who expounds a 'doctrine of two persons in one individual self' and calls for an 'inspector or auditor [to be] established within us' as he presents his 'dramatic method' in *Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author*" (*Figure of Theater* 177). Shaftesbury encourages people to psychologically divide into two persons and listen to a reading from one's critical self, which he imagines as Delphi's oracle. Marshall follows the overt parallels in Smith's divided self in the Impartial Spectator and the agent-actor. Marshall also asserts Shaftesbury's critical self serves as a predecessor to Smith's Impartial Spectator. They connect in the idea of messages (as told in the form of soliloquies) intersecting with the theater-based terms and figures "inscribed within Smith's characterizations of sympathy and the impartial spectator, but they are also clearly informed by Shaftesbury's meditation on the dramatic character of the self and the problematic theatricality that threatens the self as it appears before the eyes of the world" (*Figure of Theater* 177). Thus, Smith's imagined internal entity of the impartial spectator represents a unique iteration evolved out of the continuum of moral philosophy.

Because Smith sees the difficulty of sympathetic regulation, he is skeptical that knowing and studying the mind and its emotions is sufficient. In his doubt he offers the impartial spectator as a tool he hopes will aid people's regulatory process. Because Smith presents the impartial spectator as tool to further moral knowledge, but an additive strategy, this chapter characterizes the Impartial Spectator as a part of his dialect's antithesis. Smith explains the impartial spectator can be imagined as an internal entity where a psychic division exists between the self and the witnessing impartial spectator, "with the eyes of this great inmate [the impartial spectator] he has

always been accustomed to regard whatever relates to himself’ (*TMS* 1.3.3, 25/147).<sup>61</sup> Smith explains that the impartial spectator always exists within the person. And, the person constantly—every day and throughout every day—engages in reflective practices through the impartial spectator’s unbiased lens on a situation. Smith explains that:

This habit has become perfectly familiar to him. He has been in the constant practice, and, indeed, under the constant necessity, of modelling, or of endeavouring to model, not only his outward conduct and behaviour, but, as much as he can, even his inward sentiments and feelings, according to those of this awful and respectable judge. (*TMS* 1.3.3, 25/147)

In this way, the example person, here male, uses the lens of the impartial spectator to grasp an elevated, holistic understanding of another person, a situation, and himself. The filter of the impartial spectator is supposed to help free the person from bias and cloudy judgments.

The impartial spectator should be something like the better nature of ourselves. Smith understands that “we know that many actual spectators misjudge our situations out of ignorance or interest, so we seek to judge, and act on, just the feelings that a well-informed and *impartial* spectator would have” (Fleischacker 129, 135). In Smith’s conception, people should think about what the impartial spectator would do and behave according to those enlightened ideas.

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<sup>61</sup> All references to Adam Smith’s *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* come from the edition edited by D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie for Clarendon Press; Oxford UP in 1976 republished in 2020 in the online database *Past Masters Full Text Humanity*; (Vol 1. Part 3. Chp 3. Par 25/Pg 147)

### *Imagination*

Imagination plays a pivotal role in Smith's conception of the impartial spectator and the centrality of the faculty of sympathy. Griswold explains that, for Smith, "morality requires that we be able to see things from the other person's point of view...(and) sympathy is also an act of the imagination. Emotions are themselves shaped by imagination" (*Adam Smith* 15). Griswold contends that "since imagination turns out to be essential to the construction of morality as well as to that of reason, we are creatures of the imagination no less than of the passions" (*Adam Smith* 16). Because Smith believes connecting with others and being highly regarded by them is the greatest means of happiness, the imagination aids people's connections with others by supporting the impartial spectator's knowledge and understanding of other people's sympathetic responses.

### *Mutual Sympathy*

Smith explains that this mutual sympathy occurs "because when one's companion's sentiments not only correspond with one's own but also lead and direct [one's] own; when, in forming them, [the companion] appears to have attended to many things which [one] had overlooked, and to have adjusted them to all the various circumstance of their objects" (*TMS* 1.1.1.IV, 3/20). Smith continues to detail this personable interaction based on mutual sympathy where "[one] not only approves of [their companion], but wonder and are surprised at their [companion's] uncommon and unexpected acuteness and comprehensiveness, and he appears to deserve a very high degree of admiration and applause" (*TMS* 1.1.1.IV, 3/20). In this way, the angry man and the listener can be imagined later to enjoy a cup of coffee and a conversation together as they relate to one

another and share their ideas in ways that enhance their own and each other's understandings and experiences.

Just as Hume believes that people will naturally feel greater sympathy and connection with people closer to them in time, space, and outlook, Smith also asserts that the same relationship parameters occur among people. Smith explains that the "natural disposition to accommodate and to assimilate, as much as we can, our own sentiments, principles, and feelings, to those which we see fixed and rooted in the persons whom we are obliged to live and converse a great deal with, is the cause of the contagious effects of both good and bad company" (*TMS* 1.VI.2.1, 17/225). Smith's ideas of "bird of a feather, flock together" also connects with his ideas that one person or animal from a specific group should naturally exemplify the standard attributes of that culture or species. Smith explains that "in each species of creatures, what is most beautiful bears the strongest characters of the general fabric of the species, and has the strongest resemblance to the greater part of the individuals with which it is classed" (*TMS* 1.V.1b, 8/199). Yet, Smith adds that "Monsters, on the contrary, or what is perfectly deformed, are always most singular and odd, and have the least resemblance to the generality of that species to which they belong" (*TMS* 1.V.1b, 8/199). Although the word "monsters" seems to make a clear distinction that Smith refers to aberrant creatures and not humans of other nations or race, this point in Smith's moral philosophy becomes a point of debate that will be discussed in the Tribalist criticism section.

### *How to Elicit Sympathy: Mitigate One's Emotions and Expressions*

In Smith's moral philosophy dialectic, people do not feel their own unmitigated emotions—this would be an affront. In his conception, they feel their emotions through the lens and filter of the

impartial spectator who helps people understand and accept situations and to mitigate their emotional responses. Marshall asserts that “Smith’s endorsement of Stoic ideas” results from “an antithetical sensibility; Smith stands for the opposite of exhibitionism” where one must “not display one’s sentiments unless one is sure of eliciting sympathy; indeed, it would be best not to display oneself at all, given the small likelihood of attaining fellow-feeling” (*Figure of Theater* 184). Some might expect this stoic curtailing of passionate expression would cause Smith to engage in treatises on women in being perceived as an emotional sex. In fact, *TMS* all but excludes references to women, who were excluded precisely because of this negative perception of their nature.

Thus, while Smith contrasts the Stoics by valuing the ability to imagine others’ feelings sympathetically, Marshall notes that he believed “one should avoid exposing oneself as a spectacle before unsympathetic eyes” (*Figure of Theater* 185). This links back to the opening example of the furious man and the listener, where they moderated their reactions before engaging with each other. Smith firmly believes that when people express extreme emotions, it is off-putting to those in their environment. In fact, these volatile persons even make themselves upset. “The person under the influence of any of those extravagant passions, is not only miserable in his actual situation, but is often disposed to disturb the peace of society, in order to arrive at that which he so foolishly admires” (*TMS* 1.3.3, 31/150) Smith explains that “[the agent] can only hope to obtain [sympathy] by lowering his passion to that pitch, in which the spectators are capable of going along with him” (*TMS* 1.1.1.4, 7/22). If the furious man had just continued with his explosive outrage, then the other person might have been offended and left or returned fire with fire.



## Smith's Synthesis: Religious, Social, and Governmental Regulatory Structures

Griswold argues that “the centrality Smith gives to sympathy is itself reflective of his moral vision. The emphasis that his political philosophy places on the mean, on imperfection, and on the dangers of misplaced utopianism must also be understood in this light” (*Adam Smith* 13). Thus, along with self-knowledge and regulation as aided by the impartial spectator, Griswold contends that Smith contemplated all areas of life, including the mediating institutions of “commerce, religion, education” as he engaged in “subtle and dialectical efforts to promote the key themes of the Enlightenment in the face of his” and the general world’s doubt of the human capacity to enact moral behavior (*Adam Smith* 20). For Smith, this skepticism that people will bridge the gap from moral knowledge to moral behavior prompted him to contemplate society as between:

two models of morality, one founded on the virtues, another on rules and laws. These models have often been thought to work against one another, for the morality of the virtues emphasizes character, judgment, and perception whereas the morality of rules emphasizes duty, obligation, and conformity of action to principle. Smith attempts to combine them with the first grounding the second. (Griswold 20)

Griswold highlights this doubt as foundational to Smith’s three-stage dialectic, which transitions to the third synthesis stage through his theories of education and the normative spectator’s gaze.

### *External Regulatory Structures: Education*

To inculcate the self-reflection and imagination necessary to engage in regulating one’s emotions so as to be able to join in sympathetic community with others, Smith’s *TMS* advances education as an external regulator. Smith adamantly believes that children should be educated at home as

“The education of boys at distant great schools, of young men at distant colleges, of young ladies in distant nunneries and boarding-schools, seems, in the higher ranks of life, to have hurt most essentially the domestic morals, and consequently the domestic happiness, both of France and England” (*TMS* 1.6.2.1, 10/223). Domestic instruction fosters genuine personal growth, affection for siblings and parents, and a sense of respect for one’s elders. Smith rhetorically asks, “Do you wish to educate your children to be dutiful to their parents, to be kind and affectionate to their brothers and sisters? put them under the necessity of being dutiful children, of being kind and affectionate brothers and sisters: educate them in your own house” (*TMS* 1.6.2.1, 10/223). After establishing the home and hearth as the best space for model affective regulation and sympathy, he argues that plays and literature are invaluable in modeling the sympathy and the value of self-regulation. Neven Leddy asserts that “For Smith, the content of ancient history, especially philosophy, was too narrow for a complete Enlightenment education: his solution was to broaden that corpus to include modern sentimental novels... In simple terms, Smith argued for the inclusion of a feminine (or feminizing) voice within the canon” (271–2). This practical advice illustrates Smith’s belief in humans’ imaginative faculty and the impartial spectator’s ability to be exercised and challenged through active development. For Smith, he believes domestic education and reading sentimental novels are an essential for regulating people’s emotions and modeling dynamic imaginative thinking about the needs and feelings of others.

### *Normative Regulatory Structures: Society’s Gaze and Laissez-Faire Government Systems*

In addition to the normative power of education and its assistant literature, Smith turns to the normative powers of distributive justice as administered by the individual. Marshall considers Smith’s masculine precepts on “antiexhibitionist ideal of self-mastery,” which connects with a

general desire to present a public persona (*Figure of Theater* 185): “Most people are preoccupied with the character they present before the eyes of the world, and they know what they can and cannot expect from these spectators” (185). While this seems to erode the empowerment and moral self-knowing conferred by one’s internal impartial spectator Marshall suggests that Smith’s *TMS* “represents a society where everyone and everything seems motivated by the gaze of spectators” who “are not the imaginary, impartial judges who personify our conscience” (*Figure of Theater* 185). Affirming that people desire the approbation of their peers, Smith suggests that people strive for riches and status to avoid the harsh glare of the unsympathetic spectators. Smith explains that “‘It is chiefly from this regard to the sentiments of mankind, that we pursue riches and avoid poverty’ as ‘To be observed...with sympathy, complacency, and approbation, are all the advantages’ that support a person’s life success” (qtd. in Marshall 186). Returning to Smith’s work in economics and his theories’ profound impacts that continue in the twenty-first century, Marshall notes how Smith links the individual need “to secure sympathetic spectators” with wealth-based aspirations, “as the economist is prefigured by the moral philosopher who explains the wealth of nations with theory of moral sentiments” (186).

This final subsection explores Smith’s laissez-faire economic theory as a means of normative moral regulation much like the family dynamics explored above. This explanation relates to his particularist views on people’s willingness to understand and to help each other from an internal-to-external circuit of moral knowledge and moral behavior. The process of exchanging goods and services in the marketplace is seen by Smith as humanizing. People must look at situation from the other persons’ point of view to adjust expectations. This theory of commerce depends on Smith’s vision of sympathy. In fact, Smith asserts the desire to be trusted is one of people’s greatest goals and the process of economic negotiation, exchange and

entrepreneurship is the perfect experiential practice grounds for this self-disciplining (*TMS* 1.7.4, 24-25/336). A person cannot gain another's trust if they are not allowed to act of their own volition. Importantly, as with Marshall's observation, Smith's regulatory system relies on an individual's desire for an approving normative spectator's gaze.

In this system of free will and voluntary action outside of government interference, Smith sees the nation effectively and fairly working within its local sectors. And he believes this laissez-faire system helps prevent bias and corruption: "When the legislature establishes premiums and other encouragements to advance the linen or woollen manufactures, its conduct seldom proceeds from pure sympathy with the wearer of cheap or fine cloth, and much less from that with the manufacturer or merchant" (*TMS* 1.4.1b, 10/185). Griswold describes Smith's skepticism about governmental interventions to correct inequalities as fear that distributive justice will undermine ethics. Thus, while some modern people charge Smith's *WN* of promoting extreme privatization that benefits hegemonic sectors, his vision felt that people participated in the national economy based on their own judgments and willingness. He believed his system prevented unfair interventions that fostered unfair advantages and created problems through a lack of local knowledge.

#### *Wollstonecraft: Smith's Detractor*

M. Shelley's robust intellectual background brings one to imagine M. Shelley and her intellectual partner, Percy steeped in conversation over *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*; contemplating Wollstonecraft's courage as she spars with Smith's popular text *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Mary understood Wollstonecraft's nuanced argument that uses the major precepts of Smith's philosophy, sympathy, to explore the ways in which society was not equipped to support

Smith's utopic moral vision. In *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft argues society encourages women to be pretty, useful companions "without a mind" and because men are equally "contented to live" with such a companion, a man "in the society of his wife is still alone, unless when the man is sunk in the brute" (96). Such intellectual inequality forestalls what she believes Smith, "a grave philosophical reasoner," calls the "'charm of life,'" sympathy; the ability "to observe in other men a fellow-feeling with all the emotions of our own breast" (96). Because society, in her view, had yet to value women "in the grand light of human creatures, who, in common with men, are placed on this earth to unfold their faculties" (11) and instead valued women's pliancy, vacuity, and superficial appearances, Wollstonecraft suggests Smith's well intentioned, yet too utopian, construction of the impartial spectator constitutionally flawed; in *Vindication* Wollstonecraft argues the impartial spectator is based on local norms and prejudices that already disqualify women from being perceived positively by society because society constructed women as superficial and duplicitous. Ironically Wollstonecraft pulls from Smith's spectator regulation logic, his description that men cannot be "satisfied merely with being believed, unless they are at the same time conscious that [they] are worthy of belief" (*TMS* 1.7.4, 24-25/336) to argue the harm that would come from applying Smith's moral process to women "I am afraid that morality is very insidiously undermined, in the female world, by the attention being turned to the show instead of the substance... We should never, perhaps, have heard of Lucretia, had she died to preserve her chastity instead of her reputation" (*Vindication* 143). This twisted prejudice of the time reverses Smith's moral logic when applied to women. Furthermore she rejects Smith's turn to the impartial spectator to aid women in viewing themselves through the eyes of the other "because each bystander may have his own prejudices, besides the prejudices of his age or country" (*Vindication* 143). Accordingly, women should not attempt to hold themselves up to the

imagined human spectator with all the flaws and twisted logic, but rather they should imagine themselves in the eyes of God “who seeth each thought ripen into action, and whose judgment never swerves from the eternal rule of right. Righteous are all his judgments—just, as merciful!” (*Vindication* 143). Instead of giving power over to what she perceived as faulty social constructions advanced by fallible men, Wollstonecraft argues for Dr. Price’s moral philosophy (influenced by Joseph Butler) which values conscience.

Because Smith’s moral philosophy depends upon the similarity of physical appearances and cultural outlooks the “impartial spectator seems too enmeshed in the attitudes and interests of the society in which it develops for it to be free of that society’s biases, or to help us care impartially for all human beings” (Fleischacker 14). This critique of course relates to people outside one’s culture but this chapter argues it also relates to those segments of the population, like women, who are raised under a radically different normative rubric than their male counterparts. In this way, in-culture persons only apply virtues and laws to people of their own tribe, or gender with a subjective, inconsistent application of virtue and law towards out-culture persons. Critics charge that, according to the people’s desires for mutual sympathy gained through submissive mutual emotional adjustment, people will follow their culture’s or gender’s hegemonic value systems—even if this means racist and sexist thinking and practices.

Smith agrees that people naturally care for their in-culture people more than out-culture ones. And, while Smith adamantly opposes blind following of “established custom,” he does not clarify systems of social equity nor address how persons should handle situations where they go against the hegemonic tide (*TMS* 1.5.1b, 5/197). Of course, these questions are far more complex and Smith does not advocate for close-mindedness and exclusionary social systems. Echoing the

Stoics, he emphasizes that each person is always responsible for his or her own thoughts and actions.

