

©2008

Kathryn Lenore Steele

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

NAVIGATING INTERPRETIVE AUTHORITIES:  
WOMEN READERS AND READING MODELS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

by

KATHRYN LENORE STEELE

A Dissertation submitted to the  
Graduate School-New Brunswick  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in Literatures in English

written under the direction of

Paula J. McDowell

and approved by

---

---

---

---

New Brunswick, New Jersey

January 2008

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Navigating Interpretive Authorities:

Women Readers and Reading Models in the Eighteenth Century

By KATHRYN LENORE STEELE

Dissertation Director:  
Paula J. McDowell

Challenging existing notions of the oppositional reader, this dissertation proposes the model of limited interpretive authority as a new way of understanding reading practices in eighteenth-century England. It examines the women readers of Samuel Richardson's Clarissa as illustrations of this concept. Chapter 1, a literature review, suggests that even as methodologies become more flexible, the modern, individual, and secular reader continues to inform studies of historical reading. Arguing that the field requires a reading model describing more limited individual interpretive authority, this chapter turns to eighteenth-century instructions for reading the Bible. These texts employ a language of self-discipline and self-censorship that characterizes reading which negotiates, instead of rejecting, interpretive authority. Chapter 2 explores the historically problematic emphasis on oppositional reading in the study of women readers. A review of these methodological problems is followed by an examination of Hester Mulso Chapone's 1773 Letters on the Improvement of the Mind. This influential conduct book theorizes and recommends socially-embedded reading practices; in recuperating

novelistic reading practices for the reading of the Bible, this text reflects a key change in reading practices. The chapter argues for extending the search for evidence of reading to the didactic texts usually believed to merely constrain readers.

The final two chapters examine the implied readers and historical readers of Samuel Richardson's 1747-48 novel Clarissa. Chapter 3 examines internal reading strategies. Clarissa's interpretive practice changes as she moves from acting in the social world to spiritual retreat. Silences in response to her family's coercion--representing a form of passive disobedience--are replaced by a refusal to narrate. This refusal signifies Clarissa's removal from the interpretive conflicts of the material world. Clarissa's self-transcendence invites us to imagine some readers' desire for similar self-transcendence. Using both published and archival letters, Chapter 4 tests and extends the models of reading proposed by the novel itself. Anna Howe, this chapter proposes, not Clarissa, provides the model of reading most often employed by readers. Reading like Anna Howe, or reading in a mode of filial disobedience, reveals a way to navigate, without necessarily rejecting, the interpretive dictates of patriarchy.

## Acknowledgements

I am fortunate to have had excellent teachers, mentors, readers, friends, and supporters as I came to this project and completed this dissertation. My dissertation committee, Paula J. McDowell, Michael McKeon, Jonathan Brody Kramnick, and Toni Bowers provided innumerable useful suggestions and comments; I owe them a special debt for muddling through the drafts in spite of my inadequate editing and proofreading capabilities. My dissertation director, Paula McDowell, was an outstanding mentor and model from the earliest stages of the process. I am grateful for her encouragement, her wonderfully practical professional advice, her patience with the many substantial changes this project underwent, and for her seemingly superhuman ability to read and respond to drafts within hours of receiving them. Her support and example allowed me to begin to see myself as scholar, and as a scholar working across the fields of literary studies, the history of reading, and the history of the book.

Michael McKeon's scholarship, teaching, and insights continue to shape my thinking about the eighteenth century. I want to thank him especially for always pushing my thinking--in seminars, conversations, and responses to my writing--to the broadest possible historical implications of the problems of reading and interpretation. I enjoyed many productive conversations with Jonathan Kramnick, especially about Richardson, Clarissa, and Eliza Haywood. I am grateful to Toni Bowers for agreeing to be on my dissertation committee at a late date, for reading and commenting on the dissertation thoroughly, and for helping make the defense a truly engaging intellectual experience. Her insight will be palpable in future revisions and versions of this project. Conversations with Ann Baynes Coiro about learning and education , well before this

project was underway, were foundational in the direction the dissertation ultimately took. Graduate classes at the University of Colorado taught by Charlotte Sussman launched my interest in eighteenth-century British literature, and her encouragement was key to my decision to continue with graduate work.

This work benefited financially from funding by Rutgers University in the form of two year-long fellowships. A fellowship awarded by the North American Conference on British Studies and the Huntington Library allowed me to perform initial archival research at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. The Daniel Francis Howard Travel fellowship allowed me to perform key archival work on the Richardson correspondence in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and on religious reading instructions at the British Library. Nancy Sullivan Murphy provided nearly matching funds to support travel for research, for which I am highly thankful.

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation funded two dissertation-writing workshops: a Summer Dissertation Writing Workshop and a dissertation Seminar in Historical Interpretation. In addition to the Mellon Foundation, I wish to thank the leaders of the workshops, Meredith McGill and Michael McKeon, for creating environments of genuine scholarly exchange. The comments of the participants of these workshops proved invaluable in my revision of the Chapters 1 and 3 of the dissertation. Thanks for these comments and conversations is due to Sarah Alexander, Anannya Dasgupta, Leslie Dovale, Angela Florsheutz, Devin Griffiths, Natasha Hurley, Ellorashree Maitra, Jacob Nellickal, Alison Shonkweiler, Alexandra Socarides, Ameer Sohrawardy, Richard Squibbs, Margaret Wald, and Madhvi Zutshi.

I might have finished this dissertation, but certainly would not have finished happily or sanely were it not for the friendship, support, and continuing collegiality of Kristie Allen, Danielle Bobker, Kristin Girten, and Kathleen Lubey. I hope that this is only the first of many such acknowledgements that I am able to make to them.

Finally, I want to thank my family: my father, Ralph Steele, for a love of books and reading that spilled over; my siblings, Gretchen Hollands and Christopher Steele, for helping hone my argumentative skills since childhood; and my mother, Nancy Sullivan Murphy, for bountiful emotional and material support. My daughter, Cynthia Blatherwick, has been incredibly forbearing of a parent absorbed in academic pursuits. Alex Bain patiently endures interruptions of his own work to discuss mine, insists that we eat normal things at regular hours, and keeps the house mirthful; for these, and countless other quotidian and intellectual benefits, I continue to be grateful.

## Table of Contents

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Abstract.....   | ii  |
| Acknowledgements.....   | iii |
| Introduction.....   | 1   |
| Chapter One<br>Bound and Unbound:<br>Interpretive Authority and Individual Readers.....                   | 10  |
| Chapter Two<br>Reading Women in the History of Reading.....   | 50  |
| Chapter Three<br>Reading Models in <u>Clarissa</u> .....  | 92  |
| Chapter Four<br>Arguing with ‘Papa’ Richardson:<br>Daughterly Disobedience and Readerly Disobedience..... | 149 |
| Conclusion.....   | 208 |
| Works Consulted.....  | 215 |
| Curriculum Vita.....  | 227 |



## Introduction

The images available to us of the readers in the past are limited by the ephemerality of reading act, and yet, paradoxically, many projections of readers are shaped by an imagination of the reader as an agent of unlimited and creative interpretive capabilities and possibilities. Michel de Certeau's figure of the reader as poacher, to take a notable example, continues to inform the way observers of reading define, describe and characterize reading activity. To what extent, ask scholars in both literary studies and the history of reading, can or does the reader determine a text's meaning? Although this question has been answered productively in numerous ways, De Certeau's formulation of the autonomous reader, however, is inherently modern:

Because the body withdraws itself from the text in order henceforth to come into contact with it only through the mobility of the eye, the geographical configuration of the text organizes the activity of the reader less and less. . . . The autonomy of the eye suspends the body's complicities with the text; it unmoors it from the scriptural place; it makes the written text an object and it increases the reader's possibilities of moving about . . . Emancipated from places, the reading body is freer in its movements. It thus transcribes in its attitudes every subject's ability to convert the text through reading and to 'run it' the way one runs traffic lights. (176)

Recognizing that the autonomy of the reader depends on the relatively recent phenomenon of silent reading, de Certeau's reader reads with his/her eyes only--unlike the physically tied down scriptural reader who reads out loud, and in a more bodily, and presumably more public manner--way. In addition to comparing the ability to move around within or between texts to running traffic lights, de Certeau compares speed-reading to airplane travel. The very mobility of the eye, therefore, becomes analogous to the modern subject's ability or tendency to physically migrate from place to place. In spite of its modernity, this idea of the reader as physically and mentally free, has itself

run through histories of reading. As I discuss in more detail below, this image of the autonomous reader is often either the pattern for or model against which other readers are measured, or the implicit trajectory toward which reading trends.

This autonomous reader is the reader who leaves the most evidence since reading unmoored from a textual place often finds its way into writing. Evidence is left when the reader seeks to mark his or her difference from the text either within the physical object itself (in marginalia or other markings within the book), or in responses manifested outside of that object (a written critique, an intertextual allusion, a letter detailing the reading experience). This autonomous reader also represents the kind of creative, flexible, intellectually rigorous, oppositional reading that we most value today (and often taught as critical reading). Indeed, those who are most highly invested in the practices of close, analytical, and skeptical response--scholars and students of the history of the book and reading who are likely to be teachers of critical thought--are precisely those whose work constructs our images of the historical reader. That is to say, as modern and autonomous readers of the sort described by de Certeau, we ourselves may find it difficult to perceive readers for whom readerly autonomy is antithetical, or for whom rejecting, questioning, or opposing a text might be not only unfamiliar, but actively repudiated.

This project, however, describes, and seeks to find ways to recognize and characterize, those very readers who do not necessarily challenge the text. In developing an approach through which we can begin to study the apparently obedient reader, this project contributes to--and corrects--the image we have of the readers of the past which has been colored by the evidential dominance of resisting reader. The history of reading,

as a field, has recently embraced a rigorously material paradigm of research. The material and empirical paradigm of the new history of reading tends to find, and thus study, primarily the resistant and the exceptional reader. At the same time, though, recent scholarship focusing on women readers suggests that the study of women's reading requires sensitivity to the fact that women were less likely to leave the kind of written evidence upon which histories of reading have come to depend. This is especially true if they adhere to codes of femininity that complicate the assertion of individual expression and interpretation. I therefore examine the problem of the obedient reader as an aspect of the problems of gendered reading. In directing attention to patterns of gendered interpretive practices, my project examines current approaches to the study of historical reading.

Women readers of the eighteenth century are the particular examples I look to in examining the obedient reader. The female reader has not been neglected. And certainly the female readers of the eighteenth century--the paradigmatic novel reader--has been accorded substantial aggregate attention. But historians of reading and literary historians either have noticed only those readers who contest the ideologies of gender constructed in prescriptive and imaginative literatures, or bemoaned the ideological consignment of women to the realm of passive consumption. Left out of this picture are the readers who eagerly sought assistance from interpretive authority; reading practices that move between the poles of passivity and resistance are equally elided. This project argues that we need to look more closely at those on the orthodox side of the tension between interpretive authority and the oppositional reader.

Women readers often employ what we might call traditional modes of reading longer than men--religious reading, deference to clerical and professional interpretative authorities, and communal rather than individual reading. However, we often project later ideals of reading and a historical movement toward readerly independence onto the readers of the past, making it difficult for us to see these modes of reading. Indeed, such traditional practices appear to limit women's individual interpretive options, but I show that because they were understood as feminine and religious such limitations allowed women to gain interpretive ground lost as a result of their exclusion from many powerful interpretive traditions. This project begins to describe and characterize the reading experience of those who follow, feel bound to follow, the directions of those who attempt to control interpretation. More specifically, I bring to light women readers whose active reading practices involve relinquishing some of their interpretive power.

The abundance of reading responses to Samuel Richardson's novels, the interpretive debates carried on in his correspondence, and the influence his novels had on the world of women's letters make the Richardson circle one significant site for my approach to the history of reading. Richardson and his readers saw *Clarissa* as exemplary, making the novel Clarissa ideal for an examination of the relationship between internal and external readers. Although many scholars of the history of reading are now mining private forms of reading response such as letters and diaries, I argue throughout this project that we cannot abandon the text, or textual analysis, in attempting to understand historical readers. Indeed, my own archival research into non-published responses (in the Richardson correspondence) shows that women themselves looked to fiction, and to fictional characters' own reading and communicative practices, as they

constructed and articulated their own habits of reading. I argue, therefore, that the methodologies of the history of reading must continue to re-evaluate the usefulness of the implied reader in the context of archival resources.

The first chapter of this project, “Bound and Unbound: Interpretive Authority and Individual Readers,” presents an overview of the field of the history of reading. The new history of reading, taking shape and gaining ground as an interdisciplinary field in the last decade, has sought to correct overly general and teleological theories of historical reading. Historians of reading have, therefore, looked carefully at the particularity of each historical moment’s reading modes and embraced a multiplicity of individual and eccentric reading practices. But I argue that even as approaches to historical reading practices have become more subtle and flexible, they continue to privilege the traits of the modern, individual, and secular reader. Readers are identified most readily, that is, in terms of opposition to interpretive authority, an authority itself defined in the period as religious.

The seminal collection *A History of Reading the West* (1999), edited by Roger Chartier and Guglielmo Cavallo, for instance, sheds light on numerous modes of historical reading from ancient times to the present. At the same time, however, in tracing a long history of readers who reject interpretive authorities, this volume implicitly narrates the development of the modern, critical reader. An emphasis on the development of this individuated reader fails to provide us with terms that can adequately characterize the ways readers situated their reading relative to the reading and interpretive authority of others. Here, and throughout this project, I argue that we need language for describing the contrasting--and difficult to see--practices of the desire to reach

interpretive consensus and the desire to subordinate individual interpretation to religiously and culturally constructed interpretive mandates. Eighteenth-century instructions for reading the Bible, for example, employ a language of self-discipline and self-censorship, thus articulating a reading practice that negotiates with, rather than rejects, interpretive authority. These texts present a reading model that provides readers with a limited individual interpretive authority--limitations that we need to attend to more closely in describing the reading habits of the period.

Chapter 2, "Reading Women in the History of Reading," expands my argument about the unnecessary, and historically problematic, emphasis on resisting or oppositional readers, but turns the focus more specifically to women readers. I examine the problem of the lack of evidence for women's reading, and argue that our notions of gendered reading practices are distorted not only by a paucity of evidence but, again, by the inclination to look for critical or resisting readers. After defining some of the specific problems of finding and evaluating women's reading, I examine an influential conduct book of the late eighteenth century as an example of one approach to resituating and reevaluating the methodological problems. Hester Mulso Chapone's 1773 Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, I argue, articulates socially-embedded reading practices, rather than individual ones. In recuperating novelistic reading practices for the reading of the Bible, this text not only reflects a key change in reading practices of the period, but reveals the importance of extending our search for evidence of reading to the didactic and prescriptive texts usually believed to merely articulate limitations against which readers define their reading. Although Chapters 3 and 4 detail the reading practices in the Samuel Richardson circle and focus on the 1750s, I put this later text first because, like

the reading instructions examined briefly in Chapter 1, it helps us to name and describe reading practices that existed throughout the century and that might otherwise go unnoticed.

The final two chapters examine the implied readers and historical readers of Samuel Richardson's novel Clarissa. Chapter 3, "Models of Reading in Clarissa," examines the reading strategies represented in the novel. I argue that Clarissa participates in two forms of interpretive practice as she moves from acting in the social world to her spiritual retreat at the end of the novel. Other characters attempt to interpret Clarissa's silence, especially in negotiations about marriage, as acquiescence in each particular moment and to the larger structure of patriarchal power these negotiations represent. At the same time, as Clarissa herself frequently acknowledges, these silences are actually a form of passive disobedience.

In the later sections of the novel, though, Clarissa's refusal to narrate her experience, especially as she approaches death, represents a different form of silence. Here, silence signifies Clarissa's removal from the interpretive conflicts of the material world. I look to thinkers such as Phyllis Mack and Saba Mahmood to suggest that women's silence (and resulting absence from the historical record) might become legible when it is considered as an aspect of active spiritual practice. Thinking in terms of spiritual practice helps us complicate the binaries of active and passive reading or resistant and submissive reading that often inform discussions of women's reading. Clarissa's self-transcendence also invites us to imagine some readers' desire for similar self-transcendence. My analysis of Clarissa, thus, extends the existing understanding of women's reading as either submissive or oppositional by suggesting that absence from

the historical record might signify active modes of spiritual communication. Religious retreat, and the silence that it may enjoin, undermines the period's (and our own) assumptions about silence as a marker of passive femininity and suggests how we might understand the scarcity of evidence for women's reading without also reinscribing such ideologies.

While Clarissa's submission to a spiritual power is a rejection of material patriarchal authority, I use the correspondence between Richardson and his female readers to illustrate more subtle negotiations of interpretative authority. "Arguing with 'Papa' Richardson: Daughterly Disobedience and Readerly Disobedience," continues the illustration of the kinds of readers and reading practices the novel models. Here, I describe the ways women's rhetorical positions and interpretive strategies link daughterly affection with readerly disobedience. This chapter opens with a look at the way the characters Anna Howe and Mrs. Howe communicate. Anna Howe takes an openly rebellious stance toward arbitrary parental authority, but while she quarrels with her mother--a representative of that power--Anna also seeks reconciliation; she strives for agreement, but remains unwilling to surrender all of her expressive power.

I then examine the correspondence between Richardson and his readers to test and extend the models of reading the novel itself proposes, arguing that Anna, not Clarissa, provides the model of reading most often employed by readers. Reading like Anna Howe, or reading in a mode of filial disobedience, reveals a way to navigate, without necessarily rejecting, the interpretive dictates of patriarchy. Women corresponding with Richardson appear to concede his greater authority, but also quite frequently disagree with him. These strategies of filial disobedience, alternating between concession and



debate, derive energy from the strong-willed and disputatious Anna Howe, to whom these correspondents compare themselves. The construction of these reading stances in relation to the novel forces us to confront with a particularly literary skepticism the use and privileging of historical readers' responses over fictional representations of reading. Furthermore, this network of women readers and writers, whose reading habits are formed in relation to their reading of Richardson's novels, complicates our notion of the individual reader.

In re-theorizing the terms through which we understand women's reading, this new history of reading argues that we might begin to recover reading experiences from a diverse, and often patchy, body of evidence by paying close attention not only to the material responses left by individual readers--readers that, I argue, may not be fully representative--but by continuing to engage in comparisons between literary and non-literary evidence of reading and by carefully weighing the merit of readers' claims to transcend material texts. As those of us studying the history of reading continue to perform archival work, and as more archival resources are being made available in electronic forms, it remains especially important to consider and reevaluate our methods. This project suggests that an insistently empirical and material approach to the history of reading--an approach as radically contemporary as de Certeau's airplane-riding speed reader--may be moored to a new set of problems that elides many of the readers of the past.

## Chapter 1: Bound and Unbound: Interpretive Authority and Individual Readers

The perception that reading habits are changing is widespread, as is the perception--whether celebrated or lamented--that electronic media are responsible for the changes. "Reading at Risk," a National Endowment for the Arts study published in 2003, suggests that literary reading significantly declined between 1982 and 2002. We are now concerned, Dana Gioia writes in his introduction to this study, that as fewer people read, "our nation becomes less informed, active, and independent-minded" (vii). A study by the National Assessment of Adult Literacy found more broadly that "the ability to comprehend and use information from continuous texts . . . has declined significantly among college [graduates] since 1992," because television and internet use have increased (qtd in "Literacy declines" 5). Our national intellectual health, dependent upon independence of mind, declines as we lose the ability to read literary and continuous texts.

A May 2006 exchange between Kevin Kelly and John Updike in the New York Times encapsulates the tension between those looking enthusiastically toward a future of reading that will include new media and those elegiac observers for whom this future represents decline and corruption. Kelly's, "Scan This Book!," details the various projects to digitize printed books, new abilities of search engines, and the resulting changes in the publishing world. Kelly describes readers brought together through web-based media such as links, tags, and bookmarks who are imagined to have more creative control over the texts they encounter; search engines, thus, "are transforming our culture because they harness the power of relationships" (45). It is not clear, however, exactly what the social value of connecting things to other things is, nor does Kelly explain how

simply establishing relationships between texts and/or people, or making texts more accessible produces democracy. Arguing against equating change with progress, Updike is concerned about the over-personalization of the author, and his response dwells on the books, booksellers and reading experiences that might be lost. Updike creates a hermit-like technological holdout in contrast to Kelly's modern, wired-in readers. The printed book, Updike claims, "is the site of an encounter, in silence, of two minds, one . . . invited to imagine, to argue, to concur on a level of reflection beyond that of personal encounter." Reluctant to participate in the personal exchange electronic communication enables, "[b]ook readers and writers," he argues, "are approaching the condition of holdouts, surly hermits who refuse to come out and play in the electronic sunshine of the post-Gutenberg village" (27). Updike's idealized reader reads a bound, printed book, and engages silently with only one other abstract, depersonalized mind.

Neither Updike's retrenchment in the face of "electronic sunshine," nor Kelly's wholehearted endorsement of digitizing is a particularly new ideological position in the longer histories of the book and histories of reading. There have been many similar debates over how or whether new technologies of the word, to use Walter Ong's term, change an established culture. The debates about the effects of the emergence of writing, the codex, or the printed book, to take only a few examples, occur both within the historical moment of change (or convergence) and in retrospect. And, although Updike characterizes his book reader as an antiquated holdout, when situated within a longer history of reading, this image of the silent, privately reflecting reader is really quite modern. As many scholars have observed, until the last two or three hundred years, communal, vocalized reading was quite common and many readers read, circulated and,

played the roles of co-authors to the texts of individuals they knew personally. The private reader Updike elevates and mourns, when we consider this longer history, has been constructed as a problem, and a hindrance to correct reading, at least as often as she or he has been celebrated as a harbinger of democracy.

I begin with this current debate to illustrate the power of the image of the private, silent, individual reader. As I will argue, this reader, and this reader's modernity, haunts studies of historical reading. While the field of the history of reading as a whole has embraced increasingly flexible and historically sensitive models for describing reading and reading change through time, the traits of the modern, individual, and secular reader continue to be privileged, especially as our methods value the eccentric over the conventional and the fragment over the cohesive. To identify readers in terms of opposition to interpretive authority, and to think about reading in terms of discontinuous and fragmented reading models, moreover, is to situate reading within models of reading that contrast sharply with some eighteenth-century beliefs, if not practices, about reading.

In the second part of the chapter, I turn to some early modern observations about reading, and about reading the Bible in particular, to illustrate this discourse of reading. Here I look in particular at the way current methodological practices contrast with the widely held belief in the period that the reading of the scriptures, although they were "plain and easy," required the submission of the reader to beliefs about their meaning that both pre-existed and transcended the text and the book as a physical object. Although we cannot ascribe practices to readers on the basis of such prescriptive texts, I examine instructions for reading in these first two chapters (looking more particularly at instructions directed at women in the next chapter) in order to develop a language we

might use provisionally to describe the reading practices of the historical and textual women readers I discuss in the final two chapters. Eighteenth-century instructions for reading the Bible employ a language of self-discipline and self-censorship that help characterize habits of reading with the grain, rather than against the grain. These texts, I argue, provide readers with a limited individual interpretive authority that we need to attend to more closely in describing the reading habits of the period.

### **I: Readerly Autonomy and the History of Reading**

In 1990, surveying the new but fast-growing fields of the history of the book and reading, Robert Darnton took stock of the disciplines and proposed new directions. The field of the history of books, he wrote, was “bewildered by competing methodologies,” and “looks less like a field than a tropical rainforest” (Kiss 110). Darnton proposed a unifying conceptual scheme, the communication circuit, that follows the book from author, to publisher, printers, and booksellers while also taking into account market, political, social and historical pressures. The final, and arguably most problematic, stop on this circuit is the reader. Darnton reserves an entire chapter for the foundational essay, “First Steps Toward a History of Reading” in which he proposes the methodologies that inform the history of reading. Reading can be studied through depictions of reading; through evidence of teaching reading; from autobiographical accounts (including marginalia); by employing theories of readers’ response; and by evaluating analytic bibliography. There is a tension, however, between the imperative to theorize and synthesize and the need to increase the pool of archival sources. We now seem to have reached a point where the latter--expansion--prevails over unifying conceptual theories.

The way scholars in the history of reading have taken up the approaches suggested by Darnton has yielded a similar rainforest, or proliferation of methods. Most recent observers of the fields of the history of reading see the lack of organizing narratives and theories as a problem and an advantage. The appearance of disciplinary incoherence reflects the fact that the object of study--reading--requires a variety of methodological approaches. James Raven, Helen Small, and Naomi Tadmor, editors of a 1996 collection of studies, argue for the necessity of multiple approaches. "We need an approach to the history of reading," they write, "that will be various enough in its methodologies and in its objects of study to establish and explore the often conflicting, contradictory ways in which general social changes and individual experience interact." Such a flexible or versatile theory will allow us to move beyond simply knowing "what materials people read in the past," and move on to explaining "how they read them, why they read them and, wherever possible, what it meant to them" (15). This theory remains elusive. Jennifer Anderson and Elizabeth Sauer, in the introduction to another collection, retreat from making any consolidating statements, refusing to "attempt to provide a synthetic narrative of early modern English reading," although conceding that the studies "suggest some of the basic features that could be deployed at the service of such narratives, which are necessarily comprised of multiple writers, reading publics, and book trade operatives" (16). Histories of reading, everyone seems to agree, run into problems when they attempt to move between the "conflicting, contradictory" images of individual accounts and larger historical currents. The overview limns the two central tensions in the field: the first is that between material and textual approaches, and the second is that between individual accounts and broader theories of reading and diachronic reading

change. I want to pursue the problem of mediating between individual accounts of reading and more encompassing theories of reading. My purpose in doing this is to suggest that, while we are aware of the need to move between such accounts, the field sees the individual reader, and often reading itself, most clearly when the reader or the practice is defined against interpretive authority.

The attraction of recent scholars to theories of discontinuous reading is symptomatic of an often unnoticed move toward the individual as it emphasizes the multiple ways one might move through a text. As Leah Price observes, introducing the January 2006 Special Issue of PMLA on “The History of the Book and the Idea of Literature,” there has been surge of interest in discontinuous reading practices, reflecting “distrust [of] the place of sequence in our work,” and “a resistance to grand narrative” (15). Peter Stallybrass, notably, proposes that discontinuous reading has been a significant, if not dominant, mode of reading since as early as the fourth century, especially in Christian cultures (“Books and Scrolls”). This theory emphasizes the change from linear technologies (such as the scroll) to nonlinear technologies (such as the codex, gathered pages or a book). The scroll’s physical form appears to mandate reading linearly, or continuously, while the book or codex enables one to open to any page, and to move between several pages or several books at the same time. A focus on linear as opposed to nonlinear technologies, according to Price, represents a salutary move away from earlier approaches that posited a causal link between changes in the making of texts (such as the change from manuscript to print, or from codex/book to computer) to changes in reading practices. The significant shift in the field is to emphasize competition between strategies of reading: “What’s at stake,” she writes, “is less any contrast

between the attributes that inhere in different media than an investigation of the competing strategies that readers have used to move through a single medium” (15). The new linear/non-linear paradigm makes most use of a synchronic rather than a diachronic approach, but, as I argue, the approach can also lead to measuring readers by standards or protocols of reading that have come into existence relatively recently.

The attractiveness and flexibility of theories of discontinuous reading can be seen in the way they have been used to describe reading practices over a span of distinct historical periods. Many of the studies in one key collection of history of reading studies, A History of Reading in the West discuss forms of discontinuous reading practice. In this collection, for example, Anthony Grafton--on humanist practices--and Jacqueline Hamesse--on scholastic modes of reading--identify early modern forms of discontinuity in the use of the reading wheel, commonplace books, florilegia, and indexical reference works. Armando Petrucci, in the same collection, shows its workings in contemporary media use. Leah Price’s book, Anthology and Novel details the marketing of elegant extracts, another form of discontinuity, to women in the nineteenth century. By focusing on reading strategies as they exist in a particular moment, theories of discontinuous reading in a variety of studies seem persuasive and seem to avoid the problem of sequence or grand narrative.

The problem of sequence, as James Raven writes, is that “histories of reading and of the book are liable, when cannibalized and subsumed within larger narratives, to contribute to a teleological chronicle of progress, of the march of literacy, enlightenment and democracy” (“New reading” 272). Harvey Graff, in his book The Labyrinths of Literacy: Reflections on Literacy Past and Present, also warns against equating literacy



with progress, noting that “Literacy can and has been employed for social control and for political repression as well” (70). Graff and Raven are correctly critical of a tendency to celebrate reading as a mark of progress or to construct continuous histories that line up accounts of reading into a historical narrative. Discontinuous practices seem to circumvent these problems of sequence and progress by focusing on fragmentation and synchronic competition. But Price, in a 2004 essay for Book History, suggests that a corresponding problem may result when we see forms of discontinuity as socially transformative. She observes that a few scholars question the assumption that studies of readers, and studies of fragmented reading practices, can be equated with transgression, democracy or pluralism (311). It is in keeping, however, with Price’s investment in fragmentation that she only mentions this, and parenthetically at that, as a warning, rather than taking it up as a serious challenge to the new scholarly emphasis on discontinuity. I want to pursue this hinted critique. A focus on discontinuous reading, I suggest, while allowing us to see multiple individual and eccentric accounts of reading, simultaneously obscures reading that seeks order, cohesion, and confinement to interpretive limitations.

Raven, Small and Tadmor begin their collection by complicating the assumption that “‘medieval’ forms of reading, [can be] understood as public, hierarchical, and closely-directed; and [that] ‘modern’ reading experience [should be] defined as private and anarchical” (2). In other words, they want to avoid a narrative of progress that moves toward the modern, private and anarchical reader. Over-corrections of such assumptions, however, over emphasize, in both obvious and more elusive ways, the historical existence of private and anarchical reading. This is done by tracing modes of readerly freedom from interpretive authority. Even while acknowledging the problem of situating reading

within superficial narratives of progress and enlightenment, a discipline-wide emphasis on readerly freedom (often associated with fragmented or discontinuous reading), indicates the attraction for such narratives. In other words, as we have come to study competing reading strategies instead of overarching narratives, a corresponding critical emphasis has developed that discovers the reader primarily as s/he is constructed through opposition to a range of named and implicit interpretative authorities. Looking at competing reading strategies certainly allows us to see how reading practice and readers are constituted in a particular historical moment. But, I would argue that this is most useful when we are able to see how readers themselves sense, and attempt to articulate their reading strategies. In focusing on the discontinuous and the competing, we miss those readers who welcome the reading dictates of certain kinds of interpretive authority. We need to be able to resituate accounts of reading within larger histories and larger theories of reading, but instead of situating them within our own narratives of progress, enlightenment and democracy, perhaps we should pay more attention to historical readers' own perceptions of reading change and their own development of theories of reading.

Michael Warner sees the roots of the practice we call critical reading in reading practices that develop in the later eighteenth century. Historians of reading, he argues, privilege the term critical reading and look for it in historical readers, but have not either fully defined nor fully historicized it. Warner's argument suggests that the practice of critical reading implies a certain kind of subject who can grasp the "enframing, metapragmatic construal of the situation of reading" (32). We might say that the critical reader escapes from the terms dictated by the text or questions his or her inscription as an

implied reader. Warner's argument for more careful historicization, though, implies that uncritical reading is difficult to perceive because contemporary historians of reading value--and project onto readers--those reading practices that are most similar to their own scholarly ways. The term critical reading itself, defined or undefined, rarely appears in studies of historical reading, but I take Warner to mean that critical reading is employed as an implicit norm. I would extend Warner's argument, as well, to include the tendency to celebrate readerly autonomy as a kind of critical reading. While the reader does not necessarily have to grasp reading in a metapragmatic way to oppose interpretive constraints, to look for those readers who do oppose interpretive constraints, is to project a form of modern, individual-based reading onto historical readers. Can we only see reading when readers are questioning, debating, or being skeptical--in short, acting like scholars? The accounts of reading I turn to now often pose the professional reader against the non-professional reader, simply inverting the categories of reading behavior to render readerly activities visible.

The elevation of the individual reader has a long history. The critical reader haunts our research into the reading practices of the past because some of the deepest theoretical underpinnings of the study of reading are invested in pitting the activity of the reader against the activities of critics and professional readers. Many later historians of reading have employed this image of the reader as poacher as articulated by Michel de Certeau in 1984:

The reader takes neither the position of the author, or an author's position. He invents in texts something different from what they 'intended.' He detaches them from their (lost or accessory) origin. He combines their fragments and creates something un-known in the space organized by their capacity for allowing an indefinite plurality of meanings. Is this 'reading' activity reserved for the literary critic (always privileged in studies of

reading), that is, once again, for a category of profession intellectual (clerics), or can it be extended to all cultural consumers? (169)

We can see the roots of Kevin Kelly's excitement about the creative possibilities of combining fragments in the context of digitized texts here. De Certeau's poacher is not only a creator, or co-creator of the text, but a cultural consumer whose activities oppose those of privileged readers, both literary critics or professional intellectuals, and authorial intention. De Certeau inverts the hierarchy, making the reader worthy of study, because he or she is doing what the author does. In fact, de Certeau argues, the social hierarchization of professional readers who assert meaning and who silence dissenting reading over non-professional readers "conceals the reality of the practice of reading or makes it unrecognizable" (172). Not only do professional readers silence dissenting readings, but dissent constitutes the reality of reading. Of course, de Certeau, and those who follow him, intend to disrupt the idea of the reader as constructed by elite readers, by focusing on the creative activity of the reader/consumer. In other words, while the recognition that the reader is a creative and active participant in textual economies has generated significant interest in the reader, that interest, I argue, is often limited to the reader who opposes professionally generated or sanctioned meaning, thus constructing new meaning. But there is no room in this model of the antagonistic relationship between author or professional and reader for conscious or deliberate concession of interpretive authority; the most unrecognizable reading continues to be such concessionary reading.

One early study of an ordinary reader is Carlo Ginzburg's The Cheese and the Worms; work such as Ginzburg's has been noted for the ways it "direct[s] attention away from the illustrious intellectuals . . . to more humble men and women and their

understanding of the printed word” (Raven et al 14). This case-study not only gives us the history of a non-professional reader, but illustrates the difficulty in seeing and defining that experience without recourse to oppositional categories of interpretive authority. While Ginzburg shows how Menocchio’s interpretation derives from an old oral tradition, this tradition is glimpsed only because it generated a questionable cosmogony and thus led to a trial for heresy of which written records remain. Non-heretical reading of the same texts (or heretical readings that were never orally expressed) would not have resulted in the trials that produced a record of reading. But, Menocchio did not necessarily set out to read differently than the church officials: in combining traditional and orthodox cosmogonies, he was not being intentionally heretical, even though he clearly did not accept the social hierarchy of his time. Menocchio is an example of a humble reader, but it is even more difficult to tease out the reading habits of ordinary men and women whose practices and interpretations never border on the heterodox. To do this, we have to be willing to question any assumptions that “humble” readers want to read differently than “illustrious intellectuals,” or that they saw such different reading as politically charged.

Histories of reading, as they are now written, suggest a progressive erosion of the power of such authorities to influence reader’s habits. In their field-defining anthology, *A History of Reading in the West* (1999), Roger Chartier and Guglielmo Cavallo (working largely from the same theoretical background as de Certeau) suggest that the history of reading should trace the development of readerly autonomy and needs “to recognize the constraints that limit the frequenting of books and the production of meaning and to inventory the resources that can be mobilized by the reader’s liberty”

(34). Constraints that limit the production of meaning might be institutional or individual censorship, practices of selective excerpting for pedagogical and ideological purposes, and enforcing interpretation within rhetorical and oral reading situations. The reader's liberty is "dependent" upon these structures, "but is capable of growing, shifting about, or subverting the techniques and devices designed to limit it" (34). The image of readers needing to mobilize against entities that limit their liberty suggest the relative power of readers and interpretive authorities. It becomes the scholar's job, following this line of thinking, to seek out and expose the ways readers subvert such limitations and such authority.

As I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, electronic media are currently blamed for eroding traditional habits of book reading. In the final essay of Chartier and Cavallo's volume, Armando Petrucci counters the claims that reading and readers are disappearing. Acknowledging that electronic media are changing reading practices, he suggests that new forms of reading are simply not visible to observers (namely, it seems, academics) for whom "order" is a category of authority and reliability. Zapping, his term for the activity of moving around in fragments of electronic media, and the long-running plots soap opera plots, have he argues, "created potential readers who not only know no 'canon' or 'order of reading,' but have not acquired the respect, traditional in book readers for the order of the text, which has a beginning and an end, and is thus intended to be read in a precise sequence established by someone other than the reader" (364). Anarchic reading, and refusal of the order of the text can also, he claims be discovered in physical postures: readers who lie down while reading, rather than sitting on a bench or at a table (or standing, reading books chained to tables, as some early modern readers

did), reading books that have been “manipulated, crumpled, bent, forced in various directions and carried on the body,” and refusing to be quiet while reading are evidence of anarchic reading (364). While correct to push us to think about different ways we might define reading, now or in the near future, Petrucci’s argument rests on constructing these new ways of reading through the practice of refusing “respect” for the “order of the text.” Although he names only “someone other than the reader,” who might be refused or rejected, interpretive authority seems implicitly to inhere in the author and in the academic: the two contrasting practices--extreme fragmentation and discontinuous reading and extreme or seemingly endless attention to narrative--fail to conform to the limits imposed by genres such as the novel or the more abstract constraints of the canon. But, we might ask, what evidence do we have that refusing order is understood in terms of “respect” or disrespect for “someone other than the reader?” And, more importantly of this project, can we situate respect or disrespect for the text historically?

William St Clair, in his impressively researched study on reading in the Romantic period, begins with the premise that readers must be granted autonomy by those who study them:

Without implying that the reactions of readers were independent of the texts being read, we need to grant them autonomy . . . . [R]eaders had freedom, within their circumstances, to choose which texts to read and which passages to give most attention to, to skip, to argue, to resist, to read against the grain, to be influenced by irrelevancies, to be careless, to misunderstand, to be distracted, to slip into dreams, to disagree but to continue reading, to stop reading at any time, and to conclude that the reading had been a waste of time. Readerly autonomy also included the opportunity to pass on opinions and impressions, even if they were ill-formed, confused, irrelevant, to anyone willing to listen.” (5)

St Clair illustrates the many ways the publishing industry (rather than various kinds of professional readers) limits readers’ choices, but this assertion of readerly autonomy is in

keeping with some of the trends I have been identified. St Clair provides a greater range of options in addition to simply mobilizing against limiting forces. But his range of terms perpetuates a dynamic in which is described primarily for what it resists: the text, because it might present a linear narrative or argument; or professional readers, because they hold more authoritative opinions.

The modern reader, according to Reinhard Wittmann, emerges at the end of the eighteenth century. Revising the reading revolution theory, which posited a change from intensive to extensive reading in the period, Wittmann argues that oppositions between authorial and interpretive entities (such as the clergy or exegetical traditions) and readers collapse, or are subjected to pressure, toward the end of the century. Modern readers emerge who “did not read whatever was recommended to them by the authorities and the ideologues, but whatever satisfied their intellectual, social and private needs” (311-312). The early modern reader, in this narrative, is receptive to the advice of interpretive authorities, often church-centered authorities. Before this revolution the reader is receptive to the advice of pedagogical and interpretative authorities, while afterward his or her individual intellectual needs are more persuasive. In other words, the change through time is a change toward individual readerly freedom rather than a change in what kinds of texts were read or how they were read.

Studies of the readers of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries support Wittmann’s theory that one of the long transformations of the eighteenth century involves individual authority in reading. According to Anna Battigelli, Narcissus Luttrell is one reader who moves away from “standard authority.” Immersed in the print culture, and political controversies, of the seventeenth century, Luttrell wrote a parliamentary diary.



He saw these diary entries as participation in the disputes and the politics; the practices of commonplacing and quoting he employs not only reveal the importance of print to the political events recorded, but indicate a need and a desire to master each controversy. Luttrell, however, doesn't quote "standard authority," the Bible or classical texts, instead his "commonplace books reveal a shift in the reading public's understanding of authority: rather than locating that authority in the past, Luttrell locates authority in his own judgment as that judgment is informed by contemporary polemic" ("To Conclude" 78-79). At the other end of this period, Jonathan Rose provides evidence of nineteenth-century middle-class autobiographers who present themselves as individuals in relation to their reading. Certain books, he claims, "burst the boundaries of the mind" to effect this transformation ("Rereading" 62). Although one might question Rose's reliance on the idea of the great book, that he finds accounts of readers linking their reading to their sense of themselves as individuals is in keeping with Wittmann's claim that reading becomes increasingly internally directed at the end of the eighteenth-century.

In this project overall, I am interested both in looking more closely at reading habits in place before this change in individual authority, and in suggesting that older forms of deference to interpretive authority persist throughout the century. Rose's work especially helps us to notice the way older traditions linger. In contrast to the middle-class readers whose reading fosters a sense of individuality, Rose suggests that working-class autobiographers present themselves as part of a group. Not only is there uneven development of individualistic reading strategies, but Rose shows us readers who seek to fit their reading into structures of interpretive authority rather than to oppose them. Moreover, Rose, in his careful examinations of working-class readers, complicates the

producer/consumer hierarchy without simply inverting the categories. Although the categories that interest Rose are those of high/popular culture and working- and middle-class readers, he usefully points out that we do not have to define non-professional readers strictly against professional readers.

One of the fallacies of studies of reader-response, Rose argues, is the assumption that “the canon of ‘great books’ is defined solely by social elites.” This fallacy, he continues, holds that common readers “either do not recognize that canon, or else they accept it only out of deference to elite opinion” (“Rereading” 48). Using the responses of readers themselves, he argues against observers who see the acceptance or embrace of canonical works as a form of social control. He presents evidence, for example, of Marxists who read classics in prison, and of “Jewish anarchists in London’s East End [who] were sponsoring popular lectures on Hamlet, Gulliver’s Travels.” These readers, he asserts, “believed that kind of acculturation was essential to political liberation” (“Rereading” 64). Rose’s work, therefore, alerts us to the fact that when access to any kind of reading is not assured, rejecting or opposing established canons may seem largely beside the point, or, at least, premature. An 1886 list of the one hundred best books, compiled by Sir John Lubbock “was enormously popular among autodidacts . . . eager to make up for an education that had been denied [them] and . . . not ashamed to ask for a road map,” even though many of the works were not approved of by the arbiters of literary taste of the period (“Canon” 101). The tastes of the working classes “lagged well behind those of the educated middle classes,” (“Canon” 98) in part because the books they could acquire most readily were older books, but also because of beliefs that old, dead writers carried more cultural capital. Working-class readers (and other non -

professional readers) not only did not reject canonical literature, they actively sought it out as a form of cultural capital even while reading it, at times, in their own way. It is, therefore, more useful to think about a range of readers' purposes and intentions rather than simple opposition and resistance. Rose's work opens the way for constructing definitions and descriptions of conditional and contingent acceptance of interpretive authority.

I have, perhaps unfairly, focused on introductions, synthetic accounts, overviews and the implicit arguments of collections, such as that of Cavallo and Chartier. This collection, for example, in its chronological organization, crafts narrative of historical progress that implicitly moves from (ancient and early modern) readerly oppression to (modern and post-modern) readerly freedom, as represented in fragmented and disordered reading practices. Such accounts see the reader in terms of being bound or being unbound (usually by the force of history). Reading history, in this approach, is part of a larger project to investigate and destabilize structures of power: In studying and defining ways of reading that refuse interpretive constraints, this thinking proceeds, we are participating in a project of liberation. But are the historical readers we study, even those without power, interpretative or material, also invested in such a project? And if they are not, it seems clear that a methodology that looks for and defines reading in terms of competing reading strategies and opposition to interpretive authority is not adequate for describing those reading practices. Our investigation of historical reading practices can not be limited to examining only anarchic reading, fragmented reading, or the autonomy of the reader. Rather, we must discover how readers themselves define and understand the entities that establish limits on their reading. Before asserting readerly

resistance and autonomy, we need to ask about the interpretive authorities readers themselves imagine. Then we can ask whether they necessarily reject or subvert them, and when or if they read “out of order?” In what ways do readers negotiate interpretive authority?

## **II: Dispositions of Reading: The Duty-Bound Reader**

When I argued, in the previous section that the field of the history of reading looks for fragmentation over cohesion, competition over agreement, and thus, in a related way, the individual over the group, I was looking at overviews of the field, and studies that describe diachronic change. I argued that such overviews present a long historical trajectory that moves toward the “anarchical” reader. The interpretive constraints that limit readers activities are only vaguely defined, or simply lumped into a category of professional readers. In the early modern period, such authority is, of course, quite clearly defined and visible in the context of religion and religious reading. Here, I explore the relationship between changing ideas of interpretation and definitions of interpretive authority in this religious context. One purpose of this section is to review some of the reading practices and habits that are in place before the changes of the eighteenth century that give us a modern reader. (I present evidence of the persistence of some of these older modes in subsequent chapters.) A second purpose is to illustrate that reading instructions of the period invest individual readers with a great deal of responsibility, but this does not necessarily mean that the individual is expected or encouraged to develop individual, eccentric, or oppositional readings. Readers, in this paradigm of reading, may in fact be suspicious of such readerly agency, seeking rather to subordinate their own agency within their sense of a providential plan. Looking at a

range of eighteenth-century didactic materials that provide instructions for reading the Bible, I argue, that when we consider these instructions seriously we need to reformulate accounts of the idea of readerly behavior to discuss modes of self-censorship and self-discipline in addition to (or instead of) readerly autonomy.

In examining the way religious reading has been characterized by historians of reading, I begin by continuing to trace the way individual interpretation is posed against institutional traditions of interpretation in our own studies of historical reading practices. I examine, that is, the way we construct reading primarily out of competing and oppositional reading strategies. My purpose in following this line of thinking is to notice the absence of any sustained investigations in the way reading instructions ask readers to resist their own impulses when they read. While it may seem obvious or unsurprising that an institution, such as the church, would impose limiting interpretive structures and ask readers to suppress their individual readings in favor of an official or sanctioned interpretation, the distinction I am attempting to draw between my approach and the dominant approach in the field is one of emphasis and angle. In identifying the institutions and structures that limit or control individual reading, the more standard move (as I argued above and continue to argue here) is to look at the cracks and weaknesses in the structure through which individual interpretation can be glimpsed. It is assumed, in this process, that the only way to study the reader is by discovering these moments. In contrast, by turning to early modern instructions for reading in the last part of this section (particularly of the Bible) I seek to develop a way to describe not the exceptional moments, but the reading experience of those who acceded and submitted to the dictates of reading imposed upon them. I argue, in fact, that to consider the dynamic

of these reading experiences, we may be wrong to resort to thinking in terms of imposition of reading dictates since a key dynamic of these reading instructions is the necessity of internalizing reading habits such as self-censorship. I examine such internalization, not as evidence of, say, a Foucauldian discourse of power, but as way readers intentionally and consciously read and practiced their spiritual beliefs. Individual reading is, thus, always resituated within a structure that exists outside of, but is recognized by, the reader.

Reading, in early modern Europe, is usually understood in the context of the Reformation. As Keith Thomas notes, “the leaders of the post-Reformation Church maintained that the individual should be able to read the Bible in order to gain direct access to God’s word.” This mandate, however, influenced “primarily the ability to read, rather than to write,” and it is primarily those who can write who get counted as literate (111).<sup>1</sup> In spite of discrepancies between reading and writing, Reformation practices do provide some evidence of reading, and these practices illustrate the beginning of a significant shift toward individual reading practices. As Kevin Sharpe and Steven W. Zwicker write, “the sermon notebook, the spiritual diary and the private prayer” are acts of spirituality and “acts of reading.” They are acts of reading “the word and God’s providences” and, importantly, of reading “the conscience and the self.” Reading is not limited to, or defined by, the text or any other material textual manifestation. The “self-centered hermeneutic” of Protestantism, they continue, gave individual readers a great deal of interpretive power and freedom (11). Roger Chartier observes more generally that between “1500 and 1800 man’s altered relation to the written word helped to create a new private sphere into which the individual could retreat, seeking refuge from the

community” (“Practical Impact” 118). Post-Reformation readers cultivate the habits of self-examination, and personal and private spirituality that culminate in the individual reader.

The tension between private and non-private reading becomes particularly legible when readers began to read silently. Although all forms of private reading are not silent and all forms of public reading are not audible, the distinction between silent and outloud reading is key to understanding the problem of individual interpretive authority. Over a long course of time, according to Chartier, “silent reading swept away the distinction-- which was always clear in reading aloud--between the world of a text and the world of the reader” (“Reading Matter” 277). As Paul Saenger, who traces the emergence of silent reading, tells us, erotic poetry is evidence of a burgeoning habit of private reading. More significant is the connection, made apparent by the emergence of regulations and laws, between private and silent reading and other forms of illicit behavior. In the eleventh-century, according to Saenger, heresy began to be “linked to solitary intellectual curiosity and speculation” (137). The attempt to limit marginalia by universities provides further evidence for the increase of silent reading.

Jean-François Gilmont argues that many of the institutions for understanding the Bible and religious doctrine remained the same in the sixteenth century, even after the advent of print, even though print precipitates the “fundamental debate between the Bible of the ear and the Bible of the eye, between the church of orality and the church of print” (223). Protestant church authorities maintained a culture of oral teaching. Although the catechism could be “an initiation into reading” and marginal notes, glosses, and cross-references might lead to a multiplicity of interpretations, “control of interpretation

through preaching” remained not only the primary way to understand the Bible, but the preferred and sanctioned mode (226, 228). In other words, the early Protestant church, like the universities, established structures to control individual interpretation, and the persistence of oral teaching was one of those structures.

Although Gilmont notes that some written and printed guides were clearly intended to be read aloud, such guides work even in silent situations to delimit individual interpretation as well. Kevin Sharpe, writing on readings and uses (particularly political uses) of Revelations from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth, argues that the reading of this book not only gives a history of interpretation but “charts the endless negotiation between the efforts of authors and exegetes to impose and control readings and of readers to follow their own mind and faith” (123). The “arrangement of the text into verses” and marginal notes (which first appear in the Geneva Bible) are “included to direct the reader, to delimit the potentially boundless possibilities of personal interpretation” (124). Leah Price’s discussion of bowdlerized texts in the nineteenth century demonstrates the continuance of the concern that private reading might be linked to erotic thoughts. These edited texts were marketed as suitable for family reading: the expurgated text and aloud reading in this context both correct for and imply that reading alone might be erotic (Anthology and Novel 83-90).

Regulations of, or criminalization of reading practices; the attempt to enforce oral teaching over silent reading; and changes made to printed texts themselves are all attempts to control the problem of private reading. Moving through history, the exact nature of the problem also changes: in different historical contexts or situations, it is defined as a problem of doctrine, as a problem of sexuality, or as a problem of gender.



These accounts, though, focus on the mechanism of control itself--the laws, the regulations, the preaching, the careful editing and manipulating of texts. In other words, they look primarily at what the (at times self-appointed) interpretive authority is doing, rather than at what the reader might be doing--or at what the restrictions ask the reader to do. We assume, and correctly I believe, that the regulations prohibiting marginalia, for example, or the doctrines that emphasize oral tradition, provide evidence of readers who engage in the practices they are meant to control--readers who read silently and in possibly heterodox ways. As I argued in the first section, the tendency in the field is to look at or for these readers, often to the point of defining reading as consisting only of such resistant activities. What we do not look for, because they are more difficult to see, are the readers who submit to the restrictions--the many readers who do not mark texts, who do not seek erotic reading experiences, or who limit their individual understanding of the Bible to what they have been taught by catechumens and learned from sermons. Instructions about reading can begin to reveal these readers to us.

Calvin writes that "it is not enough that we read privately, but we must have our ears beaten by the doctrine extracted from it and must be preached to so that we can be instructed." (qtd. in Gilmont 221). Calvin, following the model of reliance on oral tradition Gilmont describes, encourages private reading, but expresses the concern that his followers learn a specified doctrine, rather than interpreting for themselves. J. F. Ostervald asserts as well that private reading (although not necessarily silent reading) is the primary way of understanding scripture. Ostervald's "The Necessity and Usefulness of reading the Holy Scriptures and the Dispositions With which they ought to be Read" was printed by itself (1750) and served as an introductory essay for editions of the Bible

(1771).<sup>2</sup> In this text, Ostervald asserts the need for both private and public reading.

Private reading reinforces the aurally absorbed public sermon:

Private reading is attended with some advantages, which public reading is not. In private, one may read with more leisure, consider things more closely, repeat the thing more than once, and make a more nice application. Private reading is, likewise, the best way to improve by what we hear in public; it being impossible rightly [sic] to comprehend what is said in public discourses and sermons, without being well versed in the scriptures. (10-11)

The problem of individual interpretation is understood to be corrected or at least controlled through reading practices that externalize the reading process--here in the form of listening to sermons, and having correct doctrine doubly reinforced. Simply reading or simply hearing is not enough--one's ears must be beaten with the doctrine. The way Calvin describes reading is at odds with some prevailing theories of reading that would suggest competition between the textual approaches. In spite of the violence of the image, what is described in both cases is a set of complementary reading strategies. Importantly, the two different media of instruction are brought together through the doctrine, not through the material text. The image is notable, moreover, for illustrating the difficulty of reading correctly, an aspect of these reading instructions to which I shall return below.

As I noted in the first section, the shift away from a diachronic approach in studies of reading has begun to open the way for more synchronic studies of reading that, as Price puts it, explore the "competing strategies that readers have used to move through a single medium" ("Reading Matter" 15). It is, however, the modern commentator, Gilmont, who poses the Bible of book against the Bible of the ear--these early modern commentators emphasize the synthesizing power of the doctrine and complementary strategies. In attempting to open a discussion of how readers might have accepted rather

than rejected such instructions, I suggest that revisiting the intensive/extensive theory--now rejected because of its diachronic focus--may be useful in fleshing out both competing and complementary strategies of reading. Rolf Engelsing proposed that at the end of the eighteenth century there was a shift from intensive to extensive reading.<sup>3</sup> Intensive reading covers a range of practices including notation, marginalia, glossing and the extraction of text for personal reflection and situational application in addition to the in-depth knowledge of predominantly religious books. Extensive reading, on the other hand, results from (or seems to result from) increases in available reading material and might refer to practices such as reading a number of different texts, reading relatively quickly, and reading without stopping to make notations, or applications of the text. In contrast to the religious nature of intensive reading, extensive reading is usually considered a more secular reading practice; it is often associated with novels.

As Robert Darnton points out, the theory's appeal, as well as its weakness, is its "before and after simplicity" which elides the subtleties and complexities of actual reading practices (Kiss 166). In particular, the model links extensive reading to novels and other non-religious texts. Some readers, Darnton observes, such as those who read the novels of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Samuel Richardson, read novels quite intensively. Other scholars looking at eighteenth-century reading practices complicate the theory by noticing that intensive and extensive reading seem to overlap in the period. Using, but complicating the model, Robert de Maria, for example, is able to characterize Samuel Johnson's wide-ranging reading practices. John Brewer uses the model in describing Anna Larpent's reading. The wife of the Inspector of Plays, Larpent

chronicled her reading in between 1773 and 1828, reading some texts, such as sermons and religious works intensively, while engaging only briefly, or extensively, with others.

The work of scholars such as Brewer and de Maria shows that intensive/extensive model remains useful to the extent that it describes not diachronic change, but synchronic descriptions of what readers do. The terms also apply when we look at the ways readers and thinkers of the period themselves describe distinct ways of reading. An educational tract bound with a 1707 translation of François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon's Instructions for the Education of a Daughter (1687), observes that “a great number of books . . . will not be only useless, but very hurtful” to the female reader (295). Using a traveling metaphor, the writer recommends intensive reading since, reading extensively is like “seeing several Countries thro’ which one passes without stopping.” But just as one must choose one country to live in, he continues, one must choose one more intensive course of reading: “Regular Reading profiteth, that which is various giveth Pleasure; but whosoever would arrive at the end which is proposed, ought to follow but One way, for fear of wandring in Several” (295). J.F. Ostervald, in “The Necessity and Usefulness of reading,” also presents a distinction between intensive and extensive reading, and favors the practices we would call intensive. “Many are very fond of reading a great deal,” he writes, “and running over the scriptures in a short time.” Intensive reading is, instead, “what makes reading profitable” with its qualities of “attention, meditation, and serious reflection on what we read . . . [reading must be] chewed and digested” (“Necessity” 29-30). These observers of the early part of the century, as well as those at the end of the period (such as Hester Mulso Chapone, whose treatment of this issue I discuss in chapter 2) understand--and fine useful--a distinction between intensive and extensive reading,

favoring intensive reading. I call attention to these descriptions of reading not as evidence for or against a shift from one to the other, but as a way, used by the writers of the period itself, to describe what are now historically distant and unfamiliar reading practices.

Although she does not explicitly term it so, the acts of reading Evelyn B. Tribble studies can be called intensive; indeed the religious readers studied by Patrick Collinson and by Tribble suggest that we need to expand descriptions beyond intensive as well. Looking at the acts of reading described in John Foxe's Actes and Monuments (1583), a record of the acts of the Protestant martyrs, Tribble observes the way acts of religious reading are embedded in a network of reading and cognitive processes: "These books were not simply read, they were pored over, memorized, recited, expounded, and explained, in a network that fluidly combines memory, orality, writing, and reading" (41). Moreover, she suggests that some readers had a completely spatial grasp of the scripture which allowed them to "negotiate textual places deftly and to deploy that knowledge even--perhaps especially--in the face of great personal danger" (42). Some sixteenth-century Protestant readers, as Patrick Collinson notes, read beyond the bounds of the physical text as well and seemed to have a similar spatial grasp of the Bible; Collinson however emphasizes their belief in the unity of the text. Collinson shows that although readers used scripture as "proof texts," thus breaking it into bits for the sake of argument, they also perceived the Bible as a single entity--they read the Bible "through." The reader's extra-textual, or transcendent, belief in the unity of the text, according to Collinson, comes from the reader's belief that it is unified and is to be read with spirit of God, "which is to say, [the reading] abandons all normal, human(e) modes of perception"

(103). Readers were not dependent upon the book, as a material object, for their understanding of its contents. Readers themselves, therefore, experience reading in a manner radically different from the empirical and materially-based manner in which we study reading.

The readers represented in Actes and Monuments are brought into the historical record because they read in a heterodox way and are deliberately situated in opposition to institutional power (the Catholic Church). When acts of reading are recorded because they are contested, criminalized, or condemned, the reading practice is both constructed in opposition to such interpretive authority, and becomes visible because of its heterodoxy. As Peter Stallybrass notes in his discussion of discontinuous reading in relation to the codex form, “Christian and Jews actively differentiated themselves from each other through the adoption of the book or the scroll” (“Books” 43). It was key that this distinction be based on the material form of the book itself: “The crucial thing for Christians was to make sure that they read their Jewish scriptures in a form that was materially as unlike the Jewish scriptures as possible” (“Books” 43). Making the books materially distinct makes the reading experience distinct as well. But, the readers described by Collinson and Tribble, while they may be employing some discontinuous reading practices rely heavily on extra-textual practices and beliefs. Overlapping modes of comprehension--such as listening, looking at images, employing glosses, or breaking a text into proof texts--appear discontinuous and fragmented, but they require a coherent overriding sense of meaning and purpose.

It is especially important to understand the gesture toward continuity and cohesion in the eighteenth century. Although biblical exegesis remained a site of

controversy, the “scholars of the later eighteenth century,” as Hans W. Frei writes, even as they “distinguished between interpretive procedures, obviously expected to come up with a unitary reading of a text in their actual exegetical results” (93). Brian Young notes that the writings of clergymen of the period indicate the widespread practice of inserting themselves within theological debates. His example, Daniel Waterland, refers to himself in third person even in his private reading notes as if he were engaging in public discourse, thus suggesting the “inherently controversial nature of so much divinity in this period” (91) that shapes private reading. But, when we look at reading instructions addressed to the laity, the Biblical texts are represented as unitary, and as plain and easy to understand. More importantly, such instructions require the reader to approach reading with a disposition that is both submissive to this idea of unity and persevering. The reader, in other words, has to be both active and passive, and thus is required and expected to cultivate a limited interpretive authority.

As Marcus Walsh has shown, in the eighteenth century Romanist (Catholic) biblical scholars thought the scriptural texts were imperfect and therefore based interpretation on tradition and authority; the Anglicans in contrast “had to argue for the integrity of the text, and the possibility of a standard of interpretation” (“Biblical” 759). The Catholic Church saw interpretation of the Bible as subjectivist and it was because of this interpretative indeterminacy that it was necessary to have and impose authoritative textual judgements. The Anglicans positioned the clergy as professionals with a specific body of knowledge that should be put into use helping the individual lay readers to understand the texts for themselves. According to Walsh, scholars in the period worked to come up with rules and principles that could be applied to reading the Bible. In

particular, they argued that interpretive problems could “be solved by a rigorous comparison of places genuinely comparable, by reference to Paul’s own system of philosophy as it appears in the epistles and not to the prevalent philosophy of later times” (“Biblical” 761). We can certainly see competing strategies of reading here (clergymen arguing with other clergymen and Anglicans with Catholics) but when we look at only the Anglican side of the picture, we see unity created in the face of division, and it is this unity that was both projected to and absorbed by lay readers.

Collinson argues that readers read the Bible with the belief that it was unified; as the work of both Walsh and Frei shows, readers in the eighteenth century also supposed that authorial intention could be grasped. The expectation of unity was an aspect of what Walsh calls a “received, shared, and confidently stated hermeneutic methodology” whose components included “[a]uthorial intention; inherent sense; linguistic and cultural context; the sacred status of the text” (“Biblical” 762). Moreover, the eighteenth century, according to Frei, “was the period of the direct reading of the ‘plain’ text” (55). The texts were understood to be transparent or “objectively knowable,” as Walsh puts it, even if that transparency could only be accessed with the right kind of background knowledge (“Profession” 384). Although clerics were working out systems of internal, linguistic, and historical comparison among the texts of the Bible, the rules for reading directed at non-clerical readers emphasized these ideas of transparency, unity, and clear authorial intention. Sermons and prefatory material on reading the Bible detail the practices and even emotions, or dispositions one should have while reading. And finally, the belief that reading should be done with a pre-disposition to believe meant that even the difficult, or less transparent, parts of the Bible were imbued with meaning.



I want to return to J.F. Ostervald's essay on "The Necessity and Usefulness of reading the Scriptures." Ostervald's language and terms are representative of the many instructions for reading the Bible written through the eighteenth century and provide additional terms for understanding this limited interpretive authority. Such texts exhort readers to cultivate regular habits, practice self-examination, and submit to a great deal of hard work in their study of the Bible. Ostervald details what he calls the "dispositions of the mind" for reading the Bible. The four dispositions he discusses are attention; frequency and diligence; judgment and discretion; and, most importantly, submission and obedience. This last disposition makes it explicit that the proper reader of the scriptures will read with a spirit of agreeing and believing. He warns the reader not to "give way to a spirit of curiosity, but lay aside vain reasoning, and rash inquiries" (39) which lead to doubt.

Non-clerical readers took the perspective that the Bible was plain as a starting point. Instructions for reading addressed to non-scholarly readers only occasionally include any kind of specific rules or method for reading the Bible, but even casual mentions of Bible-reading habits adduce the belief that the scriptures are plain and easy. Samuel Richardson writes to Lady Bradshaigh that he refuses to read Jonathan Swift on the trinity because he doesn't want to encounter ideas that might lead him to doubt his faith. "All that concerns us to know for the conduct of life," he assures her, "is plain and easy."<sup>4</sup> Jane Johnson (1706-59) who taught her own children, wrote that the scriptures

[A]re not set forth as a Riddle for every one to guess at, but every thing that is necessary for any one to Believe, & Practice, is so Plain, that those that Run may Read it, & a Way-Faring man tho' a Fool shall not Err therein. Therefore those parts that are mysterious to any one, don't relate to them, but were wrote for different Persons, or different Times, & by those Persons, & at those Times were, or will be, well understood. (qtd. in Mandelbrot 46)

The insistence that the scripture was plain and easy often accompanied such a characterization of multiple audiences rather than those of the learned; “those that Run,” or children, and the foolish “Way-Faring man,” can be equally enlightened by their reading since whatever they do not understand they are not intended to understand. In his Letters to a Young Lady (1789), John Bennett writes not only that the “sayings of our Lord are so very obvious, as to need little, or no explanation” (44). Furthermore, the Bible is “a feast, adapted to every taste; the most exalted understanding must admire and the lowest cannot fail to comprehend, its instructions” (37). To assert that the Bible is plain and easy does not reduce its complexity. Rather, as these thinkers all agree, complexity broadens the Bible’s audience making comprehensible to the least educated and fascinating to the most sophisticated readers.

The prophetic books, according to Ostervald are intended to be unclear or obscure. It is the nature of prophecy that “the meaning of them must needs be concealed,” so that the foretold events cannot be stopped (“Necessity” 18). He admits that they can be understood more clearly in light of a figural reading, thus illustrating the need for some expert knowledge of historical events. More importantly, though, the reader should simply meditate on the prophecies in order to “find an astonishing light dart from them” (21). By reading and rereading often, and by reading frequently and diligently, he tells the reader that s/he will begin to “discover” more beauties in the writing. On the one hand, these instructions construct everyone and anyone as the possible--and thoroughly comprehending--audience of the scriptures. On the other hand, since the Bible so plainly contains obscure passages, the assertion of this plainness is in itself a kind of interpretive control putting in place a belief about the scripture’s

accessibility, or the significance of its inaccessibility. In either case, readerly freedom is tempered by the belief that the text has an immanent meaning and purpose --a reader who does not understand is not, perhaps, meant to understand.

According to most of these commentators, morning is the best time to read, but a regular schedule of reading is, in any event, necessary. Some advisors recommend additional daily study. John Bennet suggests to his young female audience that “Mason on Self-Knowledge should be read every morning upon rising” (69). Daniel Waterland, in his Advice to a Young Student. With a Method of Study for the First Four Years (1755) not only divides up daily reading but devises a larger plan of reading broken into months and week for the entire four years of the student’s university study. In addition to a chapter of the Bible first thing in the morning, on Sundays and holidays, the student should spend a few hours reading and writing summaries of sermons. A chart is included which divides the time of the year, with each month or pair of months having its particular texts.

The daily (or yearly routine), these instructions include the conventional Protestant exhortation to reflection, self-examination, and application of what has been read. In The Christian school-master (1707), James Talbot recommends self-examination every night: “That every Night, before they go to bed, or to their Private Devotions, they should Commune with thine own Hearts, . . . [and] examine their Thoughts, Discourses, Actions, Recreations, and Devotions, and see what has been amiss in any of them “ (75). Many eighteenth-century writers advise women to read explicitly reflective and meditative texts like Catherine Talbot’s popular Reflection on the Seven Days of the Week (1770). Although application and sustained thought were considered

difficult, especially for girls and women, such difficulty was perfectly in keeping with the larger cultivation and practice of Christian conduct. James Fordyce writes that the “practice of real Piety requires no small resolution and perseverance;” he continues to say that the sort of self-denial inherent in such a practice is fully consistent with Christian belief: “But self-denial from right principles is the perfection of Christianity” (92). The individual reader must work quite hard to achieve “real Piety,” and that work involves self-denial.

While instructions for reading the Bible articulated a form of reading that involved reading individually but with the spirit of God, non-religious writers and texts also were concerned about problems of cohesion within the text as well. Discontinuous and continuous forms are in tension in the eighteenth-century, to be sure, but although scholars have recently emphasized discontinuous forms, writers of the period tried to reshape such reading with the same kind of unifying gestures I have discussed in terms of spiritual practices. Leah Price, for example, is interested in the fragmented and excerpted results of “the endeavors of professional readers--editors, publishers, teachers, critics--to predict or prescribe or proscribe the reading of others” (12). She argues that such efforts--in the material form of anthologies--begin a division and a gendering of reading practices. Women in the eighteenth century were “trained” to read narrative and men, in the tradition of commonplacing, were “trained” and expected to read sentiments; by the nineteenth century this arrangement is reversed and women are expected to prefer the self-contained sentiment and men narrative.

Price usefully directs us to pay more attention to the tension between fragment and whole and suggests that the anthology makes it possible to read in the older, intensive

way. But she does not dwell on the process of application in the reader herself, or the concerns expressed by eighteenth-century thinkers about piecemeal learning and thinking. Stallybrass quotes John Locke, from A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St Paul as evidence for the practice of discontinuous reading. Locke complains that

the dividing of [the Epistles] into Chapters and Verses, as we have done; whereby they are so chopp'd and minc'd, as they are now printed, stand so broken and divided, that not only the common People take the Verses usually for distinct Aphorism; but even Men of more advanced Knowledge, in reading them, lose vvery much of the Strength and Force of the Coherence. (qtd in "Books and Scrolls" 50)

John Bennett, in recommending sermons suitable for young women to read often notes that a writer lacks in "Unity of design" (58). Sarah Scott critiques of dictionary and quotation learning in her novels, A Description of Millenium Hall (1762) and A Journey Through Every Stage of Life (1754). In the latter she describes a lazy, affected aristocratic young pupil whose mother wants him to read Romances and Poetry so that he will have an "Appearance of Learning." This appearance of learning will allow him "on occasion, to quote a Line out of Horace and other Latin Authors." The mother goes so far as to suggest that instead of requiring her son to read, the "Tutor might, with a little Trouble, find an easier Way of imparting to his Pupil this ornamental Knowledge. As for example, he might extract such Sentences out of the Latin Authors as would be useful in Conversation" (37). Scott continues this line of critique in Millenium Hall where one character's desultory reading leaves her "such a confusion in her memory, where an historical anecdote was crouded by a moral sentiment; and a scrap of a play interwoven into a sermon" (192).

Samuel Richardson fretted to Susanna Highmore that they had entered an "age of dictionary and index learning, in which our study is to get knowledge without study . . .

and a smattering is almost all that is aimed at.” (SL 160). He nonetheless created an index of sentiment for his novels, A collection of the Moral and Instructive Sentiments, Maxims, Cautions, and Reflexions, Contained in the Histories of Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles Grandison (1755). The sentiments are edifying to meditate upon, were collected to be provide rules for daily living and meditation; they are, according to the preface a collection of “elevated thoughts, beautiful sentiments, or instructive lessons” (vii).<sup>5</sup> Price sees the publication of such excerpts (as well as abridgements of the novels) as founding moments in the history of a division and gendering of reading practices, while Stallybrass uses the practice of breaking up Biblical text to ground a theory of discontinuous reading. Rather than place these concerns within a narrative that moves toward fragmentation, I want to emphasize the period’s ambivalence about such sentiments.

Richardson is certainly a prime example of this ambivalence, expressing concern about the relative value of precepts or morals and novels in both published works and in his correspondence. As he writes to Thomas Edwards

But as they were all written for ye Sake of Instruction to young People; who are apt to read rapidly wth. a View only to Story; I thought my End wou’d be better answer’d, by giving at one View ye Pith & Marrow of what they had been reading, perhaps with some Approbation; in order to revive in their Minds ye Occasions on which ye Things were supposed to be said & done, ye better to assist them in the Application of<sup>y</sup>e Moral. (Qtd. in Eaves and Kimpel, SR 421)

Richardson concedes that some readers, namely “young People,” are more likely to be drawn to the narrative, but he would prefer them to pay attention to the Moral. Indeed, the preface claims that the richness of the narrative might be distract from “the instructive;” many readers, therefore “are desirous of fixing in their minds those maxims which deserve notice distinct from the story . . . should have often wished and pressed to

see them separate from that chain of engaging incidents that will sometimes steal the most fixed attention from its pursuit of serious truth”(ix). Richardson’s Familiar Letters (1741) is the immediate subject of this observation, suggesting that not only the longer, more connected incidents of the novels might pull the attention away from “serious truth,” but that even the shorter, largely incomplete narratives of the letter-writing manual might do so. The collection is meant to be supplemental to and be supplemented by the novels, even as it is the “Application of <sup>y</sup>e Moral” that is the author’s stated intention.

The narrative and preceptual conflict with each other, the former getting in the way of the reader’s pursuit of serious truth. At the same time though, the collection (and its commentators) does not forget that it is drawn from more fully elaborated texts. The preface, for example, imagines that the readers will “refer themselves occasionally to the volumes for the illustration of these maxims”(ix). The preface to sentiments contains its own theory of how the detached sentiments can be read: such collections, “always been well received . . . have been considered as the first strokes of a picture, in which are seen the justness and beauty of the painter’s design, though it has not the colouring”(vii). This language describes a reading practice informed by the confidence that such a transcendent authorial design and intention exist--the same reading practice we have seen described by the writers of instructions for reading the Bible.

This look at some of the discussions of reading in the eighteenth-century is not intended to be exhaustive. Rather, in looking at a few representative and conventional texts, my purpose has been to notice some key differences between contemporary and eighteenth-century ways of thinking about reading and to begin to develop language we might use to characterize reading practices that do not necessarily oppose interpretive

authority. In particular, of course, I have attempted to identify some characteristics of a limited or negotiated interpretive authority. These characteristics, which will be more fully explored in subsequent chapters, include a sense that authorial intention and design could be grasped, and practices of reading that situated reading the physical text within a larger context of cognitive networks (in Evelyn Tribble's words) that include the predisposition to read from within a set of religious beliefs. Such networks include memorizing, reading aloud, and learning the text aurally, and illustrate that individual reading--and especially individual interpretation--is only one way to use a text. A limited interpretive authority is also suggested when didactic writers exhort readers to read with submission to their faith: readers must censor themselves and carefully filter out ideas that might lead to skepticism or heterodoxy. Finally, reading may simply confirm doctrines learned in the context of oral instruction.

Current (twentieth and early twenty-first century) methodologies in the history of reading privilege readerly freedom and resistance to interpretive authority and characterize the absence of response, or the acceptance of authoritative interpretation, as passive. The unbound, or potentially unbound, reader becomes a focus when the objective is to expose and articulate forms of resistance. This may reflect a modern sense not only of the individual as a reader, but of the significance (to scholarship and to this sense of the individual) of, to return to Cavallo and Chartier's phrasing, "recogniz[ing] the constraints that limit the frequenting of books." The study of reading, then, becomes about identifying the "resources that can be mobilized by the reader's liberty" (34). But historians of reading frequently fail to ask whether readers understand their own reading practices as a sort of mobilization against the forces that limit their autonomy. Do all



readers, or have all readers, resisted or rejected such limitations of readerly freedom? A contemporary celebration of readerly autonomy underscores the early modern suspicion of readerly freedom, but we do not have to understand such suspicion and the resulting constraints negatively. What I contribute in the following chapters, however, is modification of this binary and careful attention to the obedient reader. Instead of assuming that all readers chafed against the implication that they must be guided or corrected, or must submit their interpretations to external constraints, I hope to illustrate that some readers welcomed such instruction and that binding themselves to some protocols of reading unbound them for other reading and intellectual experiences.