### *Bentham's Biography and Cross-Cutting Circles*

Bentham's innate intelligence shone through from an early age, which helped steer him through British and European cultures where his contentious irreligious and reform-minded proposals often became obstacles to standard career advancements. At the age of twelve, he was entered into Queen's College, Oxford, where he excelled in studies. Bentham enjoyed literature and read Richardson's *Clarissa* and Locke's *Essay*, to name a few of his preferred texts. Regardless of his acumen and diligence, Bentham was disqualified from receiving his college degree because he would not sign the statement of faith in God and the Church. Nevertheless, Bentham's refined principles did not stop him from beginning his career in law and returning to Oxford to attend William Blackstone's lectures. Blackstone, a formidable figure in British law, proposed a theory known as the "natural law," which sparked Bentham's deep disagreement. Bentham felt it relied on unfounded, rigid principles regarding human nature as a justification for unfair laws.

Rebutting Blackstone's ideas became a central driver in Bentham's works towards increased flexibility in legal reforms. After a short-lived legal career, Bentham launched his career in 1776 as a legal theorist with the anonymous publication critiquing Blackstone's *Commentaries*.

From 1786–7, Bentham joined his brother Samuel in Russia, where he continued to work on his legal and governmental theories as well as turning his attention to his brother's project for a new type of prison called the panopticon. As revolutionary fervor in Russia and France advanced, Bentham—who was sympathetic to their causes at the time—issued a series of letters in 1789 critiquing Prime Minister William Pitts' adversarial position toward France. Although

Bentham came to disapprove of the bloody turn the French Revolution took, France granted him honorary citizenship in 1792. During this time, Bentham worked intensively on nearly every type of government and social system reform. He continued to write and advise other countries on their juridical and governmental systems throughout his life. In 1823, he founded the *Westminster Review* with his friend James Mill. This publication brought a legion of radical thinkers together to promote their perspectives. Bentham was profoundly influential in bringing the Great Reform Act to fruition. However, sadly, or fittingly he died on the eve of its signing. Never having married, Bentham died surrounded by his friends who watched his body anatomized for the advancement of science. His mummified head and skeleton were placed on display at the university college London. Bentham's principle of the Greatest Happiness Principle and the government as a trustee while the citizens are the beneficiaries has profoundly impacted political science theory. And, Bentham's advocating for transparency and responsibility by the government has impacted people's views of their rights to demand equity from their governing bodies.

#### *Jeremy Bentham: Pragmatic Advocate for Equity-based Structural Reforms*

Although profoundly influenced by the moral sense school, particularly Hutcheson's and Hume's proto-utilitarian ideas, Bentham's moral philosophy differs from previous thinkers in that he moves away from creating theories on the mind's anatomy (like Locke and Shaftesbury). And, Bentham eschews any turns towards religious-based internal or external regulatory structures. Nevertheless, within this project's transdisciplinary framework, Bentham's legal, practical outlooks on human behavior can still be codified within a three-stage thesis, antithesis, and synthesis dialectic. While Bentham's thesis asserts that humans can access moral knowledge



through their passions of pain and pleasure, his antithesis doubts that individuals will act morally upon ethical principles. He also doubts that the law will enact genuine justice, as he views the law as corrupt, especially through inequitable voting rights and general discriminatory practices. Bentham's synthesis advocates for a turn to deep structural reform of the British legal system.

### **Bentham's Thesis: All Sensations Are Quantifiable Levels of Pain and Pleasure**

#### *Pain and Pleasure Motivate Action: Bentham as a Consequentialist*

Bentham shares Smith's desires to deeply and accurately understand the intricate details of circumstances, including the motives of multiple agents, un/intended outcomes, causal relations, and all the minutia related to a situation. However, while Smith believes this understanding can come from cognitive and emotive sympathetic work, Bentham believes only two passions, pain and pleasure, are needed for moral knowledge. He asserts that "Now, pleasure is in *itself* a good: nay, even setting aside immunity from pain, the only good: pain is in itself an evil; and, indeed, without exception, the only evil; or else the words good and evil have no meaning. And this is alike true of every sort of pain, and of every sort of pleasure" (*IMPL* 10.2, 10/100).<sup>62</sup> In this view, pleasure represents the good or virtuous and can even prevent or ameliorate the unpleasantness of pain. Although Bentham eschews religious concepts, he equates pain with viciousness and evil. Bentham views these two intertwined reactions as the undeniable guides that exert the most decisive influence in people's lives, especially in determining their

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<sup>62</sup> Jeremy Bentham's *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. Edited by J. H. Burns, Charlottesville, Virginia, IntelLex Corp., 2000. *IntelLex*, <http://doi.org/library.nlx.com.ccl.idm.oclc.org>.

movements towards moral behavior. Bentham explains that: “there is nothing by which a man can ultimately be made to do it, but either pain or pleasure. Having taken a general view of these two grand objects (viz. pleasure, and what comes to the same thing, immunity from pain) in the character of final causes; it will be necessary to take a view of pleasure and pain itself, in the character of efficient causes or means” (*IMPL* 3, 1/35). Thus, while Bentham engages in a lifetime of work on socio-legal reforms, he ultimately believes that pleasure and pain present the guiding force in people’s lives beyond externally enforced systems of behavioral conditioning.

### *The Five Sanctions*

Questions arise regarding Bentham’s acquiescence to the power of pleasure and pain as internal regulatory structures for individuals juxtaposed with his lifelong emphasis on creating socio-legal reform. How would he devise effective socio-legal reforms if he believes in the dominating power of pleasure and pain as internal regulatory structures? As external sources of external pleasure and pain, Bentham initially codifies four sanctions—of the physical, political, moral, and religious—and later adds a fifth of sympathy:

There are four distinguishable sources from which pleasure and pain are in use to flow: considered separately, they may be termed the *physical*, the *political*, the *moral*, and the *religious*: and inasmuch as the pleasures and pains belonging to each of them are capable of giving a binding force to any law or rule of conduct, they may all of them be termed *sanctions*. (*IPML* 3, 2/35)

In his view, these external five sanctions mirror the internal ones and facilitate public structures that can guide moral behavior. Bentham hopes that legislators who hold utilitarian viewpoints apply these sanctions to direct citizens in their daily lives. Taking a utilitarian perspective,

lawmakers and citizens can understand their behavior within the context of how their actions interact with promoting the greatest happiness for the general population.

### **Bentham's Antithesis: The Greatest Happiness Principle Is Stymied by Corruption**

#### *The Greatest Happiness Principle and Utilitarian Calculation*

Bentham's central concerns remain how best to support the citizens enjoying genuine freedom in an increasingly equitable social environment. In considering the people themselves, he believes that their collective desires should be understood by determining the aggregate of their personal desires. "A thing is said to promote the interest, or to be *for* the interest, of an individual, when it tends to add to the sum total of his pleasures: or, what comes to the same thing, to diminish the sum total of his pains" (*IPML* 1, 5/13). Bentham believes these desires arise from their associated perspectives on what will lead to pleasure or pain. "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne" (*IPML* 1, 1/12). Thus, Bentham maintains that external regulatory structures should consider these powerful influences.

In Bentham's view, pain and pleasure "govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think" (*IPML* 1, 1/12). Even if people try to avoid pain's and pleasure's dominance in their lives, they will futilely remain subject to their control, as "every effort we can make to throw off our subjection, will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it" (*IPML* 1, 1/12). Thus, governments must also accept this dominance of pleasure and pain in people's lives and make regulations

accordingly. Bentham contends that his idea of “the *principle of utility* recognizes this subjection, and assumes it for the foundation of that system, the object of which is to rear the fabric of felicity by the hands of reason and of law” (*IPML* 1, 1/12).

### *Bentham’s Accusations of Rule by Sympathy and Corruption*

According to Bentham the greatest happiness principle provides a “standard of right and wrong in the field of morality in general, and of Government in particular” as government decrees must be framed from the perspective of the government and the people being in a mutually agreed upon and mutually beneficial contract that fosters fairness (*Fragment* App. 508).<sup>63</sup> However, Bentham believed the British government was no longer owning up to its contractual duties. In Bentham’s opinion, he felt the British governing systems had become severely corrupt through inconsistent and abstruse legal codes, which facilitated and were facilitated by corruption among the monarchy, judges, and lawyers. “Such as it was, it was the offspring of Fiction; meaning here by the word Fiction, that which is meant by it in law-language. A fiction of law may be defined—a willful falsehood, having for its object the stealing legislative powers” (*Fragment* App. 510).

Bentham contends that the socio-legal system has devolved to intense corruption due to decisions being made according to the sentiment of sympathy, as in the prevalent ideas of Adam Smith. Bentham views Smith’s dialectic as dangerously subjective, which is contrasted to Bentham’s dialectic predicated on pain and pleasure as a means of forming moral knowledge and

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<sup>63</sup> Jeremy Bentham’s *A Comment on the Commentaries and A Fragment on Government The Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham*. Electronic Edition. Burns, J.H. and H.L.A. Hart IntLex Corp. Charlottesville, Virginia, U.S.A. 2000 The Athlone Press London: United Kingdom 1977

regulating moral actions. Bentham notes with disdain the era's deference to feelings to make legal decisions. He ruminates that "Among principles adverse to that of utility, that which at this day seems to have most influence in matters of government, is what may be called the principle of sympathy and antipathy" (*IPML* 2, 11/22). Bentham proceeds to criticize a judge's ability capriciously to mark "with the seal of disapprobation, you need but to take counsel of your own feelings" according to "whatever you find in yourself a propensity to condemn, is wrong for that very reason" (*IPML* 2, 11/22). Bentham contends that this fickleness permits harmful arbitrary court decisions.

Continuing to chastise the fickleness of this inconsistent regulation system where judges can issue punishments based on personal feelings associated with a legal case, Bentham intones, "if you hate much, punish much: if you hate little, punish little: punish as you hate. If you hate not at all, punish not at all: the fine feelings of the soul are not to be overborne and tyrannized by the harsh and rugged dictates of political utility" (*IPML* 2, 13/26). Thus, legality is not a quantifiable regulatory system, but one based on whimsy and bias. "They consist all of them in so many contrivances for avoiding the obligation of appealing to any external standard, and for prevailing upon the reader to accept of the author's sentiment or opinion as a reason and that a sufficient one for itself" (*IPML* 2, 14/26). This sympathy-based system denies the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people, as it holds no requirements for equity or consistency from the legal system. "The various systems that have been formed concerning the standard of right and wrong, may all be reduced to the principle of sympathy and antipathy" (*IMPL* 2, 16/30). And, as this freedom to issue sympathy- or antipathy-based decrees offers innumerable structural and personal benefits, this system will likely continue indefinitely.

While some assert that excluding evidence streamlines the cases and prevents spurious evidence from gaining traction, Bentham views the exclusion of evidence as having significant negative repercussions. Of course, Bentham encourages a healthy suspicion of evidence. However, Bentham sees the exclusion of evidence based on a judge's caprice as shutting the door "against evidence in its most trustworthy shape" and opening the door to the uncontrolled authority of the judges (OLL V.6 Pr, 579). To curb the power of judges and their precedent-making judgements, Bentham encourages the increased use of trial by jury. He believes that "the despotism produced by taking out of the hands of jurors the function of deciding on the question of fact, in so far as the allegation concerning it is considered as proved, disproved, or not proved, by circumstantial evidence" has had terrible chains of negative impacts on the British legal system (OLL V.6 Pr, 507). If a judgment error is made in a jury trial, that error does not become accepted as a precedent in the same way that judge's ruling becomes codified into regulatory codes.

For Bentham, the issue of circumstantial evidence cannot be overstated, as he wants the courts to understand every germane aspect of a case to ensure justice is served. He argues that capricious judges issue rulings based "upon no more than one article of circumstantial evidence" to the exclusion of other pieces of evidence and silenced testimony (OLL V.6, 52). Bentham considers this an injustice:

Why? Because, though in the formation of that decision, the one circumstance in question was the only circumstance expressly brought to view and mention,—yet it may have happened that the case afforded other evidences, by each of which a part more or less considerable was borne in the formation of the decision so pronounced. So much for what is possible;—what is certain is, that in every rule by which expression is given in general

terms to a conclusion thus formed, all these corroborating circumstances, if any such there were, will be excluded. (OLL V.6, 52)

Bentham perceives a pernicious domino effect in the judges' ability to allow or dismiss evidence haphazardly:

Conclusion so drawn as above, will come to be applied by successive judges; whatsoever infirmative facts the case admits of, may have had place in any number: yet of none of them can the existence be brought to view; for the inference, as drawn, is regularly all-comprehensive; nor can any hand but that of a judge presume to narrow it. (OLL V.6, 52)

At this point, Bentham adds his solution—trial by jury. He proposes that “of the conclusion drawn by a jury, the mischief, if it be erroneous, and thence mischievous, goes not beyond that individual case (OLL V.6, 52-3). Bentham conveys his distrust of the current legal system where judges have indirectly usurped lawmaking authority from legislators through capriciously issuing rulings that transition into rigidly enforced precedents.

### **Bentham's Synthesis: Advocating the Natural System as “Securities Against Misrule”**

Dubious of the intentions of the government and the legal system, Bentham begins his critique by dismantling what he identifies as Blackstone's fictional premise of the natural law. This idea proposes that institutions and laws cannot change because an original contract has dictated the law since time immemorial. In this critique, Bentham takes issue with presumptions without reason. Additionally, he sees the assertion—things are the way they are because they have always been so and can never be otherwise—as purposefully blocking the masses from understanding and achieving agency within the law. According to Bentham, sinister interests are at play when the masses are intentionally denied access to legal understanding, either by

obfuscating language or fallacious reasoning. Bentham explains that only lawyers and judges understand the law's convoluted structures. And lawyers and judges often come from a community for whom it is in their interest to maintain the law's current structure. Finally, Bentham critiques the law's prohibitive financial costs and its lack of transparency, specifically regarding the use of evidence. Bentham wants to make the legal system accessible to everyone, not only the richest and the most entrenched in the system. Allowing all evidence to make its way to a jury denies the judges' or sinister interests' power to shape the narrative of the cases. Instead, jurors can have the opportunity to use their faculties to assess the case's evidence and testimony. As a collective, the jury can compare, contrast, infer judgments while making causal connections. In essence, the group of citizens can do the work of making sense of the evidence in order to come to the most accurate understanding possible.

L. J. Hume explains Bentham's "commitment to the Whiggish notion of government as a trust was already deep-seated in this formative period. It determined his understanding of the objective to be achieved through constitutional law, which was to make the government—the trustee—act invariably in the interest of the beneficiaries, its subjects" (78). According to Bentham, the government essentially functions as a trustee who is contracted to ensure the greatest happiness for the beneficiaries, the people. If the government does not honor this contract, the people (its beneficiaries) have the right and obligation to hold the government to the contract and reform its operations. In Bentham's view, this proactive approach further reinforces the value and agency of the individual's emotions and reason. Bentham asserts that legislators should base decisions on how those impacts will foster happiness, pleasure, and security for human society. "It has been shown that the happiness of the individuals, of whom a community is composed, that is their pleasures and their security, is the end and the sole end which the



legislator ought to have in view” (*IMPL* 3 1/5). Regarding people being subject to pain and pleasure, Bentham reminds legislators of the importance of individual and community happiness and of the leaders’ responsibilities to encourage those states of existence.

*Bentham’s New System to Qualify Criminal Acts and Their Punishments*

The extent of Bentham’s work in government and social system reform cannot be overstated. On a comprehensive level, he worked to redefine what acts were even classified as criminal and to reorganize the punishments accorded to those acts. J. H. Burns’ introduction to *IMPL* explains, “Bentham sought to reduce punishment...to consider whether or not various actions should be regarded as offences... These were gathered under four headings: where punishment was groundless, inefficacious, unprofitable, and needless” (Intro, *IPML*, ixix). Bentham asserted punishment is groundless “when, for example, the person injured had given consent, or the offence was committed to prevent a larger calamity, or that adequate compensation for the injury caused by the commission of an offence was already available” (Intro, *IPML*, ixix). Bentham considered punishment inefficacious under situations such as insanity, intoxication, or infancy conditions.

Bentham’s point on punishment as unprofitable directly opposes Hume’s General Rule rebuttal of his story of returning money to the miser in a situation that adversely affected the public good. For Bentham, this idea refers to situations “where the evil of punishment in particular circumstances so outweighed the nature of the offence that it was not worth proceeding with the punishment” (Intro, *IPML*, xviii). Uncertain punishments refer to cases where too many tangentially related people might be implicated and the punishments will become out of proportion to the initial crime. The last redefinition of punishment connects with Bentham’s

ideas on prison reform. Bentham advocated that courts consider if a crime should be punished by penalties or jail time when education or other beneficial means can be applied to address the underlying circumstances that precipitated the criminal act.