---

<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to calculate literacy rates accurately. As measured primarily by signatures on legal records, wills, and marriage licenses (which indicates an ability to write as well as, or instead of, the ability to read, and thus remains inaccurate), rates of reading in England rose between the end of the fifteenth century (when, according to Stephens, only about 10% of men and almost no women were literate) through the eighteenth; literacy rates seem to have increased most sharply in the 1600s. Nonetheless, it seems clear that roughly half of the British population remained illiterate throughout the eighteenth century. Roughly 30-40% of women were able to read in this period. By the middle of the nineteenth century, nearly 70% of men and about 50% of women were literate. Hunter provides a useful description of the new readers of the eighteenth century (urban, ambitious, mobile, and young). Both Graff and Thomas warn that scholars need to pay attention to different kinds of literacy (being able to read only the catechism is different, for example, from being able to read Latin and English). Stone, Laquer, and Graff examine and interrogate theories about the causes of changes in literacy rates. See Richard Altick's The English Common Reader, David Cressy's Literacy and Social Order and "Levels of Illiteracy in England, 1530-1730," Harvey Graff's "Reflections on the History of Literacy," and The Legacies of Literacy: Continuities and Contradiction in Western Culture and Society, Thomas Laquer's "The Cultural Origins of Popular Literacy in England, 1500-1850," R.S. Schofield, "Dimensions of Illiteracy, 1750-1850," Margaret Spufford's "First Steps in Literacy: The Reading and Writing Experiences of the Humblest Seventeenth Century Spiritual Autobiographers," W.B. Stephens' "Literacy in England, Scotland, and Wales, 1500-1900," Lawrence Stone's "Literacy and Education in England, 1640-1900," David Vincent's "Reading Made Strange: Context and Method in becoming literate in eighteenth and nineteenth century England," and R.M. Wiles' "Middle Class Literacy in Eighteenth-Century England: Fresh Evidence."

<sup>2</sup> This text was printed alone at least three times (1750, 1770, 1780) and also served as the front matter for the Bible in an edition commissioned by the SPCK, at least once (1771).

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the theory and its limitations see Darnton's "First Steps Toward a History of Reading" in The Kiss of Lamourette, 154-187; on Engelsing in particular see 165-166.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Jun 1753, Richardson, Selected Letters, ed. John Carroll, 235. Further references to this text are noted parenthetically with the abbreviation SL.

<sup>5</sup> According to Eaves and Kimpel, Benjamin Kennicott probably wrote the preface to the collection; see Samuel Richardson: A Biography, 420. Further references to this text are abbreviated SR.

## Chapter 2: Reading Women in the History of Reading

Lady Pennington's A Unfortunate Mother's Advice to her Daughter, carefully outlines the way a woman's day should be spent, observing that the "great art of Education consists in assigning to each [activity] its proper Place" (22). Religious reading and contemplation should take place first thing in the morning, during a "half Hour either before, or immediately after Breakfast." Assuming that her daughter will do most of her reading at home and alone (rather than at school or with a tutor or governess), Pennington gives the period's standard advice about studying English, modern languages, arithmetic (only some), the fine arts (as talent allows), and history (plenty). After reading, the daughter should "make Reflections" to help her understand what she has read and to "render [her] Conversation agreeable to others" (25). Mornings should be dedicated to "Improvement" and afternoons allowed for "Diversions" such as humorous books, plays, cards, company.

Regular reading habits and the appointment of reading into particular time slots, appear in accounts addressed to men as well. But when we compare the advice directed at a university student--a male reader, in other words--to advice such as Lady Pennington's, we see several key distinctions. Daniel Waterland, for example, in his Advice to a Young Student (1755), emphasizes commonplacing, not reflection, as a post-reading activity. When reading philosophy, the student should mark the margins of obscure passages, and "[s]et [them] down the Question in a little Paper-Book" (14) to create a running index of philosophical problems. When reading the classics, Waterland again recommends getting a "Quarto Paper-Book for A Common-place, in Mr. Locke's Method, to refer any Thing curious to" as a way to compile "Elegancies of Speech," for

future use. When the young man reads sermons--an activity for holidays from the regular schedule of reading--he should abridge them, and use a "Quarto Paper-Book" to take down "general and particular Heads" (19). *Waterland* even includes a template of this method of outlining.

I point out *Waterland's* frequent recommendation to commonplace, and to purchase and fill up little paper-books, because advice to women situates reading in a substantially less material reading world. Lady Pennington allows that her daughter may reflect upon reading. Reading, however, has its appropriate outlet not in writing, but in conversation. Moreover, in the day's schedule, social activities, such as going to the theater, playing cards, and visiting, are of equal weight with the bookish activities. Granted, *Waterland* writes to a university student, but the difference in the two books of advice directs us to a significant problem in understanding women's reading of the early modern period--it leaves little or no material evidence.

Women left less evidence of their reading than men, in part, because, as we have just seen, they were less likely to write in response to their reading. I suggest, though, that it is not only the lack of written evidence that makes studying women's reading in the past difficult. Rather the trend in the field that I discussed in Chapter 1--the trend that values the individual reader and the individual reader as s/he is situated in opposition to interpretive authority, makes it difficult to see women's reading. Reading only becomes visible when texts make physical or material demands on their readers, forcing them to do something to or with the text--write on it, circulate it, or otherwise respond to it in a way that leaves traces. But Lady Pennington's reader, and many women readers of the

period, used their reading as an aspect of their social and conversational duties and practices.

I concluded the previous chapter by referring to the ways writers of instructions for religious reading detail a model of reading that involves, or requires, submission to a pre-existing and immanent textual meaning. In this chapter, I turn to the implications that paradigm has for studying women readers. James Fordyce's Sermons to young women (1766), for example, is representative of the many instructions to female readers in the eighteenth century that link proper Christian conduct for women--modesty, taciturnity, chastity of body and mind--and reading habits. He notes that the "practice of real Piety requires no small resolution and perseverance;" this sort of self-denial, he continues, is not only "the perfection of Christianity," but consistent with a gendered practice of piety, since a woman's life is "a series of self-denial[s]" (92). Women and girls were expected to accept others' interpretations rather than produce their own, to remain largely silent about their reading and learning, and to restrict many of their reading and learning activities to a comparatively private sphere. If active reading is most readily defined as reading that responds to the text in some way, can we envision a form of reading that fits with this "series of self-denials?" That it, perhaps, actively submissive? And how might we make such practices more legible?

In this chapter, I begin by briefly examining the way women's reading has been studied and approached in histories of reading. I follow some of the lines of inquiry begun in the previous chapter: Do contemporary assumptions about readers' desire for readerly autonomy obscure reading practices and does the difficulty of describing religious reading practices contribute to that obscurity? I look particularly at women's

reading as a special case of this problem. I also begin new lines of inquiry that situate women readers in relation to modes of reading that become particularly visible in the context of the novel. I use Hester Mulso Chapone's 1773 text Letters on the Improvement of the Mind as a way to explore some of these particular problems.

Chapone's text, on the one hand, provides a late century illustration of some of the traits of limited individual interpretive authority I have attempted to theorize thus far. But, in constructing such an authority for her young women readers, her text reflects--and responds to--an initial anxiety that the novel draws readers away from religious texts, and an ensuing incorporation into religious reading of what might be termed novelistic reading modes. Chapone's text compels us, as it is itself compelled, to rethink the relationships of the Bible, the novel, and women's reading.

### **I: Women and Histories of Reading**

One of the problems with approaching women readers as a category of readers is that women leave less evidence of their reading, and leave different kinds of evidence. In particular, they are less likely to leave many of the forms of evidence used by historians of reading such as marginalia, written commentaries or glosses, and individual collections (and the catalogs of such collections). Although scholars of the history of reading are cautioned against constructing narratives before gathering archival evidence, women readers are often treated in aggregate, and their reading made visible primarily in opposition to norms of men's reading. In a discussion of some of the earliest representations of women, in visual arts in ancient Rome, Guglielmo Cavallo, for example, writes that women "could be depicted in the act of writing or reading something

that narrated or reflected women's experience and emotions" (78). He goes on to postulate some aspects of women's reading:

The educated women among this reading public must have been particularly given to this sort of sentimental, fantastic literature whose plots featured stories about women (precisely to attract female readers). . . . Women lived far removed from the preoccupations of public life, and if a woman had some education, she could create her own private space as a reader of works (probably escapist texts) that reflected her. The reading of works of this sort would have been silent, or at most murmured, and must have been quite different from the rhetorical reading aloud that was ultimately 'male' reading. (80)

Our re-creations of past habits of reading are always somewhat tentative, but Cavallo's language is noticeably speculative: "women must have been particularly given", women "could create" private spaces, their reading "would have been" silent and different from men's. We might note, as well, Cavallo's assumption that women would be attracted not only to sentimental stories but to stories about women.

This tendency toward the speculative occurs in Michael Suarez's study of eighteenth-century anthologies. He uses subscription lists as evidence. The lists show a relatively low percentage of women subscribers, but, because the volumes contain romantic poetry, he imagines that they appealed to women: "Women account for almost 30 percent of the subscribers [to a collection called The Lover's Manual], though one might reasonably speculate that the female readership of such a romantic collection was greater still" (223). Suarez acknowledges his own speculation--and the need for making such assumptions based on the unavailability of concrete evidence of ownership--and points out the importance of making the distinction between ownership and readership; it is not necessary, however, to assume that a romantic content implies a female readership. Likewise, a volume of "Poems by Eminent Ladies" had a female subscription rate of only

twenty-five percent, “though many copies for wives and daughters must have been subscribed for under their husbands’ and fathers’ names” (225). Indeed, Jan Fergus, also examining records of book buying and borrowing in eighteenth-century England, shows that women enter the records of buying books when they become widows, ordering more books than when they were married; (“Women readers”). I am less interested to expose lacunae in either scholar’s work than I am in pointing out the speculative nature of these accounts of women’s reading. Both Cavallo and Suarez, in otherwise well-researched essays, admit gaps in their evidence, but nonetheless posit that women will be more attracted to sentimental, escapist, and romantic genres, and that they read in private gendered, spaces.

Scholars such as Kate Flint, Leah Price, and Janice Radway (in Reading the Romance) have all found evidence of specifically gendered practices and modes of reading, but in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Flint and Price (in their books The Woman Reader and Anthology and Novel respectively) both observe that while women began to be associated with sentiment and prose fiction in the eighteenth century, this association was firmly codified in the nineteenth century. Moreover, as Flint in particular shows, much of the empirical evidence of nineteenth-century women readers works against the prescriptions of moralists and the expectation of publishers about women readers (130). Although the assumption that women readers necessarily rejected such moralizing has its own problems (as I discuss below). Here, I emphasize a methodological problem in which a lack of evidence results in the projection of latterly defined or codified categories onto earlier readers.

Heidi Brayman Hackel has described some of the methodological problems of examining women's reading in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries. As Hackel notes, studies of early modern reading often depend upon marginalia, but women rarely wrote in response to their reading: "Silenced by a curriculum and gender ideology that taught them to read but not write, early modern girls who did not learn to write disappear as readers from the historical record as well, for it only captures reading accompanied by writing ("Boasting" 103). Because women's responses to reading must be covert, she argues, we must examine women's private or even hidden responses more carefully. Hackel shifts the methodological burden from within-the-book evidence, such as marginalia, to diaries and letters or even more obscure forms of response (such as poesie rings). In a study of a seventeenth-century woman's library, Hackel points out the importance of re-evaluating evidence of the conventional and the usual. The Countess of Bridgewater's reading practices, for example, seem to fit comfortably within the standards of early-modern women's reading: she did not mark in her books, and she did not have Greek or Latin texts. Although the breadth of her library confounds the expectation that women's reading is necessarily limited, Hackel argues that it "is her very conventionality . . . that makes her library collection so striking, for its existence does not seem to have been considered worthy of remark" ("Countess" 147). The apparent ordinariness of the rather large library (over two hundred books), Hackel continues, should force us to "expand our notions of early modern women as consumers of books" ("Countess" 147).

Hackel's work points out two contrasting problems in studying women's reading, both stemming from lack of evidence: we must look for increasingly transgressive and



covert response, or we must pay attention to the absence of response, possibly as a suggestion that no transgression has been intended. In other words, if we limit the scope of our study of reading to ever more obscure and even idiosyncratic sources, we risk eliminating the reading habits of the many readers who concede, to some extent, to the dominant, gendered norms of any particular historical moment. Hackel is correct in identifying the problem of relying on marginalia as evidence for reading, but this approach could result in a new problematic of defining the evidence of women's reading as exceptional and perhaps transgressive because it is assumed to covertly transgress gendered ideologies of silence. To look for hidden responses is to assume that women were hiding their responses in order to subvert ideologies of femininity. I propose that we turn this problem around to consider how the absence of response, or the refusal to produce a material response, even if not necessarily subversive, might be as deliberate an act as hiding the evidence of response. If we only look for or see the transgressive, it is more difficult to see the responses of the ordinary rather than exceptional women who chose not to oppose gender ideologies. One way to "expand our notions" of women's reading, then, is to expand our sensitivity to the ordinary and the conventional.

If we want to become more sensitive to the ordinary and the conventional, we are still left with the problem of evidence and of defining and deciding what the best evidence for a particular group of readers might be given that the ordinary reader is the reader least likely to leave evidence. As we have seen, this is especially true of women readers for whom some aspects of writing (the primary evidence for reading) and femininity may be mutually exclusive. It is somewhat easier to find evidence of women's reading in the eighteenth century, because more women write (in both public

and private forums); women continue, however, to express ambivalence about making their writing public. Moreover, as Stephen Zwicker has observed, eighteenth-century readers in general moved away from the older practices making marginal comments, thus making it even more difficult to find evidence at the site of reading itself. According to Zwicker, seventeenth-century reading practices typically involve study, practice, and self-fashioning, newer habits involve the argumentative and the polemical, but by “the middle of the eighteenth century it is not so much the traces of readers we discover in their books but more often their absence that is striking” (113). The habits of responding to the text in writing “have now become absorbed in the material and aesthetic properties of the text itself” (102). Broadly speaking, these patterns suggest that we need to look for evidence of women’s reading in the forms of writing that women practiced privately, such as letters, and in the representation of readers in public or published texts.

James Raven notes that historians of reading recently have begun to avoid constructing “aggregate types of readers”--the problem I have identified here as producing overly tentative and speculative assumptions about women readers--and instead attempt to understand the “accumulation of many unique readings” (“New reading” 269). This might seem to lead to the kind of focus on individual and fragmented readings that I questioned in the previous chapter. Indeed, Raven sees weaknesses in an approach that relies too heavily on individual testimonies. Because many readers do not leave accounts of their reading, the “distinctiveness [of those readers who do] appears only to highlight issues of representativeness” (“New reading” 270). Updating Robert Darnton’s proposal for a dual strategy that would “combine textual analysis with empirical research,” Raven argues that by using multiple case studies we may “identify

shared perspectives from the accumulation of diverse confessions of reading” (Kiss 181; “New reading” 279). But, again, since women readers may not “confess” their reading, we cannot discard textual analysis--or the idea of the implied reader. Rather, we need to continue to describe reading through a combination of approaches. Didactic texts also, as I will suggest below, help us to move between the representative and the exceptional, since they present a pattern or model against which evidence of actual practices can be evaluated.

But before looking at implied readers in comparison with the responses of many historical readers (as I do in Chapter 3 and 4 of this project), I think it is necessary to trace more specifically some of the ways eighteenth-century women present a special case of moving between individual--and possibly non-representative or distinctive accounts--and shared perspectives. The difficulty means that in addition to direct evidence and the representation of reading in fictional texts, we need to find ways to move between the exceptional reader (who may also write, and thus leave evidence) and the more normative reader (who may not write). If the centrality of the individual interpretation obscures a religious discourse of unity of interpretation, here conformity may obscure individual effort. Women’s intellectual work in the eighteenth century, as recent scholars have observed, is frequently accompanied by a quite rigid compliance with conventions of femininity. A key example of this dynamic is the bluestocking Elizabeth Carter, who as Claudia Thomas, Norma Clarke, and Harriet Guest (in Small Change) all have argued was able to pursue her intellectual work, at least in part, because she was--or was perceived as--a very pious woman. By conceiving of their work as private and religious, by presenting themselves as competent mistresses of domestic

duties, and (often) by defending these structures of patriarchy, women created environments in which they could perform a kind of intellectual work that might otherwise have been controversial. As Guest argues, and as Charlotte Sussman argues, religion (or the cultivation of a religious public persona) was instrumental in allowing women other kinds of agency--activism in abolition movements (as Sussman argues), or the freedom to live the life of an intellectual.

Writing specifically of Hester Mulso Chapone, Sussman notes that some of her instructions about reading reflect the “the assumption that women’s private reading of the English Bible is an acceptable occupation” (143). Sussman points out that privacy, at this moment “means something taking place inside the home rather than inside the reader’s head” (144). This is in comparison to the previous century, when just after the Restoration some women’s reading becomes private: Public forms of worship “represented a residual form of publicity and were actively suppressed. Thus for many dissenting men and women, religious practice became, by necessity, a private affair, more than ever dependent on the written word” (141). Although Sussman is discussing dissenting women at the end of the seventeenth century, the domestic privacy of later eighteenth-century reading is not limited to dissenters. A privacy which is not necessarily individual--or which is, in fact, consciously oriented away from the self as a form of political agency--works in contrast to the conventional history of the development of the individual reader at the end of the eighteenth century. Moreover, the evidence of women’s reading lies not in written responses to their reading, but in more amorphous and non-material religious and social practices. My examination of Hester Mulso Chapone in this chapter takes up her discussion of some of these practices. These

instructions for reading model the situation of reading within a social context and constitutes one form of evidence we have for women readers whose reading practices are embedded in networks of practices that may seem unremarkable and that, for that reason, may leave no marks.

## **II: Novel Problems**

In the next two sections I turn to Hester Chapone's Letters on the Improvement of the Mind (1773). One of the "most widely read works of the first generation of bluestockings" (Myers 233), this text sets forth a theory of reading, and provides detailed and gender specific instructions for reading the Bible. Chapone's instructions for reading also employ what seem to be novelistic reading modes as a way to read the Bible, complicating our perception that eighteenth-century conduct literature for women uniformly denounced the novel. After discussing the problems the novel caused, I turn to the Letters to examine the way Chapone uses the pedagogical power of narrative to help her readers understand Biblical history. I then look at how Chapone models a way of reading that uses female emotional impressionability as an initial step in a socially oriented, rational comprehension of scriptural complexity. Although Chapone seems to recover novelistic modes of reading for religious purposes, her advice reveals not an explicit or deliberate engagement with the novel but rather an acute sense that reading practices are changing. That the novel motivates this change is suggested by the frequency with which her reading instructions make use of modes of reading associated with the novel.

Chapone (1727-1801) was a member of the bluestocking circle and her writings demonstrate the characteristic concern of the bluestockings for women's intellectual and

spiritual development. Although she published poems and short periodical pieces, and, as a young woman, carried on a well known and extensively-circulated debate about filial piety with Samuel Richardson (which I discuss in Chapter 4), Letters on the Improvement of the Mind was her publishing success, and remains the work for which she is best known. As Rhoda Zuk, editor of a recent reprint of her works notes, the text had at least ninety reprints, editions, translations and anthologized excerpts between its publication and the mid-nineteenth century.

The perception of an increase in novel reading generated a certain amount of anxiety for eighteenth-century cultural observers. As soon as she addresses the problem of reading the Bible, Chapone asserts that young women need a “method and course” for understanding it in the face of increasingly secular reading practices (266). “The time and the manner in which children usually read the Bible,” she observes, “are very ill calculated to make them really acquainted with it ” (267). Scholars such as Margaret Spufford, Richard Altick, Victor E. Neuberg, and David Vincent have studied the way the Bible was often used in the teaching of reading itself, but this traditional practice, as Chapone observes here, wanes in the eighteenth century. More specifically, though, Chapone is worried that “lively entertainments” will divert girls’ attention from the Bible, and hopes that her instructions will help them to “read the Bible, not as a task, nor as the dull employment of that day only, in which you are forbidden more lively entertainments- -but with a sincere and ardent desire of instruction” (266). A range of behaviors might be banned on Sundays, but Chapone is specifically concerned here with reading activities; she thus implicates the “lively entertainment” of the novel the entertainment that might supercede the Bible.

Chapone's concerns are consistent with the expressed concerns about secularization from other writers in the period, and with later observations that the Bible and the novel were competing for readers. In his Letters to a young lady (1789), John Bennett attempts to rhetorically eliminate this competition, asking, "If people only read for the sake of entertainment, where can they find a book equal to the Bible?" (37). As Brian Young notes, fiction and theological books are not separate as forms in the eighteenth century; theological books, in fact, saw themselves in competition with novels for readers ("Theological Books"). Richardson's Clarissa was also compared, implicitly and explicitly to the Bible. Knightley Chetwood wrote that "if all the Books in England were to be burnt, this Book, next the Bible ought to be preserved" (qtd. in Eaves and Kimpel, SR 121).

Eighteenth-century admonitions against novel reading are easy to find. Chapone writes that novels might "enchant the mind," "inflame the passions," and "mislead the heart and understanding," but it remains unclear whether such rhetoric discouraged or encouraged novel reading (Letters, 337). Such assumptions underlie the prohibition placed on women readers who were often cautioned not to read romance or anything sentimental. Conduct books often simply raise the question of appropriate female reading while rarely venturing beyond this vague exhortation to read history and avoid novels. Jacqueline Pearson's study of representations of women reading draws on literary and nonliterary texts, but takes the debates about the novel, and the condemnations of the novel by the period's conduct books writers as the best synthesis of women's reading in the period: "contemporary comment, however, is less concerned about women or girls who do not read than with those who read the wrong books, in the

wrong ways and the wrong places” (15). The wrong books usually are novels. The novel’s powerful narrative momentum, emotional absorption or excitement, and fostering of private reading habits were all causes of concern.

In A Father’s Legacy to his Daughters (1774), Chapone’s acquaintance and fellow conduct book writer, Dr John Gregory makes the attempt to guide his daughters’ taste in reading:

I am at the greatest loss what to advise you in regard to books. There is no impropriety in your reading history, or cultivating any art or science to which genius or accident leads you. The whole volume of Nature lies open to your eye, and furnishes an infinite variety of entertainment. If I was sure that Nature had given you such strong principles of taste and sentiment as would remain with you, and influence your future conduct, with the utmost pleasure would I endeavour to direct your reading in such a way as might form that taste to the utmost perfection of truth and elegance. “But when I reflect how easy it is to warm a girl’s imagination, and how difficult deeply and permanently to affect her heart; how readily she enters into every refinement of sentiment, and how easily she can sacrifice them to vanity or convenience;” [sic] I think I may very probably do you an injury by artificially creating a taste, which, if Nature never gave it to you, would only serve to embarrass your future conduct. (53-54)

Gregory is unable to positively advise anything about reading other than the standard recommendation to read history. He avoids mention of any book, save that “of Nature,” as if every book he can think of will unduly excite his daughters’ imagination and “embarrass their future conduct.” Gregory’s indirection, incoherence and apparent association between reading, Nature, the warmth of the female character and the problems, therefore, of choosing appropriate reading material which will not damage her heart and thus behavior belies the connection between reading and a barely submerged sensuality and sexuality. Gregory reiterates a typical eighteenth-century concern that women’s warm, impressionable, even soft, minds and imaginations, and hearts are too



easily stimulated by the sentiments found in most reading material; he cannot recommend any books because reading is imagined to easily inform conduct.

Recognizing private and solitary reading as problems, Chapone also advises that the “greatest care should be taken in the choice of those fictitious stories,” and feels she “must repeatedly exhort” her reader “never to read anything of the sentimental kind, without taking the judgment of your best friends” (337). Many writers participated in similar expressions of concern about the vitiating effects of novel reading. Samuel Johnson, in the well-known Rambler #4, worries about the effect of reading on the young impressionable mind, writing that novels “are the entertainment of minds unfurnished with ideas, and therefore easily susceptible of impressions; not fixed by principles, and therefore easily following the current of fancy; not informed by experience, and consequently open to every false suggestion and partial account”(176). Although these minds do not have explicit genders, the Lockean language of impressionability is feminized by mid-century. As Richard A. Barney observes, “the description of humanity’s profound malleability in early childhood, especially as it was described by Locke and Fénelon, became attached to women as a permanent feature even in adulthood” (55). These concerns, stemming from the belief that impressionable young women were the primary readers of prose fiction, result in attempts to censor and supervise women’s reading.

The belief that women minds were soft and warm, (made of “Matter too soft a lasting mark to bear” as Pope writes in “To a Lady”[l.3]) and that their characters were more emotional than rational, promotes images of women readers as impressionable, and as susceptible in particular to sexual corruption through the medium of language. At the

least, most writers understood women's intellectual capacities as different but complementary to the intellectual powers of men. "Nature appears to have formed the faculties of your sex" James Fordyce writes in The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex (1776), ". . . with less vigour than those of ours" (2:7). Sciences and the abstract philosophy are, he claims, the "province of men," but women are to "possess" the "empire" "which has the heart for its object" (2:8). Moreover, women's "business chiefly is to read Men": reading is performed not to hone their "argumentative" talents, but to polish "the sentimental talents, which give you that insight and those openings into the human heart (2:9). Books will assist this in this process of learning to read other people, but women should not "attach [them]selves wholly to this study" (2:9). Fordyce both separates and then conflates the reading of character and the reading of books.

The conventional ideology of female reading suggests paradoxically that women will passively and uncritically accept as true the represented relationships between text and life, and that such absorptive reading will result in overly active sexual behavior. The seeds of sin are planted in Milton's Eve, for example, by Satan when he sits "Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve; / Assaying by his devilish art to reach/ The organs of her fancy, and with them forge / Illusions as he list, phantasms and dreams" (IV: 800-803). Eve does not read, but Satan can reach Eve's "fancy" through the opening of her ear, and thereby impregnate her mind with intimations of dangerous knowledge. Early eighteenth-century works of prose fiction incorporate images of the female susceptibility to sexual ideas in ways which more pointedly emphasize reading. Charlot in Delarivier Manley's The New Atalantis is easily seduced after the Duke replays the Satanic instigation of sin and "infuse[s] poison into the ears of the lovely virgin" by encouraging

her to read “the most dangerous books of love--Ovid, Petrarch, Tibullus--those moving tragedies that so powerfully expose the force of love and corrupt the mind” (37). Moving the reader can be the initial step of corruption--especially if what is read itself represents the emotions of love and lust. In mid-century, Clarissa's Lovelace provides yet another iteration of the seductive opportunities made possible by reading:

Many a girl has been carried, who never would have been attempted had she showed a proper resentment when her ears or her eyes were first invaded. I have tried a young creature by a bad book, a light quotation, or an indecent picture; and if she has borne that, or only blushed, and had not been angry, and more especially if she has leered and smiled, that girl have I, old Mulciber, put down for our own. (153:521)

Whether being used to invoke original sin or to satirize political corruption (enacted upon the innocent female body) this image of the female mind as penetrable, and thus corruptible, appears frequently as a justification for monitoring and censoring female reading.

Later observers of these debates, possibly influenced by the novel's centrality to eighteenth-century literary studies, initially assumed that readers disregarded such prescriptive literature or that these concerns are voiced to correct already widespread practices of novel reading by women. Scholars are beginning to assess the novel's influence in more nuanced ways. In a study complicating the “image of the impressionable and idle female reader,” Naomi Tadmor demonstrates that reading, even of the novel, in some households “was connected not to idleness, listlessness or frivolity, but to a routine of work and of religious discipline” (165). Usefully pointing out that mid-century readers were neither devouring novels nor rejecting them, Tadmor's study nonetheless shows how this more traditional, disciplined and socially-oriented routine of reading becomes legible to us primarily in contrast to the legacy of the leisured novel

reader. In other words, even as we move away from asking simply whether or not women readers were reading novels, the novel continues to help highlight other forms, often older forms, of reading.

Jan Fergus has investigated the patterns of buying books and borrowing books from circulating libraries. Showing that novel buying (and borrowing) is not as prevalent as later observers of eighteenth-century culture have supposed (religious books were purchased more frequently), she argues against historical and contemporary perceptions that women were the primary readers of fiction. Like many commentators on the relationship of women to prose fiction, she concludes that the anxieties about women reading novels is primarily an aspect of a larger feminization of the imagination and prose fiction, rather than a reflection of actual reading habits: “Possibly the energy with which eighteenth-century moralists expressed increasing anxiety over female novel readers (as well as those in the lower classes) derives in part from a male perception that the written word was now making a broader and more frequent appeal to the imagination, and some of that writing was coming from women” (“Women readers” 173). Even as she corrects assumptions about the novel’s circulation, Fergus’ study suggests the importance to debates about reading not of the novel itself (in its physical, consumable form) but to a series of novelistic associations, particularly the appeal to the imagination.

Kate Flint’s study of women’s reading questions using didactic texts over the evidence of readers themselves:

A clear question follows from the presentation of this material [in prescriptive literature]: what difference did--or does--the hypothesis of a woman reader . . . make to one’s understanding of the ways in which certain texts may have been read at the time of their first publication? To pose this question, however, is to assume, erroneously, that theory necessarily reflected practice. In fact, evidence

of actual reading activity calls many of the theoretical assumptions presented [in this book] . . . into question. (14)

Theoretical assumptions, Flint explains, derive from both normative texts and imaginative texts. She goes on to assert, though, that such images or theories of the reader are contradicted by practice. Flint marshals a great deal of evidence in support of this position, this suspicion of any kind of prescriptive literature is a recurrent methodology in many case studies of reading. We know that “[c]ontemporary commentaries on correct and incorrect ways of approaching books and print supplement and contradict the record left by the individual reader” (Raven, “New reading” 285). But it is often assumed that because novels were decried as damaging to women’s sensitive and emotionally susceptible minds, the women readers reacted defiantly by reading novels in the voracious way condemned and described in conduct books. In other words, we assume that readers turn deliberately away from conduct material, or that they consciously or unconsciously choose to subvert in is their actual practices. As an approach it falls into line with the tendencies to celebrate reading that is perceived to be opposing some form of authority, from the authority of the narrative to the authority of Biblical scholars and social and cultural commentators. But, if conduct material telling readers how and what to read is taken simply as theory or ideology against which empirical evidence is measured or against which it reacts, we miss important bodies of information about reading.

Didactic texts do not dictate reading but they do shape or articulate conventions that we can also see in reading practices. In his study of Anna Larpent, John Brewer captures a later moment in the history of the novel’s transformation of reading practices. Married to John Larpent who was the Inspector of Plays, Anna Larpent kept a journal of

her extensive reading between 1773 and 1828. When she read novels, he observes, she is ambivalent about them: She records both emotional responses and constructs them as “realms of feeling and passion but also as sites of instruction and edification” (235). Brewer argues that the “version of the world of the novel reader as private, feminized, illicit and associated with pleasure rather than instruction was one that Larpent wished to circumvent or avoid.” (237). Brewer’s discussion points more explicitly to the ways in which reading practices are shaped by or in response to the images or prescriptive theories of the female reader. Larpent’s journal powerfully suggests the increasing influence of anti-novel discourse on readers’ own perceptions of their reading habits. The “idle and impressionable female reader” (a yet to emerge paradigm for the mid-century readers analyzed by Tadmor ) is clearly a more dominant force against which Larpent characterizes her reading experiences.

Although Larpent herself registers this influence, the studies by Tadmor and Brewer illustrate that novel reading, or beliefs about novel reading, make all kinds of other reading more visible and more comprehensible. Moreover, as women internalize the anxieties about women’s reading and about the deleterious effects of the novel, they are enabled--or compelled--to characterize their reading experiences in new kinds of language and to distinguish between different categories of reading experiences. The novel makes these different reading experiences more visible for both eighteenth-century readers and for their twenty-first century observers, but we need to continue the work of determining how the novel helped shape reading practices rather than simply situating readers on one side or the other of the novel/anti novel debate. We need to reconsider assumptions formed not just by taking conduct books as reflecting behavior, but by our

own critical assumptions about the (transhistorical) centrality of the novel and imaginative literature to discussions and understandings of reading practices. Even when the evidence points to readers who read other texts, we may be unable to see beyond the terms of the eighteenth-century cultural commentators, as well as our own investment in the novel as a form. This is not to say that the novel was unimportant, but to suggest that we need to be more critical of the parameters of the debate and expand our understanding of the novel beyond the polarity of whether readers did or did not read novels. We must expand our understanding of didactic and prescriptive literature beyond its use as a set of conventions actual readers resist or oppose. I suggest that we can more productively engage with these debates about reading when we consider how they make visible existing and emergent reading practices. Moreover, although the novel remains a crucial category of both contemporary analysis of reading practices and eighteenth-century conceptions of reading change, we need to see it in relation to the Bible, especially when we are studying women's reading.

### **III: Novel Readings of the Bible**

In the following sections, I examine how Chapone's Letters reflects the novelization of reading practices. This novelization occurs in her pedagogical use of narrative and in a recovery of emotional affect for the development of rational scriptural comprehension. The text's recuperation of these modes, therefore, reveals the influence of the novel on reading practices of all kinds--even practices that assert themselves in opposition to the novel. Chapone's text, as it responds to and recuperates these modes also defines some of the older practices in comparison, and allows us to perceive the way women's intellectual work was informed and even enabled by these older practices.

Chapone's Letters gives us a way to talk about the significance of new or novelistic reading practices in the context of older practices and modes of reading associated with religious texts. In particular, we might reconsider assumptions about how the novel informed reading habits, and to observe a gendered difference in the emergence of the modern reader. Through direct advice and an interpretive practice that models possible reading strategies, Chapone's text invests the female reader with her own interpretive authority based on intuitive and relatively unlearned responses to texts and encourages the novelistic reading mode of becoming absorbed in a linear narrative. Such readerly authority is often understood as a mark of the modern reader, but Chapone also places the individual reader under the supervision of other readers, thus tempering this private reading experience by subordinating it within a more traditional interpretive community; she give women readers a limited interpretive authority. Oscillating between new modes of reading and a traditional canon of texts, Chapone's text asks us to write a new history of women's reading that recognizes how women's intellectual progress in the period only unevenly reflects the secularization of reading and education. Letters also asks us, more importantly, to question the dominant theories and histories of reading that have overlooked these gendered practices.

Chapone reiterates the concerns that many cultural commentators had about prose fiction's ability to carry readers along a narrative current and absorb them emotionally. But these conventional expressions of the dangers of novel reading take up only one short paragraph in Chapone's text, which is predominantly concerned with enlarging rather than limiting the scope of women's reading. I argue that the way Chapone dismisses the novel belies the importance of novelistic reading to her instructions for religious study. I



use the idea that novelistic reading might be a way to understand the Bible to examine theories of historical reading that are not sensitive enough to the eighteenth-century's own theories of interpretation.

Begun in 1765, the collection of familiar letters was originally addressed to Chapone's fifteen year-old niece. Although typical conduct-oriented sections, such as "The Regulation of the Heart and Affections" and "On Economy," make up about one third of the text, the bulk of the letters emphasizes instead the announced improvement of the mind rather than the improvement of the temper or the home. The very titles of letters, such as "On the First Principles of Religion" and "On the Study of the holy Scriptures" (two letters), signal the specificity of Chapone's instruction and mark a contrast in approach to the standard didactic text that exhorted its audience to read the Bible but provided little guidance about how to do so. Letters concludes with a course of more secular reading, and, largely following the curricular sequence John Locke sets out in Some Thoughts concerning Education (1693), presents young women with reading lists designed to approximate the grammar school education of their male peers. Chapone's advocacy of women's intellectual work is really quite unusual among writers of conduct books; equally striking, but far less noted, is her recognition that the improvement of the mind requires a process as well as a program of reading.

In-depth studies of Chapone's texts are scarce, perhaps because her ideas of friendship and her domesticity-oriented articulations of femininity are too heteronormative in comparison with the writings of other bluestockings. Although the bluestockings' engaged in extended epistolary conversations about reading, they have been little studied by historians of reading. Chapone's Letters was quite well known in the late eighteenth-

and early nineteenth-centuries; her fame is suggested by the numerous excerpted appearances of the behavior and domesticity-oriented sections of *Letters* in compilations such as The Lady's Pocket Library (1790) which also included Jonathan Swift's "Letter to New-married Lady," Lady Pennington's "Unfortunate Mother's Advice to Her Daughters," and John Gregory's A Father's Legacy to His Daughters Legacy. Chapone's letter "On the Government of the Temper" was excerpted in Mary Wollstonecraft's anthology The Female Reader (1789). She has held less appeal for more recent readers who seem to find it difficult to look beyond this domestic and conservative reputation. A closer look at the text as a whole, however, reveals her real and abiding interest in women's intellectual labor. Chapone's advice about reading subverts the period's beliefs about the limits of women's intellectual capabilities, but does so in a manner that does not explicitly question the ideologies of femininity. She uses conventionally feminine modes of intellectual labor (such as the familiar letter), and feminized modes of reading (such as the belief that women minds' were more impressionable). Although Chapone's text can be seen as subversive in employing the conventional feminized limitations of mind for a broad program of mental improvement, the framing of women's intellectual work in appropriately feminine terms accounts for the appeal of the Letters to readers of its own time. In other words, those readers seeking to transcend gendered limitations and those readers willing, or desirous, of submitting to such limitations would find the text legible and useful. This same connection between femininity and reading makes them now of interest in understanding the discursive world of the eighteenth-century woman reader.