### **Spotlights on Specific Bentham Reforms Related to this Research**

#### *Prison Reforms Using a Panopticon Architecture and Rejection of Capital Punishment*

Bentham truly believed that Britain's bloated legal system had become so corrupt that the nation teetered on the brink of revolution. For this, he was considered a political radical. Bentham deplored the British prison system, where inmates lived in dangerously unsanitary circumstances with prisons infested with rats and decaying structures. Bentham proposed a panopticon architectural vision, which does not mirror Foucault's dystopian concept. While Bentham's panopticon did include a centralized surveillance system, he envisioned a prison more as a rehabilitation center where people would live in sanitary housing. The Penitentiary Act of 1794 allowed Bentham to expand upon his vision for prison reform. However, by 1802, he discontinued his project, and the government reimbursed him for his time, effort, and personal funds that he put into the project.

Beyond the hygiene and structural advances to the prison system, Bentham sought to address criminality and recidivism through education and job training in the prison system. Bentham also worked against capital punishment. He believed that execution might be acceptable under criminal situations of extreme murder or treason that threatened the peace and stability of the nation. However, he refused to believe that capital punishment effectively deterred people from committing offenses and deplored that it was (in his opinion) "inequable in

its application, falling mainly on the shoulders of the poor, and because it is a form of punishment that is irremissible in the face of judicial error” (Crimmons 33). Ultimately, Bentham revised his opinion on any crimes being punishable by execution and advocated for the complete abolishment of capital punishment.

### *Increasing the Franchise*

Bentham worked extensively on reforming voting rights and the voting systems in England. He sought to eliminate royal patronage and to establish a system of the secret ballot. As he believed the legislature should serve as the proper lawmaking body, he helped institute fines held against truant legislators to ensure consistent attendance. And in keeping with his desire to increase public access to and knowledge of government activities, he worked to publish the parliamentary debates and to have the courts open to the public. In terms of women’s vote, he objectively agreed that women held the capacity and the right to vote. Nevertheless, he felt that slow changes fostered stability and deep restructuring. Thus, Bentham advocated for women “to be excluded until such time as universal male suffrage had been achieved” (OLL V.9, 108). At the same time, Bentham’s clear advocating for women’s capabilities and rights to vote should not be overlooked as a marker in women’s movements towards increased rights.

In conclusion, Bentham presents as the most legal-focused moral philosopher in this research project. While he acknowledges the dominant power of the internal regulatory structure of pain and pleasure, he emphasizes the need for external regulatory structures that echo these structures to maintain the Greatest Happiness Principle. With his work to increase the franchise, prison reform, and rejection of capital punishment, he offers a bastion of support for British legal

codes to move towards systems of increased equity for all minoritized persons, including illegitimate offspring and women.

### **Part III: The Novelist Mary Shelley**

#### *William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft: A-List Artist-Intellectuals of Their Day*

M. Shelley's parents, the Godwins, served as intellectual and literary powerhouses and focalizing forces for the British Enlightenment's top artists and thinkers.<sup>64</sup> Therefore it is no surprise that young M. Shelley was steeped in the era's artistic milieu. Katherine C. Hill-Miller describes M. Shelley's childhood as populated by the "likes of Hazlett, Lamb, and Coleridge" (27). Charlotte Gordon notes that Coleridge often visited the Godwin house and was "one of (Wollstonecraft's) particular devotees" (8–9). This relationship led to direct and indirect influences of intellectual and artistic ideas on M. Shelley. Conversations surrounding complex sociopolitical views and actions also abounded. The Godwins were frequently visited by Thomas Paine, writer of the impactful *Common Sense* (1776) and advocate for America's revolution to break from England. Furthermore, Peter Marshall notes in a biography of William Godwin that in 1808, Aaron Burr, the former U.S. president, sought to meet Bentham and Godwin and the statesman "found the two daughters of Mary Wollstonecraft' very fine children'" (285). Thus, Mary's childhood was infused with artistic, intellectual, and political conversations and inspirational sources.

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<sup>64</sup> For a discussion of famous visitors to the Godwins' home see Craig Nelson. *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of Modern Nation*. New York, Penguin Books, 2007. Godwin and Wollstonecraft are referenced in a group of Enlightenment thinkers relevant to the intellectual conversation Paine was a part of: "*Common Sense*, *Rights of Man*, and *The Age of Reason*, after all, do not stray far outside the beliefs of Franklin, Washington, Jefferson, Rousseau, Condorcet, Smith, Price, Priestley, Godwin, and Wollstonecraft" (80); "in London [Paine] was taken up as both political ally and companionable guest by the nation's most powerful Whigs, including the great party leader...Charles James Fox, as well as by playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan, preacher Richard Price, educator William Godwin, and author Mary Wollstonecraft;" (176).

## William Godwin's Influences as Father and Educator

Godwin was an intellectual himself who was open to Wollstonecraft's ever-evolving philosophical insights. Hill-Miller explains that when M. Shelly began a biography of her father, she emphasized Wollstonecraft's impact on her father's writings and psychology. Hill-Miller explains that previous to his relationship with Wollstonecraft, Godwin "allowed no place for the play of feeling in his philosophical system;" but under Wollstonecraft's growing interest in Hume's philosophy of emotions, Godwin "later recognized and even celebrated its force" (24). Hill-Miller claims this causal evolution of thought on Godwin's part "can be traced in his *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman*" (24).

Wollstonecraft's early death materially and practically impacted the Godwin's lives. Godwin quickly attempted to remarry as he had a baby and Wollstonecraft's daughter Fanny to support and little experience as the primary caregiver in a family.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, his philosophical temperament was notably rational and cold. Gordon's research reveals that Coleridge thought Godwin's coldness harmed his daughters and that "Fanny and Mary should be more like his own little boy, three-year-old Hartley, who was rarely quiet" (9). And, "Even Godwin admitted that he had a tendency to be too critical, but he could not help himself" (Gordon 50).

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<sup>65</sup> Hill-Miller, "Just after Wollstonecraft's death, Godwin had proposed to two women in quick succession Harriet Lee, the author, and Maria Reveley, the future Mrs. John Gisborne;" (22). Bieri, James. *Percy Bysshe Shelley: A Biography*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins UP, 2008 (404–405, 512, 527). Godwin began a relationship with one of Wollstonecraft's friends named Maria Reveley, who had cared for the infant Mary. Mary and Percy reconnected with Reveley while they traveled in Italy where she had relocated with her second husband John Gosborne. As Godwin had opposed the young lover's passionate relationship and elopement, Reveley—who maintained positive bonds between M. Shelley and Godwin—served as an epistolary vector for Percy, Mary, and Godwin; Marshall notes that Godwin proposed to Reveley after Wollstonecraft's death and was rejected; "Mary Shelley, who knew her later as Maria Gisborne, wrote: 'there was a gentleness, and yet a fervor in the minds of both Reveley and Godwin that led to sympathy. He was ready to gratify her desire for knowledge, and she drank eagerly of the philosophy which he offered. It was pure but warm friendship, which might have grown into another feeling, had they been differently situated.'" (145).

As Mary's intellectual and artistic prowess grew, she stepped into the role of Godwin's intellectual heir. In selections from Mary's letters in 1827, she references her father's intellectual guidance and expectations, writing that "I was nursed and fed with a love of glory. To be something great and good was the precept given me by my father" (qtd. in Hill-Miller 25). As Mary continues in her epistle to a friend, the influence of her parentage cannot be overestimated. The blossoming thinker references both their influences in their "high talents have perpetually reminded me that...my chief merit must always be derived, first from the glory these wonderful beings have shed [around] me, & then from the enthusiasm I have for excellence" (qtd. in Hill-Miller 25). It seems only natural that M. Shelley would embark on a literary career imbued with sociopolitical questions.

### **Godwin's Moral Philosophy Outlooks**

Godwin asserts that "Reason is not an independent principle, and has no tendency to excite us to action; in a practical view, it is merely a comparison and balancing of different feelings" (qtd. in Marshall 199). Marshall asserts that Godwin's "doctrine of universal benevolence" is influenced by "Shaftesbury and Hutcheson and to the calm rationalism of Price. But whatever he borrows from different and incompatible traditions, he consistently tried to base his principles on the utilitarian ethic" (103). This last point on Godwin adhering to a utilitarian ethic connects him to Bentham's moral philosophy, which becomes connected to Mary's criticism of the era's sexism and classism in an overall inequity. "Godwin never relinquished his doctrine of universal benevolence, but, encouraged by Hume and Wollstonecraft, he increasingly stressed the value of the 'culture of the heart'" (Marshall 396). M. Shelley's work continues Godwin's questions

regarding humanity's source for feelings, the tensions between motives and consequences, the extent of human benevolence, and the utility principle as a system of government.

### *Godwin Attracts Percy Shelley*

Godwin had an indirect yet consequential impact on Mary's life as his intellectual role in society attracted Percy Bysshe Shelley (P. Shelley, 1792–1822) to their home, eventually leading to M. Shelley and Percy's intellectual and romantic partnership. Percy was indirectly introduced to Godwin through his friendship with the "Lake Poet" Robert Southey (1774–1843), who would become the national Poet Laureate and who had served as a figurehead in Godwin's "paternal universe" (Bieri 187). When Percy learned of a potential to meet this esteemed thinker, P. Shelley wrote, "The name of Godwin...excite[s] in me feelings of reverence and admiration" (qtd. in Bieri 187). Regarding Percy's and Mary's intense, layered partnership, Gordon estimates that "it seems inevitable that Percy Shelley would fall in love with Mary Godwin" (76). Gordon contends that Percy "was already half in love before they met, fascinated by the idea that Godwin and Wollstonecraft, the two standard-bearers of political liberty whom he admired with an almost religious fervor, had a daughter" (76). It seems no accident that many elements of Godwin and Wollstonecraft's equity-based relationship were mirrored in Percy and Mary's relationship dynamics, where they functioned as intellectual partners.

### *Wollstonecraft's Writing and Its Impact*

However, once yoked as a couple, William St. Clair notes, the passionate lovers turned to Wollstonecraft's writing to reinforce their decision to elope, as they had read "Wollstonecraft's early autobiographical novel *Mary*," and her "*Letters from Sweden*, so influential in prescribing

correct sentiments for travelers among the mountains” (365–6). Wollstonecraft’s posthumous influences can be seen in M. Shelley’s reading choices and her writing content. From Mary’s early years, Hill-Miller details that “the Young Mary Godwin carried her mother’s books with her wherever she traveled, reading and rereading them in times of stress...She admitted in her middle years that ‘the memory of my Mother has been always...the pride & delight of my life’ (MWS *Letters*, 2:3–4)” (19). Mary kept the practice throughout her life, including on her honeymoon. Wollstonecraft’s intellectual presence followed Percy and Mary “on pilgrimages [where] it was tempting to think the dead might materialize, that a visit to an old home or a walk through old haunts might bring them back. When the trio read Wollstonecraft’s work out loud, which they did frequently, she felt close by” (Gordon 103). Wollstonecraft’s intellectual presence seems to have accompanied M. Shelley throughout her entire life.

Percy and Mary Shelley’s intellectual engagement with Wollstonecraft continued even after their initial elopement and continental rambles: “after the return to England, [Percy and Mary] continued the same intensive study in 1814” (St. Clair 366). During this time, Percy supported Mary in revisiting her mother’s writings. According to St. Clair, these included her mother’s *Posthumous Works*, containing Wollstonecraft’s *Letters to Imlay*, *Wrongs of Woman*, *Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution*, and her adaptation of Salzmann’s *Elements of Morality*. St. Clair emphasizes why *Vindication* was not on her list as she “had read the *Vindication* the previous summer and presumably...knew it so well that rereading was unnecessary” (366).



*Godwin's Influence and Dinner-Table-Talk*

Percy did not supplant Mary's parents' voices; he offered a metonymic value. His intensive and extensive knowledge of their works provided M. Shelley a perfect discussion partner to explore the implications of her parents' writings. While Percy respected and embraced much of Godwin's theories, his mercurial and passionate views sometimes put him at odds with his intellectual father-in-law. Percy's changing views on political and philosophical issues manifested in his writing which he constantly discussed with Mary. Marshall describes Percy's pamphlet *A Philosophical View of Reform* (1820), "as a powerful restatement of Godwinian principles" (333). Percy hails Godwin and Bentham as foundational thinkers for their development of "the principle of utility as the substance and liberty and equality as the forms, according to which the concerns of human life ought to be administered" (qtd. in Marshall 333). However, Percy in his moments of greatest flourish and frustration opposes government as a regulatory structure, asserting that Bentham's ideal of governance directed for the greater benefit of society holds too many pitfalls. Yet, for all of Percy's gusto and revolutionary fervor, he like Godwin and Bentham, advocates for a slow and steady path to progress through parliamentary reform. While at times Percy's assertions, such as human society should evolve into "a just combination of the elements of social life" without government (qtd in Marshall 333) may seem to align him with Smith's thinking, his claims that "the strongest argument, perhaps, for the necessity of reform is the inoperative and unconscious abjectness to which the purposes of a considerable mass of the people are reduced" place him at odds with Smith's sanguine view of individualist economic benevolence and its improvement of the common man's plight (qtd in Bieri 511–12). One can only imagine the intense discussions had on this topic held between these

formidable artist-intellectuals of Percy and Mary Shelley and how these debates filtered into M. Shelley's ideas on justice as expressed in *Frankenstein*.

#### **Part IV: Literary Analysis**

In the allegory *Frankenstein*, M. Shelley continues Wollstonecraft's arguments against Smith's sympathy as a viable normative regulatory structure, and her father's alignment with Bentham's utilitarianism that supports a balance between the individual and the universal good. While S. Fielding's "A Vision" functions as a didactic allegory that presents archetypes imbued with heavily standardized connections and interpretations, M. Shelley presents a polysemous presentation of archetypes. Her polysemous archetypes offer readers multiple interpretive allegories, or competing interpretations, from a received metanarrative. Each holistic frame level, which is conveyed through epistles, presents a new view of the events between Victor and the Creature. These communications include Walton's epistles to his sister, Margaret; his transcription of Victor's narration; Victor's inclusion of the Creature's narration; the Monster's inclusion of the De Lacey family's history; and the Creature's transcription of Safie's letters.

Among several claims this chapter makes about *Frankenstein's* form as a dramatization of Smith's and Bentham's dialectics, this chapter's literary analysis begins by asserting Margaret's role as Walton's audience and the recipient of evidentiary letters that hold the several diegetic frames, which offer insight into the actors' motivation and circumstances, and casts Margaret as the allegorical juror in a court case on the various crimes committed during the events involving Victor and the Creature. Margaret's gender and the rational authority Margaret will assume as she evaluates the evidence dramatizes the type of gender reforms and regulations Bentham advocated. Furthermore, her positioning as the final arbiter of Walton's archive of

testimonies parallels the role of the ideal sympathetic observer promoted by Smith, but hints at the complexity of having a woman who is born into her society's prejudices attempt to attempt to engage sympathetically with the actors who live a life so foreign to hers, which parallels Wollstonecraft's critique of Smith. In any case, the chain of veracity becomes weaker with each diegetic narrative and retelling of the events. Thus, issues of accuracy, authenticity, and credibility are heavily filter through the reception of these pieces of epistolary evidence. Yet, in Bentham's reforms few pieces of evidence should be removed from the jurors' perusal. Additionally, the questionable veracity of these testimonies dramatizes the limitations of humanity's application of Smith's imagination, mutual sympathy, and projected sympathy as the polysemous nature of M. Shelley's allegory affords her narrative structure room to critique Smith while advancing Bentham's reforms.

*Framed Narratives Allow Each Narrator to Represent Smith's Dialectic*

Jeanne M. Britton insightfully analyzes how M. Shelley uses sympathy as the driving force behind the change in structure from the individualistically driven epistle to the first-person narratives that register sympathy. As the narrators vie with each other to control the story's telling, these authoritative voices assume control over other characters' voices. The epistolary novel transition's from passionate, individual epistolary expression into tales spoken from omniscient, cohesive, and controlling metanarrative voice. This shift occurs when Walton retells Victor's and the Creature's narrative to Margaret and when the Creature assumes the narration of Safie's story. This assuming of narratorial control occurs throughout the novel, even in the Creature's recounting of the pivotal instance of him saving the drowning boy and then being shot

in the shoulder by the fearful boy's father. No one can confirm these events except for the Creature.

On each diegetic level, the narrators of those embedded stories dramatize Smith's dialectic. As each narrator experiences his encounter with the Creature, they also access information from the other diegetic levels about various plot events and character perspectives. Each narrator possesses needed information to stand in for an impartial spectator, as they have access to multiple perspectives by multiple actors from these respective diegetic levels providing the extradiegetic epistolary narrator Walton's, internal spectator many advantages. These pieces of insider knowledge derive from transcribing Victor's intradiegetic oral narration, from Victor's repetition of the Creature's metadiegetic oral narration of his own experience, and the Creature's framing of the De Lacey family's history.