The use of narrative reading is one key aspect of the way Letters opens up the different texts of the Bible to female readers. Stephen Prickett argues that development of the novel was significant in changing ways of reading the Bible. The novel both “transform[s] standards of realism” and “the way in which other stories were to be read and understood” (15). There is increasingly an emphasis on character, as eighteenth century rejected typology as “no longer adequate to convey the human qualities of the biblical narrative,” and biblical narrative was “narrowed to a single thread of story” (16, 15). Clearly some parts of the Bible--those that present history rather than the proverbs or prophecies--lend themselves to being read in this more novelistic way than others.

While Prickett suggests that the eighteenth-century novel changed the way the Bible was read, Hans W. Frei’s account of the way historical-critical readings of the Bible “eclipsed” narrative readings in the eighteenth century suggests that, rather than the novel itself, a longer historical trend was responsible for this change. Before the emergence of historical-critical hermeneutics in the eighteenth century, readers understood biblical narrative as descriptive of real events within a unified temporal scheme. But empirical standards for evaluating texts situated the Bible within a field of ancient texts and opened them all to questions about probability or possibility. Seventeenth and eighteenth century theologians employing new historical thinking began considering the narrative as distinct from the subject matter; it was not possible, that is, to read the narratives of the Bible as realistic narratives. As Frei writes, the “historical critic does something other than narrative interpretation with a narrative because he looks for what the narrative refers to or what reconstructed historical context outside itself explains it” (135). Frei terms this an eclipse of narrative because the narrative is being read with

reference only to this other historical or moral contexts. Frei notes, however, that a “burgeoning realistic outlook . . . was indeed reflected in common perspectives on the Bible.” “But,” he continues, “it never shaped in the study of the Bible the same kind of imaginative and analytical grasp applied to the writing and reading of the novel” (151). But Frei’s approach is distinct from Prickett’s as well, because Frei argues that the eighteenth century did not attempt to understand the internal logic of the biblical narratives--they did not attempt, as they may have attempted with a novel, to enter and accept the narrative world as a created, complete world in itself (or, later in the period, as an aesthetic object).

Frei and Prickett approach the relationship of the Bible and the novel in different ways, but both are interested in professional exegetes--Frei in theologians, and Prickett in the movement of exegesis from the church to the university. The common perspective, as Frei puts it, is not often explored in itself. Prickett’s formulation of the change as moving toward simple narrative and toward non-typological characters would seem more likely to describe that common perspective, though. Indeed, narrative reading of the Bible is important to those writing instructions for reading scripture who wanted to frame the Bible in terms of accessibility, and thus in terms of narrative, since stories were believed to be relatively easy to understand. At times, Chapone recommends this sort of reading in her instructions. But, it is also possible to see the ways in which Chapone, as she crafts a way for women readers to make sense of the Bible, moves toward what Frei calls the “imaginative and analytical grasp” of the novel.

One of Chapone’s first acts of guidance is to propose that her pupils read the Bible as narrative. She works through the Old Testament, providing a synopsis of each

book and then explains the order in which they should be read because often “the facts are not told in the times in which they happened, which makes some confusion” (272). She gives readers permission to skip certain books, such as Leviticus, some of Numbers, Chronicles and the books between Esther and the Apocrypha. Chapone repeatedly stresses the reading order as opposed to the printed order: “Though I have spoken of these books, in the order in which they stand, I repeat that they are not to be read in that order--but that the thread of the history is to be pursued . . . taking care to observe the Chronology regularly” (272). The reader is directed to reshape these scattered elements of Biblical history into a linear narrative so that she will not “lose the historical thread” (276). Emphasizing an active practice of ordering and sorting out different genres, Chapone’s instructions reassure readers that the difficulty in following the history lies in the book’s confusing order and not in their intellectual abilities.

Chapone follows the many commentators, like J. F. Ostervald, who suggest that the history corresponds with readers’ need for easy reading at first. The historical books, he writes in The Necessity and Usefulness of reading the Holy Scriptures, contain a “method of instruction being the most plain and easy, and suited to every capacity. Histories are so easy to comprehend and retain, that even children may understand them without much difficulty” (14). Bookending our period, but suggesting a gendered application of the use of narrative, Fénelon and William Duff both employ the assumed feminine predilection for story to compensate for intellectual limitations. According to Fénelon, writing at the end of the seventeenth century, religious stories are better than catechizing for girls: “Although they [stories] seem to prolong instruction, in reality they shorten it greatly and they avoid the dulness of catechisms in which dogmas are

dissociated from events.”<sup>1</sup> Duff’s early nineteenth-century volume contains “little pieces of history” and he hopes that “these narratives . . . will agreeably relieve the mind, fatigued with attention to a series of argument, and by amusing the imagination” will inculcate the moral lessons “which might have escaped notice, if presented in a less entertaining form” (19). Infantilized female readers, they both suggest, will be fatigued with dull explanations of religious doctrine or with arguments about morality, and bored with memorizing the catechistical questions and answers. Fénelon and Duff allow girls to be swept along in the power of narrative, but primarily because the female reader is assumed to be unable to understand or retain her lessons any other way.

Chapone was not alone in perceiving the pedagogical efficacy of narrative, but she was unusual in appropriating it as way to confront rather than avoid the complexities of the Bible. Mark Salber Phillips argues that in the later eighteenth century the sense of history began to be defined with reference to biography, novels, memoir, and to be more explicitly gendered. Whereas history had been understood as having a direct relationship to current political events, it becomes more sentimental and is now expected to be “interesting.” This suggests that it dwelt on the inward and on the complexities of the human mind. But even as history takes up an “affective approach” that approach is criticized by women because they wanted to be understood as serious readers, as “diligent and active readers”(112). Hester Chapone and Mary Wollstonecraft both counter this attitude and argue that reading, understanding, and knowing history is a “valuable asset” for women. Phillips pays particular attention to Chapone’s instructions to write about history to a friend, in order to retain it. Although I have more to say about Chapone’s instructions for writing as a pedagogical tool, I am more interested here in the way her

instructions participate in this larger eighteenth-century tendency to narrativize and historicize (if not novelize), and in the way this participation encourages rigorous, if gendered reading of the Bible. Although she recognizes and builds upon already existing--and feminized--beliefs about cognitive habits of narrative reading, she employs narrative in the service of explaining, not avoiding, religious doctrine, and encourages her readers to read the Bible itself, not its excerpts.<sup>2</sup>

Narrative is not simply a tool for engaging and holding the attention of girls but an important part of understanding “this, which is, of all histories, the most authentic” (266). By showing them how read within the narrative framework of historical order, Chapone helps her pupils grasp the evidentiary nature of Biblical history. Thus, while women were often exhorted to simply believe rather than to investigate the tenets of their faith, Chapone makes it possible for them to experience, in this narrative reading practice, a dimension of the “authenticity” of the Bible--an authenticity that would be lost in the confusion caused by reading “in the order in which [the books] stand” (275). Chapone’s instructions invest the reader with the interpretive authority to make sense of the text on her own, in this case by rejecting the material authority of the text as printed and by making her aware of an extratextual doctrinal narrative.

Chapone does not, of course, recommend that the whole Bible should be read only as narrative. Indeed, Chapone’s instructions are useful to her female readers because she is so explicit about the different modes of reading they should employ. Chapone is unique among conduct books writers in her consistent awareness that women, often lacking in systematic education, need to be taught the dominant reading conventions of their time and told what to skip and what to read with attention. On the

most practical level, Chapone helps readers prepare for difficult reading experiences by recommending notes, indices, and Biblical commentaries, such as Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews* or Dr. Patrick Delany's *Life of David*. Simply naming such texts, or reminding readers of ways to employ resources like the historical index (printed in the back of many eighteenth-century Bibles), is useful for self-educated or privately educated girls and women.

But she also divides the text by form--narrative and non-narrative--and by degree of difficulty--easy and obscure. Narrative reading is only appropriately employed in some cases since the Bible also contains books of "detached sentiments" such as those in *Proverbs* or *Ecclesiastes*. These "are a kind of reading not proper to be continued long at a time--a few of them well chosen and digested, will do you much more service, than to read half a dozen chapters together; in this respect they are directly opposite to the historical books, which if not read in continuation, can hardly be understood, or retained to any purpose" (275). "Laid up in your heart," the biblical precepts, or "detached sentiments" are to be read in small doses, memorized, and then referred to for daily application while the historical parts are read as linear narrative. The bible also "contains many various kinds of writing--some parts obscure and difficult of interpretation, others plain and intelligible to the meanest capacity" (266). Chapone's acknowledgement that the Bible is transparent and complicated--it is both "plain and easy" and "obscure and difficult"--situates her text as a direct engagement with reading practices and previews the doubleness of her reading instructions. Although it was conventional, in the period, for writers to claim that the scripture was plain and easy, Chapone gives her readers ways to deal with both the easy and the obscure texts of the



Bible. Plain and easy texts can be grasped intuitively or emotionally while the obscure and difficult texts require more work. This two-faceted approach underpins the subsequent reading instructions which are tailored to beliefs about women's mental capabilities, but which authorize Chapone's young female readers to engage in study and difficult reading in the face of ideologies of femininity that condemned such activities.

Chapone's instructions force us to reconsider the applicability and utility of some of the theories of reading in the eighteenth century, especially when it comes to women's reading. I have already discussed the way such theories of reading have shifted away from describing historical reading practices in terms of diachronic change and foreground the co-existence of different, possibly competing modes of reading. Chapone's characterization of the way readers should approach the various kinds of writing in the Bible, for example, fits with more recent complications of the overlap of intensive and extensive reading. In Chapone, both modes exist not only at the same historical moment, but within the same printed object--the Bible--and both modes can be usefully employed by women in their study of it.

Arguing that narrative and linear reading are unusual forms in the long history of reading, Peter Stallybrass provocatively suggests that "only certain productively perverse uses of the book have transformed it back into a scroll, most notoriously 'gripping' novels or 'page-turners,' where the teleological drive from page to page mitigates against dipping about or turning back" (46-47). Stallybrass refers to the telos created by plot, but readers of the Bible certainly see their reading as participating in a spiritual telos. As we see in Chapone, one productive, if not exactly productively perverse, use of continuity and linearity comes in comprehending large narrative patterns. It is evident, from studies

of early modern reading practices, such as Patrick Collinson's and Stallybrass's that by the eighteenth-century Bible readers were accustomed to reading and using discrete parts of the Bible in a variety of quotidian ways as rules for living by and in argument. Chapone's instructions allow for both continuous and discontinuous reading.

In Chapone, however, synchronic competition between forms is not a material competition but a cognitive one: it takes place between the readings of detached sentiments and historical narrative within the same printed object. Chapone's directions to skip around in the Bible in order to follow the "thread" of the history are materially discontinuous but cognitively continuous, since it is through the narrative that the reader will be able to grasp and retain the history. In this way, Chapone's approach to Biblical study is closer to the approach described by Collinson. Collinson suggests that while early modern readers memorized and used chapters and verses as fragments--thus reading in discontinuous way--they conceived of the Bible as a whole. The Bible is unified by the belief that it is unified: it is read in a way that "abandons all normal, human(e) modes of perception" (103). Letters frames the history of the Bible in a way that emphasizes the reader's move to this more than human mode of perception. The reading is performed in a discontinuous way, but Chapone uses that discontinuity in the service of an extratextual continuity and in the service of helping her readers to structures of understanding that only exist outside of the material object.

We could, in all likelihood, look at many scenes of reading or instructions for reading, and see the elements of both discontinuous and continuous reading, or of modes of extensive and intensive reading existing together or existing in competition. I bring these terms to Chapone in order to frame this overlap in the eighteenth century in relation

to the novel. That is, the two “directly opposing” ways of reading the Bible Chapone recognizes--the reading of detached sentiments and the reading of continuous history--can be identified more precisely by observers, like Chapone, as the structure of the novel gains a more palpable hold on readers’ conceptions of what they are doing when they read. Chapone, we could say, is a modern theorist of reading in her use of these binary categories of reading experience, foretelling the eventual breaking up of reading into categories such as secular and religious, or, more recently, intensive and extensive, or continuous and discontinuous. But Chapone also asks us to rethink theories of reading, such as the theory of discontinuous reading, which have little room for the more experiential description of the reading process. As I discuss below, the way Chapone negotiates the emotional experience of reading the Bible reveals the persistent usefulness of some traditional rather than new reading practices.

I have been arguing that Chapone identifies different modes of reading in the Bible and uses these newly recognizable and newly available strategies of narrative reading to help her female readers grasp Biblical history. One of the most pressing anxieties novels provoked, however, had to do less with the momentum of linear narratives than with their presumed ability to over-stimulate the emotions. As I shall now discuss, Chapone complicates the period’s constructions of women’s reading as primarily physical and absorptive experiences by reframing the language of emotional impressionability as a first step to a rational reading practice. While I earlier discussed the doubleness of Chapone’s approach to reading in terms of linear and detached texts, here Chapone models a practice that also moves in two directions. This reading practice oscillates between emotional experience and rational thought.

Because we most easily recognize readers whose activities are similar to those reading activities we (scholars and professional readers) practice, our studies of reading often center around the readers who disregard, or are skeptical of, interpretive authority. In investigating and destabilizing structures of power, or attempting to reveal moments of the reader's liberation, however, we may forget the practical usefulness of interpretive authorities. Chapone's text suggests the pragmatic utility of such authority at a historical moment when women were often excluded from the institutions through which interpretive authority was established. As we have seen, simple practical advice about which parts of the Bible to skip and which to read as a story helps build doctrinal understanding. Here I trace the way Chapone's instructions construct the reader as an individual interpretive authority, but then limit that eccentric impulse by situating it within a social and more traditionally authoritative context. In doing this, Letters suggests a gendered narrative for the emergence of a provisionally modern woman reader who uses traditional as well as novel reading modes.

In making even the most difficult texts of the Bible available for women to read, Chapone can be compared to eighteenth-century Anglican clerics who believed that the meaning of the Scripture was, as Marcus Walsh writes, "comprehensible to all readers," but who also saw themselves as "professional readers and critics who could educate readers, providing them with "contextual knowledge" and guiding them toward correct Biblical interpretation ("Profession" 394). Educated boys, who were often taught by clergymen, had formal training in these contextual knowledges of history, languages, philosophy, and polemical divinity. Chapone's pedagogy takes into account women's limited access to such contextual knowledges, and creates substitutes for these formal

educational and interpretive structures by modeling the way women can come to their own understanding without, or before, having a full body of that knowledge. Individual interpretive authority is initially figured as emotional response, but that response is only a first step toward more rational readings and understanding of scripture.

Woman's emotional and sensible nature was understood to provide women special access to religious feeling. George Savile, in The lady's new-years gift (1688) wants his daughter to "keep to the Religion that is grown up with you" in part so she will not be tempted to ask questions of her faith, since "the Voluminous enquiries into the Truth, by Reading, are less expected from you" (7). Later in the period, the idea that men read for truth and women simply to believe is linked more explicitly to the "natural softness and sensibility" of their dispositions which, as Gregory writes, "particularly fit you for the practice of those duties where the heart is chiefly concerned" (10). "And this," he continues, "along with the natural warmth of your imaginations, renders you peculiarly susceptible of the feelings of devotion" (10). Although Gregory did not think women should read texts on religious controversy, Fordyce allows a greater range of reading, while nonetheless conceding that "to feel [the] . . . tendency [of the ideas of Christianity], and experience their operation, a modest, susceptible, and affectionate mind is chiefly required" (Sermons 98). "Nor are these ideas beyond the ordinary reach of female understanding," he writes, "They depend not on a nice chain of reasoning, nor on the abstruse researches of science" (98). Warning her of the theologian's tendency to complicate the issues, Fordyce assures her that "to conceive . . . [of these ideas] as they are set forth in scripture, masculine intellects are by no means necessary." Instead, because they are "[c]onnected with facts the most astonishing to the imagination, and

sentiments the most touching to the heart, they seem to lie particularly level to the better characters of your sex” (98). According to the male conduct book writers, women should avoid controversial reading and are best suited to belief, not because they are good reasoners, but because of their (otherwise lamentable) predilection for imaginative and sentimental reading.

Chapone’s treatment of controversial and complex books of the Bible most demonstrates the way she recovers emotional affect for a constructive reading of religious texts. Conduct book ideology held that girls should avoid profundity or abstruse learning. Dr. Gregory warns his readers, for example, to “fix [their] attention on the [plain articles of faith], and do not meddle with controversy.” “If you get into that,” he cautions ominously, “you plunge into a chaos, from which you will never be able to extricate yourselves” (13). Religious controversy was believed to stretch women’s metaphysical contemplation beyond their capabilities and undermine their faith, but Chapone sees religious polemic as a way to strengthen the reader’s faith: “As you advance in years and understanding,” she writes, “I hope you will be able to examine for yourself the evidences of the Christian religion, and be convinced, on rational grounds, of its divine authority” (265).

Chapone is cautious about recommending controversial texts such as the prophecies, Song of Solomon, or the epistles of St. Paul, advising her readers to wait for greater intellectual maturity and to “then read them with a good exposition”(275). And yet, Chapone never resorts to censorship of the sort seen in the male writers’ advice and which tends toward avoidance. Rather she helps her readers negotiate these complex and ambiguous texts by explaining a reading practice that moves between emotion and

reason. The following advice about the Pauline epistles illustrates the dynamic of Chapone's method: "Instead of perplexing yourself . . . I would wish you to employ your attention chiefly on those [passages] that are plain; and to judge of the doctrines taught in the other parts, by comparing them with what you find in these. It is through the neglect of this rule, that many have been led to draw the most absurd doctrines from the holy scriptures" (282). A short while later she recommends that her reader "read those passages frequently, which, with so much fervour and energy, excite you to the practice of the most exalted piety and benevolence"(283). Easily accessible to any reader, "plain" texts require no special ability or knowledge, and so it is upon these the reader should "employ her attention chiefly." This allows her to experience the emotional power of the epistles in an immediate way. Because the passages to read "frequently" are the parts that "excite you," Chapone provides an initial mode of access that employs the way women are already assumed to read--with their emotions.

This emotional apprehension is followed by re-reading, close-reading, and comparative reading, or by steps toward what we could call a more critical reading practice. This method will help her reader understand the Christian doctrine more fully and avoid the common and "absurd" interpretive mistakes of "many" other readers. In the specific context of an address to women, this critical move authorizes reliance upon individual interpretive skills. Indeed, this entire interpretive process is also informed by Chapone's representation of herself as a woman who has taken on the authority to judge the interpretive mistakes of others; a careful reader will see that Chapone herself has "meddled" with controversy and extricated herself just fine. By asserting her own

opinion in the face of many other (presumably male) readers, Chapone models intellectual independence for her readers.

As a result of the period's perception of the sexual overtones of private novel reading, Chapone, I suggest, perceives even more acutely the dangers of private reading. She therefore posits individual interpretive authority as useful only in gaining initial access to difficult texts. Her approach always externalizes emotional sensation--the reader is allowed to feel the power of the text, but that feeling is authorized with reference to another reader's similar feeling. Chapone additionally makes learning necessary to experience the most "exalted piety." Chapone writes, for example that Jesus' precepts were "given in a manner easy to be understood, and equally striking and instructive to the learned and unlearned: for the most ignorant may comprehend them, while the wisest must be charmed and awed, by the beautiful and majestic simplicity with which they are expressed" (266). The precepts can be understood by the ignorant, but what charms and awes the wisest is the movement from a simple grasp of the meaning, through deeper layers of significance, and back, not to a merely rational sense of the precepts, but to a now more complex feeling. Arising from the comparison of the simplicity of the form to the layers of meaning, only wisdom and learning can produce this more comprehensive intellectual and emotional experience. Because it is embedded in the exegetical tradition of the wisest historical readers of the Bible, this understanding is also a more social understanding. She may read the Pauline epistles with "fervour and energy," but they should "excite" her to externalize her feelings in a "practice of piety and benevolence." Chapone directs her readers to difficult or obscure passages, and even alerts them to the existence of extra-Biblical controversy by noting that a book or passage



has generated argument, but because she always does so in the context of naming Biblical expositions, she simultaneously curbs the heterodox impulse and directs her readers into established authoritative readings. In resituating the reader within these wider communities of interpretation, she controls eccentric and possibly enthusiastic responses to the text and manages the problems of overly individual interpretation or emotional response.

Chapone does not limit the construction of interpretive communities to the relatively abstract realm of Biblical exegesis, but recommends more immediate and concrete communities in the form of conversations and epistolary discussions between women. The conversation of a slightly older woman of sense and knowledge is, she asserts, an ideal medium for learning. Her text itself models this female community, employing the familiar letter as a formal manifestation of her pedagogical method, and relying upon the affectionate relationship between women (and, by implication, between writer and reader) to inform the instruction. The “advantage of [her niece’s] partial affection [will] give weight to [her] advice” (267). By situating learning within affective relationships, Chapone continues the project of engaging young women emotionally as way to engage them intellectually. Since girls are not, like their male counterparts, usually required to recite or write “themes,” Chapone also reframes the familiar letter as a site for the practice of composition, an activity integral to reading comprehension, noting that a “useful exercise of your memory and judgment” would be to “recount [some] interesting passages to a friend, either by letter or in conversation.” In these interactions, the young reader will “learn to select those characters and facts which are best worth

preserving”(347). Confirming her sense of what is “best worth preserving” with another reader will also ensure that the reader never becomes too independent a thinker.

These epistolary and conversational relationships between actual women, or between reader and writer, represent and model the historically specific modes of feminine intellectual labor employed by the bluestocking circle. As Chapone emphasizes reading within woman-centered interpretive communities, she also tempers overly-private, overly-stimulating reading and opens additional directions of learning and reading. In fact, it is because she provides certain limitations and structures for learning that she is also able to suggest ways for women to expand their reading beyond standard gendered limitations. The interpretive communities in which Chapone situates her readers partake, of course, of older, more traditional models of communal reading, and of the emplacement of supervisory and surveilling structures designed to limit interpretation. At the same time, however, the limitations placed on interpretive authority expand the intellectual possibilities for women readers. A continued reliance on structures of interpretive authority provides a constraint that produces meaning rather than limits it. Importantly, Letters allows us to see that there is a gendered difference in the emergence of such modern reading practices since it suggests that women readers employ traditional modes of reading longer than men. Religious reading, deference to clerical and professional interpretive authorities, and communal rather than individual reading are proposed as useful and necessary practices for women readers. These more traditional habits of reading in fact enable women’s intellectual progress.

This movement between modes of reading and learning employed by Chapone are, I have been arguing, what make this text important for constructing new ways of

understanding women's reading in the eighteenth century. Letters proposes that female readers can and should employ both feminized, novelistic reading modes--modes understood as new--and older modes of reading, such as communal and religious reading. Illustrating, to us, the way the novel makes individual interpretive authority available to readers, Chapone recognizes and uses women's supposed emotional and intuitive superiority to give them access to the Bible, but carefully controls singular readerly impulses so that they never becomes suspiciously interiorized. It is by looking back, by situating reading within older modes and with reference, or deference to traditional interpretive authorities that Chapone's readers make intellectual progress. Current theories of reading are unable to adequately account for this oscillation. In attempting to characterize the ways readers experience interpretive authority, one strand of this thinking moves toward some version of the modern secular reader. At the same time, an approach that considers the materiality of the book can seem to exclude a consideration of affective reading acts. Women's reading, we learn from Chapone, looks back, as often as it moves in new directions.

---

<sup>1</sup> I have taken this translation of the phrase from the Barnard edition, 36.

<sup>2</sup> Many such excerpts were available for children and adult readers. See Mandelbrote, "The English Bible" in Rivers, New Essays, and Bottigheimer.

### Chapter 3: Models of Reading in Clarissa

#### Introduction

Shortly after leaving Harlowe Place with Lovelace, Clarissa laments to Anna that part of her punishment is the complication of her status as an example: “How am I punished, as I frequently think, for my vanity in hoping to be an example to young persons of my sex! Let me be but a warning, and I will now be contented” (120.453).<sup>1</sup> Are Clarissa’s perfections--her piety, her professions of filial duty, her learning--the pattern for other young women to follow or is she a negative example, a warning not to oppose parental will? Samuel Richardson often found himself explaining the limits of Clarissa’s exemplarity. He warned Hester Mulso (later Chapone), for example, that his character Clarissa should not be taken as a case for making the argument that young women should be allowed to reject suitors of their parents’ choosing. Clarissa’s case, he asserts, “stands by itself and I beseech you let not young creatures . . . imagine themselves entitled to plead her excuses for non-compliance, till they have her reasons, to wit, an absolute aversion; . . . oppression and persecutions like hers; and endeavours used by them, in imitation of her, to reconcile herself to her friends” (qtd. in Chapone, Filial Obedience 245). Clarissa’s case is so exceptional that she cannot be taken as a model. And yet, as he wrote to Frances Grainger, Richardson hoped to effect a change in morals and religious understanding with this character: “If the present age can be awakened and amended, the next perhaps will not, duly weighing all Circumstances, think Clarissa too delicate or too good for Imitation” (22 Jan. 1749/50, SL 142).<sup>2</sup> The women of his own age cannot hope to imitate Clarissa’s delicacy and goodness, but they should aspire to her

piety. Look to her submission, Richardson implies in these exchanges, not to her disobedience.

Neither eighteenth-century readers, nor more recent readers have resolved the question of Clarissa's exemplarity. As Lois Chabert observed in 2003, it is possible to understand Clarissa's actions, in particular her retreat and apotheosis at the end of the novel, as a daring act of self-determination or to understand her action and her death as the self-willed (and even anorexic) response of a woman whose only power in a patriarchal society is over her own body ("Christian Form"). But to what extent did eighteenth-century women readers understand this conflict? This chapter explores the possibility that readers perceived Clarissa's silence and death understood as a triumph--as Richardson wanted it understood. This is not to discount the perception that readers saw in Clarissa's fate an expression of Richardson's and the eighteenth century's misogyny, but rather to underscore the probable existence of these obedient or unquestioning readers. To suggest the existence of such a reader, is suggest also that if Clarissa is a model for women readers, she might model certain kinds of interpretative acceptance, rather than interpretive resistance.

As Siobhán Kilfeather notes, in addition to the consideration of the "representation of women" in the novel, one of the major strands of critical thought about Clarissa has been the "tendency to celebrate [the] diversity and disjunction" of the novels (251). In contrast to studies of the novel's indeterminacy (such as Terry Castle's and William Warner's), Tom Keymer contends that Richardson, through Clarissa, figures the reading and interpretative processes in order to teach readers how to read: "Richardson knowingly fostered the active participation of his readers, whom he expected to become,

“if not Authors, Carvers’ of the text. The instructiveness of the novel . . . derives precisely from this method of putting readers, morally and intellectually, on their mettle. It is by an active encounter with difficulties, and not by the passive reception of lessons, that Richardson’s reader may learn.”<sup>3</sup> When Keymer says Richardson wanted his readers to learn, his emphasis is on the specific moral lessons rather than on ways of reading. For example, Keymer argues that Lovelace can appear sympathetic--as readers, we participate in the hazards of seduction Clarissa herself experiences--but to sympathize with him is a readerly mistake (56-84). Readers are not passively given the lesson that one must not fall in love with a rake and profligate; rather they come to understand that by re-interpreting the character of Lovelace.

But Richardson’s eighteenth-century readers did not necessarily respond actively when it came to the character Clarissa. Many readers confessed that they would never dare to compare themselves to Clarissa. Sarah Fielding apologized about her Remarks on Clarissa, writing of her “vanity in daring but to touch the hem of her [Clarissa’s] garment” (Corr. 2: 61, 8 Jan. 1748/49). Sarah Wescomb thanks Richardson for “giving [her] so amiable a Sister a Clarissa” but admits she would never have had the “confidence to call myself Hers” (21 May 47, FM XIV, 3, f. 19). She later suggests that after reading Clarissa she doesn’t feel she should ever try to write again: “Yet you may observe how flagrant an Instance I shew of the little I have gained with regard to the former of these Advantages; for shou’d I else, after a Perusal of the most Excellent Letters ever wrote, have so much as touch’d Paper, Ink, or Pen, even to the Feathers again? . . . For ought not a sense of my Incapacity to have deter’d me?” (25 Jan 49/50FM XIV, 3, f. 37). Reading Clarissa--and reading Clarissa--while it does not stop either woman from writing, does

give each pause. Seeing her writing as touching the hem of a garment (as Fielding does) or being called Clarissa's sister (as Wescomb is) prompts the women to hesitate and apologize for their writing. They emulate Clarissa's modesty in their diffidence about their own writing. This chapter begins to explore how that hesitation--or, perhaps, the fully realized refusal touch even the Feathers of a Pen--finds its source in Clarissa herself.

I begin by looking at those rhetorical and interpretative strategies that can be understood as aspects of masculine (or patriarchal) power. In particular, I examine the way the father's curse works as an interpretative device; strategies that attempt to force and direct interpretation and are associated, explicitly and implicitly, with fathers and authors. I then turn to the way Clarissa negotiates these interpretative authorities. I argue that her negotiation of authority is informed by her position as a daughter. In making this argument I follow the work of scholars such as Kathryn Shevelow. Shevelow theorizes the ways in which readers "image themselves as daughters" and bring the "extensive social and psychological conditioning" of the male ownership of knowledge and interpretative authority to that daughterly role ("Fathers" 112-113). Clarissa initially submits, and even falls victim to, the machinations of masculine power. Clarissa opposes this power, eventually replacing her earthly father altogether, with a complete submission to a spiritual one. As I argue, though, she continues to employ strategies of submission even in her opposition and filial disobedience. Clarissa's submission, I suggest, is often expressed through silence, making it difficult for us (and those around her) to understand the exact nature of her opposition because silence often appears to be a passive and accepting response. A closer look at some of the silences in the novel, thus, reveals

another model for understanding silence in which silence indicates deep and active understanding.

### **I. Fathers and Authors: Interpretative Authority in Clarissa**

The problem of arbitrary authority, expressed as the problem of parental authority, is central to Clarissa. In correspondence about the topic, Richardson often articulated the novel's underlying "double moral, extending to tyrannical Parents, as well as to Profligate Man." The double moral "lay[s] down from [Clarissa] the Duty of Children, and that whether Parents do theirs or not" (to Lady Bradshaigh, 26 Oct. 1748, SL 94). The novel tests parental authority and filial obedience, especially of female children, through the problem of arranged marriage. As Mrs. Harlowe observes, "Now that [Clarissa is] grown up to marriageable years is the test" of her true obedience (17.95). Although the Harlowes, under the influence of their mercenary son James, and urging a miserable marriage upon Clarissa, act against Clarissa's interests and abdicate their parental responsibilities, Richardson insistently repeats his belief in absolute parental authority, not only in his letters, but through the filial piety of Clarissa herself.

The novel questions the authority of parents and fathers, in its epistolary form (as Florian Stuber has argued) and explicitly in the character of Anna Howe (as Rachel Carnell has argued). A trend away from arranged marriage during the second-half of the century also suggests that parental authority, at least in the case of arranged marriage, is weakening.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, the expressions of parental authority, especially as they are intertwined with authorial prerogatives, allow us to see some of the lingering and on-going gendered assumptions about interpretative hierarchies. Most simply, we can think of these hierarchies as the (implicitly gendered) relationship between author and reader.



Clarissa believes not only that it is her duty to obey her father, but that her father can and should control her fate until marriage: her father is her author. This belief in the authority of fathers leads Clarissa to place heavy interpretative weight on the curse. In this section, I begin by discussing the way the curse operates as an extreme gesture of masculine authority that informs Clarissa's reading of subsequent events. In contrast to Mr. Harlowe's attempt to direct events through the curse, Lovelace and Richardson use strategies of revision--more effective and more invidious ways to control readers. In examining these three "authors" of Clarissa, I show one way in which patterns of interpretation and reading are gendered in this novel.

After she has left Harlowe Place, Mr. Harlowe can no longer dispose of Clarissa in marriage; he attempts, therefore to punish her "both here and hereafter." The curse is relayed by Arabella who writes that Mr. Harlowe "in the first agitations of his mind on discovering your wicked, your shameful elopment, imprecated on his knees a fearful curse upon you. Tremble at the recital of it!-- No less, than 'that you may meet your punishment, both here and hereafter, by means of the very wretch in whom you have chosen to place your wicked confidence'" (147.509). All of the characters understand the curse as a dereliction of parental duty, as an expression of irrational rage and as representing a desire to control and even torment Clarissa. As Belford writes, her "father's brutal curse" represents the "villainous hard-heartedness of all her family" (172.560). Like Belford, Anna suggests that the curse proves "only what manner of spirit they [the Harlowes] are of, and how much their sordid views exceed their parental love" (148. 510). Although largely an expression of impotence and rage, Mr. Harlowe's curse reveals his belief that he has the power and the right to control his daughter's destiny.

The curse colors the way Clarissa interprets many of subsequent events: Clarissa understands the curse as prophecy (Erickson, Mother 157). It becomes a real pronouncement on her after-life since she believes herself to be “absolutely devoted!” or condemned (146.508). Clarissa also uses the curse as a lens through which she perceives more immediate and material events such as Lovelace’s attempt to seduce her the night of the false fire: “let not my father’s curse thus dreadfully operate!” (225.726), she exclaims when her corners her. Clarissa initially submits to the authority of the curse, allowing it shape her understanding of later events from the attempted rape, to the rape, and finally her arrest (263.899, 333.1062). Clarissa is horrified by the curse because she has a serious regard for filial duty. The fact that Mr. Harlowe utters the curse and Clarissa takes it seriously demonstrates not just his exertion of arbitrary power, but their shared belief that he is the rightful author of her fate. She is made miserable by thoughts of the curse, and by her belief that because she has opposed and subverted her father’s will, she deserves to be cursed.

Peter Hynes argues that the curse’s “claims to govern story are never decisively scotched, but neither is [the curse] accorded a clear-cut place among the effective motivations of the text” (319). The reactions of most characters in the novel (as well as those of many readers) suggest that, rather than having narrative or causal influences, the curse’s most potent effect is to cloud Clarissa’s reason: the curse holds interpretative power. More importantly, as characters such as Anna and Mrs. Norton point out, the curse distorts Clarissa’s relationship to God since it effectively replaces God with Mr. Harlowe. Anna reminds Clarissa that God does not allow men to dictate to God, who “is just and gracious, and gives not his assent to rash and inhuman curses . . . .God Almighty

cannot succeed a curse so presumptuous as to be carried into his futurity! (148.510). By allowing the curse to affect her mind and perception, Clarissa participates in Mr. Harlowe's presumption of God's role in determining an individual's fate. Correct religious feeling does not allow for an interpretation of the curse as causing subsequent events, material or spiritual, because it attempts to supercede God's authority to judge and curse. The problem with the curse is that it causes Clarissa to misread the imperatives of filial piety.

Anna later writes, "I am concerned to find that your father's rash wish affects you so much as it does. Upon my word, my dear, your mind is weakened grievously. You must not, indeed you must not, desert yourself" (327.1043). Here again, Anna's emphasis is not on causality, but on the influence the curse has on Clarissa's immediate, material emotional and mental health--for her weakened mind. Anna is distressed that Clarissa's sense of religion is compromised and that the curse damages her not by condemning her but by casting her into despair. Anna and Mrs. Norton, perceive Clarissa's fragile emotional state, appeal to her sense of religious duty in order to supplant Mr. Harlowe's effect on her mind. The weight Clarissa gives to paternal authority compromises her piety and makes her lose sight of the even higher authority of God. Clarissa will eventually submit to God's authority, but even this substitution maintains the interpretative hierarchy of the father/daughter relationship. It is important, however, that we see the consistency between Clarissa's belief in her father's power to influence events through the curse and that eventual change. Her initial, if uncharacteristically unreligious, reaction to the curse reveals the strength of the hold her

father has on her mind--and of the strength of the principle that her understanding should be filtered through a higher, fatherly (and thus masculine) authority.

Clarissa believes her father's curse shapes events, but the reader can see that the curse is relatively benign in comparison with the kinds of manipulations Lovelace employs to shape Clarissa's perception of her reality after she has left Harlowe Place. Lovelace's plotting is a continuation of the gesture of control implied by Mr. Harlowe's curse. As Robert Erickson notes, Lovelace becomes a substitute father: "Because her gloomy father has abandoned her, Lovelace will, after the abduction, be her father. She cannot escape him. The verbal fate meted out to her in her father's curse is continuous with the literary fate Lovelace weaves for her in his multifaceted narrative" (157). I would extend this by suggesting that it is because Mr. Harlowe curses Clarissa that Lovelace is able to weave her into his narratives. The break with her family and the curse precipitate the rational instability that makes it easier for Lovelace to control Clarissa's interpretation of events. And, just as Anna and Mrs. Norton worry that Clarissa has compromised her piety, Lovelace exploits her piety in creating the scenes that put her more firmly into his power. After crafting the letter that convinces Clarissa to choose Mrs. Sinclair's he sends her, as part of the "minutiae of [his] contrivances," a list of "books to be procured for the lady's closet" (131.472). The books include "Stanhope's Gospels; Sharp's, Tillotson's and South's Sermons; Nelson's Feasts and Fasts; a sacramental piece of the Bishop of Man, and another of Dr Gauden, Bishop of Exeter; and Inett's Devotions" (155.524). These "devout books" along with sentimental plays, Spectators and Tatlers, and works by Pope, Swift, and Addison, are key in influencing Clarissa to "think better of the people of the house" (155.525). As Margaret Doody has

pointed out Clarissa lives and dies by religious manuals such as Nelson's Feasts and Fasts in the last part of the novel (Natural Passions 153-179); here, in this earlier section, the use of the devout books by Lovelace to construct an appropriately pious, if fictional, environment. Lovelace uses his fatherly power of creation, to exploit Clarissa's religious feelings even as her own father's exercise of this power weakens these feelings.