In their totality, these embedded frames serve an explanatory function providing different perspectives on the events between Victor and the Creature. While Victor does not have access to Walton's expanded knowledge, the doctor has memories of his own experiences, the Creature's oral history and his framing of the De Laceys, and the material evidence of Safie's transcribed letter. The Creature also possesses fragments of knowledge and material evidence, including Victor's notes on his very creation. Overall, these embedded narratives illuminate the characters' sympathetic capacities or incapacities when encountering those unlike them, which provides insight into motivations and causes of events and choices.

Reading *Frankenstein* as M. Shelley's thought experiment which dramatizes the failings of Smith's dialectic, these narratives demonstrate the limits of the impartial spectator and normative regulations like education and individuals' desires for an approving sympathetic

spectator to embrace those of visual and cultural differences as part of the community. Viewing each character as a case study in the failures of Smith's dialectic, if we position Margaret in the allegorical role of Smith's ideal sympathetic observer, inductive reasoning suggests she too will fail to understand those who differ from her socially and culturally. But, placed instead in the allegorical role of Bentham's reformed court, acting as a juror, who experiences life according to the limitations and biases placed on women, she may have a chance to offer greater equity in her assessment of the tragedies recounted by her brother, Walton.

### **Walton's Narrative: A Man Who Does Not Know Himself or Others**

#### *Smith's Thesis: Attempted and Failed*

Much like Walton's sister Margaret can be viewed through two allegorical lenses, this chapter argues that Walton's material role as epistolary writer dramatizes Bentham's reforms and valuation of individual experiences, while his composition reflects M. Shelley's alignment with Wollstonecraft's critique of the harmful application of Smith's utopic normative regulations on women. From an external impression, Captain Walton might present as an intrepid explorer who seeks to broaden humanity's knowledge of the world. However, M. Shelley quickly subverts this bold exterior to reveal a man who does not have a clear sense of self or an ability to assess others correctly. Perhaps Walton understands this truth, as his early epistles proclaim that his thoughts and dreams need "keeping" and that he "greatly need[s] a friend who would have sense enough not to despise [him] as a romantic, and affection enough for [him] to endeavour to regulate [his] mind" (Shelley 10). When he states the idea of "keeping" his thoughts and dreams, Walton's meaning intersects with what scholar Kristen Martin discusses as collating elements of an

organized aesthetic. “Keeping,” in this context, facilitates a sympathetic response in the viewer throughout the multiple framed narratives gracing the novella as a whole. This concept extends to Walton’s mental regulation in keeping all of his thoughts and stresses mentally regulated in a unified “managed wholeness” that “becomes something like the daydream-equivalent of aesthetic harmony” (Martin 600). Acknowledging his limited self-awareness, Walton demonstrates what Smith believes to be an individual’s struggle to regulate themselves for sympathetic interactions. Who is this complex Captain Walton?

### *Smith’s Impartial Spectator Struggles*

Through Walton’s private epistles to his sister Margaret, M. Shelley presents him as a complicated man who condescendingly engages with his sister. Laura Claridge Walton asserts that Walton’s “very uneasy relationship with his sister has been too often overlooked; his letters to her are usually thinly veiled threats to her power, attempts to assert his own autonomy” (19). In using Walton to demonstrate the failure of Smith’s impartial spectator and mutual sympathy, this captain, who is responsible for his entire crew’s lives, does not seem to grasp either his failings or those of Victor. Walton’s obsession with this expedition and his delusions of fame foster his rationalization for the voyage. After actively disobeying his father’s wishes against his son taking to the sea, Walton writes to Margaret that “you cannot contest the inestimable benefits which I shall confer on all mankind, to the last generation” (8). Walton views this expedition as a rite of passage into his manhood, despite the dangers he is taking for his crew.

Walton’s ambitions regarding his expedition echo Smith’s assertion of humanity’s natural desire to be successful, as success garners the esteem and sympathy of others. In Smith’s view, humanity’s main drive in life is to connect with others and to feel beloved. M. Shelley’s

descriptions of Walton's "ardent curiosity" (7), "agitation" of his mind (8), and preference for "glory to every enticement that wealth placed in [his] path" (9) indicate this explorer's obsessive focus. These self-important assessments of his goals and his potential place in history demonstrate Walton's lack of understanding of himself. His impartial spectator is failing to regulate Walton's self-deception and failing to discipline his overexcitement. Instead of acting with prudence and humility in the face of this great quest, the adolescent Walton fails to practice Smith's constant emotional adjustments, which leads to the captain endangering his crew and disturbing the peace and safety of the expedition.

From his epistolary exchanges, Walton appears to want to impress his sister but reveals his inability to shake off society's gendered prejudice and writes to her condescendingly. For M. Shelley, these complex gender relations link into her accusations that Smith's impartial spectator circuit fails to not only include beings like the Creature but also fails to foster fundamental respectful relations of men to women. In a self-aggrandizing turn, Walton imagines his sister's experience while he, like Smith's ideal man of the world, attempts an endeavor to benefit "all mankind to the last generation" (8). Walton imagines his sister views his voyage as potentially rash: "Be assured, that for my own sake, as well as yours, I will not rashly encounter danger" (12). From this condescending perspective, Walton reassures Margaret that he has done the cognitive work of predicting her feelings and motivations. Because Margaret is a woman who lacks knowledge about such public affairs, Walton assumes she will feel agitated in her womanly fears. In his epistles, he assures her of his cool, persevering, and prudent intentions while at the same time intoning agitated aspirations at a fevered pitch.

Believing that Smith's dialectic fails to consider society's prejudicial treatment of women, Shelley crafts Walton's early epistles as an experiment that reveals how sympathy is

unsuccessful in bridging gender difference. Wollstonecraft argues that society purposefully miseducates women, making it difficult for the two genders to relate across different knowledge sets and socially prescribed areas of interest. This implicit critique reveals itself in Walton's early epistles, where he only shares the basic narrative details of his recent encounters and avoids sharing his philosophical analysis of the interactions between Victor and the Creature. Walton most certainly does not seek his sister's advice in these early epistles. M. Shelley uses this sibling communication to critique Smith's belief in the ability of imagination to foster sympathy among people.

Although Walton views Margaret favorably, he cannot imagine she understands his goals and intellectual purpose. Therefore, his imagination cannot sympathize with her, which is why he yearns for a friend "possessed of a cultivated" and "a capacious mind, whose tastes are like [his] own" (10). Unlike his sister who serves as a passive receptacle for his emotions, Walton idealistically expects a sympathetic male friend to "approve or amend [his] plans," to have the mental fortitude to "repair" his "faults," and to temper his "ardency" and "impatience" (10). Because Walton desires this imagined friend's approbation, the lonely captain is perhaps too primed to cast Victor as this longed-for friend.

Just as Walton misjudges himself as a man for the history books when he is more of a self-important dilettante, he also demonstrates his failure to correctly comprehend the horror of Victor's backstory and to determine Victor's credibility. Upon meeting Victor, Walton is impressed by Victor's prodigious knowledge. Walton seems in awe of Victor's intelligence, as he states, "On every point of general literature, [Victor] displays unbounded knowledge, and a quick and piercing apprehension. His eloquence is forcible and touching; nor can I hear him, when he relates a pathetic incident, or endeavours to move the passions of pity or love, without



tears” (146–7). Walton praises Victor for his concern for others above his own misery. Walton places Victor on a pedestal to sit “immeasurably above any other person I ever knew” (29). Walton believes he has found an intellectual partner in Victor, with whom he perceives a sense of intimacy.

The fervent prejudice with which Walton first encounters Victor continues to the end of the narrative, even after Victor reveals he is unworthy of Walton’s lavish praise. The captain never catches the inconsistencies and questionable elements of the doctor’s actions or his unreflective retelling of the past events. Richard Dunn sharply critiques Victor’s narrative suggesting his “story describes the progress of folly and grief from acts of ego which drove him from all normal friendships,” which ultimately suggests Walton unduly praises Victor (411). Walton nearly deifies this mad scientist whose arrogance precipitated the demise of his loved ones and other innocent persons. Walton speculates that when his visitor “has retired into himself he will be like a celestial spirit, that has a halo around him, within whose circle no grief or folly ventures” (29).

### *The Insufficiency of Smith’s Regulations*

Most eighteenth-century moral philosophers, including Wollstonecraft and Smith, believe family serves as the best regulator of an individual’s emotional system. And to inculcate the sympathetic operations further, literature offers insight into emotional variety and the value of sympathetic understanding. What happens when families are less than idyllic, or the children do not imbibe the lessons modeled by the family or by literature? Walton reflects little on his family, but does suggest his “education was neglected” (8). Where are his parents in all of this? Little is disclosed; he may have lived with his father until he died and then his “good uncle

Thomas” took him in. Where is his sister in the family upheaval? Whatever the full story it sounds like there was little coherence to his upbringing which translated into an uneven education but one that Smith should likely have applauded as he clearly valued “Homer and Shakespeare” aspiring to write like them (8). But unfortunately the only lessons he took from them was the glory of their fame. How would one expect Walton to regulate himself if the guardrails did not seem available to him or the ones he accessed were not correctly interpreted.

Even though Walton did not receive the necessary regulations, he seems to be operating under similar eighteenth-century assumptions about family. Charmed by Victor’s description of youthful domestic bliss and biased by their similar positions in the world, Walton inaccurately ascribes moral abilities to Victor. In truth, Victor narrates tragic family traumas, including his dissension with his father and the death of his mother. At every turn of Victor’s narrative literal and figurative death pursue his family. Victor’s mother joins Elizabeth and his hands as she lies dying. She morosely declares that their prospective union will be “the consolation of” her husband as he ages without her (24). Victor’s father blesses their union by invoking his own death, as he hopes Victor and Elizabeth’s marriage will bring him “domestic comfort” in his “declining years” (104). Walton’s inability and unwillingness to perform a nuanced understanding of Victor’s recounting of his life history reflects his struggles with his sister and continued disparagement of her gendered role.

This perception of a projected sympathy between Walton and Victor can be thought of as Smith’s mutual sympathy. Walton explains his belief that humans “are unfashioned creatures, but half made up, if one wiser, better, dearer than ourselves such a friend ought to be do not lend his aid to perfectionate our weak and faulty natures” (28). In his admiration of Victor, Walton believes he has found a partner forged in what Smith would call mutual sympathy. Walton’s

belief that he has found “a friend who might sympathize with [him], and direct [him] by his counsel” (16), is prejudiced by their similar classes, aspirations, and sentiments. Richard Dunn asserts that “the early discussion Walton and Frankenstein have about the value of friendship further demonstrates Walton’s inability to evaluate his strange visitor” (410). Even after Victor’s passing, Walton elides Victor’s victimization narrative and his avoidance of taking responsibility for his actions. Walton never achieves an accurate understanding of Victor, a man who up until his death burns with “hatred, and the ardent desire of revenge” and, after examining his past conduct, does not find his behaviors “blamable” (151). Walton’s biased embrace of Victor because of their shared aspirations to “be useful to [their] fellow man” (146–7), dramatizes M. Shelley’s critique of Smith’s theories as utopian and leading to delusional senses of interpersonal connection.

### **Victor’s Narrative Dramatizes Smith’s Normative Regulatory Failures:**

#### **Daddy Issues, Marriage Issues, and Monomania**

Although Walton naïvely fawns over Victor as the man he hopes to be his intellectual partner and whom he aspires to be as he matures, Victor’s first-person narrative undermines his praise, again placing Smith’s dialectic into question. M. Shelley designs her doctor as having a fragile relationship with his father Alphonse; a fiancée who seems to have issues with women and marriage; and a scientist who performs unethical experiments and then arrogantly denies responsibility for their results. However, having all the advantages of a landed family—Victor should be able to emotionally regulate with the aid of his impartial spectator. According to Smith’s ideas on people applying education to develop and practice their impartial spectator skills, Victor’s years of domestic education should have given him an accurate sense of his place

within his family and his human community. This mental awareness does not seem to be the case, as Victor rashly follows his scientific impulses and immaturely rejects his failures, leading to death and destruction for his family, himself, and the Creature.

Even Victor's bold commandeering of Walton's epistle suggests his irreverent view of sympathy. Declaring Walton's sympathy "useless" Victor demands that Walton listen to his "history" to prove how "irrevocably it is determined" (17). Victor's narrative assertion and certitude lacks the necessary skepticism essential to Smith's dialectic, while it also demonstrates the likely perversion that can befall those driven too far in the direction of man's desire for a spectator's praise. Victor desires to be a man of the world, as that brings praise and wisdom. These are essential elements of Smith's normative economic regulation. However, Victor must study abroad to accomplish this, which requires leaving his family. Claridge explores the pain Victor seems to hide when Alphonse pushes him to leave for university in Ingolstadt directly after his mother's death. The grieving Victor must attend to his sorrow in a foreign place without family support. Nevertheless, "there is the suggestion that Alphonse disapproves of his son's grief as a dilatory tactic. In fact, a strong sense of parental disapproval informs the father/son reactions throughout the novel" (Claridge 18). Alphonse does not operate as a guide and support system fostering Victor's intellectual and personal development. Instead, he functions as a parent who only conditionally loves his son and pushes him away when Victor is vulnerable after the loss of his mother.

Because Victor's father esteems his family's position as "one of the most distinguished" families of the "republic" with "ancestors" who "had been for many years counsellors and syndics," Victor feels the need to live a life of "noble objectives," although scientific and not legislative (18). Victor strives to be like his father, filling "public situations with honour and

reputation” (18). “The need to win approval from judgmental parents can at times compel the child toward excellence; but it can also be perverted into disastrous extremes, in which the child transforms his Promethean aspirations for success into those of overreaching and surpassing his parents at the cost of everything else” (Claridge 18). His aspirations for the success of his creation are buoyed by his desire to be, like his father, “respected by all who knew him for his integrity and indefatigable attention to public business” (Shelley 18). It is for this reason Victor experiences such extreme abhorrence at his perceived failure and the ill repute he thinks his Monster will bring upon his reputation and humankind. Smith’s regulation through family does not seem to take into consideration the complexity of real-life dynamics like the loss of a mother or a father’s temperament.

*Frankenstein* tests Smith’s dialectic of family sympathy and reveals flaws within the Victorian familial regulatory system guided by the impartial spectator and produced through family relationships. M. Shelley carefully alludes to Victor’s annoyance at his work being hindered by marriage and his relationship with Elizabeth. A close reading of Victor’s narrative suggests his ambivalence, if not distaste, for women, and society’s reinforcement of his aversion to women and domesticity. M. Shelley includes a dream sequence for Victor, which holds polysemous interpretations—one of which will be analyzed here, and another will be analyzed in the Creature’s chapter subsection. In Victor’s dream, he first sees Elizabeth in the bloom of youth. Delighted to meet her, he kisses his bride. However, his kiss brings her death, which foreshadows her murder by the Creature and represents one of the tragedies that Walton overlooks in his holding Victor to such high esteem. While the kiss signifies the Western marriage that should eventuate in the birth of children and the procreation of the species, Elizabeth and Victor’s marriage is shrouded in death and grief. Their union is formalized with

Victor's mother's dying words. Moreover, before modern medicine, pregnancy remained a dangerous experience for women of all classes, was connected with anxiety, and was surrounded by associations of death. Victor's association of marriage and domesticity with death do not seem optimistic. Already reeling from his mother's death and denied the proper space to grieve by his father, Victor associates women as hindrances and sources of psychological pain for himself. Returning to the reality of the dangers of pregnancy, the need for women to produce heirs to ensure estate entails, and the oppression experienced by women, Victor generally seeks to disassociate from women.

Victor's anxieties surrounding his marriage to Elizabeth are also deeply associated with the death of his ambition—his own metaphorical death. The competition between civic and economic self-advancement and domesticity place Smith's two most vaunted forms of normative regulations at odds, dramatizing Wollstonecraft's critique. When Victor was young, he "ardently desired the acquisition of knowledge" and "when at home," found it "hard to remain...cooped up in one place" (Shelley 26). Ambivalent about cultivating family sympathies, Victor "longed to enter the world, and take [his] station among other human beings" (26). Victor even disparages Elizabeth for lacking the requisite "coolness of judgment" that propelled him into the public world (147). Family concerns distract Victor. Therefore, he considers them dangerous, as they would "tear" his "thoughts from" his "employment...which had taken an irresistible hold of [his] imagination" (33). Such is Victor's ambivalence towards family and its value as a source for sympathy when it comes to saving his family from the Creature or killing the Creature to save his reputation. Of course, Victor chooses his reputation: "I shuddered to think that future ages might curse me as their pest, whose selfishness had not hesitated to buy its own peace, at the price, perhaps, of the existence of the whole human race" (114). Victor deludes himself that he is

protecting humanity by destroying the Creature's mate. Victor's desire for a Spector's sympathetic gaze, that history look fondly on him, overruled the impartial spectator's guidance; he is unable to investigate his hubris thoroughly.