When Clarissa escapes to Hampstead after the night of the false fire and the attempted rape, Lovelace momentarily loses his authorial, creative power over her environment. He regains control when he insinuates himself into Mrs. Moore's household, where he spins new stories and is able to intercept and revise Anna's letters. Just as he will soon rape Clarissa, so he "rapes" these letters, stealing them and revising them in order to continue to direct these scenes. Authorial control and authority are here associated not only with writing, but with rape--with the forcible changing of the text to manipulate the reader's interpretation. The rape (and the rape of Anna's letters) is the most extreme example of what Terry Castle calls the violence of interpretation. Castle reads interpretation as penetration, "an act of filling the gap left by the (incomplete) sign, an act of violence" (59). Many scholars have noted similarities between Richardson and Lovelace as authors: both are obsessed with plotting, manipulate language and literary conventions, and construct texts--the novel in Richardson's case, the various stage-managed scenes in Lovelace's--that are meant to be "overhear[d]," as Nicholas Hudson notes (32). Hudson, Murray L. Brown, and Tom Keymer (RC 154-157) follow earlier scholars such as Mark Kinkead-Weekes (Dramatic Novelist) and Margaret Doody (Natural Passions 111-124), in associating Lovelace with Richardson as authors and plotters. Castle argues that Richardson's revisions, prefaces, notes, annotations, and

additions are ways of attempting to control the reader, and work in a way similar to Lovelace's rape-like marking of Anna's letters. Richardson's own insistence on parental authority aligns him only provisionally with Lovelace and Mr. Harlowe in the case of the father's curse. Richardson, as Shirley Van Marter has shown in her studies of the changes between first, second, and third editions of the text, concedes to some of his readers' objections about the curse and Clarissa's perception of its power. At this point, however, and despite the connections between Richardson and Lovelace as plotters and authors, I am interested in underscoring the way the novel situates and sequesters Clarissa in a male-authored world--that is within a gendered, material interpretive hierarchy--to which, at this point, she largely concedes.

## **II. Unspoken disobedience: The Silences in Clarissa**

As we have seen, curses and vows are associated with a kind of bad reading--the attempt to force words into stable meanings for the purpose of controlling interpretation. Just as her family, fearing the way she uses language, often refuses to listen to her or to read her letters, Clarissa often refuses to see Lovelace or to listen to his vows. He complains about this to Belford after one of their conversations after she has left Harlowe Place: "She cuts me short in all my ardours. To vow fidelity, is by a cursed turn upon me, to show that there is reason, in my own opinion to doubt of it . . . my poor vows are crammed down my throat before they can well rise to my lips. And what can a lover say to his mistress, if she will neither let him lie nor swear?" (103.413). Her refusal to listen to his protestations of love inhibits his ability to seduce with words. Lovelace is frustrated because her refusal to listen, explained as her implicit belief in what he would say, thwarts his ability to manipulate her. But Clarissa is not just naively willing to believe

his professions of fidelity: She refuses to listen because she refuses to be manipulated. Forcing him into silence by letting him neither “lie nor swear” is a way she uses silence to resist Lovelace’s power over her. The conversations with Lovelace represent an early step in Clarissa’s move away from submission. In these scenes, as well as in the scenes I discuss below, Richardson creates patterns of silence. As I argue in the following section, her arguments with her family teach her how to employ, and manipulate, silence in conversation. Ultimately, though, as we see here when Clarissa attempts to silence Lovelace, silence becomes a way for Clarissa to acquire control over communication.

Much of the debate about competing interpretative paradigms in Clarissa comes from looking at how characters read each other’s letters. The conversations replayed within those letters also reveal a great deal about the various characters’ rhetorical and interpretative modes. In this section, I begin by examining some of the conventions of silence as expressed in conduct literature. Young women are exhorted to silence, but silence is often an indicator of consciousness, knowledge, or intelligence. And, while silence can represent passive femininity, and submission to others’ interpretations Clarissa makes silence a part of her argumentative strategy and a form of opposition. Silence is the form her filial disobedience often takes.

Before looking at the conversations and debates in Clarissa, it will be useful to review some of the gendered assumptions about young women and conversation made in the period. Conversation was a key aspect of sociability and the ability to say the right thing at the right time was lauded as an ideal female attribute. The women of the Bluestocking circle, for example, used conversation as a mode of participation the public sphere, but as Deborah Heller has observed, gendered expectations about women and

debate complicated this participation. Elizabeth Vesey, she shows, was noted for her ability to make everyone in a conversation come together magically; Vesey is typically described as self-effacing and more feminine in contrast to Elizabeth Montagu who was considered a more masculine conversationalist. Women's inclusion in conversation was dependent upon the expectation that they would be relatively silent and self-effacing.

Silence did not signal the absence of thought since the silent woman becomes a text for others to read. "Modesty," according to Dr. John Gregory, "will naturally dispose you to be rather silent in company . . . [But] one may take a share in conversation without uttering a syllable. The expression in the countenance shews it, and never escapes an observing eye" (28). The other conversants perceive the young woman's participation by reading her countenance. Hester Mulso Chapone, in her Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, gives young women more latitude in conversation, writing that "silence should only be enjoined, when it would be forward and impertinent to talk," but repeats the convention that women's faces rather than their voices carry the signs to be interpreted: "even silence should be an attentive silence . . . [and] your looks should shew your attention" (328).

Scholars of conduct ideology have exposed the oppressive aspect of silence. Mary Poovey writes that "silence is theoretically communicative, of course, only as long as the external sign of the countenance is assumed to bear a perfect, indeed automatic, relationship to the interior self" (24). In Poovey's analysis, the face can be read like an open book because there is no knowledge--in particular sexual knowledge-- to conceal. The ideology of propriety denies women any knowledge of their own (sexual) desires. But, it also seems important to recognize that women themselves may have understood



silences as an active, constructive aspect of their feminine selves. Chapone and Gregory concede that the female body and countenance are objects to be read, but they encourage a lack of correspondence between the countenance and the interior self. This is not to conceal not sexual knowledge, but to reveal one's more general knowledge without speaking. Although Gregory appears to connect silence to modesty, and thus verbosity to sexuality, women writers such as Chapone see that silence in conversation is useful because it allows the woman to demonstrate her knowledge through "attentive silence." Late in the century, Anna Letitia Barbauld, in her essay, "On Female Studies," also makes clear that the disjunct between the body/face and the mind represents the presence of knowledge: "In no subject is [a young woman] required to be deep,--of none ought she to be ignorant. If she knows not enough to speak well, she should know enough to keep her from speaking at all." Knowledge should be hidden, "as when the landscape is seen through the veil of a mist, the bounds of the horizon are hid" (481, 482). The young women to whom these instructions are written must understand what is being discussed, although they are often called upon to remain silent. Polite conversation, therefore, requires silence but not passivity. The reading of the body and the reading of books are linked, since the interior knowledge will show up as the woman appears to understand the conversation.

Judicious silence can be construed as an aspect of proper Christian behavior as well as an aspect of female modesty. Situating conversation within Christian principles, Chapone writes that it is important to "set your companions in the most advantageous light." "In short," she continues, "it is an universal duty in society to consider others more than yourself.--'in honour preferring one another.'[sic] Christianity, in this rule,

gives the best lesson of politeness”(Improvement 327; the quotation is Rom. 12:10).

Setting companions in advantageous light, doing and saying what is most fit, and preferring others in conversation and social interaction are all self-effacing habits and often require silence. In these prescriptions of the role women should play in conversation, women have a double social and religious duty to be silent and to allow others to speak. Silence in conversation should be understood as a kind of deliberate strategy of femininity (as Poovey argues), but as a strategy it works with knowledge other than sexual knowledge. It works from the assumptions that there is learned content behind the silence. It also works not simply as a passive imposition, but as a deliberate, conscious, and often duty-bound act of communication.

In the series of confrontations between Clarissa and her family about the proposed marriage with Solmes, and in conversations between Clarissa and Lovelace, a pattern develops in which silence is used as a deliberate, often aggressive argumentative strategy. This pattern of meaningful silences helps us to understand silence as a response to and negotiation of women’s relationships to interpretive hierarchies. Some of the conversational silences in Clarissa employ fairly conventional assumptions of passivity and femininity. Because female desire in women must be unspoken (at least until marriage), Clarissa’s silence often is an aspect of her feminine modesty, and, in that such modesty requires a certain submission to the interpretations of others, passivity. But Clarissa and Clarissa also exploit the interpretative possibilities of this female silence for their own ends, using silence to foil or confuse the interpretations of others, signaling an unspoken knowledge. Remaining silent is one of the ways Clarissa resists being read by others.

Just after Clarissa leaves Harlowe Place with Lovelace she is urged by Anna to marry him quickly, and, in the first days they are together, Lovelace and Clarissa discuss this possibility. In these conversations, Clarissa's silence is often the silence of the proper lady as she contemplates the impropriety of speaking and acting for herself. Although she admits that Anna's advice to marry "had great weight," she "wanted somebody to speak for" her when Lovelace actually proposes (107.423). Clarissa's physical reaction to the proposal is read by Lovelace as a sign that she loves him: "And oh how the mantled cheek, the downcast eye, the silent, yet, trembling lip, and the heaving bosom, a sweet collection of heightened beauties, gave evidence that the tender was not mortally offensive!" (109. 425). Propriety demands that a young woman not answer a marriage proposal for herself, but her silence and her body provide answers.

Lovelace, however, satirizes and manipulates the conventions of silence. He makes a show of appearing reluctant to speak as he "prefaced and paraded on" before finally proposing a "speedy solemnization" (107.422). Lovelace's self-feminizing performance is (mostly) intentional because he wants to appear as modest and reluctant to discuss marriage as Clarissa herself. Lovelace explains his strategy to Belford: "I had once before played about the skirts of the irrevocable obligation; but thought myself obliged to speak in clouds, and to run away from the subject as soon as she took my meaning" (109.425). Lovelace seems surprised to have made an explicit proposal, but his ability to manipulate Clarissa's silence and modesty give him a convenient escape route. Taking Belford through the stages of his own reaction, he first reads Clarissa as a prude, justifying his reluctance or refusal to marry by interpreting her reticence as artful manipulation: "Well do thy arts justify mine; and encourage me to let loose my plotting

genius upon thee.” He deliberately perverts the meaning of her silence, refusing to “take in thy full meaning, by blushing silence only.” Thus, he asks, “[W]hat had I to do, but to construe her silence into contemptuous displeasure?” (109.425). Lovelace understands that one reason Clarissa remains silent is her feminine modesty. At almost the same moment, he reads the physical signs that accompany her silence as sexual desire while pretending to understand her silence as anger. Lovelace makes explicit the various possible interpretations of silence--modesty, desire, anger--as he plays with all of the conventions of female silence. As the Harlowes do, Lovelace uses the instability of silence, and the assumptions that silence hides nothing but sexual truth, to torment Clarissa.

One of the on-going debates about Clarissa concerns the extent to which she is or understands she is attracted to Lovelace. Contemporary readers, responding to her apparent coyness in the various marriage proposals, suggest that she should be more aware of how Lovelace understands her and should manipulate him. Sarah Fielding, in Remarks on Clarissa, captured the conflicting responses generated by the second installment of Clarissa during which Lovelace and Clarissa dance around the issue of marriage. The fictional readers “accused [her] of want of Love” and suggest that “Clarissa herself was a Prude--a Coquet” (15, 13). Anna says that Clarissa has a “very nice part to act” and that her “mind that is much too delicate for [the] part;” she also suggests that Clarissa’s reluctance to speak is artful rather than sincere: “You must throw off a little more of the veil,” she advises her (111.432). In addition to voicing such concerns through Anna, Richardson was aware of the extra-novelistic criticism of these scenes and observed to Aaron Hill that “My Girl is thought over nice by many” (10 May

1748, SL 87-8). Readers within and without the novel seem to think that Clarissa should know how to manage herself, and her own silences, more carefully because silence leaves a space for too many interpretations.

Readers (and Anna) understood Clarissa's silences differently than Richardson. Readers saw her as being coquettish. Richardson, however, can defend Clarissa in all her niceties and delicacy because he is delineating an ideal (rather than a pragmatic) female response. From Richardson's perspective, getting caught up in debates that posit Clarissa as an ordinary woman who might understand that silence can be manipulated, by her and by her lover, is a kind of bad reading of the characters of Lovelace and of Clarissa. But, if the reader is looking toward Clarissa as a model of feminine behavior, what response other than silence--to the situation or to the reading of the situation--is possible? This sort of double bind is indicated by the fact that Clarissa can be called both a Coquet and a Prude when she refuses or is too confused and embarrassed to speak. The theoretical good reader who takes Clarissa as a model finds herself in the same bind because she cannot respond with being immodest: the readers agreement within Richardson takes the form of a silence which could be interpreted as prudish or coquettish.

These scenes, in which Clarissa and Lovelace dance around the issue of marriage, look much like the scenes about the marriage with Solmes enacted by Clarissa's family. Lovelace uses conventional and feminized meanings of silence to manipulate Clarissa; in the quarrels with her family, Clarissa is as likely to manipulate silence as the other members of the family. With Lovelace Clarissa is silent because she "knew not what to say, nor what to do" (98.389). With her family, Clarissa must often hide what she is thinking. The novel and the novel's characters pay close attention to every

communicative gesture. Indeed silence is not the not norm in this novel of over 500 letters; it is significant, however, that the power of language--in particular the power of Clarissa's language--often motivates the characters to try to forcibly silence her. Although never fully carried out, Mrs. Howe prohibits correspondence between Anna and Clarissa to protect Anna from being corrupted by Clarissa's filial disobedience. Clarissa's family often mention Clarissa's power to move them through language. "There is no standing against your looks and language" (60.253) her uncle writes. Her mother later laments to Mrs. Norton that "we are no less acquainted with the unhappy body's power of painting her distress so as to pierce a stone" (376.1156). Her brother equates the moving power of Clarissa's language with her gender; he is the one "upon whom [she is] so continually emptying [her] female quiver" (42:1.198). These images conflate her body and her (female) language. It is this power of her female quiver that forces them to isolate her and silence her.

At the same time, or perhaps because her spoken and written arguments are so persuasive, Clarissa's silence is read as carefully as her words. Silence must be interpreted and "accounted for," as Clarissa notes to Anna after an epistolary silence of a few days (69.280). We are poignantly reminded of the way silence can "turn even unavoidable accidents into slights and neglects" (69.280) when Clarissa and Anna's correspondence is broken off by the rape. When the correspondence is re-established, Anna, unaware that her revelatory letter about Lovelace's plots was never received, interprets the silence caused in actuality by Clarissa's breakdown, as credulity and lovesickness (310.993); such an interpretative disjunct between usually perceptive correspondents illustrates the stakes of reading silence.

Contrary to Terry Castle's assertion that Clarissa doesn't understand the "politics of interpretation," many of the scenes with her family show that Clarissa does understand the politics of interpretation (58). She reveals, most often to Anna, what is happening behind the silence: each character interprets silence differently. In this scene, for example, James, Jr. wants to prohibit Clarissa from seeing Lovelace while visiting Anna Howe:

"Let the girl then . . . be prohibited seeing that vile libertine.  
 Nobody spoke.  
 Do you hear, sister Clary? taking their silence for approbation of what he  
 had dictated; you are not to receive visits from Lord M.'s nephew.  
 Everyone still remained silent.  
 Do you so understand the licence you have, miss? interrogated he" (6.57)

The family, already under James' influence, is passive in this interaction as an imperious James speaks for them. James hears his parent's silence as agreement and approbation. Clarissa refuses to interpret their silence--they simply "remain silent"--just as Richardson consistently refuses to portray them as aggressively cruel. A careful manipulation of silence, by both Richardson and Clarissa, thus vilifies James while ameliorating the Harlowe's acquiescence to his plans.

In a similar deployment of silence to shape characterizations, Bella also uses the implications of silence against Clarissa. When fabric has been sent to Clarissa for her wedding clothes, Bella taunts and torments her: "This, Clary, is a pretty pattern enough: But this is quite charming! . . . What! silent still?" (45.204). She pointedly moves back and forth between the patterns and Clarissa's silence several times: "I am only giving her my opinion of patterns, here, unasked indeed--but she seems by her silence to approve of my judgment" (45.204). Emphasizing the control James and Bella have in the family, Bella is characterized as cruel while Clarissa is forbearing in her refusal to engage with

Bella's childish teasing. Silence is twisted into approbation by Bella, while Clarissa's refusal to comment signals her increasing resistance to the plan of marriage the fabric represents.

In conversations with her mother about Solmes and her feelings for Lovelace, more cruel aspects of the double nature of silence emerge. In situations meant to evoke the confidences of mother-daughter communication, Clarissa must remain silent because she is unwilling to actively oppose her parents' will. But while Clarissa struggles to remain an obedient daughter, her mother manipulates her silences into unwanted meanings. In the first of a series of such scenes, her mother asks her if her "affections are engaged to" Lovelace (16.90). Clarissa hesitates while she works through the implications of her answer because she knows "what the inference would be" (16.90). If she denies her feelings for Lovelace, the inference will be that she is free to marry Solmes. Her mother, though, interprets the silence as proof that Clarissa loves Lovelace, thus forcing Clarissa to speak and to make the reason for her silence more clear: "O! madam, madam! Kill me not with your displeasure. I would not, I need not hesitate one moment, did I not dread the inference if I answer you as you wish--Yet be that inference what it will, your threatened displeasure will make me speak. And I declare to you that I know not my own heart if it be not absolutely free" (16.90). As she writes, Clarissa is, or becomes, aware of the multiple ways her silence and her mother's silence can be construed. This dilemma between speaking and silence is a dilemma in which either choice opens her to emotional and interpretative manipulation. Silence will be interpreted as evidence of affection for Lovelace, but speaking and denying that affection forces her to incur parental displeasure by refusing to marry Solmes. As these



negotiations continue, silence increasingly becomes the only way Clarissa can navigate between these two positions.

In the scenes about the marriage Mrs. Harlowe often represents male authority--the patriarchal Mr. Harlowe and the will of the family. Mrs. Harlowe reminds Clarissa that her father is not known to “give up [a point] he thought he had a right to carry” (17.96). In response, Clarissa reports on the multiple meanings of her own silence:

Too true, thought I to myself. And now my brother has engaged my father, his fine scheme will walk alone . . . and it is become my father’s will that I oppose, not my brother’s grasping views. I was silent. To say the truth I was just then sullenly silent. My heart was too big. I thought it was hard to be thus given up by my mamma, and that she should make a will so uncontrollable as my brother’s, her will. (17.96)

Mrs. Harlowe announces that she interprets Clarissa’s silence as passive assent, noting when Clarissa refuses to speak that she must be “convinced.” Mrs. Harlowe pretends to impute her silence and hesitation to “that modesty which has ever so much distinguished” her (17.96). But Clarissa is silent here because she realizes that she has been “given up” by her mother to the will of her brother. She also realizes that her brother’s control over the family means that she must now also oppose her father’s will. Because she feels betrayed by her mother, and feels that her brother is manipulating her father, she cannot speak. Her “heart is too big” with the many conflicting feelings about the situation. More importantly, to voice any of them would undermine the filial piety that is (or has been) the foundation of her character. As her family pressures her more, and as that pressure comes to represent her father’s will, Clarissa is forced to say less about what she thinks and feels: Her silence increases as she becomes increasingly disobedient, illustrating her dual positions of absolute obedience and complete defiance.

When her “father and mother industriously avoid giving [her] opportunity of speaking to them alone” she notes that their refusal to interact makes her appear to consent: “They ask not for my approbation, intending, as it should seem, to suppose me into their will. . . . How difficult is it, my dear, to give a negative where both duty and inclination join to make one wish to oblige!--” (8.61). Clarissa understands this “severe conflict between a command that [she] cannot obey and language so condescendingly moving!” (41.2.190). In the absence of a declared negative, Clarissa is assumed to consent. That is, the absence of speech--or, more specifically of a denial--can look like acceptance. Silence allows her to maintain an appearance of obedience (and remain within the confines of appropriate feminine behavior) while really being disobedient. But in these conversational silences, her silence often expresses defiance and disobedience.

Clarissa’s every expression willfully misinterpreted by her family, but since every communicative gesture is read through the lens of Clarissa’s sexuality. The imputation of silent assent marks her awareness of implicit sexuality of marriage as does the silence or absence which marks modesty and “natural shyness.” The refusal to answer questions about her feelings for Lovelace are interpreted as evidence that she loves him. Silence and passivity are used by Richardson to condemn the Harlowe’s, making Mr. and Mrs. Harlowe more passive and James and Bella more cruel in their interpretation and forced misinterpretations of silences. Her own silence helps create Clarissa as properly feminine and patiently forbearing. Yet we see that as the pressure on her to obey increases, her silences become more meaningful and become less about forbearance and more about opposing her family’s will.

In the two previous sections, I have tried to outline two different, and often opposed, interpretative approaches. The first consists of revisions, vows, and curses that are used primarily by male characters and are, in any event masculinized because they are associated with the creative power of fatherhood/authorhood. These strategies are used as ways to control readers and readings/interpretations. The refusal to read, and enforced silences are techniques of control used by those with power and those without. An often feminized silence is used to negotiate the problem of Clarissa's obedience and resistance. Silence is explicitly addressed--in conduct books and in Clarissa--as both an indicator of intelligence and learning and as an argumentative strategy. Readers understood Clarissa's silences as meaningful and possible to read--not as obscure, covert or necessarily idiosyncratic. But at the same time, to understand this, may be to be silent: the reader who understands what Clarissa does will necessarily speak that comprehension.

### **III. The rest, in silence: Silence and Reading**

In this section I ask whether the kinds of silence, and the non-response, non-narrativizing, non-circulation of texts which Clarissa employs after the rape can be seen as models for readers, in that they are, or represent, a more religious way of reading. In other words, do some of the ways of reading suggested but not represented within the novel correspond to readers whose response would not be represented (representable) in writing? I start by looking at the critical history of the rape and suggest that a focus on the rape as a interpretative key is a problem for a reading history of the novel. The rape and Clarissa's death are important, but the terms of argument that have emerged from a focus on the rape do not illuminate the ways the eighteenth-century readers understood

Clarissa. Nor do they adequately characterize the various texts Clarissa reads and writes toward the end of the novel. The novel stages conflicts between secular/ideological ways of reading and religious ways of reading, suggesting that only the former will leave legible evidence. The novel stages this conflict in part simply through the constant slippage between Clarissa's interpretations of events and the interpretations made by those around her. But the novel also represents this conflict in the material circulation and reading of religious books and texts. Clarissa's meditations, and the physical exchange of religious books as plot-driving devices, represent an undercurrent of unrepresented religious reading. This religious reading, I suggest, is perceived by the good reader of the novel. Richardson underscores this perceptive reward by explicitly revealing the bad reading practices of the rakes Lovelace and Belford.

Much of the recent commentary on the meaning of Clarissa rests on understanding the rape of Clarissa, and afterwards, Clarissa's final retreat, death, and apotheosis. As Terry Eagleton writes, "The 'real' Clarissa--the pivot around which this elaborate two thousand pages pivots--is the rape; yet the rape goes wholly unrepresented, as the hole at the centre of the novel towards which this huge mass of writing is sucked only to sheer off again" (61). Here, I examine what the rape represents, both for contemporary and later readers--and suggest a near mutual exclusivity between the two interpretations. Contemporary (post-eighteenth-century) interpretations of the rape and its aftermath usually hinge on seeing Clarissa's rape and her death as symbolic victories (as Eagleton, most concisely, argues): the aristocratic, patriarchal, and/or masculine principles Lovelace represents triumph over the bourgeois, individual, and/or feminine principles Clarissa represents in the rape, while Clarissa's refusal to marry Lovelace and

then her death represents a reversal of that triumph. The events of the rape and its aftermath can also be viewed as the expression of (rape) and then concession (death) to the misogyny of a patriarchal society.

Clarissa's death can be viewed as a victory for Clarissa's inviolate (and female) self against aristocratic privilege, bourgeois ideology and/or patriarchy. On the other hand, many readers of the eighteenth century and later, have been resistant to the idea that surrendering herself to God and to death is a triumph even as they attempt to read from within Richardson's ideal of Christian principles. Lois Chaber argues that Clarissa is a Christian comedy, but notes that even if we try to understand Clarissa's death as a Christian triumph leaves us with significant question: "As a heroine, however, Christian or otherwise, Clarissa makes a dangerous and misleading model for women--in her own century or ours. Her deathbed declaration [that her punishment has been "happy"] . . . is both an epitome of Christian heroism--redemption achieved through suffering--and of classic female masochism--an internalization through guilt of society's misogyny" (537).

The events of the rape and its aftermath have not only been linked to each other, and linked to the large ideological positions Clarissa and Lovelace can be made to represent, but have been discussed primarily in narrative and linguistic terms. Clarissa writes fewer letters after the rape and the letters she does write are non-narrative. As Tom Keymer argues, she understands that she can't write her own story because she is too involved in her own perspective. Any story she writes will be too subjective; moreover, she has lost faith in the ability of words to represent reality adequately--"linguistic self-presentation becomes almost impossible" (RC 224). Castle also suggests that Clarissa escapes the "instability of signifying codes" by choosing death (118).

According to Isobel Grundy, Clarissa becomes a rape survivor because she “refus[es] to participate in any of the socially sanctioned discourses of rape” and mov[es] out of the discourse of legality (which, under patriarchy, has no words or procedures to cope with the fact of rape) into that of informed resistance to force” (265). Clarissa’s refusal to interact, to narrativize, and to prosecute Lovelace, according to Keymer, frustrates many readers’ (in and of the novel) desires for resolution, consensus, and justice (RC 218).

Eighteenth-century readers could not have understood the problem in terms of an “internalization of society’s misogyny,” but clearly we need to think about how readers might have understood Clarissa’s actions at the end of the novel not only as the actions of an exemplary religious female character, but as the actions of a woman writer and reader. What do Clarissa’s death and silence mean for women readers who are told to read and then remain silent about it?

I am primarily interested in the way Clarissa’s activity after the rape is marked by an increasing refusal to write, or at least to narrativize, and her reluctance to allow texts to circulate. I am interested, in other words, in understanding her activity or lack of activity toward the end of the novel as a kind of silence. This silence and reluctance to interpret or respond to some texts she encounters in this part of the novel, might, I argue, provide a kind of model for reading strategies. Many critics see the rape as the ultimate expression of power that silences women, but it has also been noted, to the contrary, that, Clarissa has a will after the rape which she doesn’t have before (Castle 109). Her retreat is a deliberate and willed retreat, it is not a passive acceptance of her fate. Because Clarissa operates by a religious code or standard at the end of the novel, we need to read her behavior after the rape in terms other than literary, linguistic terms. In other words,

perhaps what looks like repression and misogyny to us looks like religious duty and piety to eighteenth-century readers eager, as many of her readers clearly were, to read Clarissa as a religious exemplar.

The critical accounts of what happens to Clarissa's language at the end of the novel work primarily on the assumption that readers and characters operate in a world shaped by language and narrative--not in world shaped by communication with God. Scholars see the deliberation with which Clarissa rejects human and social forms of communication, and thus the ways in which her final acts resist her appropriation within patriarchy. But, we become like the frustrated early readers and the characters who will only be satisfied with a narrative resolution when we expect non-religious or non-revelatory forms of discourse to explain Clarissa. Readers must have seen and understood Clarissa's death as a religious act, rather than a linguistic act.

A critical emphasis on and need for narrative closure meshes with a form of bad reading Richardson represents in the novel--this reading is a kind of Lovelacean, plot-based reading. As Margaret Doody has pointed out a Lovelacean reader "can only think in terms of obtaining what he wants and avoiding unpleasant consequences" (Natural Passions 170). In other words, Lovelacean readers want plot, and want happy endings. Mary Patricia Martin argues that the courtship plot and the death plot are in implicit competition. In particular, Martin examines the proliferation of ideas about the ending--the "might have beens;" these, and the possibility that Lovelace might reform and make Clarissa a good husband, create "lingering expectations" about a happy ending and "are necessary to Richardson's didactic project, a part of its strategy rather than a sign of its failure" (607). In other words, Richardson leads his reader to believe that the novel will

have a standard comedic ending in order to ultimately turn them away from such an ending, or from desiring such an ending, thus reinforcing his idea that, because Clarissa is a religious book, the only happy ending is death.

This kind of reading works against the rich detail and texture for which the novel is often celebrated by another kind of eighteenth-century reader--the reader who is happy to enjoy the “prolixity” and the sentiments rather than the story. “The prolixity of Clarissa,” as Hester Mulso early pointed out to Elizabeth Carter, is necessary: “its minute strokes are the principal beauty which distinguishes it from other works of its kind” (qtd. in Eaves and Kimpel, SR 236). Samuel Johnson (famously) commented along the same lines: “if you were to read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted that you would hang yourself” (qtd. in Castle, 182).

The ideological conflicts certainly were part of the novel’s power, but in attempting to understand readers’ responses, it seems important to try to make sense of how they made sense of the novel before moving our discussions into these more abstract realms. Readers want resolution, but again, we--critics who have a notion of what a novel is and what a novel does--probably think more in terms of narrative resolution, than eighteenth-century readers still working out how to understand the novel.

One of the differences between eighteenth- and twenty- or twenty-first century interpretations of Clarissa has to do with the relative importance of the rape as the defining interpretative moment. Understanding interpretation in terms of physical penetration, the assumption around which Terry Castle bases her argument, seems particularly contemporary, particularly influenced by late twentieth-century thinking about gender and language. The novel’s earliest readers comment upon the rape as an



“outrage” and a “Horror” but do not dwell on it with the near obsessiveness displayed by later readers, or characterize it in these specific, sexualized, and theoretical terms.

Indeed, the codes of femininity that dictate, say, that Clarissa cannot speak for herself even after she has, for all purposes, eloped with Lovelace, hold even more strongly in the problem of articulating sexual activity. Eighteenth-century women, discouraged from admitting even sexual desire, have very little recourse to language that expresses sexual acts themselves.

Lady Bradshaigh and her sister Lady Echlin, for example, both reject rape and both write alternate endings. Their readings (which I will discuss at more length in Chapter Four) demonstrate the difference time and theory make in the importance of the rape itself to understanding the novel as a whole. In Lady Echlin’s alternate ending both Lovelace and Clarissa die, but Clarissa isn’t raped and Lovelace dies penitent. In contrast to Richardson, who saw Clarissa’s death as a necessary aspect of his moral point, Echlin believes it possible to work within a religious/didactic mode that does not too severely punish characters or readers. After protesting that she would not read the volumes in which the rape occurs, Lady Bradshaigh’s (Echlin’s sister) shorter ending allows Clarissa to live after the rape and serve as a kind of exalted governess of Anna Howe’s children. Although she stays within sexual codes of the period by not allowing Clarissa to marry after being raped, Lady Bradshaigh creates a life for Clarissa outside of her sexuality. These readers, and others, see plenty of meaning both in the novel and in the character outside of the rape altogether, suggesting that we re-enact what we term Richardson’s misogyny when we limit our own readings of the novel to what rape means.

Early readers look beyond, or away from the rape and, minimize it in favor of the character as a whole--it is we, not they, who reduce Clarissa to a sexual object. Many readers' responses circumvented or simply ignored the issue of the rape while the details and nuances of Richardson's representation of Clarissa's piety were of more immediate or lasting interest. Hester Mulso, for example, pointed out failings in Clarissa's exercise of rational piety, and noted in particular that her fear of her father's curse made her seem superstitious. Along the same lines, Mulso was joined by her future mother-in-law, Sarah Chapone, and Frances Grainger in raising questions about issues such as Clarissa's submission to her father and more generally, deference to parental and patriarchal authorities, as that might interfere with women's religious duty. Women readers who were concerned about the issue of obedience and authority understood the ideological problems of power and gender the novel explores but chose to discuss the problems in more pragmatic terms and not in terms of the rape itself. Likewise, even women who claimed to understand the pressures the Harlowes put on Clarissa to marry, such as Lady Mary Montagu and Mrs. Delany, discussed the issues of power in terms of marriage, not rape. These readers did not understand the rape as the key interpretative issue of the novel. In other words, these eighteenth-century readers seem to understand the rape as a relative event. It evokes problems of power, but it is not the only or most dominant expression of such problems. It is only we (post-theory) readers for whom the rape is the dominant symbolic expression of power in the novel.

This eighteenth century reading experience of playing down the rape is reflected in the way Richardson chooses to not represent the rape directly and separates the actual event by many letters from Clarissa's account (which itself refuses to narrate the event).

I suggest that the rape is not represented because it causes a reading problem for women readers; Richardson's narrative strategy, thus, could be a concession to the problem of modesty and delicacy reading such a scene would cause. Richardson expressed concerns that women readers might not want to read about Lovelace's "vile" behavior: As he writes to Edward Young:

Miss Lee [Young's stepdaughter] may venture (if you and she have patience) to read these two [volumes of Clarissa] to you. But Lovelace afterwards is so vile a fellow, that if I publish anymore, I do not know . . . whether she, of whose delicacy I have the highest opinion, can see it as from you or me. And yet I hope, at worst, there will be nothing either in the language or sentiments, that may be so very censurable . . . . (19 Nov. 1747 SL 84-85)

When the novel is read aloud, the young woman's delicacy may be offended by the rape. The structure of the novel works with eighteenth-century female readers' needs to be distanced from the act of rape, allowing readers to get used to the idea before they actually get the details. The stretch of time between its occurrence and its discussion or retelling by Clarissa is a kind of silence about the rape.

Scholars have posited various characters and reading modes in *Clarissa* as ideal and as the pattern Richardson was after. Tom Keymer suggests that "Readers in the novel provide models for readers of it; and while Anna and Belford are by no means perfect exegetes, both have the right values" (59). Situating Belford as the writerly site where the male and female language "cross over" Julia Genster argues that Belford is the reformed reader. Genster suggests that the reader is allowed to have sympathy for Clarissa and even Lovelace in the early parts of the novel, but that we are to reform, like Belford who has the narrative control of the last third of the text. Mary Patricia Martin focuses on the way Clarissa teaches her readers how to read *Clarissa*: Clarissa "must teach other readers how to make sense of the story she has so carefully constructed."

Echoing the idea that the novel stages “interpretative struggles,” Martin suggests that “reformed reading is the product of interpretative struggles, not the application of known principles” (606).

Keymer’s is the broadest argument along these lines: he argues that Richardson wanted to help his readers learn how to actively engage in a difficult text. But, no matter which character or set of characters or which mode and outcome of reading is chosen as ideal, all of these scholars use the now conventional trope that the novel stages “interpretative struggles” (as William Warner termed the problem). These arguments thus assume that Richardson, and to some extent his readers, are constructing ways of novel reading that rely on interpretative difficulty. We assume that readers embraced opacity (as we do) rather than resisted it, or found it worrisome. In other words, these critical/scholarly readers participate in, and see in historical readers, forms of critical reading, and take as truth Richardson’s complaints that his audience did not know how to read. I suggest that we need to be more critical of Richardson’s critical assessment of his readers.

Without suggesting that *Clarissa*’s (or any text’s) meaning is transparent, I want to suggest that to privilege the “interpretative struggles” of this novel is to employ a certain kind of historically situated critical reading. Michael Warner notes that critical reading has been defined against uncritical reading, but has not been either completely defined or adequately historicized. Situating its emergence in the eighteenth century, Warner defines critical reading as the “enframing, metapragmatic construal of the situation of reading,” which is “an imaginary and therefore partially unconscious grasping of the situation of reading itself” (32). As he argues, the assumption that critical

reading is simply a self-conscious reading practice universalizes and dehistoricizes the practice and doesn't allow us to see other, competing, forms of reading of reading or textualism (32). But, while Warner suggests that noncritical reading has traditionally been more empirically visible in the history of reading, I would argue that in the history of reading of *Clarissa* only a kind of critical reading has, thus far, been visible: *Clarissa*'s reception is well-documented by readers who are struggling toward "grasping the reading situation itself" as they debate the significance of Richardson's novel. At the same time, we can understand this practice as only emergent because of the way many of these same readers seemed to accept Richardson's professed Christian purpose and seem to have read in ways traditionally characterized as non-critical or uncritical. Can forms of non-critical reading might help us envision a gendered reader, help us regender *Clarissa*'s readers?

Reading for amusement and reading to learn (reading for profit) are separable or are becoming separate activities in this period. The split between these two forms of reading, and their implicit connection to secular and religious reading is evident in Richardson's conception of the purpose of his novel as a well as in eighteenth-century discussions of the novel. Although asserting that *Clarissa*'s death was a Christian victory, Richardson was aware that many readers wanted a more narratively satisfying conclusion. But he questioned the expectation that the novel should have a happy ending simply because *Clarissa* was good character. He justified his ending, in his "Postscript," on the grounds that poetical justice works against God's will to "distribute" good and evil "equally" but his discussion of the issue show clearly that two competing modes of reading exist:

Nor can it be deemed impertinent to touch upon this subject at the conclusion of a work which is designed to inculcate upon the human mind, under the guise of an amusement, the great lessons of Christianity, in an age like the present; which seems to expect from the poets and dramatic writers . . . that they should make it one of their principal rules, to propagate another sort of dispensation, under the name of poetical justice, than that with which God by Revelation teaches us he has thought fit to exercise mankind; whom placing here only in a state of probation, he hath so intermingled good and evil as to necessitate them to look forward for more equal distributions of both. (1495)

Richardson's comments reveal a split between the two kinds of reading I have been discussing. Richardson also anticipated and decried both the readers or critics who read for plot and poetic justice (or, later, who read in terms of narrative theory). Richardson also anticipated the readers who read for the ideological significances of the primary events of the novel; moreover, there is evidence of eighteenth-century readers who read according to these Richardsonian reading protocols.

More importantly though, Richardson here conceptualizes that split in historical terms. “[A]n age like the present” expects narrative resolution, while past ages, he implies, accepted whatever good or evil God meted out. His novel is meant to “inculcate upon the human mind” this religious lesson and suggests that the ideal reader of Richardson is one who will accept both Richardson's lessons and “the great lessons of Christianity.” In other words, both Richardson and his readers understand not only that there are different standards of coherence (different ways of understanding a text), but also that these approaches can be what Warner terms “rival frameworks” of reading (33). To see that there are different possible ways of reading itself is a form of critical reading—and, it is a form of reading of Clarissa for which we have plenty of evidence.

Richardson famously explained Clarissa's death as a "triumph" and defended it, in terms of the "Christian system," in the face of many objections from his readers who wanted her to live:

I intend another Sort of Happiness (founded on the Xn. System) for my Heroine, than that which was to depend upon the Will and Pleasure, and uncertain Reformation and good behaviour of a vile Libertine, whom I could not think of giving a Person of Excellence to. The Sex give too much Countenance to Men of this vile Cast, to make them such a Compliment to their Errors. And to rescue her from a Rake, and give a Triumph to her, over not only him but over all her Oppressors, and the World beside, in a triumphant Death (as Death must have been her lot, had she been ever so prosperous) I thought as noble a view, as it was new. But I find, Sir, by many Letters sent me, and by many opinions given me, that some of the greater Vulgar, as well as all the less, had rather it had had what they call, an Happy Ending. (to Aaron Hill, qtd. in Eaves and Kimpel, SR 217-218)

Contemporary readers also saw Richardson's texts as themselves comparable to the scriptures. Knightley Chetwood wrote that "if all the Books in England were to be burnt, this Book, [Pamela] next the Bible ought to be preserved" (27 Jan. 1740; qtd. in Eaves and Kimpel, SR 121). And Smyth Loftus declared that the same novel revealed "a beautiful simplicity which I never knew excelled except in the Bible" (12 Nov. 1756, qtd. in Eaves and Kimpel, SR 121). These readers read Richardson's texts as scripture, as guides, and as conduct books; we might, therefore assume that the reading experience was also different than that assumed to be the reading experience of novels. Reading the novel as scripture might include, for example, dipping into the novel as one might dip into the Bible for advice and daily guidance. Indeed, Richardson codified such a reading experience in his Moral Sentiments. These kinds of readers read quite differently from the readers who look to this novel (or any novel) as a working out, or exploration of a historical, political, social or cultural problem.

We more easily understand those readers who debate the meaning of the novel with Richardson, however, because their approach to reading is more like ours, more critical. But many of Richardson's correspondents do not seem like the "greater Vulgar," or the vast number of readers unknown to him and unable to participate in the more nuanced conversations about the novel he carries on in the letters. The many readers for whom we have evidence present a paradoxical image when measured with the critical/noncritical standard: they are critical on the one hand, often rejecting Richardson's understanding of his novel, but completely accepting of Richardson's religious purpose, on the other. The distinction between critical and uncritical reading is less appropriate than a distinction between religious and secular ways of reading: the "greater Vulgar" seems to mean for Richardson, not those readers who do not agree, but those readers who read for plot (and poetic justice) rather than for moral and spiritual guidance.

Scott Paul Gordon calls most readings of the novel, mandevillian, or self-interested mis-readings. Most read *Clarissa*, the character and the novel, intellectually rather than sentimentally. Gordon argues that a disinterested reading can be enacted by reading through the physical effects of crying--by reading as a sentimental reader:

As a secularized version of direct revelation, pathetic reactions provide readers with an experience immune from rational challenge, and should perhaps be more closely tied to radical, personal religion than to the rational latitudinarianism invoked by intellectual historians. For if the early eighteenth-century latitude-men emphasize works over faith, the pathetic response is, like faith, a private experience--unprovable to others but irrefutable to the individual feeler. (488-89)

I suggest that we need to theorize both the religious and the sentimental, interiorized reader more carefully. This reader may be a reader who does not respond because she takes *Clarissa* and this kind of interiorized, religious response as a model and acts by it.



We should not ascribe a religious reading practice to historical readers and a secular reading practice to more modern readers. Rather, the two ways of reading (secular and religious) exist side by side at this historical moment and the two ways of reading are in competition with each other. What might be different for readers for whom these are not necessarily separate kinds of reading experiences? As we have seen, the assumptions of many literary critical readers of Richardson is that readers will resist his religious messages, and will resist the idea that Clarissa's death is a triumph. None of these arguments addresses the possibility of readers who strove to understand Richardson and to "think with" him "on all subjects" (Chapone, Filial Obedience 247). Might there have been many readers who, rather than needing the warning not to read like Lovelace, readily accept Clarissa's ways of reading? Reading like Clarissa problematizes response, especially written response and yet it helps us to theorize the kind of private response Gordon suggests as the most apt way to read the novel--the kind of (reading) experience that is "unprovable to others but irrefutable to the individual feeler." Clarissa herself, as a pious woman and a daughter employing silence as a way to disagree and obey, displays exactly this kind of unprovable and yet irrefutable mode of reading.

As I discussed in Chapter 2, one of the problems with determining women's reading practices is that women may not leave material traces of their reading. Moreover, if we discount the absence of traces of evidence of response as indicating passivity (or absence of response itself), we may not bother to look further. But, as we have seen in Clarissa, Clarissa's silence is taken for assent when she is most violently opposing the interpretations of her silence. Understanding this strategic use of silence helps us to

understand reading practices that do not leave the same kinds of positive or easily legible, evidence that marginalia, for example, leaves.

In addition to contextualizing silence within the period's norms of femininity, we might contextualize it--and specifically Clarissa's use of it--in religious or spiritual terms. Phyllis Mack points out that the concept of agency is tied, even by many feminist theorists, to ideas of autonomy, and individuality, the "religious person's desire for self-transcendence," therefore, is difficult to account for (150). The otherness of religion, she argues, is "a conception of agency in which autonomy is less important than self-transcendence and in which the energy to act in the world is generated and sustained by a prior act of personal surrender." (156). Although Mack is specifically discussing seventeenth-century Quaker women, understanding such acts of personal surrender is a larger problem for feminist scholarship in general especially when it requires confronting "the problem of validating religious women's efforts to achieve self-realization and enlightenment through pain" (153). In a very different historical context, Saba Mahmood argues that women's participation in the Islamic movement poses a similar conceptual challenges to feminist theory, questioning the way concepts of the self, moral agency, and discipline are often tied to ideas of resistance. Examining the mosque movement in contemporary Egypt, she asks how such ideas of agency can be brought to bear on women in patriarchal religions, since the existing models limit discussion of women's agency to resistance. Mahmood suggests that "we think of agency not as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create" (203). Clarissa's actions after the rape, and

her pointed submission to the will of God (as she understands it) could be seen as an example of this sort of positive liberty.

The alternate mode of interpretation (an alternate standard of coherence) that takes material shape in the novel in exchanges of books and conversations about books illustrates some of the reading-specific features of Clarissa's submission to the will of God. The mode of reading is hinted at in the different use of religious books, but suggests an alternate foundation of reading that exists largely outside the letters of the novel. In other words, it suggests, but fails to represent, the form of religious reading that Clarissa herself practices--or is imagined to practice.

Lovelace sends Mrs. Sinclair, as part of the "minutiae of [his] contrivances," a list of "books to be procured for the lady's closet" (131.472). The books include "Stanhope's Gospels; Sharp's, Tillotson's and South's Sermons; Nelson's Feasts and Fasts; a sacramental piece of the Bishop of Man, and another of Dr Gauden, Bishop of Exeter; and Inett's Devotions" (155.524). When her family finally sends her some clothes and books, Clarissa surmises that her brother chose the books. The books sent her include "a Drexelius on Eternity, the good old Practice of Piety, and a Francis Spira." Like Lovelace, James exploits Clarissa's piety for his own ends--he uses the books to represent a message to her. Clarissa sees them as evidence of her "brother's wit"; he wants to "to point out death and despair" (173.561). The books James sends perverts or twists the idea of piety into the idea of punishment, earthly punishment. Clarissa understands the taunt in a different way than it was intended, however, since she "wish[es] for the one, and every now and then, [is] on the brink of the other" (173.561). The books are legible to Clarissa as evidence of James' wit. Although she cannot, yet, read Lovelace's

contrivances in the books in her room, Clarissa employs dual reading modes in interpreting the significance of James' choices. As evidence of his wit they are read in secular sense because that "wit" assumes that death will be a punishment, but, reading them religiously, Clarissa also sees a confirmation of her own feelings in these books--she wishes for death not as a punishment but as a release. The fact that she is only "on the brink" of despair also suggests that the books confirm and strengthen her spiritual resolve not to fall into the sin of despair. The books have two interpretations--one for the pious and one for the worldly, the pious reader will see them as confirmations of belief, feelings, the worldly will see them as references to death and an afterlife as a punishment rather than rewards.

Richardson assumes his readers will know what these books are and proceeds to suggest the two different ways of reading and using them. Clarissa and the good reader already know Drexelius, Spira, and Tillotson well enough that the metonymic relationship between the books as objects and death and despair does not need to be explicated. But the religious reading, Clarissa's other understanding (and the one which welcomes death rather than sees it as a punishment) is not itself represented: The only experience of reading represented at this moment is the Lovelacean/Jamesian way of "reading" that involves using the object to send a message derived from a bad reading of the content. Richardson replays the scene of using a religious book as a misread object within Lovelace's plots more than once. While Richardson's representation of the misuse of religious books by Lovelace has obvious benefits for the creation of Lovelace's character, I suggest that the circulation of these books also signals the existence of modes of reading that Richardson alludes to but does not represent.

After Lovelace intercepts Anna's letters he finds a reference to the Norris (John Norris's A Collection of Miscellanies [1687]). Anna had sent Clarissa with money interleaved. Lovelace wonders about the meaning of Anna's reference and sees "Norris" as a code. "She says in it, I hope you have no cause to repent returning my Norris--It is forthcoming on demand. Now, what the devil can this mean? . . . The devil take me, if I am out-Norrised" (198.634). Although James and Lovelace use the books' metonymic functions to convey messages--about the character of the people at Mrs. Sinclair's house or the punishment Clarissa should meditate upon, Anna uses the Norris in more straightforwardly material way, to convey paper money. When Lovelace worries that he will be "out-Norrised", however, it is because he assumes that Norris is being used as a code. Lovelace doesn't read Norris as a book, as a material object, but as a code. Lovelace doesn't know these stories and he seems to have no control over them, partly because they are carried out in a language he believes he doesn't understand. Lovelace's reaction points to a competing model of interpretation, a possibly female, and more religious oriented model of interpretation. We know, and Lovelace suspects that this form of reading exists, but we don't have direct access to it within the novel.

When he has Lovelace look at Taylor's Holy Living and Dying the day of the rape, Richardson continues the pattern of alluding to, but not representing, two different ways of reading spiritual guides or religious texts. Clarissa writes that "The grand deluder was the farther end of the room . . . looking into a book which, had there not been a preconcert, would not have taken his attention for one moment. It was Taylor's Holy Living and Dying (313.1001). Lovelace talks to Clarissa about it. "A smart book, this, my dear!" --The old divine affects, I see, a mighty flowery style upon a very solemn

subject. But it puts me in mind of an ordinary county funeral where the young women, in honour of a defunct companion, especially if she were a virgin, or passed for such, make a flower-bed of her coffin” (313.1001-1002). The “preconcert” is part of his plot to look pious for the people of the house where Clarissa is lodging; his use of the book, thus, is plot-oriented. And, as part of Clarissa’s recounting of the day of the rape, Lovelace’s comment foreshadows Clarissa’s rape, death, and funeral. But Lovelace himself reads the text in a critical and skeptical way--and, because he does not conceive of death as a “triumph”-- a secular way: the “flowery” text is a way, in Lovelace’s view, to hide the unattractive (and sexually defiled body) or subject, of death. The flowery style, according to Lovelace, covers up something vulgar and hypocritical. He can’t reconcile the flowery style with the subject of death because he does not understand death as salvation. Lovelace’s earthly understanding of death is unlike Clarissa’s who later welcomes her own death. Clarissa takes this text seriously-- lives and eventually dies by rules such as Taylor’s (as Doody observes in Natural Passions). The only kind of reading represented, though, is Lovelace’s plot-oriented, secular style of reading. Neither Clarissa nor Richardson really talks about what it means to read, for example, Holy Living and Holy Dying in a non-Lovelacean way. The religious experience of reading is not represented.

Just after the rape, Clarissa writes her ten mad papers; in the final weeks that she is alive, some of her meditations also make their way into the text. The fragments and the meditations create reading situations in which communication, always at question in the novel, is even more frustrated. The kind of writing Clarissa performs in these fragments and meditations represent a private form of response that might serve as a model for

readers. The mad papers seem to provide evidence (or a model) of one alternate way of reading. Written after the rape, the fragmented or mad papers are the first material sign of her withdrawal. The mad papers, especially the papers addressed to no one or seemingly to herself, are like the meditations because they are not meant for circulation--they are not meant for readers. Except for Lovelace and Belford, and Dorcas (who finds and steals them) no other character reads the mad papers. The mad papers thus model for the novel reader--and only the novel reader--a mode of intensely private communication.

In the later part of the novel, we are also allowed to read some of Clarissa's meditations. Clarissa has been writing the meditations all along, although the novel only reproduces five of them. Richardson added to the meditations and printed them as a collection, with dates of their composition. This text, Meditations Collected from the Sacred Books; And Adapted to the Different Stages of Deep Distress; Gloriously surmounted by Patience, Piety, and Resignation. Being those mentioned in the History of Clarissa as drawn up by her for her own use, was printed in 1749. According to Keymer, the meditations are Clarissa way of non-narratively interpreting what has happened to her--and of constructing herself as female Job. As he writes, the "meditations are dated between 18 June and 29 August, and thus coincide with the point in the novel at which Clarissa more or less ceases to narrate" ("Meditations" 91). Although they explain her personal situation in "in the larger moral terms of darkness and evil" ("Meditations" 96), Clarissa does not actively circulate or discuss the meditations.

The texts of the meditations respond, or seem to respond, to certain events--such as Clarissa's arrest, or a letter from her family--but they respond indirectly. The writing and the response distance Clarissa from the events. This distancing is key for

understanding how the meditations should be read and for reading in the novel, since several of the events (letters from Arabella and her uncles) are also reading events. Clarissa uses the meditations to respond (non-narratively) to events such as her arrest, her uncle's letter, a letter from Arabella, and Lovelace's continued pursuit of her. Clarissa never sends the meditations to anyone, but she does intend them to be read eventually. The act of writing them and the refusal to circulate them, though, suggests that she wants them read later: they will be read at a temporal distance from the event to which they respond.

One of the fragments is to Anna, one to her father, one to Arabella, and three to Lovelace. The remaining papers include an allegory of a lady and beast (the lady, attacked by a beast, is the one at fault for unnaturally in assuming the beast could be tamed) two address herself, reproaching herself for vanity and reminding herself that her life will now be unhappy. The last mad paper is a poem made up of fragments of other poems. Frances Ferguson observes that the tenth letter/fragment calls attention to the fact that we have been reading print, not handwriting because it is printed at an angle and runs off the page; Clarissa, she argues, becomes "a version of the disorderly letter" (106).

Tom Keymer argues that Richardson does not allow the collected meditations to circulate because they would make Clarissa appear to be imposing an interpretation--and particularly religious interpretation--upon the events of her life. Keymer argues that "As a spiritual exercise addressed to herself or to God, the result is innocent enough; but when addressed to other readers the invocation of a precedent that worked initially to provide Clarissa with a consoling interpretation of her own life begins to appear, instead as a sustained effort at imposing that interpretation on the world" ("Meditations" 107).



Imposing an interpretation on the world would align her with the problematic strategies employed by characters such as her father and Lovelace who attempt to control their “readers” and the interpretation of events.

Richardson may have wanted to avoid making the book seem too religious, since he was trying to reach an audience of non-religious readers. The meditations that appear within the novel, though, suggest how this kind of religious reading might work. The meditations are tools for reflection, and they are tools for remembering (meditation 1 is entirely copied from various places in Job, meditation 5 from Psalms and the others a mixture of scriptural and original sources). The kind of reading the meditations call for is an anti-narrative, or anti-plot based, type of reading.

Lovelace cannot really read the mad papers. He copies the fragments to Belford “to show how her mind works now she is in this whimsical way” (261.889). He eventually stops transcribing because he “can write no more of this eloquent nonsense” (261.890). Lovelace notes that there is “method and good sense in some of them” (261.894) and decides that he will wait to read them: “when all is over, and I can better bear to read them, I may ask thee for a sight of them” (261.890). Lovelace is concerned about Clarissa’s mind and takes the poem in particular to be evidence that her memory is still good; he is comforted that neither the drug nor the rape have permanently damaged her mind. He refuses, however, to read the fragments as representations of her mental state. He doesn’t have the skills to read the fragments and mad papers in any way other than as “whimsical,” as an aberration of (to his mind) normal, rational thought. He is, in contrast, more “affected” by the more cogent, and more narrative, letter she writes him

later. Lovelace needs to be directly and narratively addressed, and can't participate in Clarissa's desire to transcend the self.

Within the novel, the meditations circulate more widely than the fragments, but their circulation is often covert, illegitimate or private. Belford takes the first one from Mrs. Lovick without Clarissa knowing: "Mrs. Lovick gave me, at my request, the copy of a meditation she showed me, which was extracted by the lady from the Scriptures, while under arrest . . . She is not to know that she has taken such a liberty" (364.1124).

Lovelace also gets one from Mrs. Lovick without Clarissa's knowing and because Mrs. Lovick thinks it will help to reform him. Mrs. Lovick tells him that "she [Clarissa] transcribed into her book a meditation on your persecuting her thus. I have a copy of it. If I thought it would have any effect, I would read it to you" (418.1221). Lovelace wants to take it, and Mrs. Lovick consents as long as he shows it to Belford, whom Mrs. Lovick appears to see as the better keeper of Clarissa's reputation (418.1221). Mrs. Lovick, who wants to control the circulation by passing it through Belford, acts in accordance with Clarissa's desire that Belford be the "protector" of her memory. The third meditation is written in response to a letter from her Uncle John Harlowe asking whether she is pregnant; it is "stitched to the bottom of this letter with black silk" (402.1192, "editor's" note). The final disposition of the meditations is problematic since Clarissa leaves them to Mrs. Norton, but Mrs. Harlowe ends up taking them and having a copy transcribed for Mrs. Norton. Mrs. Harlowe wants to keep the meditations and "had desired Mrs. Norton to get the little book of Meditations transcribed, and to let her have the original . . . as it might, when she could bear to look into it, administer consolation to herself" (510.3.1425). The reading of the meditations is, again, delayed.

Belford and Lovelace read the meditations in a secular way and see the meditations as aesthetic objects rather than as spiritual guides; they are not looking to the Bible or the meditations for spiritual understanding or hope for afterlife. (Lovelace laughs at Belford and admonishes him for admitting that he only realized, on this perusal, the “beauty and noble simplicity” (370.1145) of the Bible.) After reading Clarissa’s first meditation, Belford looks into a borrowed Bible to compare Clarissa’s meditations with their originals (this first meditation is completely taken from Job). Belford asks Lovelace to indulge in his reflections on the “sacred books” rather than on Clarissa’s rendering of them (or Clarissa’s situation, something he is usually more loquacious about). He thinks the book of Job is “apposite” to Clarissa’s situation but he does not comment upon, or understand, Clarissa’s desire to be dead, to be judged, or on her comparison of herself to Job. His appraisal of Job’s application or explanation of Clarissa’s situation seems purely intellectual. Belford understands that Clarissa uses the meditations as a spiritual tool, but he explains that to himself in psychological terms: “We may see by this, the method she takes to fortify her mind” (399.1189). In other words, Belford doesn’t actually attempt to apply the scriptures to the situation as Clarissa meditation is clearly attempting to do. Belford reads the beauty and simplicity of her expression and then the “divine beauty” (364.1124) of the scripture itself.

Belford resituates the reading experience away from himself (and application to himself), and away from application to Clarissa by focusing on pedagogical and interpretative generalities. Voicing a series of conventional eighteenth-century feelings about Biblical writing, he notes that the style is “easy, simple, and natural,” and that the scriptures are an “all excelling collection of beauties” (364.1125). Belford generalizes

about the way children and young men are taught the Bible: boys' progress in reading is judged by "the books we are advanced to, and not by our understanding" (364.1125) and supplemented or even supplanted by histories such as that by Josephus. Aesthetic and intellectual appreciation are good places for a rake to begin his reformation, but these approaches actually indicate the incompleteness of Belford's reformation--there is a vast gap between his understanding of the meditations and Clarissa's. Belford seems to represent one type of Richardson's implied readers. As Richardson works through Belford here to sell the "beauties" of the Bible (which can affect even rakes), we sense that he is speaking to one of his target audiences--that of novel readers who are more likely to read a novel than attend, or attend to, a sermon.

Although his reading of her meditations begin his process of reformation, Belford resists Clarissa's authorial intention--just as we will see Lovelace do--but in a different way. Where Lovelace reads himself into the meditations, Belford distances himself from the reading experience by making it an intellectual, rather than a spiritual, exercise. As we have seen, Lovelace understands reading the Bible as an aesthetic object, but he performs his own, and often intentional, misreading of the meditations. This is very different from the interpretative move toward generalization and abstraction that Belford makes. Lovelace sees (or pretends to see) the meditations as expressions of Clarissa's feelings for him: Reading self-interestedly, he sees himself in the writings, and refuses to see them as Clarissa's attempt to transcend herself and the particularities of her situation.

Lovelace treats the meditations as if she had written them to and about him. Lovelace reads the "arrows of the Almighty are within me" in Clarissa's meditation, as code suggesting that Clarissa is pregnant--"in the way to be a mamma" (371.1147).

When he sees the fifth meditation, Lovelace assumes that he is the “enemy of her soul” (418.1221). This is true, but Clarissa’s subject could also be evil, or earthly tribulations, in general. “The gin, the snare, the net, mean matrimony” (418.1221) to Lovelace, but Clarissa intends them to signify his plots against her. Deliberately obtuse, or deliberately disregarding the intertext, Lovelace misses the way Clarissa revises the problem of agency as it appears in the scriptural passage. Instead of describing the fate of a sinner, as Job 18 does, her passages describes the fate of person sinned against. Lovelace is “severely treated by the lady” (418.1221), but he misses the Manichean scheme into which Clarissa has inserted the two of them. Belford sends the fourth meditation to Lovelace and comments upon his previous teasing interpretation: “See if thou, in the wicked levity of thy heart, canst apply it as thou didst the other, to thy case: if thou canst not, give way to thy conscience, and that will make the properest application” (413.1207). Lovelace’s misreadings are so obviously bad and because they are self-centered, directly oppose Clarissa’s intentions and attempt at self-transcendence.

Lovelace’s misreadings focus on a non-spiritual reading of Clarissa’s state of mind and body (in keeping with his belief that “Nineteen cannot so soon die of grief” [453.1308]). His refusal to read them as her preparation for death reflects his refusal to believe in her imminent death and his consistent misreading of the depth of her piety: Lovelace always believes that Clarissa will act like the other women he knows and bow to social conventions (i.e. marry him). Refusing to believe that Clarissa feels “earnestness” for death, Lovelace argues that Clarissa’s expressed desire for death is a result of her study of the Bible, and of reading Job rather than her religious conviction; he imagines her as a typical absorptive reader. Echoing Belford’s observation of the

apposition of Job to Clarissa's situation, he writes that "[a]s for the earnestness she expressed for death, she has found the words ready to her hand in honest Job; else she would not have delivered herself with such strength and vehemence" (371.1148). (He also compares her to Lucretia, but thinks she is "too noble" (371.1148) to kill herself.) According to Lovelace, then, the Bible teaches expression but not feeling--a superficial understanding in comparison with Clarissa's. Lovelace criticizes Clarissa's piety saying that "death desired merely from worldly disappointment shows not a right mind" (371.1148). Richardson appends a note here saying that Clarissa's letters reveal that she has already considered that and moved on: she initially despaired, but believes her desire and preparation for death spring from a "better root" (371, note a).

Gerard A. Barker points out that Clarissa participates (as well as do Pamela and Sir Charles) in the Protestant belief in the "validity of self-judgment" (503). Barker is more concerned to explain, or explain away, certain manipulative aspects of these characters, but in doing so he only makes more clear one of the differences between secular and spiritual understandings of character motivation--a difference Richardson himself is trying to describe in these scenes of reading and misreading. Richardson understands that some readers, including his own characters, will rely upon a range of explanations--influence of the written word, emotional instability, or aesthetic enchantment--to explain, or to explain away, Clarissa's unwavering belief in the certainty of her salvation. But we know that these are misreadings because Richardson allows characters such as Lovelace, and to a lesser extent, Belford, to perform them.

The meditations have a reforming purpose in the hands of others, but Clarissa never directly gives them to others with this didactic intention. Lovelace sees two of the

meditations. In both cases the person presenting them wants to reform him, or as Belford writes when he sends him the first, to “strike transient (if not permanent) remorse in thy heart” (364.1043). Mrs. Lovick reads him the fifth meditation when Lovelace attempts to visit Clarissa: “she transcribed into her book a meditation on your persecuting her thus. I have a copy of it. If I thought it would have any effect, I would read it to you” (418.1221). One reason that she doesn’t want the meditations to circulate is that they are her private way of communicating with God, and of preparing for death. According to Robert Erickson, Richardson believed in necessity of writing as part of relationship with God--in the copying passages or writing spiritual biographies. The meditations are written in the heart: “they are written primarily for the God who alone can read the heart;” God is “her ultimate and final Reader”(Erickson, “Written” 42)

Clarissa’s reading and writing in the late parts of the novel are non-narrative, non-argumentative, non-circulating. I suggest that Clarissa’s meditations represent a reflective way of reading the Bible. More significantly, she uses the meditations, or this kind of reading, (and to some extent the fragments work this way too), to put distance and silence (even death) between events and responses to events. Clarissa employs a mode of response that appears to refuse to respond. In any event, the response isn’t evident, obvious, or explicitly represented in the novel. This strategy of deflection, or the refusal to directly represent a response, mirrors Richardson’s handling of the rape within the novel, and the representation of the rape, to the extent that it is represented. Putting distance between an event and a response is a strategy for confronting, or not confronting, certain issues--here in particular that seems to be sex and sexuality. But the meditations are not direct responses, although they are responses, as the meditation sewn in black silk

to the letter from her Uncle John makes clear. Rape and the event of reading (about rape) are made similar in calling for a deflective or postponing response. Clarissa is not and will not be present to explain or debate the meanings of the meditations. Her own use of the meditations as a private activity suggests that she doesn't see the meditations as another form of writing to the moment.

Several of the meditations are concerned with judgment, but not just God's final judgment: the meditations also meditate on different ways of reading or judging a text. The first meditation, a collage of verses from Job, expresses Clarissa's desire for death and judgment. This was written just after her arrest (instigated by Mrs. Sinclair for board and lodging). The meditation reflects the shame of the public nature of the arrest and the uncomfortable home where she is made prisoner. In this meditation she writes, "Oh that my works were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the book for ever" (364.1125). She skips from early chapters in Job (3 and 7) to the later verses, where the psalmist writes, "I Know my redeemer liveth" (Job 19:25). She doesn't cite that, but instead she copies the verses just before: "Oh that my works were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! / That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever!" (Job 23-24). Clarissa makes one key change, though, replacing "rock" in the last line with "Book." At this point she is not focused on being redeemed but on being judged and on having her story known and written. Written, though, here, seems to mean finished or over (in contrast to the ongoing comfort of knowing that the redeemer lives). The verses she copies turn on the difference between writing or manuscript and printing. As Richardson well knew, the text remains quite flexible while it is still in manuscript, but is less so after it has been printed in a



book. The final image she uses of being graven, in a book or, as in a rock, suggests a very material finality. Clarissa wants all of her words to be already written, so that she is no longer writing to the moment. Only after putting distance and time between the events and their reading, can she be properly judged. In the context of the meditations, Clarissa will be judged only after she dies. Readers who come later, the meditations suggest, can better judge or read her story.

All of Clarissa's immediate readers are bad readers. The meditations point out in particular the bad readings by the Harlowe family. Clarissa's responses to the letter sent by her Uncle John asking whether she is pregnant provide a good example of the indirection of her responses. There are two responses to this letter, a letter and a meditation. The letter points out several misreadings of her letters to her mother and sister in which she had asked for blessings, but refuses to answer the question her Uncle's letter had asked. John Harlowe: "were we sure you had seen your folly, and were truly penitent, at the same time that you were so very ill as you intimate, I know not what might be done for you. But we are all acquainted with your moving ways when you want to carry a point" (402.1192). In the absence of physical proof of her ill health and repentance, the Harlowes persist in accusing Clarissa of employing "moving" rhetoric to manipulate the family. Complaining that she is not allowed to determine her reading audience, Clarissa writes, "to be turned over from the tender nature of a mother to the upbraiding pen of an uncle; and to be wounded by a cruel question, put by him in a shocking manner; and which a little, a very little time, will better answer than I can: for I am not either a hardened or shameless creature" (403.1193). Clarissa's letter also translates the issue from one of material consequences (pregnancy) to one of spiritual

consequences--her death and the remorse her family might feel, in a very little time, if they refuse her a final blessing. She refuses to discuss this issue and instead simply attaches a meditation to the offending letter.

The meditation written in response to John Harlowe's letter reveals that Clarissa read with an overriding sense of modesty. Reading the question her uncle asks is painful and embarrassing, because it refers to--and thus reminds Clarissa of--the rape, but it also reminds her that her family believe that she, as her uncle Antony phrases it in a follow up letter, "lived several guilty weeks . . . at bed as well as board" (406.1195) with Lovelace. Clarissa's letter implicitly claims that she is too modest to even attempt an answer; Antony, of course, rebuts this claim. The meditation expresses her distress at reading these letters. In the meditation she seems to try to distance herself from reading the reminders of what others think of her: "Oh that Thou wouldst hide me in the grave! That Thou wouldst keep me secret, till Thy wrath be past!" (402.1192).

The need for distance and the translation of that need into reading events is seen in the allegorical letter she writes to Lovelace in an attempt to convince him to stop trying to visit her or write to her. Clarissa tells Lovelace in this letter that she is setting out for her father's house, hopes for a reconciliation "through the imposition of a dear blessed friend" (421.1233). She is busy preparing for the journey and asks him not to disturb her, but that they might meet at her father's house. Clarissa later explains allegory to Belford: "Read but for my father's house, Heaven, said she; and for the interposition of my dear blessed friend, suppose the mediation of my Saviour; which I humbly rely upon; and all the rest of the letter will be accounted for" (440.1274). Belford and Lovelace are both taken in by the letter. As Belford writes of Clarissa's explanation: "I read it so, and stood

astonished for a minute at her invention, her piety, her charity, and at thine and my own stupidity, to be thus taken in” (440.1274). Lovelace claims that he is “cut to the heart by this Miss Harlowe’s interpretation of her letter. She ought never to be forgiven. She, a meek person, and a penitent, and innocent, and pious, and I know not what, who can deceive with a foot in the grave!--’Tis evident she sat down to write this letter with a design to mislead and deceive . . .” (449.1301). Lovelace (like the Harlowes) sees the allegory as her attempt to “mislead and deceive.” Clarissa and her readers exist in different worlds, and read in very different ways. Clarissa’s reading of the Bible, as evidenced in her meditations, is not representable in ordinary discourse--as we see in the difficulty Belford, Lovelace, and the Harlowes have in understanding it.

This chapter has been an attempt to distinguish between some of the modes of reading that Clarissa presents to its readers. The novel, as it details Clarissa’s trials with her family, initially sets up a gendered reading economy. Masculine control of authorship works to shape the way Clarissa reads her world. As an exemplar of femininity, Clarissa submits--albeit not unconditionally--to this interpretive hierarchy. In the later novel, namely after the rape, Clarissa’s submission is to God only. As a result, not only does she become more difficult to read, but the texts with which she surrounds herself are likewise opaque. We are left with the question of whether the implied reader of Clarissa is like the ones we can see--the Harlowes, Belford, and Lovelace--or like the one whose spiritually based opacity makes her difficult to see. Is Richardson’s ideal reader one who attempts to change the story to make it work within his or her own world view? Indeed, my next chapter examines some readers who represent a gendered version of this approach, following, I will argue, the pattern of Anna Howe. The readers for

whom Clarissa was the pattern, though, may remain unknown to us, since taking Clarissa as a model might indicate a refusal to attempt to explain, or make material, one's response.

---

<sup>1</sup> Parenthetical citations to Clarissa are to the Penguin edition (ed. Angus Ross) and are noted by letter number and page number. Unless otherwise noted, emphasis is Richardson's.

<sup>2</sup> Parenthetical references to The Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson, ed. Carroll are noted with the abbreviation SL.

<sup>3</sup> Richardson's Clarissa and the Eighteenth-Century Reader xviii. Further parenthetical references to this text are abbreviated RC. The quotation about "carvers" is from Richardson to Lady Bradshaigh (25 Feb. 1754, SL 296).

<sup>4</sup> On the decline of arranged marriages, see in particular Stone, "The Companionate Marriage" (323-404).

#### **Chapter 4: Arguing with ‘Papa’ Richardson: Daughterly Disobedience and Readerly Disobedience**

Richardson wrote to Lady Echlin that “A good character is a gauntlet thrown out.”

In this letter, he outlines his sense of the relationship of reader to character:

As some apprehend it reflects upon themselves, they perhaps think they have a right to be affronted. The character of a mere mortal cannot ought not, to be quite perfect. It is sufficient, if its errors be not premeditated, wilful, and unrepented of: and I shall rejoice if there be numbers of those, who find fault with the more perfect characters in the piece, because of their errors, and who would be themselves above being guilty of the like in the same situation. Many things are thrown out in the several characters, on purpose to provoke friendly debate; and perhaps as trials of the reader’s judgment, manners, taste, and capacity. I have often sat by in company, and been silently pleased with the opportunity given me, by different arguers, of looking into the hearts of some of them, through windows that at other times have been close shut up. (10 Oct. 1754, Corr. 5: 33)

Seeing reading as a test, or a challenge, Richardson believes he can understand a person’s character through his/her interpretation of a fictional character. When he was writing Sir Charles Grandison, he played this game on a very individual level with Lady Bradshaigh.

Lady Bradshaigh disliked spinsters, and Richardson found this one of her failings.

Richardson notes to her sister, Lady Echlin, that he had made a character in the new novel, Charlotte Grandison (a character patterned on Richardson conception of Lady Bradshaigh as a young woman) dislike spinsters as well. Indeed, he writes “that fault was thrown in to Lady G--’s character on purpose . . . to be corrected by Harriet; but to no purpose! the scandal remains! the instruction is unheeded!” (12 Sept. 1754, Corr. 5:26). Richardson intends his characters to be patterns of instruction for his readers, and intends them to be so in very specific, didactic, and even personal, ways.

Clarissa’s Anna Howe was not as specifically directed, although many readers found her fascinating and more compelling as a model. Richardson created the character Anna Howe to have “stronger and more <striking> . . . Faults” than the angelic Clarissa

(to Aaron Hill, 18 Nov. 1748, SL 101). Responding to Sarah Chapone's expressed preference for Anna, Richardson outlines his view of the difference between the two characters, detailing Anna's deficiencies. She "wanted Generosity to the Man she intended to have," was "pert and undutiful to her Mother," and, most damningly in Richardson's eyes, she is "inferior in true Courage, to Clarissa, as in Meekness" because Lovelace can intimidate her (Anna), but doesn't intimidate Clarissa. In short, the difference between the two characters is that "Clarissa is a Heroine: And by her Meekness, where neither her Virtue nor Honour, nor her Friendships, nor her Pity were concerned; and her Courage where they were; she shewed that Magnanimity, which ever will be the Distinction of a true Spirit." "I have often been surprized," he continues, "that these two Characters have been very much mistaken by Persons of Taste, Virtue, Honour, who nevertheless have favoured the History with their particular Attention. Can it be, that to the one we know we are superior, and therefore are not Jealous?" (2 Mar. 1752, SL 203-204). It is a readerly mistake, he suggests, to prefer Anna with all her faults to the virtuous and magnanimous Clarissa. Richardson attempts to contain this misreading by privileging the functional aspect of a "superior heroine" Richardson admits, only to reject as a response admitting of inferiority in the reader, any identification with her less than perfect foil.

It is not surprising, perhaps, that Sarah Chapone, whose own writings detailed the unfairness of English law to wives, would object to Clarissa's submissiveness and applaud Anna's outspoken criticism of Clarissa's situation. Sarah Chapone admires what she calls Anna's "Simplicity." This character trait involves being able to forget the self, she writes, "And provided the Action be right, makes no further Reflection upon it" (Mar.