Victor, the lonely man who cannot connect with his father or his life partner Elizabeth, struggles to connect with anyone, let alone the Creature. Victor has not been trained to imagine the Creature's life experience, as he represents a person who is without pedigree, protection, and family. When confronted with the Creature's aberrant being, born from Victor's ego-driven inflated sense of self, Victor cannot bear to look upon the manifestations of his arrogance and his failing. In creating the Creature, Victor desires sympathy. However, the sympathy he wants is more like the mutual sympathy he feels for Walton, bypassing the imaginative work required by Smith's impartial spectator to understand those who are not like him or who inhabit very different circumstances. Victor presents as a limited, unrealistic thinker for all his worldly ways. By Victor's own profession, he "love[s] [his] brothers, Elizabeth, and Clerval" as they are "old familiar faces" (26). When he imagines creating an "animal as complex and wonderful as man," he imagines producing a reflective mime to return his egocentric sense of self (32). Victor only dreamed of a brotherhood between himself and the Creature.

Victor seems to have fantasized about their relationship fluidly moving between a father-son dynamic and an identical-twin dynamic between himself and his Creature born from "many happy and excellent natures" made in his image and with his disposition (32). However, Victor's progeny does not look like nor act like Victor's narcissistic delusion of a being who would engage in a mirror-like mutual sympathy. No, the Creature does not become a moment of wholeness for Victor's ego. Victor shockingly faces his true corrupt self in the malformed and violent manifestation of the Creature. What Victor sees when he peers into his mind's eye, his

impartial spectator, is a truth that he rejects by retracting into a denial of his wrongdoing and a hastening towards his death, which is freedom from his questionable earthly acts. As Victor's health fails, his ego clings to his faulty perspective that justifies his actions.

Victor rejects Walton's friendship and his attempt to "reconcile" Victor to live (147), as the only thing that could persuade Victor to preserve his life would be to "engage" in an "undertaking or design, fraught with extensive utility to [his] fellow-creatures" (148). Victor's impartial spectator fails to regulate him, and even though Walton appears to have learned from Victor's intradiegetic oral narration's moralizing moments which appear to motivate Walton's attempt to redirect Victor's passions, Victor lacks healthy interpersonal understanding. Victor's myopic vision interrupts the interpersonal sympathy, which would facilitate his acceptance of Walton's view even if it runs counter to his own.

In considering Victor's entire engagement in his relationship with the Creature, his father and family life issues have bubbled below the surface. Instead of being a wise, contemplative person, Victor carries his psychological baggage with him and uses the tools in that baggage to embark on his devastating animation of the Creature. Victor has found justifications to encourage his unethical and illegal acts of corpse theft, among other questionable acts. However, the voice inside Victor's mind encourages him and rebuts any doubts with high-minded justifications for this heedless youth's endeavors. "If this rule were always observed; if no man allowed any pursuit whatsoever to interfere with the tranquility of his domestic affections Greece had not been enslaved; Caesar would have spared his country; America would have been discovered more gradually; and the empires of Mexico and Peru had not been destroyed" (33). Just like Walton sees the records of his expedition filtering through the history pages in the future, Victor



assigns himself a place within the continuum of critical thinkers who furthered human knowledge and benefited human society.

However, readers must look carefully at M. Shelley's choice of Victor's examples of the "discovery" of America and the destruction of Peru. Patricia Matthew notes that "writers like Amelia Opie, Maria Edgeworth, Wollstonecraft, and others used slavery as a metaphor for white women's marginalization—not only as chattel but as objects subjected to men's appetites" (83). Indeed, this book's Chapter Four refers to Wollstonecraft's preface for *Maria*, where she links the secondary citizenship of British women under Blackstone's *feme covert* system to slavery. Of course, modern theorists deny the universalizing of the minoritization experience to honor the fundamental differences between, for example, the suffering an educated, white British woman experienced as a *feme covert* versus what an enslaved woman of color who is denied constructive education would suffer.

In reading with the grain of M. Shelley's creation of the complex character of Victor, his high-sounding justifications might be presented in this context of British males crossing ethical boundaries. This analysis that undermines Victor's rationalizations is bolstered by M. Shelley having the marginalized beings of the Creature and Safie feel a kinship with and compassion for the mistreated Indigenous peoples of the Americas during this era of British expansion. M. Shelley presents Victor's disregard for his father's sage advice that would represent an impartial spectator's wise perspective. He only expresses dis-ease and horror at his dream, which holds the keys to many psychological burdens Victor lets dictate his life choices. Victor also disregards the human dignity of those from other cultures, such as the Indigenous people of the Americas, in a manner that furthers M. Shelley's criticism of Smith's dialectic.

*The Creature's Allegorical Narrative: The Monstrous Feminine Returns the Gaze*

The Creature's narrative completely contradicts Smith's sanguine theory of the impartial spectator, as he is denied humanity and common dignity by the supposedly evolved human community. At the same time, M. Shelley has her vulnerable and orphaned Creature follow Smith's regiment of education to develop his knowledge and impartial spectator, especially those of sympathy. Tragically, the Creature's advanced self-awareness, and society's brutal denial of his worth, leads him down a path of murderous revenge, which annihilates his moral code. M. Shelley designs the Creature's process of self-awareness to be one where he realizes his outcast status and the barbarous minoritization of others like himself who do not adhere to hegemonic standards. This realization does not promote an awakening towards peace but towards violent actions where the Creature uses the corrupt legal code to enact his revenge. As the Creature learns that the female body represents the location of social domination and often serves as the receiver of violence, he uses the woman Justine to enact a particularly hateful part of his revenge. In M. Shelley's realistic presentation of the court's prejudice against Justine versus the favoritism shown to Victor, the author presents her support for Bentham's legal system reforms. For the Creature, this self-effacing series of violent, irreversible actions leaves him in a suicidal state of despair where he cannot live among humans nor find peace within his mind.

**Books: Adam Smith's Ideal Education Meets Reality**

*On Reading and Spending Time with the De Lacey's: The Creature Learns He Is Other*

The Creature's oral narration to Walton of his education through the books read and time spent with the De Lacey family initially seems like an idyllic and positive path of personal

development. With M. Shelley's choice of texts that the Creature reads and the heartbreaking fallout between himself and the De Lacey's, the author initiates a series of events that precipitates the Creature's journey from one of childish wonder to one of visceral fury. While David Marshall asserts that the Creature functions as an archetypal sympathetic spectator who is ideal in his witnessing and outside position, Colene Bentley proposes an intervention in Marshall's theory that dovetails with this project's perspective. Bentley states that the Creature does not only respond emotionally; he is a "knowledge-gather[er]" (335). He also learns and adapts, which can be seen in his digesting of the reading material and in his evolving how he secretly supports the impoverished De Lacey family. In this respect, Bentley considers the Creature a "community seeker" (336). He respectfully integrates himself into their lives in a brilliant manner, as he brings them firewood and other life necessities. This communitarian experience dramatizes Smith's regulatory goals of domestic education and literary guidance.

M. Shelley puts Smith's theory to the test through the Creature's education with the De Lacey's and his self-teaching. He does not know himself or others and therefore develops sympathetic skills through literature and the power of narrative. In living with the De Lacey's, what does the Creature read, and what does he learn about himself, family life, and society? M. Shelley chooses the Creature's curriculum to include "*Paradise Lost*, a volume of Plutarch's Lives, and the *Sorrows of Werter*" (86). From the *Sorrows of Werter*, the Creature learns the desire to love and be loved. This desire for emotional connection and acknowledgment from others coincides with Smith's theory that human's primal drive in life is to be beloved. The Creature's education resembles women's education in that he appreciates "the gentle and domestic manners [Werter] describe[s]" (87). His appreciation of Werter's "lofty sentiments and feelings" for others, which includes having a family and a beloved of his own, motivates him to

seek a partner—to Victor’s horror. In Werter, the Creature finds a potential proxy to use as a guide in developing his impartial spectator. The Monster admires Werter, “[he thinks] Werter himself a more divine being than [he] ha[s] ever beheld or imagined” (87). However, Werter cannot stand in as an impartial spectator because if the Monster attempts to see himself through the eyes of Werter, he knows Werter would not recognize him. Of course, Werter might not be the calmest guide, as this character is impassioned and alienated. At the same time, M. Shelley presents a critical point that the Creature knows he is not acceptable to look at, which makes him unacceptable as a human community member.

However, in these texts and through his positive and negative relations with the De Laceys, the Creature comes to understand human society’s bias and of his excluded positionality. The innocent Creature questions “where he fits into the aesthetic economy of a society that values fair-skinned people with lyrical voices” (Matthew 176). In his readings, the now disturbed Creature—who has already digested the horror of viewing his malformed face in the river’s reflection—notes the texts include passages that offer delightful descriptions of the various beautiful characters. He also notes the perfect symmetry of the son Felix De Lacey’s face. The Monster relates to the emotional content of these texts, yet knows he is not represented in these readings: “As I read, however, I applied much personally to my own feelings and condition. I found myself similar, yet at the same time strangely unlike the beings concerning whom I read” (87). The Monster’s differences present themselves most effectively and most unalterably through his physical form: “My person was hideous, and my stature gigantic: what did this mean? Who was I? What was I?” (87). Not being able to see himself in these books’ pages he continues his education in Smith’s sympathetic structure and its inherently exclusionary nature.

M. Shelley particularly criticizes Smith's belief that people rely on a visual similarity in feeling a projected sympathy with others. The Creature lacks the facial and body features that would connect him with the human species. The only genuine friend the Creature ever has in his life remains the blind patriarch of the De Lacey family. Matthew emphasizes that "the elder De Lacey's blindness reveals that so long as the creature cannot be seen, he is human, literally judged not by the colors of his skin but the content of his character" (176). Shelley shows how stories become more legible when they are produced through a sympathetic exchange. In offering to help reveal the truth by hearing the "particulars" of the Creature's tale, De Lacey promises to assist in organizing parts into a whole. This promise echoes Walton's desire for an auditor who will keep the logic and harmony of his thoughts. De Lacey promises to subordinate the disorganized aspects of the Creature's tale, which would naturally include details on his features. "This moment shows how sympathy might be achieved through a particular kind of regulation that is affectively motivated. De Lacey, in this sense, becomes a sort of avatar for Shelley, whose own ability to regulate the Creature is compelled by a strong sympathetic attachment" (Martin 613). However, as the Creature's narrative shows, this sympathetic and affective regulation produced by a sense of mutual sympathy and belonging is not accommodated by Smith's theory which praises visual similarities as an essential aid in sympathetic regulation.

Further violence befalls the Creature as he is legally denied equity like several other marginalized persons in the narrative. From Felix, he learns that the "sanguinary laws of man" allow mischief and exploits those excluded from its structure (97). Through Safie's letters, the Creature learns that women in many countries do not have a place within the law. He understands that society gives value only to those from wealth and pedigree: "I learned that the

possessions most esteemed by your fellow-creatures were, high and unsullied descent united with riches. A man might be respected with only one of these acquisitions; but without either he was considered, except in very rare instances, as a vagabond and a slave, doomed to waste his powers for the profit of the chosen few” (80). This insight affords the Monster informed judgments. Bentley explains how the exclusivity of in-groups, those groups comprised of similar looking and culturally alike people “makes it difficult for them to know and understand those they observe who are not part of their own community (as Smith’s theory couches sympathy as knowledge of the circumstance that surround people and actions)” (336). This point is particularly relevant when the physicality of the other is markedly different. Bentley emphasizes how people’s failures of sympathy lead people to judge others based on material wealth, occupational status, and other superficial elements of a person’s life.

### *The Creature Is Psychologically and Physically Tortured to Become a Monster*

M. Shelley proves that reading these abstract and controlled texts does not prepare the Creature to interact with the true ugliness of violent, prejudicial society. In the Creature’s character arc, M. Shelley seems to endow the Creature with a highly developed sense of his impartial spectator. The Creature achieves self-awareness and the ability to sympathize with others. He demonstrates his conviviality in caring for the De Lacey’s and returning their kindness with his thoughtful acts. However, M. Shelley clearly shows that even a top education has not endowed Walton or Victor with a real sense of self or others. And this method of reading to learn how to interact with others has dramatically failed the Creature, as well.

Although he is a highly developed rational being, he cannot live morally or in peace due to society’s mistreatment and Victor’s abandonment. Claridge notes that “at the time of his first

violent act, he is merely seeking fellowship with another human, and he assumes little William, the 'beautiful child' so unlike himself, to be too young to have formed prejudices based on appearance" (21). The Creature presents as the karmic revenge when the innate goodness in the Creature is warped by his creator's cruel, emphatic rejection and by ignorant society's antagonisms and exclusion. He does not register in their impartial spectators' circumscribed definitions of their tribe members. Therefore, the Creature is an object of transferred aggression and derision.

### **The Creature Is Othered as Monstrous Feminine**

In Wollstonecraft and M. Shelley's aligned viewpoint, the Creature's allegorical monstrosity dramatizes society's requirements that women turn away from their vigor to fit into the picture of painted perfection which is ultimately unnatural and monstrously harmful to them. Their inauthenticity becomes aberrant in these feminists' opinion. Wollstonecraft despises society's characterization of women as insipid "perpetual" children who are "mere animals;" such characterizations are instrumental in deforming women in both body and mind (13). Smith's impartial spectator cannot know what it cannot imagine, denying recognition to women who have "sound constitution" and who "read and converse with both sexes, indiscriminately" to "improve her mind" (*Vindication* 200). Nor does custom know what to make of a woman who puts aside "fashionable vagaries of dress" and instead takes up "science, with the steady eye which strengthens the mind" (*Vindication* 200). According to Wollstonecraft, women are trained to be physically weak. If only premature "distinctions of sex" were not "inculcated long before nature makes any difference," girls would be able to exercise and run around developing a vigor of body to support their minds (47). But instead, society plies women with wanton descriptions

of their “sensibilities” and “artificial beauty,” encouraging them not to eat or exercise (47).

Wollstonecraft asserts that poor diet and limited exercise destroy the female body—they become monstrous to themselves and their partners. The Monster further allegorizes society-constructed female monstrosity by not aesthetically conforming, as women are viewed monstrously by men and society as monstrous when they do not perform the feminized role. Thus, when women are strong and independent, they are dismissed as Amazonians, immoral, or abject because they do not conform to custom. From this complex perspective, women who are both conformists and non-conformists are equally unknowable to society’s normative impartial spectator. The former group is unknowable because they are painted variations of themselves who have modulated themselves to perform the expectations of their gender role. The latter group is unknowable to the patriarchal impartial spectator because they do not register within the limited definition of acceptable womanhood. For both Walton and Victor, the Creature seems to be identified as a mysterious, abject being, a shifting hybrid of every identification. The Creature’s hybridity is uncategorizable, thus repulsive to their minds.

M. Shelley seems to have designed the Creature to be an entity that possesses a constant fluidity of identifying signifiers, which repulse and confound the other characters and Victor. In some scenes, the Creature is described akin to a woman. The Creature’s “lustrous black” hair, “pearly white” teeth, and transparent skin suggest the painted performativity that Wollstonecraft condemns (34). In other moments, the Creature’s gender fluidity confuses the onlookers, as his physical strength and unusual looks are the qualities society would condemn in a woman. The Creature’s incommensurate elements—which are too beautiful, too ugly, and too strong—leave him bereft of proportionality. The Creature’s unfeminine femininity makes him an open signifier



that people can see as monstrous because of how society distorts women or sees women as monstrous when they lack clear feminine markers in accordance with gender strictures.

This chapter's allegorical reading of the Creature's menacing monstrous femininity links Victor's horror at the Creature's animation to his dream of Elizabeth's death. Perhaps the Creature's unrecognizable and therefore monstrous femininity is particularly horrifying for Victor as it represents his failure in creating a male companion intellectually equal to himself. In Victor's nightmare mentioned above, he envisions Elizabeth's death in association with his mother. In this way, the Creature both appears as a menacing threat to Victor's domestic safety and an entity associated with the liminality of the female. The Creature cannot be a man arriving at Victor's home as a welcome guest. He is a strange lover whom Victor must keep to the shadows where the Creature's liminality and abjection haunt the recesses of Victor's mind. The Creature is not one entity; the Creature is all entities and every aspect of horror for Victor.

Even though Victor does not seem to have the imaginative capacity to understand the foreign agent (Woman/Monster) that he observes, Victor nonetheless sees the foreign agent as a spectator. This relationship causes him to view himself through the agent's eyes, creating feelings of inadequacy. Victor's description of the Creature's "dull yellow eye" causes him to reflect on his choice to ignore and sever sympathetic ties with his family and his bride (34). Because Victor feels disapprobation upon encountering the Creature's eyes, he helps construct the impartial spectator within himself. The Creature's eyes proffer an affective need that Victor does not know how to reciprocate. The Creature "mutters" inarticulately, "grins," and reaches out for Victor (34). These gestures are reminiscent of a baby, a vulnerable creature dependent on sympathy. While Victor describes the Creature as ugly, he is not described as aggressive in those opening moments. Something about the incongruity of the Creature's strong and ugly aesthetic

mixed with his gentle vulnerability prompts Victor to struggle to hear him: “He might have spoken, but I did not hear” (34). Even in his infant-like moments, the Creature represents the breakdown in Smith’s theory of sympathy. Regardless of the Creature’s fragility, Victor cannot connect with the Creature as a being deserving of attention and dignity.