1752, FM XII, 2, f. 55). Anna says and does what she feels is right without thinking twice, giving her “that surprizing Dignity . . . which her most blameable Warmth and Petulancy to her Mother & Her Lover could not wholly divest her of” (Mar. 1752, FM XII, 2, ff. 58-61). In being able to forget herself, Anna can pursue “right” actions.

Women likewise saw that model as a way to pursue their own “right” ideas in the letters: They argued with Richardson, hoping that like Anna, their “warmth” would be forgiven as an aspect of this overall character.

This tension, between Richardson’s ideal of Clarissa, and the women’s more practical turn toward Anna, is felt throughout the correspondence. Other readers as well admired Clarissa but remained drawn to Anna. As Isobel Grundy writes, “Hester Mulso argued with him in the style of one of his own characters taking another to task” (223). The character, of course, is Anna Howe. Sarah Wescomb exclaims, “What an angelick Creature you have made Miss Howe charming girl! Indeed I dote upon her for sure I fear such exalted friendship was never seen before yet how natural easy and unaffected” (21 Mar 1746/47, FM XIV, 3, f. 18 v.). Diplomatically emphasizing the friendship rather than either character, Wescomb, perhaps has already sensed Richardson’s preference. H. Morgan confesses his ambivalence about which character to prefer: “The Raillery of that notable baggage . . . her Friend and confidante, is happily struck without the Vain Flights of Levity; for her notions are not only just, but pleasantly convey’d. Her reasonings too are close and cogent . . . she rivals the capital Figure so powerfully that I can’t give Clarissa the Palm, without a kind of check of conscience, and a fervent look backwards Miss Howe” (FM XV, ff. 15-16). Morgan understands that he is expected to direct his attention to Clarissa, but is powerfully attracted by Anna’s rhetorical strength.

Both Richardson and his correspondents use Anna as a trope for a range of personal and rhetorical characteristics, such as “Spirit,” “Earnestness,” and even her “Execrations.” Anna is associated with quickness, wit, and the ability to make a good argument. Richardson called Lady Bradshaigh a Twin Sister of Anna Howe from the very beginning of their correspondence, writing that “I love Miss Howe next to Clarissa: And I see . . . that you are the Twin-Sister of that Lady . . . I adore your Spirit and your Earnestness: And pride myself in your charmingly-spirited Execrations; so much to Honour those . . . of my darling Girl” (26 Oct. 1748, FC XI, ff. 153-6). One of Sarah Wescomb’s friends, Sally Righton, wrote Richardson a letter in Anna’s voice, thanking him for a visit, and moderating a perceived impertinent request for more letters by terming herself Anna (30 Oct. 1755, FM XIV, 2, ff 49-50). John Chapone calls his wife, Sarah Chapone, Anna Howe when she writes a letter questioning women’s subordination and dependence on men. Hester Mulso, when she is at most exasperated and impertinent, tells Richardson to “call her Anna Howe” (Filial Obedience 232). In other words, readers and writers refer to the character of Anna when they want to be argumentative, but want to continue to be thought of as good-natured. Anna is likely to speak out explicitly against authority, but she moderates that opposition with raillery, and gentle impertinences.

Anna is not perceived as simply disputatious. During their discussion of Richardson’s third novel, Sir Charles Grandison, Richardson tells Lady Bradshaigh that Charlotte Grandison is a version of Anna, “Your Ladiship’s adopted Sister.” He goes on to say that Anna is more amiable than the new character, even “with all her Faults, and some she had not small ones” (8 Dec. 1753, FM XI, f. 49 v.). Lady Bradshaigh’s reply



underscores Anna's faults: "Ah sir, you did not need to tell me my adopted Sister had faults that were not small ones, she cou'd not otherwise have been my sister" (14 Jan. 1754, FM XI, f.62 v.). Richardson is hurt when Lady Bradshaigh implies that he is pointing out her faults by comparing her to Anna and responds by emphasizing Anna's affectionate and warm nature rather than her argumentative nature. This is "a severe Turn upon me!" Richardson responds, since there are also "great Amiabilitys in Miss Howe's Character: Has she not an excellent Heart? So much Warmth of Friendship, so much sweet Vivacity of Temper; These graces <make> mark the Relationship between Lady B. and Miss Howe"(8 Feb. 1754, 279 SL).

Just as Anna is both warm and argumentative (possibly to a fault), her function in the novel is multi-faceted. This chapter begins with an examination of the relationship between Anna and Mrs. Howe, focusing in particular on the way Richardson creates, in Anna, a character who is quite disputatious. The Howe's household, which so often includes Clarissa by epistolary proxy, is marked by more subtle forms of debate in which opposition is not necessarily absolute. The mother-daughter relationship allows a negotiation of the limits of parental authority that the binary of Clarissa's submission and resistance does not. Anna hates "that tyrant word AUTHORITY" (56.239) and makes fun of her mother, Mrs. Howe, who, with her constant refrain of "obedience without reserve" (27.132), is clearly a mouthpiece for Richardson's opinion about filial duty. Anna argues vociferously against parental authority and parental tyranny, but ends up as a containing and reconciling force in the novel. She concedes to parental authority by agreeing to take part in a more or less arranged marriage. Because she is disputatious, but does not go the subversive lengths that Clarissa goes, Anna serves as a model for

women readers who seek to dispute with Richardson about the meaning of Clarissa, and about women's role in marriage and in families, if not in public life. As they refer to and overlay the fictional world upon their own when arguing, Richardson's women correspondents illustrate the way his fiction itself supercedes his articulation of women's place in the letters. Most importantly, their rhetorical strategies provide evidence of a form of reading that, Anna Howe-like, negotiates interpretive authority.

I begin with a brief overview of the scholarly treatment of the Richardson correspondence. In part two, I examine the rhetoric of the relationship between Anna and Mrs. Howe. After illustrating the kind of model Anna provides, I turn to Richardson's correspondents themselves to show that women correspondents recur to Anna as a model, both explicitly and implicitly, when they debate with Richardson about the meaning of the novel itself: Anna is their model of a limited interpretive authority.

### **I: Letters from a woman reader**

Lady Bradshaigh famously “shed a Pint of Tears” while reading the final volumes of Clarissa: “[W]hen Alone in Agonies would I lay down the Book, take it up again, walk about the room, let fall a Flood of Tears, wipe my Eyes, read again, perhaps not three Lines, throw away the Book crying out Excuse me good Mr Richardson, I cannot go on” (6 Jan. 1749, Corr. 4: 241).<sup>1</sup> This episode, coming after Lady Bradshaigh has threatened not to read the ending at all, provides us with clues about Lady Bradshaigh's emotional response and about her physical reading situation.

Taken along with recent investigations into her alternate ending to the novel and her marginalia in her copy of Clarissa, the case of Lady Bradshaigh's responses allows us to examine several of the strands of critical approaches, within Richardson scholarship

and within the histories of reading, to the Richardson correspondence. I use the correspondence of Lady Bradshaigh, initially, to outline some of the reading practices of this circle of readers, and to examine the scholarly use of the Richardson correspondence; here I argue that the use of the letters most often takes Richardson, and not his reader, as its focus. I then examine Lady Bradshaigh as a case of the methodological problem I identified in Chapter 1. As she has been recuperated as a individual and as an oppositional reader, Lady Bradshaigh has been made over into a writer. Thus, while we now have better access to Lady Bradshaigh's responses (in the form of Janine Barchas and Gordon Fulton's edition of her marginalia), arguments made about her response obscure those reading practices that fit with patterns of negotiated interpretive authority.

One strand of this work focuses on the material dimension of the reading experience and employs the correspondence as a way to evaluate the overlapping practices of private and communal reading in the period. Lady Bradshaigh was apparently reading alone in a room--her only conversation is a fictional conversation with the author of the text. She does not seem to be in the small room, or closet, women (and characters, including Pamela and Clarissa) used for reading and writing, nor is she reading aloud or being read to by someone. Lady Bradshaigh later mentions, when she is reading Sir Charles Grandison, that she and her husband Sir Roger have separate rooms in which they read; he is very impatient when he is interrupted in his reading room (27 Nov. 53, FM XI, f. 43). Susanna Highmore also claimed to have read parts of Clarissa privately in her own room. Highmore, however, notes that the practice diverged from convention: "We could none of us read aloud the affecting scenes [of Clarissa] we met

with, but each read to ourselves, and in separate apartments wept” (Corr. 1:cxi). Only the most affecting scenes, though, require privacy.

While the ending of *Clarissa* required solitude for these readers, communal reading remained a long-standing norm. Naomi Tadmor documents this in her study of Richardson’s readers, showing that reading was performed as part of household routines and was social rather than private. The social practice of reading in the Richardson household began early and lasted throughout the day, according to an observer of the Richardson household cited by Anna Letitia Barbauld:

As soon as Mrs. Richardson arose, the beautiful Psalms in Smith’s Devotions were read responsively in the nursery, by herself, and daughters, standing in a circle: only the two eldest were allowed to breakfast with her . . . . After breakfast we younger ones read to her in turns the Psalms, and lessons for the day . . . . We all dined at one table, and generally drank tea and spent the evening in Mrs. Richardson’s parlour, where the practice was for one of the young ladies to read, while the rest sat with mute attention, round a large table, and employed themselves in some kind of needle-work. (Corr. 1:clxxxvi-clxxxvii)

Such practices, in which needlework and reading are combined, have a history with Richardson who reported to Johannes Stinstra that, as a young boy, he read to a circle of women as they were doing their needlework: “Half a dozen of them, when met to work with their needles, used, when they got a book they liked, and thought I should, to borrow me to read to them” (Corr. 1:xxxix). We can glimpse the way texts circulated socially, rather than as privately, even amongst those who could not read in Margaret Collier’s account of reading *Clarissa* to the elderly, illiterate couple with whom she lived, at a far remove from London. The couple “were desirous that I should read *Clarissa* to them,” and their “remarks, and odd observations” gave her “new entertainment” on what was her fourth reading of the work (31 December 1755, Corr. 2:89).

The movement between communal, outloud reading, giving way at times to silent private reading, and the continuing practice of forms of intensive reading provide important context for an understanding of women's reading of this novel that moves beyond the material. That is, while readers (and this chapter) are more overtly concerned with interpretation and meaning than the physical and social spaces in which reading takes place, that reading was so often seen as a social event, or conversely, as an intense emotional event, suggests that women readers were not engaged in abstract intellectual exercises when they discussed *Clarissa*. Instead, they saw the novel as coextensive with their own lives.

Before ever getting to the agony-inducing ending of *Clarissa*, Lady Bradshaigh begged Richardson not to allow Lovelace to rape Clarissa. Many other readers also pled for a happier ending. Indeed, the letters, thus, have been used to describe the role that readers' responses made in Richardson's changes to *Clarissa*, or to detail other aspects of Richardson's composition and publishing habits. Protesting Clarissa's rape, an event she knows will make a happy ending unlikely, Lady Bradshaigh, turns herself into something like the enraged, and yet impotent Mr. Harlowe bringing down a curse upon the just run-away Clarissa:

If you disappoint me, attend to my curse: --May the hatred of all the young, beautiful, and virtuous be ever your portion! and may your eyes never behold any thing but age and deformity! may you meet with applause only from envious old maids, surly bachelors, and tyrannical parents! may you be doomed to the company of such! and after, death may their ugly souls haunt you!--Now make Lovelace and Clarissa unhappy if you dare. (10 Oct. 1748, *Corr.* 4:181)

Lady Bradshaigh equates the physical forms of beauty and youth with the narrative form of a comedic ending (one in which Clarissa may marry Lovelace). This implicitly equates the ugly and the old with the moralistic, gesturing toward the collision of the

didactic and the entertaining in this novel which has informed and continues to inform so much of the response to it. Lady Bradshaigh asserts that “nothing can induce me to read your history through” (n.d., Corr. 4: 200). Such responses, responses that protest the ending, threaten to stop reading, and in general pressure Richardson to make changes, actually did lead to changes. Richardson, though, often worked against what these readers wanted, using what he saw as their misreadings as a guide to press his own points home more forcefully. The letters, thus, have been used to argue from positions that privilege Richardson’s intention or to detail his habits of revision, rather than his readers’ responses.

The first edition of Clarissa was published in three installments. Volumes 1 and 2 came out on 1 December 1747, and end with Clarissa’s letter to Anna announcing that she has left Harlowe Place and is with Lovelace. Volumes 3 and 4 (28 April 1748) carry the story through the fire-scene and her escape to Hampstead. The final three volumes came out 7 December 1748. A second edition, which has only a few changes, was also published in December 1748, with changes in the division across volumes. Keymer speculates that Richardson used the second edition run of the first volumes to help him sell off extra copies of the last three volumes (“Clarissa’s Death” 389-96). Between 1748 and 1751, however, Richardson made some significant changes, resulting in the eight-volume third edition. Keymer looks at a letter from “Philaretus,” who, like Lady Bradshaigh, threatened to stop reading if he killed off Clarissa. Keymer suggests that “perhaps every reader who protested to Richardson in such extravagant terms, dozens of others walked more quietly away from the prospects of the fictional bereavement” (395). “Perhaps” Keymer continues, “we may add that Clarissa’s dwindling sale attests a

resistance on the part of the reading public to anything other than "a happy ending like that of Pamela ("Clarissa's Death" 395).

Mark Kinkead-Weekes, writing on what Richardson claimed to have restored to the novel, and Shirley Van Marter, in her more detailed studies of the differences between the three editions, both note the significant changes made to Clarissa and Lovelace: She becomes more delicate, and he more evil. Richardson also changed the third edition to minimize the appearance that Clarissa believes the curse affects her salvation. Such changes may have been in direct response to readers such as Hester Mulso, who objected to the seriousness with which Clarissa understands her father's curse. Mulso suggests that she "joins her father to condemn herself" and that this reaction "call[s] into question the foundation of her other virtues, which if not grounded on reason but on blind prejudice or superstition, lose all their value" ("Filial Obedience" 207). As Van Marter notes, "Numerous small revisions accentuate the cruelty of the curse and stress its impact on her" ("Third Edition" 128). These readers--and the specter of the reader who misunderstood his characters--clearly influenced Richardson, but the critical focus to date has been on Richardson, rather than on his readers' perspectives.

Characterizations of Richardson's readers largely have been limited to two kinds of readers--the sentimental reader, and the female writer wrestling for control of Richardson's text. As Tom Keymer writes, scholars have tended to divide women readers into "women of sentiment like Lady Bradshaigh and Lady Echlin, whose naive outpourings seem to typify the otherwise irrecoverable responses of the wider public; [and] intellectuals like Elizabeth Carter and Hester Mulso," whose response are visible, and therefore significant, because they are also published writers ("Fire Scene" 143).

This division in readerly type begins in the eighteenth century, since Richardson's contemporary, Samuel Johnson, as Anna Letitia Barbauld notes, suggested that Richardson surrounded himself with women because they listened passively: "his love of continual superiority was such that he took care always to be surrounded by women, who listened to him implicitly, and did not venture to contradict his opinions" (qtd. in Corr. 1:clxxii). Barbauld, however, gives play to an alternate version of Richardson's relationship with her women readers and listeners as well, observing that "[g]reat debates took place in the author's female senate concerning" the ending to Sir Charles Grandison (Corr. 1:cxxiii). Readers fall into the dualistic categories of sentimental/intellectual, or passive/debative.

Paradoxically these opposing types of readers--the reader who listens passively and the reader who debates and tries to overwrite the text, are both derivable from Lady Bradshaigh's responses. Even as she begins to accept the impossibility of a happy ending, Lady Bradshaigh pleads with Richardson to reverse what he has written. The idea of the rape generates a physical response and a loss of the control she asserts when she threatens Richardson with a curse:

Dear Sir, if it be possible--yet, recall the dreadful sentence; bring it as near as you please, but prevent it . . . Blot out but one night, and the villainous laudanum, and all may well be well again. --I opened my letter to add this, and my hand trembles, for I can scarce hold my pen. I am as mad as the poor injured Clarissa; and am afraid I cannot help hating you, if you alter not your scheme. ([c. 20 Oct] 26 Oct. 1748, Corr. 4:20)<sup>2</sup>

Like Clarissa writing the mad papers after the rape, Lady Bradshaigh can not direct or control or her feelings--she "cannot help hating" Richardson. Because, as she frames it, her emotions are now in Richardson's power, she can no longer exert her own authorial powers over him, she can only respond, trembling as she attempts to write. Looking at



scenes of reading such as this, Paul Scott Gordon accuses most readers of Mandevillian misreading, which he defines as reading for self-interest. Most read *Clarissa*, the character and the novel, intellectually rather than sentimentally. Pathetic reactions, such as crying, he writes, “provide readers with an experience immune from rational challenge, and should perhaps be more closely tied to radical, personal religion” (488). One sort of reader we can derive from Lady Bradshaigh’s response, then, is the reader whose response leaves no evidence because it is personal and interiorized.

On the other hand, Lady Bradshaigh’s account of her reading--her insistence upon her right to request Richardson to “alter [his] scheme”--models the debative reader and the reader as writer. Janine Barchas, the editor of the printed volume Bradshaigh marginalia, argues (like others discussed above) that the marginal comments and Richardson’s response to them allow us to see how “Richardson was able to chart reader reaction to *Clarissa* from page to page and locate many of the interpretative fissures in the text . . . his reactions to Lady Bradshaigh’s marginalia certainly implies that he had ‘right readings’ in mind” (23). Again, this marginalia, like the responses found in the letters, is used to focus on Richardson’s compositional practices and his response to his audiences’ misreadings. Barchas, however, pushes us toward seeing Lady Bradshaigh as a more particularized, or individualized, reader, though, observing that her comments were colored by both gender and class. Lady Bradshaigh points out, for example, what she considered vulgar phrases or practices that did not match her experience of upper class behavior. Barchas argues convincingly that Lady Bradshaigh’s comments express an ongoing concern about the failure of mothers, in the novel, to act appropriately maternal (33). But, in this analysis, Lady Bradshaigh emerges as a more individual

reader in large part because Barchas emphasizes her resistance to Richardson as an author: Lady Bradshaigh is not so much a reader as she is a woman writer protesting masculinist assumptions. Barchas assumes an antagonistic relationship between reader and writer, or at least reader and text: “Lady Bradshaigh uses the margins of her book to ‘overwrite’ Richardson’s text with hundreds of annotation . . . partially re-authoring Clarissa in the course of her active reading” (9). Barchas characterizes the comments as revealing “tension” between the reader and writer.

In arguing that Lady Bradshaigh uses the margins to “overwrite” Richardson’s text, Barchas is not the only scholar to identify Lady Bradshaigh as a resistant reader. Following the story of Bradshaigh’s correspondence and marginalia in Pamela and Clarissa, Janice Broder also argues that a writerly Lady Bradshaigh struggles for ownership of this text. Broder is most interested in Lady Bradshaigh’s sense of a class position that entitles her to criticize Richardson and his authorial power. Elspeth Knights reads Lady Bradshaigh’s responses as blurring of the lines between author and reader, noting that the desire to rewrite the story represents a public readership that feels a more intimate relationship with the author. The expectations of real bonds between readers and writer “do not seem to have been bound by any sense of the author as one who wielded the power and authority of a remote father figure” (233, Knights’ emphasis). Although employing the idea that a reader might blur the line between author and reader, in practice Knight, Broder, and Barchas find critical ground primarily by posing the reader against the writers, or in seeing readership only as it evinces writerly practices.

Knights presents the most comprehensive, if condensed, examination of Richardson’s women readers. Although there are shared “perception[s] and polemical

use[s] of the notion of gendered of female reading,” she concludes that “[n]o typical eighteenth century ‘woman reader’” emerges (223). Noting that “[w]hat proved difficult for later critics (including women) was the literal and limited understanding some of . . . [Richardson’s] women readers displayed,” Knights falls into this trap of evaluating readers in terms of later notions of critical reading, as she searches for and tries to describe women readers’ “critical (or quasi-critical) assumptions” (223-224). More usefully, though, she asks “how did [Richardson] influence women’s behaviour, self-perception and social organisation more generally” (223). I would suggest that we might more productively pose this question by asking how did his texts influence women’s behavior, self-perception and social organization? Although many of the circle of Richardson’s correspondents were acquaintances and met socially, one of the premises of my argument is that the relationships between Richardson and his various correspondents were forged through readings of the novels. Richardson’s novels inform the correspondence at the level of content--as correspondents debate the meanings of the novels--and at the level of form--as the correspondents debate like the characters in the novels. In order to see this, we have to be willing to do more blurring of the lines between author and reader, but we need to find a way to focus on that blurring as a way to look at reading, not simply as a way to pull more writers, or critics, out of history.

Lady Bradshaigh was certainly a writer--as the volumes of her correspondence with Richardson attest. In addition to her marginal notes, she wrote two different alternate endings to Clarissa. In addition to her endings, Lady Bradshaigh made extensive marginal notes in her copy of Clarissa. In the first ending, Clarissa will be “brought to the verge of the grave” but then restored to health; she agrees to visit the grief

stricken and seemingly dying Lovelace, and to marry him which then restores him to health (20 November 1748, Corr. 4:203). In the second, Clarissa lives a single but exemplary life in retirement and helps raise Anna's children and a nephew (Barchas 140). Lady Bradshaigh was recognized by her contemporaries as a writer: Sarah Wescomb, considering the possibility that Richardson's correspondence might be published, is perfectly willing to have her own letters included because they are not well written, but she thinks that Lady Bradshaigh "shou'd decline the least desire of having them made known, as it might be mistaken for vanity" (15 Apr. 58, FM IV, 2, ff. 28-29). The work of scholars such as Barchas, Broder, and Knights has begun the work of allowing us to consider Richardson's women correspondents and readers in new light: they are intellectually engaged readers who cannot simply be universalized. But at the same time, these investigations set up an binary of response for women: women can either reject, criticize, or subvert what they read, thus becoming writers, or they can submit to sentimental, physical constructions of female readership and remain largely unstudied and unobservable.

Lady Bradshaigh, however, ultimately concedes artistic power to Richardson. We see this in the way she loses control over the tools of writing, and in the way she subsequently calls herself a convert to Richardson's way of thinking. Lady Bradshaigh converts to seeing the ending of Clarissa from Richardson's perspective. "The desire of having your piece end happily (as 'tis called)," she wrote to him on 3 June 1750, "will ever be the test of a wrong head, and a vain mind." (Corr. 5:269-270). Lady Bradshaigh eventually comes to understand the novel as Richardson claims to have wanted it understood--as a moral tale and not as a novel (with the expected comedic ending): she

has been converted by Clarissa. Conversion works as an initial starting point for discussing the women readers of *Clarissa* since it allows us to begin to describe a process of acceptance that includes, but does not necessarily conclude with, a skepticism about, or refusal to concede, the author's plan. This sort of tension, rather than that existing simply between reader and writer, is what we need to examine more carefully. The tension between wanting to agree (or believe) but having reservations may help bring us closer to the way the readers themselves understood their relationship to the novel and the novelist.

## **II: Anna and Mrs. Howe: The Novel Models Negotiation of Authority**

The friendship between Anna and Clarissa is part of Richardson's response to the criticism that Pamela was an unreliable, perhaps even a manipulative narrator. Providing a contrasting perspective to Clarissa's story, Anna not only understands events from a very different vantage point, but even appears to exist in a different world: "while the main action takes place in an isolated, unusual, and intense world, Miss Howe moves in normal society, visits and receives visitors, is properly courted and goes to balls . . . she responds to Clarissa's idealism with the voice of ordinary life" (Eaves and Kimpel, SR 252). Anna represents the social and the ordinary to the claustrophobic interior of Clarissa's letters and experience. As Clarissa's foil, Anna is also Clarissa's most critical reader since, as Mark Kinkead-Weekes writes, "both friends realise it is Anna's duty to search" out the "things [that] lurk in Clarissa's heart and mind that are not being brought into full consciousness" (Dramatic161). Like Clarissa, Anna is pressured to marry a man of her parent's choosing; unlike Clarissa, Anna marries the man. This parallel narrative shows that while Anna argues against absolute authority, she also concedes to its material

workings. Anna is Clarissa's foil; the Howe's are the Harlowe's. Anna belongs to a family that does not pit a Solmes against a Lovelace or use a tyrannical authority to the exclusion of the possibility of reaching a consensus. The Howes disagree without precipitating rupture.

In this section, I examine the way Anna's arguments with her mother, as represented in her letters to Clarissa, often include her mother's voice and her mother's opinions. I will go on to show that, formally, these parts of the novel and the correspondence between Richardson and his women correspondents echo each other. These echoes include quoting, repeating, reiterating, and manipulating each other's words for argumentative clarity and for rhetorical effect. At the same time, in both the fictional model and the historical correspondence, these forms of close-reading and close-debate work in tension with the desire to agree and the desire to concede, or to hide, disguise, and ignore disagreement.

Rachel Carnell argues that it is not just Clarissa's heart and mind that Anna interrogates, but the larger structure of her belief in divine right, a belief expressed through Clarissa's filial piety. Their correspondence represents a political debate that "recapitulates the public sphere exchanges from the 1680s and 1690s between the proponents of divine right and the proponents of social contract theory" (274-5). Clarissa's ideal of perfect obedience falls in line with the political theory of absolute monarchy, but Anna "espouses the recognizable tenets of social contract theory" (277-6). Carnell goes on to argue that Richardson creates this "highly rational exchange" between women in order to suggest a way--through private letters within the domestic sphere--of including women in public debate. That Anna argues against tyranny and divine right is

important, but Anna's letters often include Mrs. Howe's arguments in favor of the absolute authority of parents. Anna's letters allow, and in many instances, defer to, a key counterargument. Mrs. Howe is a more rational voice than the Harlowe's through which Richardson can express his belief in absolute parental authority; as Anna observes early in the novel, "obedience without reserve . . . is the burden of my mamma's song" (27.132). As Anna's only parent, a widow in control of her own property, and a negotiator of Anna's marriage, she also represents the working of patriarchal interests. But Mrs. Howe is not simply a female Mr. Harlowe. Described in the novel's list of characters as "a notable manager having high notions of the parental authority" (37), Mrs. Howe's "management" prevails over her "high notions," and she seems to represent a more ameliorative version of parental authority. As I will argue, the gendered character of the mother-daughter relationship informs the negotiation, rather than opposition to, parental authority. The exchanges between Clarissa and Anna are not simply polemical since Anna's incorporation of her mother's opinion indicates a true consideration of that opinion; at the same time however, Mrs. Howe's actions often work counter to her profession of the rules of filial obedience since she finds herself able only to enforce that belief conditionally.

Mrs. Howe is virtually a third correspondent in the letters between Anna and Clarissa. She often requires Anna to read as she is in the process of writing, looks over Clarissa's letters and uses Anna as an amanuensis for her own messages to Clarissa. In the early parts of the novel, Clarissa's letters are written and sent in secret; Anna's, on the other hand, are often read and practically co-written by her mother. One of Anna's letters is interrupted twice as Mrs. Howe "breaks in upon" her daughter. The first time, Anna

writes, “[s]he wanted to see what I had written. I was silly enough to read Solmes character to her” (27.130). Mrs. Howe, perceiving the description of this “creeping mortal” as encouraging Clarissa’s disobedience, orders Anna to rewrite that part of the letter. Anna recounts the exchange with her mother, but only after the offending passage, which has been included in spite of Mrs. Howe’s direction. Anna refuses to take out the sketch Solmes’ character in this case, but we and Clarissa nonetheless must read Mrs. Howe’s opinion about its inappropriateness and her censure of her own daughter.

When Mrs. Howe pronounces a “rigorous prohibition of correspondence,” her prohibition structures the letters, forcing Anna to write in secret and in fragments; as she notes to Clarissa: “What an incoherent letter will you have” (100.404). After Clarissa has written the story of her rape, Mrs. Howe allows Anna to write but also “command[s] her to write a separate letter to “let [Clarissa] know her thoughts” (317.1016). Worried about her daughter’s reputation, Mrs. Howe imposes terms on the correspondence, by “insist[ing] on Clarissa’s] prosecuting” Lovelace, and “mak[ing] that a condition on which she permits [their] future correspondence” (317.1017). Clarissa adamantly refuses to take legal measures, so Mrs. Howe revises her conditional approval to surveillance. Clarissa and Anna will write through Mr. Hickman and Mrs. Howe will “see all [they] write” (317.1021). Although Anna points out that parental supervision interferes with the young women’s ability to freely express themselves, complaining that the additional reader “would cramp [Clarissa’s] spirit, and restrain the freedom of [her] thought” (132.477), Mrs. Howe continues to be structuring presence in their letters. At the level of content, Anna disagrees with her mother’s adherence to the dictates of filial obedience-- and enacts this disagreement as she continues to write to Clarissa in spite of prohibitions



and conditions. But while she writes after being told not to, and while her letters often express her frustration that her mother impedes her freedom to write, Anna continues to share her mother's opinions with Clarissa, and to share Clarissa's problems with her mother, indicating the high value she places on Mrs. Howe's opinions and advice.

The letters written as the Harlowes increase their pressure on Clarissa to marry Solmes exemplify the way Mrs. Howe's arguments inform Anna's, demonstrate the similarities between Mrs. Howe's and Anna's argumentative styles. Clarissa considers leaving home--to avoid being sent to her uncle Antony's and locked in--and asks Anna for advice. Anna writes that she "know[s] no more what to say, than before" (56.239) and gives her mother's opinion that the Harlowe family "will recede" (56.239). Clarissa thanks Anna for being inconclusive: "I know not what I should have done had your advice been conclusive in any way" (57.243). As much as Clarissa wants advice, and as much as Anna loves to decry the tyranny of the Harlowes, neither can yet bring themselves, in writing, to propose or recommend outright disobedience and elopement. During the exchange of letters at this moment, Clarissa appreciates Mrs. Howe's advice and wants her approval. The Harlowes silence Clarissa, refusing to allow her in their presence and taking away her pens and paper, but Mrs. Howe (like the readers of the novel) reads the letters between Clarissa and Anna. It is to Mrs. Howe that Clarissa is allowed to explain her aversion to Solmes, her awe of the marriage vows, her desire to get out of the correspondence with Lovelace, and her conflicted sense of duty to her father. When the pressure on Clarissa intensifies, more and more of Mrs. Howe's opinion appears in Anna's letters. Clarissa wants to please Mrs. Howe, and "hopes that" her determination not to leave her father's house "will in a great measure answer your

mamma's expectation of me"(57.244). Clarissa considers Mrs. Howe a vital source of advice and even a substitute mother.

Anna's next letter is taken up almost entirely with a conversation she and her mother had on the subject of arranged marriage. Anna explains this letter saying that "my mamma thinks it of so much importance that she enjoins me to give you the particulars of it" (58.244). She relates her mother's arguments, interspersed with asides to Clarissa. While Mrs. Howe's arguments are written as dialogue, Anna's arguments are written as reported speech giving Anna more room to interrupt and reply to her mother:

'The lovers' imaginaries (Her own word! notable enough! I'nt it?) are by that time gone off; nature, and old habits, painfully dispensed with or concealed, return . . . . And now, she said, the fond pair . . . are continually on the wing in pursuit of amusements out of themselves; and those, concluded, my sage mamma (Did you think her wisdom so very modern?), will perhaps be the livelier to each, in which the other has no share.' . . . .

I insisted upon the extraordinary circumstances of your case, particularizing them. (58.246)

Anna's asides and direct comments to Clarissa seem to undermine Mrs. Howe's line of argument that arranged marriages are no less happy than those made for love. She makes fun of her mother's words and suggests that she is old fashioned. Anna boasts that she herself "said a great deal upon this judgement of the subject" (58.249), arguing for Clarissa's "extraordinary case." She even seems close to persuading Mrs. Howe: Anna concludes that "mamma was so sensible of the force of [the argument], that she charged me not to write to you any part of my answer . . . . And thus, my dear, I set my mamma's arguments before you" (58.249). Despite the digressions and mocking, Anna chooses, in this case, to silence her own (and in her opinion, better) arguments in favor of her mother's. She gives Clarissa this argument in her mother's voice, allowing that voice more authority in the letter itself.

The simple explanation for the inclusion of Mrs. Howe's arguments in Anna's letters is that Richardson needed a more rational mouthpiece than the Harlowes for the tenets of parental authority. But it is important to see that Mrs. Howe is a more rational voice because, contrary to her professed belief in it, she does not insist on absolute obedience. She asks Anna to include her arguments, but she does not always look over her shoulder as she writes, allowing Anna the room to make fun of her and include her own arguments as well. Anna responds in an equally trusting, conciliatory way. When she allows her mother's voice more weight in her letter, she gives Clarissa (whom she knows to be inclined toward her mother's position on filial obedience) a reading choice: Clarissa can choose to read Anna's satire on the old-fashioned Mrs. Howe contained in the digressions and interruptions, or she can choose to read the arguments in favor of arranged marriage. Anna's letters attempt to put all of these positions together-- to accommodate both her mother and her friend.

Although much of the content of their debates, particularly concerning Clarissa's situation, has to do with generational conflict, the differences between Anna and Mrs. Howe reflect assumptions about masculine and feminine rhetorical strategies. Anna is characterized by her mother as "too witty; Anglicè, too pert;" "Ah Nancy" Mrs. Howe says, "you are so lively! so quick! I wish you were less like your papa, child!" (58.245). Because Anna is witty, pert, and quick, she is a masculine debater. We know that the marriage between Mr. and Mrs. Howe was not happy: According to Anna, Mrs. Howe "did not quite govern" the late Mr. Howe (81.331). The absence of her father allows Anna to take his place in these debating situations--but only when Mrs. Howe feels that

Anna is getting the upper hand. The role of the father is implicitly related, in the quarrels between Anna and Mrs. Howe, to “governing” or winning.

Anna is not always the masculine authority her father apparently was. Indeed, the Howes understand their debates in both gendered and generational terms. Despite her pertness, her quickness, and the soundness of her arguments, she does not always win the arguments with her mother. During “another pull” with her mother about whether Clarissa should be allowed to come to the Howes privately, her mother is “unpersuadable.” Anna attributes the argumentative loss to her status as a daughter: “But I am but a daughter--yet I thought I was not quite so powerless when I was set upon carrying a point, as I find myself to be”(81.331). Anna and Mrs. Howe occasionally switch roles in their “pulls,” with one or the other representing the dead father at different times. This movement between gendered roles, as well as the similarity in their strategies and modes of arguing, complicates Mrs. Howe’s role as a voice of (masculine) authority. “Being but a daughter” results in losing the point--and the match. In spite of her more masculine debating skills, when Anna wins, it is only a rhetorical victory, along the lines of including the subversive Solmes sketch after being told not to. In material points, however, such as this one which concerns her mother’s refusal to give Clarissa refuge, or in case of Anna’s own arranged marriage, paternal authority--and the weight of the patriarchy as represented by the widowed Mrs. Howe--wins out. But if Anna loses because she is a daughter, she is also allowed to have a voice because she is a daughter.

The mother and daughter are very similar in their argumentative strategies, further emphasizing the complication of their gendered and generational roles. In the letter,

discussed above, in which she excludes her own argument in her mother's favor, Anna relays the way Mrs. Howe interrupts her:

Indeed, said I, the man is worthy of any woman's love (If, again, I could say)--but her parents, madam--  
Her parents, Nancy--(you know, my dear, how my mamma, who accuses her daughter of quickness, is evermore interrupting!)--(58.249)

In the same way that Anna interrupts her mother by inserting parenthetical asides in her letters about her mother and her mother's opinion, her mother interrupts her in conversation. We already have seen that the arguments Anna puts before her mother in this conversation have some "force" with her mother; Mrs. Howe, although reluctant to support Clarissa against her parents, perhaps does not entirely disagree with her daughter. But she does not want that weakening of her position relayed to Clarissa. In this letter, we see, in spite of the interruptions, that Anna and Mrs. Howe are actually moving toward some sort of interpretative consensus. Rather than see the women's interruptions of each other as attempts to dominate the conversation, I argue that they are attempts to negotiate each other's authority and power with the goal of arriving at agreement.

Anna tells Clarissa, when her mother has allowed the correspondence to resume with her supervision after the rape, that her mother once asserted that "When girls are set upon a point . . . it is better for a mother, if possible, to make herself of their party, rather than to oppose them, since there will be then hopes that she will still hold the reins in her own hands" (319.1021). Mrs. Howe hopes to "hold the reins" of a situation not by opposing it by being "of the party." Although Anna and Mrs. Howe often seem to be competing with each other for dominance in their conversation, Mrs. Howe, the "notable manager" maintains control not by opposing, but by managing, not through the imposition of her will, but through the more subtle manipulations of her psychological

presence in the letters. Anna responds in way that also manages her mother. She never refuses to send Clarissa her mother's advice and opinions, but she manages that advice by framing it with her own words and thoughts.

At the very least, such inclusion of dissent demonstrates Anna's democratic concern for allowing everyone's voice to be heard. This relationship reflects a implicit agreement between the women to manage each other. In Anna and Mrs. Howe, and in the three way debates they carry on with Clarissa, Richardson sets up a model of interaction between women that allows for debate and for agreement. The pert, and yet accommodating, argumentative style of Anna is rooted in the gendered, and affection-based habits of management, rather than opposition, learned through this all-female circle of women. Anna's filial disobedience represents a specifically gendered model for navigating the dictates of patriarchy that in turn authorizes a similar interpretative and rhetorical stance in some of Richardson's readers.