*Victor’s Fleeting Impartial Spectator: Blind Acceptance*

Thomas Dutoit presents a compelling argument for the Creature’s identity that cannot be pinpointed in Victor’s thorough rejection of his creation. During the confrontation between Victor and the Creature on the Mer de Glace, Dutoit asserts that:

It is not the voice or the manners of the monster that human beings cannot tolerate, but rather his face. The monster’s voice is only ‘harsh’; his language more literary than that of any other character in *Frankenstein*. The unrepresentability of the monster’s face and the impossibility of looking at it are textually constructed by the radical incongruity between the way the monster’s face functions and the way every other character’s face functions. (850)

Dutoit connects the Creature’s face with Levinas’s ethical face, making the Creature into a force of justice and the Law by extension: “Levinas’s articulation of the face posits an empirical face... the ethical face, the face insofar as it precedes phenomenological vision (hence, non-traditionally ‘ethical’ since ethics traditionally presupposes a logic of the visible, knowable, thematizable, and intentional)” (Dutoit 856). Like an omniscient deity, the Creature’s voice booms commandments to the mortal Victor, who stands passive with the Creature’s hands covering his eyes.

At this moment, Victor's physical sight is denied. The Creature believes Victor will listen sympathetically after covering Victor's eyes with his "hated hands" (67). The Monster shuts the visual eye of society's impartial spectator so that Victor, unencumbered by his visual experience, can honestly imagine the Creature's narrative. Thus, his psychological myopia towards the Creature ideally should be removed by removing the aberrant visual of the monstrous Creature. This Biblical moment of truth on a prophetic mountaintop does ignite an awakening in Victor. Engaging his actual internal eye, Victor ignores his socially indoctrinated discriminatory views of the "Other." This moment represents M. Shelley's powerful indictment of Smith's impartial spectator as not being impartial or unbiased—for her, the impartial spectator merely represents social values and exclusionary attitudes. Momentarily freed from the bias conveyed through his eyes trained by social stigma, Victor ruminates:

I paused some time to reflect on all he had related, and the various arguments which he had employed. I thought of the promise of virtues which he had displayed on the opening of his existence, and the subsequent blight of all kindly feeling by the loathing and scorn which his protectors had manifested towards him...After a long pause of reflection, I concluded, that the justice due both to him and my fellow-creatures demanded of me that I should comply with his request. (Shelley 100)

Instead of looking at the Creature, Victor listens, imagines, compares, explores, and finally sympathizes with the Creature in a cognitive act of approbation.

However, the placement of the Creature's hand over Victor's eyes is not a permanent solution to the bias with which most people see the world. For, while the Creature's words had a "strange effect upon" Victor, causing him to "compassionate" the Creature, just one "look" at

him and his “filthy mass that moved and talked,” changed compassion to hatred (99). Yes, this awakening in Victor is short-lived. When Victor sees the Creature’s “ghastly grin” and “wrinkled...lips,” Victor is spurred to tear the monster’s innocent mate “to pieces” (115). Not only does Victor’s enlightenment dissipate, he murders the Creature’s partner, an act that pushes the Creature to murder Elizabeth.

*Victor’s Sympathy Vanishes with His Returning Sight*

Victor cannot comprehend this unrecognizable outcast as a being deserving of dignity and inclusion. Dutoit comments that “the monster’s wish is to be a part of virtue and of happiness and affection... [H]e is the principle of the perpetual disjunction of any ‘exhibition’ of the happiness-virtue couple” (868). In considering Victor’s, the De Lacey’s, and society’s mistreatment of the Creature and the legal system’s unjust treatment of Justine, M. Shelley presents the Creature as an undeniable critique of human “hypocritical morality” (Dutoit 864). M. Shelley offers Victor every moment and possible configuration to acknowledge the Creature. However, the arrogant, limited thinking Victor cannot overcome his ego and accept his failings as a human and recognize his progeny. His monster becomes a palimpsest of meaning where he represents the sympathetic family Victor seems incapable of connecting with. The Creature symbolizes Victor’s failed attempt to be a successful man of the world like his father, and he embodies all those who value family.

As M. Shelley designs her allegory to be polysemous, the archetype of the Creature indeed flows among various identifications where the Otherness of this rejected and derided being can be a signifier for race, class, gender, etc. In terms of gender, M. Shelley intimately knew her mother’s critique of society and society’s critique of her mother, who was

unfortunately not understood by many of her British contemporaries. As noted in Chapter Four, Wollstonecraft's writing and reputation were controversial during her life. Furthermore, the scandalous information her husband Godwin published after her death intensely increased the negative social scrutiny directed towards Wollstonecraft's lifestyle, viewpoints, and writings. Stephen Greenblatt notes the connection between M. Shelley's Creature and her husband Percy Shelley's character of Prometheus, whom she references in *Frankenstein's* full title. However, her Creature "is far from championing humankind" (Greenblatt 20). Greenblatt continues to note how "for other women writers of the period, and for Shelly and her later novels, the equivalent to these half-charismatic, half-condemnable figures of alienation is the woman of 'genius.'" (20). As M. Shelley deeply valued her mother's writings, she likely considered her mother Wollstonecraft among those genius women so condemned as monstrous by a limited thinking society.

Following this thought, Greenblatt notes M. Shelley's distinct overlapping of the double bind English women suffered in being forced to be inauthentic and conform, which equates to a monstrousness. The other choice seems to be authentic but negativized by society, which earns women the unkind label of monster. Greenblatt astutely assesses the tightrope where "in a world in which—as Wollstonecraft complained in the *Rights of Woman*—'all women are to be levelled by meekness and docility, into one character of...gentle compliance,' the woman who in 'unfeminine' fashion claimed a distinctive individuality did not gain authority but risked ostracism" (20). M. Shelley presents the Creature as a challenge to Smith's impartial spectator, as Walton, Victor, and society all are repelled by and refuse to embrace the Creature who does not physically resemble them as a species member. When the Creature evolves to embrace his

negativized identity and manipulate corrupt socio-legal systems for his revenge, he becomes even more abhorrent as a mirror to society's hypocrisies.

### **Humans' Monstrous Legal System Needs Bentham's Reforms**

#### *The Creature and Safie Legally Disappeared*

In M. Shelley's polysemous allegory to dramatize her criticism of Smith's impartial spectator seems to endow the Creature with various gender, race, and class signifiers. He can represent anyone who is viewed as Other and alone. Not only bereft of family, the Creature has no other social requisites for inclusion or assimilation into society. As he continues to learn history from society's lessons, he relates most with the female character Safie. The Creature and Safie feel keenly saddened by the plight of the "original inhabitants" of the "American hemisphere" (80). As noted in Victor's earlier subsection, M. Shelley intends for readers to connect Victor's eliding of the founding of the colonies with the genocide of the native inhabitants, whom the Creature identifies with in his own marginalization. For most British people at this time, the original inhabitants of the Americas were seen as savage and unknowable, like women or the Creature in Victor's view. Safie's letters suggest her sympathy with those barbarously treated as outsiders to legal agency.

However, there exist marked differences between Safie and the Creature. Safie has been allowed to assimilate into Western society. She even professes a disdain for her homeland. She writes that she is "sickened at the prospect of again returning to Asia, and being immured within the walls of a harem, allowed only to occupy herself with puerile amusements, ill-suited to the temper of her soul, now accustomed to grand ideas and a noble emulation for virtue" (83).

Jonathan Grossman writes, “Safie would assert her rights as a woman through existing Western institutions: as Safie concludes her letters, her liberation is amazingly to come from ‘marrying a Christian, and remaining in a country where women were allowed to take a rank in society’” (119). Matthew notes that Safie’s Otherness is transitioned into an Orientalizing acceptance of her physical attractiveness. Grossman continues to explain that “With ominous naïveté the ‘Arabian,’ as Safie is called, ties, her emancipation to three institutional frameworks—marriage, religion, and class—through which both Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley recognized women were oppressed” (74–75). M. Shelley juxtaposes Safie to the Creature, as she is not monstrous in appearance and can assimilate herself into society. She secures her place within the register of the British impartial spectator because she might have been born foreign; yet, she has ascended to a citizenship status through her submission to social and legal regulations.

Jeanne Britton notes that “the monster’s encounter with Safie, both emotional and textual, imitates a pattern of simultaneous sympathetic experience and narrative shift that produces the novel’s frames. His copy of her letters mimics the novel’s transmission of stories” among the novel’s chapters (4–5). Both Safie and the Creature naïvely seek visibility and agency when their narratives plead their cases through their epistles that stand in as both legal statements and evidence of their experience. Safie’s epistles express her desire to stay in a Christian country because she believes Christian societies allow their women to “take a rank in society” (83). The Creature uses his epistles to get a fair hearing from Victor. The Creature hopes that the epistolary evidence he provides Victor will make his credibility undeniable, such that “The guilty are allowed, by human laws, bloody as they may be, to speak in their defense before they are condemned” (66). The Creature deserves to be heard under fair legal systems and equitable social treatment.

However, both Safie and the Creature seek the support of laws and customs that inherently do not recognize or affirm them. The Creature's desire to be heard based on a "human law" that allows one to "speak in [one's] own defense" holds the exclusionary nature of the request within its own diction. Just as coverture would disappear Safie, the legal structures as they stand disappear the Creature. He is not human; thus, man-made laws do not apply to him. The Creature, like Safie, becomes illegible because legal language does not recognize him as an agent. The Creature cannot fully engage the impartial spectator as he has learned through his education that he is not part of the system that helps construct the impartial spectator.

Safie and the Creature seek representation in a system that Bentham believes lacks uniformity, consistency, and concern for the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. Sinister interests control who the law represents, what material evidence can be used, and how it can be used. Safie's and the Creature's evidence and the Creature's proffering of it to Victor demonstrate the fecklessness of the marginalized. In these sequences, Victor becomes an archetype who stands in for the sinister interests that manage the corrupt legal system. M. Shelley's inclusion of epistles as evidence and the importance of various voices being heard links to Bentham's emphasis on allowing all pieces of pertinent evidence to be admitted in court cases.

### *Male Privilege and Society's Prejudice*

When Walton and Victor meet, Victor presents Walton Safie's letters as proof (in a legal sense) of his oral narration about the Creature. In this de facto courtroom, Walton serves as the judge reviewing the evidence of Victor's case. Walton finds the "letters of Felix and Safie" alongside the "apparition of the monster" convincing and believes Victor's outlandish narration (146). In



truth, Walton's prejudiced sympathy for Victor removes Victor's dependence on the epistle as evidence of his story's legitimacy and he enters the privileged role of the unified normative voice. He "correct[s]" and "augment[s]" Walton's notes, specifically "giving life and spirit to the conversation he held with his enemy" (146). In this way, Walton dramatizes another element of Bentham's criticism against the corrupt legal system where judgment was inconsistent and based upon projected sympathy. Walton, the de facto judge, pre-judges Victor in his favor and then tampers with the evidence of the epistles.

For his part, Victor also pollutes the chain of evidentiary authenticity. He uses the letters as Bentham charges a judge would—capriciously and for his own ends. The letters are twice removed from the context in which they were originally proffered. They no longer serve to verify the story of oppression and have been inverted to serve the oppressor's cause. With the emergence of the epistles and Walton's capitulation, Victor takes over Walton's transcription of the oral narration, as Victor "would not that a mutilated one should go down to posterity" (146). From Walton's notes to the Creature's letters, Victor offers a unified narrative, but a flawed one skewed by his desire to protect his ego and maintain his self-soothing metanarrative.

Victor appropriates thoughts and evidence to offer an authoritative version of the events. He purges any undesirable facts and preserves his normative power. While the letters initially function as evidence and remedy Victor's legal and normative isolation, they quickly shift in received interpretation by the biased Walton, who alters their actual content. Although Smith would never agree that the impartial spectator should eventuate in these transgressions of the truth, M. Shelley dramatizes the very ease with which these situations transpire. Even though the evidentiary nature of the letter is clear and it holds certain powers of persuasion, if the evidence comes from an individual outside the legal and normative structure, it cannot ensure the

valuation of individual experiences. In this interaction between Walton and Victor, M. Shelley dramatizes how shared sympathies of a select community of citizens leads to Bentham's assertion of systemic corruption in the legal system.

*The Need for Bentham's Reforms: Justine Executed by the Law and Victor Coddled by It*

All of *Frankenstein's* embedded narratives represent the legal system as corrupt. M. Shelley presents Justine's trial for murdering William and Victor's imprisonment for murdering Clerval to show prejudiced sympathies' injudicious use of evidence. Goss details these classist and gendered prejudices by showing the doctor's biased, favorable treatment versus the discriminatory neglect Justine receives. The disparities in treatment are based solely on her class status, which renders her into a non-entity. "In his destruction of Justine, the creature shows the justice system that cannot make sense of him to be inoperable even without his interruption, as he demonstrates its failure to protect the entity that it seems designed to preserve: justice itself, embodied in a woman who cannot be kept safe from the entitlement of masculine desire" (194). Justine's female body becomes the collateral damage in the Creature's specific war against Victor. Here Justine's body becomes the sacrificial lamb for the Creature's accusations of hypocrisy against human society in general. "The creature has learned his desire from the books written to maintain the system that keeps her at its center, and the enactment of that desire throws into relief her constant danger" (Goss 194). Tragically, no one views Justine as a unique individual with inalienable human rights. For Bentham, this situation is an all-too-common outrage.

As the Creature comes to understand the corrupt ways of the world, he embraces his accused identity as a criminal and vile being. He manipulates the law and community, knowing

they will render judgments against Justine solely based on gender and class bias. M. Shelley presents a realistic court case, which dramatizes multiple factors in Bentham's advocacy for legal reform. Echoing Bentham's criticisms that mere wisps of evidence determine court cases; the judges and public seem determined to indict Justine solely based "several circumstances" and her "confused" behavior (50). Neither Justine's pristine character nor that of Elizabeth's can sway them to consider the oddness of the overall situation. Elizabeth's testimony goes unacknowledged.

The fact that Elizabeth's testimony does not serve to affirm Justine's good character in the eyes of the court further demonstrates women's existence outside of Smith's mutual sympathies. Additionally, Justine does not have proper representation, demonstrating the legal system's prejudicial structures. In fact, after the presentations to the court of the evidence in Justine's case, the confessor felt so emboldened by the paltry "circumstantial evidence" (55) that he "threatened and menaced" Justine into making a false confession. M. Shelley writes that the vulnerable Justine, who "had none to support," "almost began to think" she was the "monster" the confessor said she was (56). However, Justine is not monstrous; she is simply outside the legal system in terms of class and sex. When the circumstantial evidence is wrapped up in biased sympathies, the courts are easily persuaded against her. In the most profound example of legal travesty due to bias, the innocent Justine is executed, which again supports Bentham's point that capital punishment too often targets the minoritized, cannot be 100% assured of truth, and is irreversible.

In contrast to Justine's tragic mistreatment, M. Shelley juxtaposes Victor's experiences with the legal system. Just as in Justine's case, the law uses equally sparse and injudicious evidence to detain Victor after Clerval's death. Initially, it seems Victor will suffer the horrors of

the biased, cruel legal system when he is placed in a room with Clerval's "lifeless" body and observed for his reaction to detect guilt (122). Exasperated, Victor exclaims, "Have my murderous machinations deprived you also...of life" (122). In essence, a confession is extorted. However, upon going through Victor's personal items, the magistrate Mr. Kirwin finds a letter that reveals Victor's father as a magistrate from Geneva. Confirmation of Victor's family status automatically reconnects him to the power structure of those in control and to all the privileges that status affords.

Upon learning of Victor's family connections, Mr. Kirwin takes "charge himself with every care of collecting witnesses, and arranging [Victor's] defense" (126). Even though both Justine and Victor are held on charges of murder, Victor is "spared the disgrace of appearing publicly as a criminal, as the case [is] not brought before the court that decides on life and death" (126). Circumstantial evidence that "Frankenstein [is] not on the Islands at the hour the body of [his] friend [is] found" proves little but spares Frankenstein's life. In contrast, Justine is publicly humiliated, condemned to death, and executed at the gallows before a society—all based on equally circumstantial evidence (126). M. Shelley could not be more emphatic in her dramatization of the failure of Smith's impartial spectator to function as an effective and fair external regulatory structure nor of the need for Bentham's legal reforms to induct an era of equity for marginalized persons.

## **Part V: Conclusion**

As M. Shelley pens her tragic tale of the confused and dying Dr. Victor and of the embittered and raging Creature, the novelist presents a dramatization of just how Smith's dialectic actually plays out in real society. Shelley's experiment with Smith's impartial spectator demonstrates the

limitations of Smith's theory applied to men who do not have the advanced cognitive and emotional abilities needed to be unbiased and impartial while still being human. Each character is unable to reach the final stage of Smith's moral thought because they are unable to regulate their actions toward the Creature's allegorical female role outside the sympathetic chain. Victor's death (remember he would not allow Walton's proposal of friendship to heal his myopia), the Creature's demoralization such that he believes it impossible to receive sympathy from any outside his race, and his subsequent use of the corrupt legal system critiques the untenability of Smith's dialectic.

Court reforms are sorely need by the time Shelley first publishes *Frankenstein*. *Frankenstein* registers this through the court scenes' misuse and abuse of evidence, sinister (biased) interests, and obfuscated court proceedings. The Creature's ease in manipulating the corrupt legal system, which is structurally discriminatory and supported through social bias dramatizes the need for Bentham's socio-legal reforms. Safie's evidentiary letters that make their way from Safie to the Monster, to Victor, to Walton, and perhaps even to Margaret, as one can imagine Walton inclosing them in a missive to his sister, and become evidence in a reformed legal system that allows Margaret, a woman, to be a juror, suggests a move in the direction of Bentham's reforms. Bentham worked tirelessly to reform the courts, to clarify his theory of sanctions, and to remove fictitious language—language that serves sinister interests in the biased power structure. To achieve this, he turned to evidence and language that attempted to hew to the material world.



## Conclusion

### *Do the Voices Carry?: Invisibilizing Characters, Modern Epistolary Novels & Social Media*

As England shifted from an agrarian, feudal society into an industrializing and burgeoning global force, epistolary novels lost favor, finding fewer and fewer writers, publishers, and buyers. What have been the lasting impacts of these treasure troves of psychological complexity and philosophical import? What has been discovered in their pages through this project's investigations? First, this book's conclusion considers across its chapters and the intersections among the moral philosophers in their strategies of fostering social harmony and among the novelists in their dramatizing the gendered real-world results of those strategies. Next, the conclusion considers the literary world's pivot away from honoring the epistolary novel. It presents William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, published in serial form from 1847–1848, to demonstrate the stylistic and attitudinal shift away from the previous respect enjoyed by the epistolary form to an attitude of derision and mockery. The examination considers the epistolary novel's impacts on the twentieth- and twenty-first-century literary trends and its modern manifestations with a special reference to Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. Finally, this research project concludes with observations regarding social media as another platform for epistolary communications. In the age of Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, rapid-fire repartee has become a private, anonymous, public, and directed communication system where gendered culture battles continue to be waged through epistolary connections sent through cyberspace.

### *Cross Connections among All the Chapter Themes*

This book's thesis presents a two-pronged hypothesis regarding the coevolutionary influences and metatextual exchanges occurring among moral philosophers and novelists during the long-eighteenth century. This research investigates the biographies and cross-cutting circles

among these thinkers and artists to demonstrate how these great minds interacted in person and through their writings. The selected novels represent metatextual conversations between novelists with their own works and with each other's works. The novels themselves can be seen as long, epistolary responses of praise, criticism, and regulation in received meaning published back and forth among the thinkers and artists selected in this monograph. The targeted analytical summaries developed of selected moral philosophers show their three-stage dialectics in moral reasoning, which were then traced and identified in selected novelists' worldbuilding moral experiments. The literary analysis subsections explore the novels' plot designs, character creations, and thematic import regarding gender roles under external regulatory structures through a narratology framework. By considering the characters' ethics and credibility as they dramatize the thesis, antithesis, and synthesis stages of various moral dialectics, this research project demonstrates how Samuel Richardson, Sarah Fielding, and Frances Burney each praise their targeted moral philosophers while Aphra Behn, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Mary Shelley all criticize theirs, especially in the sexist ramifications of the turn towards external regulatory structures.

In reviewing this research project, it can now be seen how all the novelists express through their central characters—especially their narrators—the moral philosophers' use of internal imagined entities. The authors demonstrate the efficacy or lack thereof of these philosophical tools for the human mind to achieve moral knowledge and for people to perform moral action. In Behn's *Love-Letters*, this satirist of Restoration political and gender relations initially presents her narrator as an objective presentation of the Royal Society's Institutional Observer. She then has her narrator proxy slide into being a biased, social commentator who deifies the male Octavio while negativizing the female Silvia in the fallouts from their libertine sexual escapades. In Richardson's *Pamela*, the titular character's soliloquy dramatizes Shaftesbury's critical self with her journaling, facilitating her



psychological *dédoublement*, where her mind divides into the elevated self who is witnessing, consoling, and guiding the traumatized self. As the kidnapped Pamela is isolated, this internal regulatory structure of her innate moral sense that she engages through memoir writing saves her sanity and her life. Through this writing, she is able to ignite the innate moral sense in Mr. B by activating his critical self. Pamela's literary and social role as a moral model precipitates Mr. B turning to virtue and releasing the captive Pamela, whom he marries and adds to his family's estate will.

When Richardson shifts from extolling Shaftesbury's external regulatory structure of marriage as a significant pathway to fulfilling the moral virtue of duty, the novelist continues his style of dramatizing Butler's imagined internal entity of conscience. In the novel *Clarissa*, Richardson uses this moral paragon's epistolary correspondences to present her mind's process of undergoing Butler's turn to an internal regulatory structure of the conscience. As Clarissa eschews marriage to restore her social standing and the courts to achieve justice, her letter writing—completed during times of duress while being held kidnapped or under social isolation—facilitates her psycho-spiritual process of forgiveness of the sort conceived by Butler. Richardson uses Clarissa as a model paragon both to Lovelace, who is reformed by her modeling of virtuous behavior, and to readers to be so inspired as Clarissa undergoes the process of anger, just-resentment, cool reflection, and forgiveness. For this research project, Clarissa's epiphany represents the apex of individual, especially female, agency as she engages Butler's conscience to achieve justice and empowerment independently. While S. Fielding's Leonora of *Familiar Letters* and the narrator of "A Vision" both extol Shaftesbury's importance of duty to family, the novelist strongly praises Richardson's narrative choices in *Clarissa* following Butler's psycho-spiritual path of conscience.

Burney's *Evelina* includes characters like Villars, who dramatizes Butler's admonitions against festering in states of anger and resentment. Villars' letters reveal this

bitter character impedes securing aid for his charge Evelina, as his mind perseverates on the affect level of Butler's hierarchy of sentiments. Wollstonecraft's narrator and Maria deftly dramatize Butler's ideas of conscience, where the former presents accurate, holistic assessments of Maria's dire situation and the nefarious and dubious intentions of those around her, especially Darnford. Wollstonecraft uses Maria to dramatize Butler's conscience, where this troubled character struggles against both unlawful institutionalization and decades of patriarchal indoctrination. In her journaling to her daughter, Maria seems to achieve a Butlerian sense of awareness when writing these self-reflective and, hopefully, preventative memoirs for her daughter to live a better and safer life than her mother. However, Wollstonecraft dramatizes the mercurial nature of the mind as Maria oscillates between awareness and lapses into female sentimentalism, as she becomes lured and lulled by Darnford's dashing misrepresentations of himself. Returning to Burney's work *The Wanderer*, the novelist dramatizes the importance of not following extreme passions of love and rebellion but adhering to Hume's General Rule and following class marriage guidelines and shadow laws.

M. Shelley adopts a heavily critical position against the efficacy of Smith's impartial spectator as an imagined internal entity that can foster positive personal or interpersonal growth as an internal or external regulatory structure. She accomplishes this critique by setting up each character in dramatic interactions where sympathy towards the self and mutual sympathy need to be engaged in order for characters to peacefully and authentically move forward in life. As Walton, Victor, the De Lacey's, the courts, collective society, and the Creature all fail to ascend to moral knowledge or moral behavior through applying Smith's moral philosophy tool of the impartial spectator, M. Shelley asserts her tribalist criticism of Smith's dialectic. For M. Shelley, her characters' failures in sympathy prove the flaws inherent in Smith's gap-dependent moral circuit. She contends that people never

connect with themselves or others and the lens of the impartial spectator merely represents the indoctrinated voice of exclusionary, hegemonic social constructs.

In considering each of the female characters in this project's novel selections, gender bias and invisibilizing are continuously present in the novels' moral experiments. The novelists design plotlines that establish scenarios where characters and their assigned personality attributes interact, conflict, and compete in situations rife with moral dilemmas. These epistolary novelists present thought experiments where the characters use written correspondences to facilitate personal development or to influence other characters in decision making and moral action. This manipulative intent is seen in Philander's amatory letters applying logic to convince Silvia to deny social custom and to engage in a love affair with him. This hopeful intent is seen in Caroline's posthumous offering of forgiveness to encourage Belmont to atone for his wrongs and acknowledge their daughter Evelina. Nevertheless, in most of these novels—whether they praise or criticize the moral philosophy—the female characters become covered, elided, or disappeared.

While Richardson adores his female moral paragons of Pamela and Clarissa, he still silences and removes them in marriage coverture or in physical death, to which S. Fielding applauds Richardson's narrative choices. Behn, Wollstonecraft, and M. Shelley offer criticisms of their targeted moral philosophers' dialectics and of the patriarchal norms inherent in their era's regulatory structures. Consider the pages of Behn's Volumes I and II that are replete with details and letters associated with Silvia as the fetishized object of obsession for Philander, Octavio, and Brilljard. Then, note how Behn degrades Silvia's behavior into that of a greedy and lusty beast who is only granted a handful of pages in Volume III. Silvia is disappeared. In *Pamela*, Richardson "covers" this moral model through the marriage process, wherein she transitions from a *feme-soles* into a *feme-covert* under Blackstone's legalizing of women as property. Even as Clarissa achieves a bittersweet,

idealistic agency and ascends to near sainthood, she is physically erased through her psychologically willed suicide. Evalina is only granted acceptance within society through Belmont's acknowledgment of her undeniable facial similarity with Caroline, her deceased mother. Thus, Belmont retrieves her from social invisibleness and civil death in this patriarchal structured world. Wollstonecraft delves into the real-world issue of upper-class families unjustly institutionalizing women, which creates a legitimized system of disappearing women, especially when inheritances are at stake.

Furthermore, Burney's Juliet of *The Wanderer* parallels Pamela in that she achieves safety and stability only when covered under the patriarchal structure of marriage where she ceases to be an errant, uncontrolled female. Through marriage with Harleigh, Juliet calms class-based anxieties and rights class structure boundaries as she follows Pamela's path of the good British woman to become a *feme-covert*. Thus, these novelists continuously present cases of their female characters becoming absorbed or disappeared within larger patriarchal social structures. In reading Richardson's and Burney's works with the grain, their characters' induction into the world of coverture and marriage is presented as a positive result for individuals and society. Even when Clarissa rejects marriage and becomes erased as a living being, S. Fielding's praise in *Remarks on Clarissa* emphatically extols Richardson's choices for his female character. In contrast, Behn, Wollstonecraft, and M. Shelley all criticize the eliding of the female characters' voices and bodies as a central problem resulting from the novelists' targeted moral philosophers' turn to chosen external regulatory structures.

#### *The mid-1800s Death Rattle of the Epistolary Novel: Thackeray's Vanity Fair*

During the reigns of Georges I, II, and III, from 1714 to 1820, Britain experienced "a nation that grew increasingly prosperous through war, trade, colonization, consumer

capitalism, and the beginnings of industrialism” (Abrams 2066). Several factors were noted on the public’s changing literary taste in this book’s introductory subsection on the epistolary novel’s demise. The British public began to consider epistolary novels as tedious and dull in their focus on characters’ psychological complexity, especially in contrast to the exotic swashbuckling narratives of colonial conquest. The sway of public perception took on a negative feminization tone, as Abrams notes that “by the end of the century most of the leading British novelist were women—Burney, Radcliffe, and later Maria Edgeworth—and the novel was often considered a feminine preserve. For that reason, perhaps, it lost some prestige” (2067). As the mid- to late-Victorian literary era moved into a preference for a third-person omniscient narrator, the epistolary genre’s last gasps were issued to the sounds of satire and irony that derided the epistolary novel and epistolary correspondences as a negativized purview of women. Although William Thackeray’s indomitable Becky Sharpe offers modern scholars fecund feminist material when reading against the grain, The fictional world and characters of Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* can be interpreted as a mocking gravestone epitaph in the death of the epistolary novel.

In connection to the public’s mimetic responses to the wildly popular *Vanity Fair*, several accounts offer real-life source materials shown to be inspirations for Thackeray’s Becky Sharpe. Thackeray had read Harriet Wilson’s memoirs, a point proven by the novelist’s reference and comparison to her memoirs in a scathing review of *Lady Charlotte Bury’s Diary* that he published in the January 11, 1838, printing of *The Times*. The well-read courtesan Wilson, who was born to a shopkeeper and “ostentatiously sprinkled” her memoirs “with French...(which) was considered desirable among women moving in high social circles,” openly sought to earn profits through revelations of her liaisons (Freeze 234). Sir Walter Scott described her as ‘Far from beautiful, but a smart, saucy girl, with good eyes and dark hair, and the manners of wild schoolboy’ (qtd. in Freeze 235). Thackeray probably also

knew of the social climber Mary Anne Clarke, whose books he had in his library at his death, and referred to her liaison with the Duke of York in *Vanity Fair*'s Chapter 47. With Clarke's own humble origins and education at a "fashionable boarding school" (Thackeray 235), her relation with the Duke had ongoing impacts, as she was reported to have illegally sold "military commissions and clerical posts,"— the rumors about which she tried to control through publishing her memoirs (232). The army commander-in-chief burned these memoirs at the time of the scandal, and she was "solaced by the payment of ten thousand pounds and an annuity" (Freeze 233). These real-life sources indicate the Victorian realist penchant for observing social dynamics and imbuing them within their fictional works to produce social criticism.

In *Vanity Fair*, the novel's narrator discusses epistles with opprobrium and irony— this literary shift represents a significant blow to the power and popularity of the epistolary novel and a major boon to the rising power of the omniscient voice. Illustrating these cultural shifts, the narrator in *Vanity Fair* rarely includes epistles in their unalloyed form. When he does, he ironically parodies the epistolary genre as passé and mocks it as ill-suited for the present. The narrator forges a Free Indirect Discourse (FID) relationship with the readers as he beckons them to mock the female characters in the effusive prattle over epistles. *Vanity Fair*'s narrative form dramatizes Smith's dialectical synthesis as the novel's narrator proffers authorial commentary about epistles that undermine their moral value, citing their propensity to express excessive emotions, which stymies moral action.

Furthermore, the narrator's commentary on these emotions places him in the role of the impartial spectator who knows all about the past, present, and future circumstances that cause the emotions. Thackeray gives the narrator an eagle's-eye view and a worm's-eye view of the situation and the characters. Through this privileged position of knowledge, the narrator's authorial commentary details for readers the impartial spectator's normative

approbation and disapprobation of characters' actions. As *Vanity Fair*'s narrative structure dramatizes Smith's final stage of moral thought, it also dramatizes Smith's skepticism that agents can bridge the gap between moral knowledge and moral action through the narrator's criticism of epistles and the written texts' expression of an individual's emotions.

As the boarding school classmates move to live in separate abodes, epistles provide the only method of person-to-person contact, as their intertwined lives become divided. In *Vanity Fair*, when Amelia departs from Miss Pinkerton's academy for young ladies, Thackeray's derisive attitude towards letter writing increases, as the departing pupils' exhortations and promises to write each other reaches a near fever pitch. Some of Amelia's friends urge her to "write every week," if not "every day" (Thackeray 5). After observing that Amelia is "most woefully sad at leaving school," the narrator gleefully ridicules the girls in making "fourteen solemn promises" to write each other. The sarcastic narrator recounts Miss Saltire's directions to Amelia to send her "letters under cover to [her] grandpapa, the Earl of Dexter;" Miss Swartz's declaration that Amelia should "Never mind the postage, but write every day;" and the "wistful" look to Amelia from Laura Martin, as she states "Amelia, when I write to you I shall call you Mamma" (5). Within the context of *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray presents a narrator who mocks the females' passionate melodrama and impossible promises as emotions of youth and girlishness, which connects to Thackeray's presentation of the epistolary form as overdone feminine energy.

Shortly after this intense exchange of female sensitivities, the narrator—who serves as the impartial spectator and expresses an authoritative moral voice—dives into the mind of the idealized Victorian reader. This representative who is innocuously named "Jones" is described as a man who reads *Vanity Fair* in a "Club," safely removed from Amelia's and her friend's histrionic outpouring regarding epistolary correspondence, which he is imagined to "pronounce to be excessively foolish, trivial, twaddling, and ultra-sentimental" (5). The

narrator delights in telling the rapt reader, “Yes; I can see Jones at this minute (rather flushed with his joint of mutton and half pint of wine), taking out his pencil and scoring under the words “foolish, twaddling,” &c., and adding to them his own remark of ‘QUITE TRUE.’” (5). Creating a close communication with the reader, Thackeray’s narrator emphasizes the brave masculinity of this Jones person who “is a lofty man of genius, and admires the great and heroic in life and novels; and so had better take warning and go elsewhere” (5). The narrator deridingly opposes the women’s world of letter writing to the philosophical tomes of Jones’s interests—so much so that the narrator encourages Jones to leave the room to avoid suffering the women’s prattle. The silent, observing, and contemplative male Jones, who reads and makes notes to himself, foils the effervescent females who prattle on about what seems like what would be superficial epistolary correspondences.

Jones is described as a detached, “lofty man of genius” serving as an antithetical model to the girls who are “excessively foolish, trivial, twaddling, and ultra-sentimental” (5). Jones emulates Smith’s description of those most adept at constructing and applying the impartial spectator as a moral regulator. This man— who distains of the girls’ excessive sentimentality—represents men “of real constancy and firmness...who [have] been thoroughly bred in the great school of self-command, in the bustle and business of the world, exposed, perhaps, to the violence and injustice of faction, and to the hardships and hazards of war” (Smith, *TMS* 145). The narrator’s attention to Jones’ worldly character suggests he shares traits with Smith’s controlled moral agent who on “all occasions; and whether in solitude or in society” wears “nearly the same countenance, and is affected very nearly in the same manner” (Smith, *TMS*, 146). This sense of emotional consistency and an overall staid presence markedly contrasts with the feminine histrionics regarding staying in constant contact via their method of communication—the epistle.



The narrator and Jones are undeniably paired when Thackeray has the narrator “see Jones at this minute” agreeing with his pronouncement that the girls are “excessively foolish, trivial, twaddling, and ultra-sentimental.” This fictional moment perfectly dramatizes Smith’s complex theory where everyone is simultaneously an agent, a spectator, and an impartial spectator—it is a cognitive hall of mirrors. This narrative moment also allows the narrator to acknowledge his own authority as an impartial spectator when he describes Jones “taking out his pencil and scoring under the words’ foolish, twaddling,’ &c., and adding to them his own remark of ‘quite true’” (5). By highlighting Jones’ underlining of the narrator’s words, the narrator suggests that Jones, as the generalized reader, affirms his thoughts as “quite true” (5). In this instance, Jones inhabits the role of spectator in approving the narrator’s actions as an agent.

In order to undermine the epistles’ moral value, the overall text of *Vanity Fair* scrutinizes letters, letter writing, and letters’ explorations of individual emotions. Thackeray’s novel exemplifies the shift in the British literary taste from the epistolary genre’s internal psychological and spiritual work regarding moral knowledge and moral behavior. As a novel can traverse a vast historical era of rapid sociopolitical change, *Vanity Fair* both negativizes contemplative, interpersonal epistles as the realm of girlish chatter and includes a markedly different type of epistle—those related to the business of the British colonial project. The novel includes several letters, which present an entirely different tone from the emotional, psychologically complex epistles of Clarissa, Maria, or Victor. They are the curt stuff of masculine business. Consider this perfunctory epistolary inclusion in Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair*:

It was— ‘From Georgy, requesting 5s., April 23, 18—; answered, April 25’—or ‘Georgy about a pony, October 13’—and so forth. In another packet were ‘Dr. S.’s accounts’—‘G.’s tailor’s bills and outfits, drafts on me by G. Osborne, jun.,’ &c.—his

letters from the West Indies—his agent’s letters, and the newspapers containing his commissions: here was a whip he had when a boy, and in a paper a locket containing his hair, which his mother used to wear. (212)

These collected snippets of notes and letters represent the movement away from epistles as platforms of interpersonal dialogue and self-reflective journaling. These notes and envelopes present short requests for childhood presents, bills to be paid, messages from the colonies, and a locket of hair. They are not hundreds of lines of interactive communication between two persons engaged in deep—albeit distanced—conversation.

In *Vanity Fair*, some letters are exchanged between ex-patriots living in India, as the British nation is engulfed in the news of various colonial interactions. “Letters were crucial for audiences such as distant merchants who required business updates. The letter played a key role in early forms of commercial globalization” (Bourdon 366). As a historical novel that illuminates increased class mobility, British military exploits, and colonial aspirations, *Vanity Fair* reflects how the postal service facilitates the exchange of epistles between migratory or distanced family and friends at home and abroad. Thus, *Vanity Fair* represents a marker in the cultural shift away from epistles of internal reflection to sources of feminized derision and business documents and travels, as England became a global empire.

### *Twentieth-Century Epistolary Novels and Beyond...*

Did *Vanity Fair* indeed mark the death of the epistolary novel? Of course not—epistolary novels simply hibernated for a while and then resurfaced in manifestations fitted to the needs of humans living in new eras. The twentieth century experienced significant shifts away from people avidly reading serial publications in groups and with family, where bonds of social and personal development were mutually evolving through these interactions. Instead,

“Rejecting Victorian notions of the artist’s moral and educational duties, aestheticism helped widen the breach between writers and the general public, resulting in the ‘alienation’ of the modern artist from society” (Ramazani 3). With the Education Act of 1870, British literacy rates increased in tandem with increased printing of cheap “yellow press” works. The increased affordability and access to reading materials enlarged and split British readerships into high-, middle-, and low-brow collectives.

At the fin-de-siècle, the European colonial project sat like a massive beast across the globe, as the inklings of World War I began to rear its ugly head. People’s general cultural outlook of optimism and benevolence began to shake, as represented in Thomas Hardy’s poem “The Darkling Thrush,” which had been initially titled “By the Century’s Deathbed.” Ramazani notes that “the poem marks the demise of a century of relative conviction and optimism, and it intimates the beginnings of a new era in its skeptical irresolution and its bleak sense of the modern world as ‘hard and dry’” (5). As modernity loomed with the entryway into World War II that precipitated the dissolution of the European global stronghold, assurances of stability in national or class positions or faith in religious outlooks faltered in the rise of mass dislocations of population, with the ensuing anxieties over identity, morality, and human nature.

Towards the late 1800s, several key legislative decisions were passed, increasing women’s status and rights, which all worked in conjunction with active feminist movements. With the Married Women’s Property Act of 1882, women were permitted to own property in their own right, and universities began to admit women to earn advanced degrees. The Custody Act of 1839 endowed mothers with the ability to petition for visitation rights to their minor children and custody of their children under seven. “The Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 established a civil divorce court (divorce previously could be granted only by an ecclesiastical court) and provided a deserted wife the right to apply for a

protection order that would allow her rights to her property” (Ramazani 1056). These legal changes represented many equity-based moves for women’s rights during this era. With leaders such as Emmaline Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel, suffragette movements engaged in franchise actions, various boycotts, and hunger strikes. Some feminist groups engaged in bombings. In 1918, British women over thirty got the vote, which was extended to all women over twenty-one in 1928. And, after decades of gender rights equity improvements, 1991 saw the overturning of the marital rape exemption.

Jahan Ramazani notes the new focuses in fiction born after WWII in relation to moral philosophical explorations. “Questing for new moral foundations for the post-Holocaust nuclear age, William Golding published the first of many post-Christian moral fables with the *Lord of the Flies*, and Iris Murdoch released the first of many novels of moral philosophy with *Under the Net*, both in 1954” (Ramazani 24). In literature’s modern era, novelists questioned the human ability to trust and know their worlds. For many Modernist writers, such as Joseph Conrad, among others:

what was knowable, and representable, could not be thought of as some given, fixed, transcribable essence. Reality existed, rather, only as it was perceived. Hence the introduction of the impressionistic, flawed, even utterly unreliable narrator—a substitute for the classic nineteenth-century authoritative narrating voice, usually the voice of the author or some close stand-in. (Ramazani 21)

In an interesting return to the epistolary novelists’ obsession with the machinations of the human mind, Modernist author Virginia Woolf exhorts her contemporaries to turn their gazes inward for inspiration.

Woolf proclaims that “Reality and its truth has gone inward” and novels should focus on “an ordinary mind on an ordinary day” and that “the life that matters most would now be mental life” (qtd. in Ramazani 21). Officially developing the narrative technique of FID,

Modernist writers freely entered their characters' minds to speak their perspectives. Many Modernist novels embraced inconclusive endings, such as D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913), where the narrative finale leaves readers with a view of a boundless vista or Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) where the ending connotes a sense of unfilled dreams and life regrets. Connecting with this research project, Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) concludes with a metaleptic jump from a third-person view on Stephen Dedalus's world. The Bildungsroman ends with his first-person voice soliloquy captured in a diary fragment. With an excitement tinged with mourning, he expresses his views on his self-imposed exile from all he has known, as he embarks on his journey into life as an adult and as an artist.

With the breaking down of the European colonial dominance and the global restructuring of communities that seek to address the era's ongoing humanitarian rights abuses, many writers from the diaspora seek moral philosophy answers through the writing process. Consider the works of two white South African writers. Nadine Gordimer has extended the potential of an "ethical narrative realism to probe the fierce moral challenges of apartheid and its aftermath, whereas J.M. Coetzee has used self-reflexively postmodern and allegorical forms to enquire into the tangled complexities and vexed complicities of White South African experience" (Ramazani 25). With voices from every community finding outlets for expression, writers recount global migration and cross-cultural interactions. They continue taking "advantage of the novel's fecund polymorphousness with little anxiety about belatedness, no fright over parroting, and no neomodernist worries about attempting realistic encounters with the world" (Ramazani 25).

What has the life of the epistolary novel been like since the 1980s? Paul Auster's *In the Country of Last Things* presents his female protagonist's epistolary reports of her dystopian world as a form of rebellion. She uses her epistles to deny the monstrous extinction

of her world where humans scavenge for food and where corpses—some resulting from public suicide—are used for fuel. In this novel, the act of writing preserves the protagonist's memory of the language used to describe all the material objects and social systems that are decaying in this apocalypse. In many ways, this refuge in letter writing echoes Pamela's and Clarissa's letter writing as a tool to protect their minds when under deep duress and defy overwhelming circumstances when they are at a loss of control.

The narrative of Ouida Sebestyen's epistolary novel *The Girl in the Box* (1989) follows a kidnapped woman as she writes letters to her friends, family, the police, and God in a resilient bid to protect her sense of hope and to find pathways to engender her rescue. The idea of writing letters to the self, to others, and to God heavily factor into Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), where the protagonist Celie writes herself free from bondage by racism, patriarchy, and poverty in 1930s rural Georgia. Rachel Bower considers *The Color Purple*'s embrace of the epistolary form for Celie to communicate her pain with God and for her to reconnect with her sister and her children. Bower asks pertinent questions regarding the enduring power of epistles and their adaptability to the human need for expression, reflection, and connection. "We might consider, for a moment, what this could mean for the resurgence of epistolary conventions at the end of a century marked by systemic separation, incarceration, and forced migration. Can we take refuge in the dialogue that the epistolary form seems to offer—embracing its response to the extremities of political contexts, welcoming dialogue where there is conflict, connection where there is separation?" (Bower 11)

11) All of these epistolary novels offer platforms for competing expressions where people meditate on their life journeys and share their hopes for the future.

*Digital Epistolary Relationships: Social Media as the Cyberscape for Culture Wars*

How do social media platforms, with postal routes replaced by radio waves, continue the epistolary correspondence in the twenty-first century? “Throughout history, letters have resorted not only to ink and paper (for writing) and to horses, pigeons and human beings (for transportation), but also to wedges, clay, papyrus, parchment, styli, terracotta, wood, wax, bronze, railways, airplanes, boats and so on” (Bourdon 352). Letters seem to be an integral part of the human experience. Modern technology hardware and software merely offer a new outlet for connections with the self and with others. Bourdon explores how modern epistles—in emails, text threads, Facebook posts, Instagram photos, and TikTok videos—carry on the same opportunities for self-reflection and interpersonal communication as handwritten messages of the past. “The letter is a polymorphic, multi-generic, multi-use medium whose history extends back a thousand years” (Bourdon 351). So, how do moral philosophy questions intersect with social media ethics and interconnections? How does a Twitter post reflect the ongoing incarnations of epistolary exchanges? In the era of social media, where is the place to contemplate the moral philosophy ramifications of the rapid-fire, 280-character burst of epistolary correspondences from one person to millions?

In considering the negative uses of social media to spread disinformation, Martha Nussbaum contemplates the role of controlling and directing one’s passions during the modern era of constant information input and endless opportunities for output. As the world and all its diversity has become more interconnected, the Euro-American hegemonic regime has become destabilized. The patriarchal and white male establishment is finding it must sympathize with a whole host of different people. However, its ability to sympathize has been stymied by its own indoctrination with superiority. This notion of entitlement has resulted in a sense of threat seen expressed in media outlets like Fox News and from pundits like Senator Josh Hawley in his viewpoints advocating for a type of patriarchal, white male dominance in

American society. The anxiety invoked by this threat has a complex basis in moral sense philosophy. In Nussbaum's text *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, Justice*, she pulls from Butler, Hume, Smith, and Bentham to make sense of these types of angry emotions in contemporary society and law.

Clarifying her concept of anger, she explains that "the claim is not that anger conceptually involves a wish of violent revenge; nor is it that anger involves the wish to inflict suffering oneself upon the offender" (22–3). Nussbaum notes that people might not even want to enact revenge personally and may hope for the twists and turns of life to punish the perceived wrongdoer. Alternatively, they may seek redress through the court, either through a sense of righteous ethics or hypocritical fear. They "just want the doer to suffer. And the suffering can be quite subtle" (22–3). Nussbaum concludes with her overall statement "that anger involves, conceptually, a wish for things to go badly, somehow, for the offender in a way that is envisaged, somehow, however vaguely, as a payback for the offense" (22–3). What else can explain this impulse? Nussbaum suggests this impulse is predicated on a society based on ranking and narcissistic status-focused concern: "In such cases, a retaliatory strike-back is thought symbolically to restore the balance of status, manliness, or whatever" (26). This reactionary response is a form of magical thinking "probably derived from metaphysical ideas of cosmic balance that are hard to shake off, and that may be part of evolutionary endowment" (24). This emotion is retaliatory and outward moving in that it seeks the pain of the offender as a way of assuaging or compensating for one's own pain. However, these internecine social media battles seem to foster hate, with blustering red faces absorbing energy and offering no positive outcomes.

Nevertheless, what are some proactive, thrilling examples of people using social media as outlets of epistolary support for their communities? As this project has taken a turn towards supporting female empowerment, consider just a few social media platforms doing



just that. For example, the #MeToo Movement, begun in 2017 by Tarana Burke and intended for black and brown females to find a safe outlet for statements on gender violence, has evolved into a worldwide platform for anyone to voice their truth regarding this ongoing issue. Perhaps people can overlap this #MeToo outlet with the characters from *Evalina*. Caroline's posthumous letter of forgiveness to Belmont might function just like an Instagram post, testifying to her experience of gendered mistreatment. In the world of social media, all of these efforts and correspondences from one person to many people—as in one Twitter poster cathartically sharing her trauma—and in the many responses back to the one poster—as in the outpouring of support and acknowledgment to this poster, all have roots in the epistolary tradition and in the human need for contemplative expression to the self and to others.

On TikTok, the “feminist sisters” Emma and Floli create videos set to trendy songs to spread basic information on women's equity initiatives and rights. And the #HeforShe United Nations initiated campaign seeks to bring men into the realm of women's rights by engaging high-profile celebrities in disseminating gender equity information. Perhaps people can overlap the cyber realms of feminist conversation and information sharing with the salons of the Bluestockings in their feminist movements towards personal development and greater empowerment for women. Of course, this research does not seek to universalize the female experience or elide the Bluestocking women's class and race privileges. However, their efforts still mark a subgroup working within the long continuum of transitional justice for women, just like these 2022 social media platforms.

The epistolary world holds innumerable mysteries and enduring impacts—from the public-private diaries kept during the long-eighteenth century to novels written intentionally to sway the reading public. The epistolary structure continues to serve as a format for human expression, with modern epistolary novels written by the diaspora and social media's riveting

opportunities to disseminate the ideas of and to the least empowered. However, what are the constant tensions between speaker authenticity and audience receptivity in all of these competing voices? What are the tensions between formal laws and shadow laws in how humans interact and communicate with each other? The literature figured in this project remains vibrant, relevant, and controversial in today's world, where ethics and morality remain central to the human experience. The polymorphous identities of *Frankenstein's* Creature remain even more palpable as they did one hundred years ago. While the long-eighteenth century's epistolary novels may seem like novels of the past, they resonate in today's world, where email may have usurped the role of handwritten letters. However, the human heart, mind, and spirit continues to grapple with questions of moral virtue, interpersonal communication, and moral behavior. Throughout one's entire lifetime, people continue to develop layers of self-awareness, as they evolve their skills to assess how they formally compose their thoughts and how they make choices that are guided by concern for others—all under the watchful gaze and power of smaller and larger social customs and legal structures. In all its modern manifestations, the epistolary mode represents a platform of ongoing culture wars where gender questions and moral dilemmas still seem to be intertwined, ongoing challenges to the human individual and community to awaken through ever-evolving realms of personal and interpersonal development.

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