### **III: Richardson and Women Correspondents**

The use of Anna Howe as a model produces two rhetorical and interpretive habits. The model authorizes women to write and respond, but it also limits them. As their exchanges with Richardson show, forms of self-censorship and "reining-in" inform their responses--or, at least, the responses they are willing to put into writing. Although, as correspondents, and in some cases as published authors, these women are writers, I want to focus on the way their responses to Richardson, their readings of the novels, and their use of his novels' characters gesture toward certain reading habits of mind. This habits partake of the limited interpretive authority I have attempted to describe throughout this project. Rather than pose individual interpretations, these readers negotiate their

understandings of the novels (with Richardson, and at times, with each other) often attempting to reach interpretive consensus and turning away, or deflecting, moments of disagreement or interpretive opposition and resistance.

In the following section, I examine some of Richardson's women correspondents for clues about their reading practices and habits. I focus in particular on Lady Dorothy Bradshaigh (c.1705-1785), Lady Elizabeth Echlin (c. 1704-1782), Sarah Kirkham Chapone (1699-1764), Hester Mulso (later Chapone, 1727-1801), and Sarah Wescomb (b. c. 1730). I have chosen not only acquaintances with whom he corresponded most lengthily and prolifically (Lady Bradshaigh and Sarah Wescomb) but have also attempted to represent a range of ages (since the issue of relationships between generations is one point of contention in the arguments). I have chosen writers who were self-consciously private writers, as well as those attuned to the wider audience their private letters might have.

Dorothy Bellingham, married to Sir Roger Bradshaigh in 1731, first wrote to Richardson after reading the first four volumes of Clarissa. Writing initially as Mrs. Belfour, the two corresponded a year and a half before meeting 6 March 1750 (Eaves and Kimpel, SR 230). They continued to correspond prolifically, not only about Richardson's novel Clarissa as he was finishing it, but about Sir Charles Grandison as he was composing that novel around 1750-1753. In addition to discussing the more quotidian details of their lives, their health, and their visits to one another, Lady Bradshaigh and Richardson worked through several debates arising out of the novels: one debate concerned the question of whether women should feel fear and awe toward their husbands, and another centered on Lady Bradshaigh's dislike of old maids. Lady

Elizabeth Echlin, Lady Bradshaigh's sister also corresponded with Richardson. Her letters are more newsy than those of Lady Bradshaigh; she and Richardson only occasionally discuss the novels, but, as I discuss below, her alternate ending of Clarissa is an important example of a reader who sees reading as an exercise in self-censorship.

Lady Bradshaigh, Sarah Wescomb and Lady Echlin did not intend to make their writing public outside of Richardson's circle, although Lady Bradshaigh seems to have suspected that her correspondence with Richardson would eventually be of interest to a wider public (21 Apr. 1758, FM XI, f. 240-241). Sarah Chapone and her future daughter-in-law, Hester Mulso were both published writers; Sarah Chapone published a pamphlet, The hardships of the English laws in relation to wives in 1735; Hester Mulso, discussed in Chapter 2, published short pieces in the 1750s and in 1773 published Letters on the Improvement of the Mind. Here, though, I will be examining an earlier exchange of letters with Richardson that responds directly to Clarissa, her Letters on Filial Obedience (written 1750-51, it was published posthumously in 1807). At the other end of the writerly spectrum is Sarah Wescomb. Wescomb and Richardson met in 1746 through a mutual acquaintance, when Wescomb was in her late teens, (Eaves and Kimpel, SR 199) and corresponded until just before Richardson's death. Although she reads all of the novels multiple times (and, after she is married, refers to Pamela as her "oracle" [FM IV, 2, ff. 25-26, 12 March, 1758]), her comments on the novels are often added as postscripts to letters detailing her mother's ill health, her own visits to friends and relations, and, most often, her uncertainty about her writing skills. The range of correspondents allows us to see some of the gendered reading practices that transcend individual attitudes toward reading, writing, and Richardson.



Richardson termed many of his correspondents--mature and young--the daughters of his mind. Paternalistic and pretentious as it now seems, correspondents so named were unambiguously honored. After only one or two letters, Lady Bradshaigh earns the title, leading her to "assure" him of the "value" she feels for it, which she "shall ever be proud of retaining" if "not of deserving it" (11 Jan. 1749, FM XI, ff. 11). Sarah Chapone thanks him for his goodness in calling "my Daughters yours;" "I bless God, " she continues, "they are in some sort your mental Children; their Sentiments having been early formed by your writings, your first Work coming out just at the time their ductile minds were prepared for the strongest Impressions" (23 Aug. 1758, FM XII, 2, f. 141). The image of being the daughter of one's mind evokes that of Minerva springing from Jove's head. Although the mythical Minerva's mind, of course, was fully-formed at her birth, these articulations of the trope, as well its frequent repetition throughout the correspondence, credit Richardson with a fair amount of responsibility for creating the mind he then claims a certain paternal right to and over. Indeed, as we will see, what is represented by this filial relationship is often unclear: Does it imply that Richardson created these daughters of his mind? Or, does it imply that they have their own independent minds?

Hester Mulso's Letters on Filial Obedience, for example, makes the relationship between paternal and interpretive authority quite explicit. She calls him "my most kind friend! my excellent instructor!" (208). She concludes one letter hoping for agreement:

And may I not flatter myself that we are almost agreed? At least that you begin to think me not quite so rebellious a spirit as you did? I will hope till you tell me otherwise because I wish to think with you on all subjects, and because I am ambitious enough to wish to emulate the excellence in heart and head of my dear papa Richardson; such is the phaeton-like aspiring of His very obliged And affectionate child, H. Mulso. (247)

Since the relationship here is textual, to obey a father means to agree with him and to learn from him. As I shall discuss, the writings of this circle of acquaintances define and redefine filial piety, attempting to qualify the exact extent of the obedience it requires. The tropes of filial obedience, as I argue, were especially connected, for the women correspondents, with issues of reading, writing, and creating. A few of the men he wrote to address Richardson as a father, but this often involved thanking him for advice or material support rather than expressing a desire to “emulate” him in head and heart.<sup>3</sup>

Anna Letitia Barbauld, in her early nineteenth-century edition of Richardson’s letters and account of his life notes that Richardson “had high notions of filial as well as conjugal obedience, . . . [and] expected all those reverential demonstrations of it in the outward behaviour, which are now, . . . so generally laid aside” (Corr. 1: cli). Barbauld quotes Lady Bradshaigh’s “very sensible letters” on this relationship, seeming to find in Lady Bradshaigh a voice for a more familiar or more contemporary (early nineteenth-century) father-daughter relationship. “Filial awe is too much inculcated,” Lady Bradshaigh concludes, after having found “fault with the stile” of the letters. The letters were “too stiff, with the Honoured Sir, and the ever dutiful, constantly occurring” (Corr. 1: cli). That is, Barbauld sees Lady Bradshaigh’s “very sensible letters” as expressing a more progressive familial dynamic. In his reply to Lady Bradshaigh’s criticism, Richardson shows himself aware that his attitudes were, or were becoming, old fashioned: “I had rather (as too much reverence is not the vice of the age), lay down rules that should stiffen into apparent duty, than make the pert rogues too familiar with characters so reverend” (Corr. 1: clii).

The issue of filial obedience was of particular concern in the Richardson correspondence. As Tom Keymer notes, “Richardson held prolonged debates on the subject [of filial obedience and] . . . allowed the debates to proliferate by circulating the correspondence among other potential participants” (RC 97). Although the debates carried out in the letters often move well beyond the topic of filial piety, the filial relationship, especially as the fictional model of Anna and Mrs Howe delineates and complicates it, is a key structuring factor in the rhetoric of the correspondence. My examination of the rhetoric of the letters illustrates the way these readers employ close-reading as managing and reining-in techniques. That is, the character of Anna seems to model a conditional or limited practice of dissent.

#### **IV: Reading and writing ladies: The limits of imagination**

As Ruth Perry has argued, Richardson’s influence spread well beyond his immediate circle and influenced and authorized many women writers and women novelists during the second half of the eighteenth century. “The cultural work of this fiction,” that followed in Richardson’s footsteps, she argues, “was to define and circumscribe ‘the private’ as a set of meanings and activities set apart from ‘public life’” (136). Richardson provided a model for women writers to follow in exploring this realm. Richardson’s novels, and Richardson himself, compelled such response more immediately. When Lady Bradshaigh wrote her first alternate ending to Clarissa she told Richardson that she “could not help transmitting it to paper” (20 Nov. 1748, Corr. 4:203). Edward Young wrote to Richardson after reading Sarah Fielding’s Remarks on Clarissa, that “Your Clarissa is, I find, the Virgin-mother of several pieces; which like beautiful suckers, rise from her immortal root. I rejoice at it; for the noblest compositions need

such aids, as the multitude is swayed more by others' judgements than their own" (Nov. 1749, Corr. 2:27). Women were often grateful for, as Sarah Wescomb writes, the "opportunity to exer[cise] a generous thought." He had, she continues, "given himself really as a Pappa" in allowing her to both "discover" errors to him and be "convinced" of her own errors by his replies (6 Mar. 1746/47, FM XIV, 3 f. 5). Giving himself "as a Pappa" meant, to Wescomb, and many others of Richardson's circle, becoming a reader of their letters. Being a Papa meant encouraging them to become writers, and moreover, according to Wescomb's articulation of the dynamic here, to participate in a writerly give and take.

Richardson frequently asserted that one of the reasons he argued with his correspondents was to encourage them. As he says, to Lady Bradshaigh, of the argument on filial obedience with Mulso, "When I love my correspondents, I write treatises." He does so, he continues, in order to "whet" and to "stimulate ladies, to shew what they are able to do, and how fit they are to be intellectual, as well as domestic companions to men of the best sense" (n.d. Corr. 5:122). Indeed, Richardson defended women's learning against Lady Bradshaigh, who "hat[ed] to hear Latin out of a woman's mouth" (n.d., Corr. 5: 53). Richardson allows that if a "woman has genius, let it take its course, as well as in men; provided she neglect not any thing that is more peculiarly her province" (n.d., Corr. 5:59). He alludes to Elizabeth Carter later in this exchange as the ultimate example of a woman who combines domestic duties and intellectual life (n.d., Corr. 5: 79-80). Women understood him as having a special or unique relationship to them--as not only being a champion for their intellectual development, but as their protector, and champion of their interests more generally. Sarah Wescomb writes that women are but "Worms"

next to men in most cases. Richardson is a notable exception: “in you we are safe,” she notes, because he will “stand up to vindicate the poor creatures, & encourage them to show their Faces without a blush” (14 July 53, FM XIV, 3 f 91 v.).

But, as Richardson hints when he allows women learning but only to the extent that it does not interfere with the duties “more peculiarly her province,” there are limits to Richardson’s acceptance of women’s intellectual activity. I begin, in this section, with a look at the way Richardson responds to Hester Mulso’s attempts to articulate a position disagreeing with his on filial obedience. Richardson, as we will see, asks Mulso to “rein in her imagination,” suggesting that while he encourages women’s endeavors, that encouragement has limits, especially if the woman’s endeavor appears to impinge on the novelistic grounds he considers his own territory. I will then return to the Richardson correspondence, to re-examine it in light of this trope of reining in. While the correspondence enacts the processes of dialogue and close-reading, I argue that the women rein in, or manage, their arguments with Richardson, often disguising disagreement as a way of allowing Richardson to maintain his interpretive--and instructive--authority.

The letters between Mulso and Richardson, written in the winter of 1750-51, circulated amongst Richardson’s correspondents (they were not published until 1807). In them, Mulso contends for the right of the “negative”--the right of a woman to refuse to marry a man of her parents’ choosing. Absolute parental authority, she argues, should be exercised only while the child is extremely young; grown, mentally-mature children should not be expected to submit to parental authority in matters where obedience would contravene a higher duty or authority. The letters are a direct response to the question,

raised frequently in the Richardson correspondence, of whether Clarissa would perjure herself in taking a vow of marriage to Solmes, whom she believes she can never love or honor. Richardson, of course, argued adamantly for absolute parental authority in all cases. The exchange of letters between Mulso and Richardson has implications for the didactic uses of the imagination--a concern of both Richardson's and Mulso's.

Richardson's responses show that he suspected that Mulso's "charming imagination" interfered with her ability to argue rationally. Paradoxically, one of Mulso's points is that Richardson's own imagination should be of better help in informing him of the contradictions of his expressed position on daughter's submission to parental authority.

Richardson's letters are no longer extant, but Mulso includes enough of his replies in her own that it is quite easy to follow the argument; Richardson's views on this topic, are, moreover, repeated in many of his other letters. The argument between Richardson and Mulso heats up after an initial exchange, as he suggests that allowing women to have any say in marital decisions would lead to an epidemic of clandestine marriages. She quotes his question to her--"Dare you, madam, for the generality of the hastys, the impatients, the IMPETUOUS, abide by this test"--before bemoaning the responsibility he places on her.

Oh, wo is me! if I am to answer for all the hastys, the impatients, the impetuous! because I once called myself impetuous in my expressions, and ventured to own a suspicion that tyranny and oppression might have roused in me a spirit of rebellion . . . here I am on a sudden placed at the head of a regiment of hastys, impatients, and impetuous; but indeed I like not the regimentals; for I think you have presented me with a set of Amazonian soldiers all dressed in flame coloured taffety, expert in leaping windows, or scaling walls, but whose conduct is by no means equal to their courage, in which last quality they do indeed exceed Thalestris herself, that famous female warrior who traveled so far to pay a kind visit to Alexander the Great. Choose therefore I beseech you some veteran widow to lead the hearty troops, for I find myself intimidated by our challenge, and absolutely unqualified for the command.

Now, my dear sir, call me Anna Howe, for now I deserve it. But you must give me leave to be a little pert and saucy sometimes, especially when a stroke I did not deserve furnishes me with something like an excuse for it. (232-233, Mulso's emphasis)

Observing that Richardson's interpretation of her argument removes the debate from the realm of philosophy to the realm of popular romance, Mulso mimics Richardson and finds her argumentative feet by resorting to a fictional world. Her image of the regiment of hastys in flame-colored taffety underscores Richardson's romantic and sexually-charged exaggeration of the implications her argument (which depends on rational, intellectually mature young women). But Mulso immediately apologizes for hitting back hard with her retreat into the character of Anna. Mulso takes on the character of the pert and saucy Anna as a way to deflect her criticism of Richardson's argument away from herself. By calling herself Anna, she re-imagines the debate as occurring between Richardson and his own character--or, since Anna is also a daughter of Richardson's mind, as a conflict within Richardson himself.

Richardson is so concerned to press his point that he often deliberately and obtusely misunderstands Mulso's meaning. He even carries this reading practice into the reading of his own work, transforming a metaphor of his own making into an absurdly literal statement, and continuing the practice of moving Mulso's argument from the philosophical to bodily, adds more explicitly sexual overtones to Mulso's attempts to posit a rational, mature feminine character. In the novel, shortly after Clarissa leaves Harlowe Place, she and Anna debate the limits of parental protection. Clarissa argues that Anna should be grateful for being treated as a child especially as she approaches the age of marriage: "Is not the space from sixteen to twenty one that which requires this

care, more than any time of a young woman's life? For in that period do we not generally attract the eyes of the other sex, and become the subject of their addresses, and not seldom of their attempts?" (133.480). Continued protection is necessary for women as they become more sexually attractive. Clarissa, tricked and trapped by Lovelace, then modifies her assertion to include "every age this side of matrimony," asserting "the wings of our parents are our most necessary and most effectual safeguard, to preserve us from the vultures, the hawks, the kites and the other villainous birds of prey that hover over us with a view to seize and destroy us, the first time we are caught wandering out of the eye of our watchful and natural guardians and protectors" (133.480). Clarissa is beginning to understand the dangers of being alone, young, and unmarried, and argues more forcefully for a continued duty to parents, most particularly as that duty provides a return in protection.

Mulso repeats Clarissa's image, but takes up Anna's argument about more mature women: "Suppose a woman lives single till forty," she asks, "I fancy by that time the HAWKS, vultures, and kites will give her very little trouble; and that she might be pretty secure from the danger of being DEVoured, though she should have the courage to creep from under the wings of her parents (214). While Anna's argument extends merely to the ability of a young woman to make some of her own choices, Mulso clearly wants to assert the existence of women who are able to act in the world without parental guidance--she is discussing a grown woman--"of age to know the law she lives under, and to dispose of her own property" (214). To emphasize this aspect of her argument, she makes her hypothetical women forty, and thus well beyond the age when she might (according to Clarissa's assessment) "attract the eyes of the other sex." This woman can



act in the world without being married precisely because she is no longer sexually attractive.

Mulso is not simply conceding to the period's equation of youth and sexual attractiveness; rather, she is attempting to separate women's sexual character from their mental, or rational characters in order to emphasize, (as Clarissa herself exemplifies), the existence of mental maturity and independence. Mulso contests Richardson's and the period's ascription of dependence and mental simplicity (if not childishness) to women. In creating a hypothetical, middle-aged orphan as part of this line of thinking, Mulso attempts to move the discussion from the problem of sexual voraciousness to the problems of financial dependence. Here again she insists on noticing and emphasizing that women's sphere of activity cannot be limited to sexuality. Mulso uses the metaphor of the birds of prey in the same way that Richardson uses it, comparing marriageable women to chicks and men to birds of prey. But she extends the analogy when she suggests that chicks grow up and that some chicks must learn to survive without the protection of parental wings. In her extension of the image, women are protected not simply from sexually rapacious men, but are protected legally by their parents. Nonetheless, Mulso proposes a *feme-sole*, who understands the "law she lives under" and knows how to "dispose of her own property," as a rhetorical move. It serves her argument because that argument depends on the woman's reason, not on her passion.

When Richardson takes up the metaphor (his own metaphor we must remember) he changes the terms of the metaphor, refusing to continue the analogy of birds of prey and chicks to parental protection and focusing instead merely on the danger the birds of prey present--on the sexual undertone of the implied attack. As Mulso represents his

argument, he claims that she, a “naughty girl: had ‘intimated . . . that because the men of prey . . . did not, and could not, eat and drink quite up, or devour these intrepid, these venturesome girls, they had little or nothing else to fear from them’”(242). She peppers him with questions at this point--“Who was it intimated this? What is that put you in mind of the nonsensical pert answer of a little saucy forward minx of a girl to her careful mamma? Who could this be?” (242). She finally concludes that the pert answer making light of a mother’s fears for her daughter’s chastity or reputation must have come from “one of the four ladies of quality that laughed at the sufferings of Clarissa” (242). In any event she concludes by asserting that it could not have been herself:

I am sure it was not your Miss Mulso, your child. But is it thus you interpret my words, naughty Mr. Richardson? Because I carried on your own allusion; and when you likened the men of prey to hawks, vultures, and kites, likened the dangers young women have reason to fear from them to those of a poor little chicken just going to be snapt up and devoured. ‘Does it therefore follow, that because these men do not eat women, there is little or nothing else to fear from them?’ Did I intimate any such thing? But I forgive you, provided you never say such a thing of me again. (242)

The naughtiness of which Richardson accuses Mulso (and of which she is clearly not guilty) is that of taking part of the metaphor literally. In other words, Richardson’s fictional Mulso pretends to understand literal birds of prey as dangers to women or girls, and thus makes light of them since human girls cannot be eaten by “hawks, vultures, and kites.” Mulso notices Richardson’s narrowing of the situation to sexual predation, and as she retorts that he has misread her, she makes it clear that it is he, not she, who has moved the comparison into to realm of illicit sexuality, figuring the prostitutes as his muses here. Richardson accuses Mulso of ignoring the sexual implications of women who act on their own, but, as Mulso points out, she is simply “carry[ing] on [his] own allusion.” Richardson, in refusing to see how the metaphor can expand to anything

beyond the problem of seduction, denies Mulso the authorial right to extend or “carry on” a rhetorical figure--or even simply to follow a line of argument through to a logical conclusion. By consistently mis-reading and by foreclosing attempts to build on the work he has such a proprietary, or territorial, connection to Richardson reserves literary language and literary didacticism for himself.

Mulso is not merely interested in debating the limits of parental authority, she is interested in debating the extent to which women’s thinking--imaginative, rational and spiritual--can or should be taken seriously. Noting that Richardson has been a “constant advocate for the reading and writing ladies” (243) she scolds him for “sneering” at her arguments by contextualizing her writing within a larger pattern of female intellectual deficiency:

But indeed, dear Sir, you have mixed a sneer with your rebukes that should to have been there, however audacious and peremptory I may have been, whatever sagacity I may have seemed to assume, and however contrary my doctrines may have been in the characteristic graces of my sex, in meekness, patience, resignation, submission, let not I beseech you, the reading and writing ladies suffer for this . . . . Let it not then, on my account, be made a doubt whether ‘our forefathers were not in the right when they bestowed so little attention on the education of girls. Forbid it science! Forbid it justice! that the sex, and the cause of learning, should thus suffer for the faults of one ignorant girl . . . . Let me obtain mercy, if not for myself, yet for the reading and writing ladies, for such of them at least as are innocent of any design to make ‘poor parents nothing at all,’ who never ‘made SUCH suppositions, taught SUCH doctrines, or asserted SUCH privileges for children as could only be defensible, were parents to be GENERALLY unnatural and STUPID, and children GENERALLY wiser and more reasonable than their parents. (243-244)

Mulso clearly sees Richardson as having authorized the use of the imagination for edifying and didactic purposes. Echoing Lady Bradshaigh’s sentiment that he has the ability to “make the very soul feel” (Corr. 4:179), Mulso wonders how Richardson, with his “amazing strength of thought and penetrations” (217) can maintain a view which

seems so unsympathetic to women. Richardson's novels provided an opening for taking women's mental, spiritual, and emotional lives seriously. But Richardson's uncompromising paternalism, tinged perhaps by an underlying sense of competition, stifles them nonetheless.

Mulso reports feeling stung by Richardson's rejection of her ideas. When he takes a stern tone with her, she turns to self-censorship. We will see this move enacted below by several of Richardson's correspondents. Mulso argues that parental intention can be misguided and compares the misguided wish of the Harlowe family that Clarissa marry Solmes to a mad parent feeding a child poison (222). Mulso's point, of course, is that the Harlowes do not really understand Clarissa, but in this same letter she also criticizes parents who choose husbands for their daughters for financial reasons, noting that older people often appear, to their young charges, "cold," "close and designing," and "covetous and mean" (218). Richardson's response to the series of critiques of parental judgment is severe. He reprimands Mulso, writing: "But I am really sorry, my dear Miss Mulso, to find you, on more occasions than one, depreciate the understandings of parents; rein in, I beseech you, my dear child, on these important subjects, your charming imagination" (243).

Mulso carefully recounts the experience of reading this admonition to rein in her imagination. It occurs in a "sad paragraph" which made her "cry out so" when she read it. She wonders, "Why had I not the heart [on first reading the letter] to take a pen knife and scratch it out again that it might not have thus obtruded itself on my sight?" (242). Mulso asks him to conceal the offensive portions of her letter: "well then, scratch out of my letter that vile passage . . . Whilst I on the other hand, preserve and often read over

this wholesome admonition, ‘Rein in, on these important subjects, your imagination’ (243). Mulso wants to unmake the disagreement by scraping all of the offending words off of the page. She preserves his “admonition” to read over repeatedly “because it came from my dear Mr. Richardson, and however, severe it may appear, there is kindness under every word, and sweet instruction mixed with the bitterness of reproof . . . . For there is not gall in his ink, but only precious balm and honied drops of salutary counsel” (243). Mulso correctly interprets this reprimand to rein in her imagination not merely as a response to her own stance on parental authority, but as a more general censure of her thinking and writing as a woman. But the response is not to oppose or resist this censure. Rather Mulso’s response is to agree almost forcefully by expressing a desire to unwrite--to “scratch out”--the words that have offended him.

Richardson makes her a “writing lady” because she was compelled to respond, initially to Clarissa, and then to continue to rebut his many misreadings and misconstructions of her argument. In the same creative way, he fathers her in her role as Anna Howe--crafting the model of pert, yet affectionate, debate she employs. But, Richardson’s stern warning to rein in her imagination indicates that her creative energies will be managed--especially as those energies are directed against paternal, patriarchal privileges. But Mulso’s deferential posturing--her address to him as a father, her deflection of her argument onto a character, and her naming of Richardson as the generative source of her own writing--all suggest that she accedes to this management. Reining in, paradoxically, allows her to continue to write.

As I have been tracing, Richardson’s letters compelled response, and response was encouraged by him. And yet, just as the compulsion to debate works in tension with

the desire to agree, the correspondence shows a high level of ambivalence from women about the extent to which Richardson was truly encouraging their intellectual endeavor-- and allowing them to read and respond as they desired. Although his correspondents argue with him, they simultaneously construct Richardson as a reader who, when he scolds, mangles their words, and perverts their meanings, is not misreading, but providing instruction. The filial relationship in these cases uncannily reflects Richardson's own belief that, as he wrote to Frances Grainger "in all reciprocal Duties, the non-Performance of the Duty on one part is not an excuse for the Failure on the other" (22 Jan. 1749/50, SL 144). Some of the forms of their engagement with each other in these letters may look like reciprocity, but upon closer inspection, we see that duty for the women consists of accepting and even embracing his admonitions and scoldings. Yet even as they are frightened or crying out at his harshness, they claim to be receiving "honied" instructions. They disguise or avoid disagreements, or attempt to quickly hide them away (as if in their work bags, as we will see below) when they inevitably arise.

#### **V: Arguing with "Papa" Richardson**

In the previous section, I suggested that Richardson wanted to limit the imaginative and interpretive agency of Hester Mulso. In this section I turn the focus slightly to see how women readers internalize that limitation when they argue with him. In other words, one aspect of the model Anna Howe provides is generative, allowing women to respond to Richardson and be pert and saucy. But this model of debate has what we might think of as a built-in reining mechanism. As they agree to enter Richardson's world, these women readers also agree to the limits and limitations of that world.

Hester Mulso, argues, in her own words, quite “tenaciously,” while maintaining a consistent posture of deference. She begins and closes her letters hoping that the two of them are reaching a happy middle ground. Asserting her own position, she nonetheless, claims that she continues to write “in order to have them [her opinions] rectified by you” (205). She also frames the letters between them in rational rather than personal terms: “my mind is open to conviction, and wishes for truth, and not for victory” (208). In light of the whole exchange, it would be easy simply to charge Mulso with taking an ironic tone in this particular instance. But the themes of wanting to agree, of attempting to maintain an open mind, and of desiring to learn from Richardson are so consistently voiced in the correspondence that we must attempt to understand the kinds of reading and responding habits they represent. Are such stances merely postures, or the conventions of polite epistolarity?

In response to the complaint that his letter was too brief, Richardson writes to Lady Bradshaigh that it was “Lady-like” for her to “take [him] to task” for a one-sheet note. Picking up this phrase and interpreting it as a sarcastic rebuke, Lady Bradshaigh responds, “‘How Ladylike,’ How you love to tack a reproach to that likeness” (30 June 1754, FM XI, f. 106). The phrase “How Ladylike” resonates as he wonders whether there was a “a necessity . . . to interpret those words rather into a reproach than a commendation?” (9 July 1754, FM XI, f. 110). She sticks to her initial reading, asking, “And did I interpret wrong, your innocent Lady-like. Answer me from your heart; Did I?” (6 Aug. 1754, FM XI, f. 113). As inconsequential as it seems, she is still referring to this exchange a month later when, at his request, she reluctantly agrees to number the paragraphs of her letters. She admits that she “ought oftener and sooner to submit but

there is an Innate something that creates a fondness for one's own way, don't you think so Sir? Or is it only Lady-like" (27 Sept. 1754, FX XI, f. 128).

To say that the epithet of "Lady-like" is unstable is to understate the case. Does it imply the desire to be sent longer letters? And should that desire be commended, as Richardson teasingly implies? Is it "Lady-like" to want one's own way, or to submit to masculine, authoritative requests? What then, might we make of Richardson's observation, during the same exchange, that "Encroachment," is indeed "Man-like." "one end of my writing," he continues, "is to warn against encroaching men" (9 Oct. 1754, FM XI, f. 132). Even as it plays with them, the exchange suggests some gendered assumptions about writing and debating. Women like long letters, and like to have their own way, but feel a duty to submit; men can be encroaching in their expectations of women. More importantly, an exchange like this allows us to glimpse reading habits through letter writing habits. Richardson and Lady Bradshaigh are very close-readers, refusing to let even the smallest phrase go with comment, and resorting (although for only a short period of time) to numbering paragraphs to facilitate this close attention. At the same time, however, this close-reading works to define and redefine the term "Lady-like." Here, I want to trace is the forms of close reading employed by the readers and writers of the Richardson circle. Although close reading can be employed as a form of argumentation, the instability generated in the exchange above suggests that it may also be a mode of arriving at a point of consensus (and a new definition) beyond argument.

Many students of Richardson's correspondence have noticed the way the correspondents return to, reread, and respond minutely to each other's writing. Tom Keymer, working from the thesis that Richardson wanted to foster debate with his



readers, notes the way Richardson's letters are evasive. Richardson often refers his correspondent to text of the novels, and "challenges the reader's opinion, puts questions," but not in "a dictatorial way" (RC 65). A letter from Richardson is "geared not to explanation but to interrogation, and rather than correcting readers it invites them to correct themselves . . . continuing his insistence on the reader's own final responsibility for the production of textual meaning" (RC 65). Although ignoring the potential for violence in correction and interrogation (a potential made manifest in his exchange with Hester Mulso), Keymer accurately describes some of the processes employed by this circle. Keymer's overall thesis is that Richardson wanted his readers to become better critical readers. The correspondents express their desire, however, to resolve debates, and to come to a single mind about the issues (novelistic and otherwise) they discuss. If we employ Michael Warner's definition of the critical reader as one who understands the "enframing, metapragmatic construal of the situation of reading" (32), we encounter problems trying to fit readers who, like Mulso, express the desire to "think with" Richardson on "all subjects." Surely having the same mind implies an absence or erosion of the mediation of this self-conscious reading practice. We can more carefully characterize the correspondents intentions when we move beyond, or put aside, the critical reading goal of participation in debate or proliferation of textual meaning, and begin to look at a range of desiderata including arrival at consensus, edification, and the practice of self-censorship.

Phrases such as "to begin with your first paragraph" (Lady Bradshaigh to Richardson, 30 June 1754, FM XI, ff. 106) open many letters, and the writers of this circle get into little pets if their correspondent has "passed over unintendedly" any

pertinent passages (Richardson to Lady Bradshaigh, 8 December 1753, FM XI, ff. 49). Lady Bradshaigh complains when Richardson does not respond minutely enough because he has neglected to re-read or have her letter before him as he writes. Is it “reasonable” she asks, that she should be “be oblig’d to tell” him the contents of his “former letter?” (25 Sept. 1753, FM XI, f.25). Although formally we might see these as techniques of close debate and rebuttal, Lady Bradshaigh explains in this exchange that whenever Richardson fails to respond to something she has written, she sees it as a loss to herself (27 Nov. 1753, FM XI, f. 41). As Richardson and Sarah Chapone debate whether the marriage vow entails a future promise--Richardson’s rebuttal to the claim that Clarissa would perjure herself in a marriage to Solmes--Richardson claims that even if he is shown to be wrong, he will be a “great Gainer” by the debate (18 Apr. 1752, FM XII, 2,f. 65 v.). The attention to every part of every letter is an aspect of welcoming, not necessarily critiquing, the thoughts of another mind.

One of Richardson’s management techniques was to take bits of his correspondents’ writing, quote and then manipulate the words; we have seen this above with Hester Mulso’s letters. Making lengthy exact transcriptions of each other’s letters, the correspondents include the voices of their epistolary interlocutors in order to refute--and manage--certain arguments. Richardson’s correspondents often complained, however, that he misused their words and refused to listen to them: “You write my Words without taking my Meaning,” complains Lady Bradshaigh (29 Mar. 29 [1751], FM XI, f. 22). At other times, Richardson expressed a desire to quote what he thought was particularly admirable; as he writes to Hester Mulso, “I should adopt and transcribe for you your whole letter” (20 July 1750, Corr. 3:164). At times this quoting works as

manipulation, and results in an overbearing tone; at others it suggests that the words are important enough to be repeated, and thus considered carefully and closely. Although the former is clearly in the realm of critical debate, and clearly a way that Richardson exerts his interpretive authority over his correspondents, the latter repetitive practice works more as a meditation or reflection, along the lines of his own volume of sentiments taken from the novels.

Sarah Chapone, at one point, writes Richardson a letter mocking his belief in women's subordinate position in marriage. She writes, at the request of her husband, to thank Richardson for his hospitality to one of their daughters, but she takes the opportunity to satirize husband's control over wives by writing as if she had been commanded, and as if her husband were master over her mental capacities. Chapone begins by saying that her letter reflects her husband's "perspicacity and judgment in all cases" (21 Sept. 1754, FM XIII, 1, f. 115). Because the husband knows "the exact extent and limits of all and singular the mental abilities--powers--and faculties of my loving subject my wife" (f. 115), he has the "indisputable authority to be the regulator of the wife's conscience." She continues in this vein, claiming that as a wife she is "dead in law." Being "a wife" she asserts, means "being nothing," and therefore she "can know nothing" (f. 115). Her letter is not simply a response to her own husband's request, but a more direct response to Richardson's ongoing arguments for women's subordination. Using the standard shorthand of this circle for dispute--a reference to Anna Howe--John Chapone has written, in a postscript to this letter, that "[t]his Anna Howe of mine cuts back stroke and fore stroke, and spares neither of us, she often takes upon herself to be most provokingly obedience. She is sure to do what I bid her, but then it must be in her

own way” (f. 116 v.). Interestingly, Mr. Chapone articulates, through the character of Anna Howe, the very negotiation between obedience and provocation that informs so much of the correspondence.

Richardson responds to this letter of two sheets with six (written front and back) of his own, closely written in a response that pairs Sarah Chapone’s words with his own in columns; in this answer he writes two to three lines for every one line of hers. This side-by-side style, although it looks superficially like dialogue, is often used when Richardson is most worked up. He uses this form to describe his dispute with George Faulkner, the Irish bookseller who attempted to profit from pirated copies of Sir Charles Grandison, writing his response in a distinctive reddish ink rather than the dark brown or black he uses for transcribing Faulkner’s arguments (to Lady Elizabeth Echlin, 24 Nov. 1753, Berg Collection). A challenge to his belief in women’s subordination requires the same form as this challenge to his intellectual property. The sort of moral indignation the form implies in the correspondence is echoed in Pamela when Pamela responds with equal moral indignation and close attention to Mr B’s proposals and conditions for making her his mistress (164-167).

Among Richardson’s observations are that Sarah Chapone would have made “Tyrant of a Husband;” and that he has “ever thought it dangerous to trust women with Power” (6 Oct. 1754, FM XIII, 1, f. 147). Suggesting that women are tempted to make use of their learning to rebel or question subordination, Richardson becomes inarticulate as he contemplates the wife who thinks more highly of her own judgment than of her Husbands--“Why--why--let her--I am again at a loss for Expression” (f. 148 v). At another point, he writes, “How often, am I compelled to say O dear! O dear!”(f. 151). I

notice Richardson's method of response--the lengthy two-column format (reserved for issues of utmost importance), and a repetitive, exclamatory style masking his inability to formulate coherent rebuttals--as a way to point out how different their views on women, in this instance, were. Their views diverge to such an extreme that Richardson (Richardson!) often cannot find the words to bridge the gap between their perspectives.

And yet, Sarah Chapone, like so many of the correspondents, had the habit of apologizing for disagreeing. Her warmth of temper, she suggests, "transports" her into "impertinent Contradiction" (Mar. 1752, FM XII, 2, f. 47). She compliments Richardson on his "Patience" in attending to dissenting opinions, and apologizes for producing yet more dissent (22 Feb. 1752, FM XII, 2, f. 60 v.). Despite the generation of more argument, though, Richardson and Sarah Chapone see their debate as moving toward consensus: "I thought we should in a very little while have nothing to debate about," Richardson notes when Sarah Chapone finally concedes that Hester Mulso's argument on filial obedience places too much authority in the hands of children (18 Apr. 1752, FM XII, 2f 66). In this debate, what occurs is a movement by both Richardson and Chapone toward terms that make it appear that they are agreeing. They move away from the place they started--Sarah Chapone's agreement that Clarissa's marriage to Solmes would be perjury--and toward the common ground of filial obedience.

Like Sarah Chapone, Hester Mulso moves away from discord toward the assertion of a kind of agreement that only masks their on-going disagreement. At the same time, though, the deflection of dispute generates new meaning. Mulso's letters illustrate an approach to managing disagreement in what she terms being "open to conviction" (215). At times, she slightly modifies her line of argument and pays strict attention to the

nuances of every turn of phrase; she even allows that she “express[ed herself] too strongly with regard to forced marriages” (215). Agreeing that the sentiment had “too much warmth,” she goes on to “consen[t]” to some of his points, “retracts” her own points, and “allows” minor changes the articulation of her argument: “I must likewise retract from the force of these words: A guilt that would drag her into perdition” (222). These minor changes and concessions allow (or should allow) the writers to move toward redefining the terms of their disagreement. The effect of all of these small changes and her deferential stance toward Richardson, as well as his severity toward her, is that she refines her original argument without really giving way to Richardson. Nonetheless, as she refines the argument she comes to more subtle definitions of love, duty, and obligation to parents--the more necessary since as she points out the state/family analogy is, if not collapsing, undergoing revision: “The measures of a king’s authority are in this country,” she writes, “more exactly settled, and may be more precisely known than those of the parent’s which are left a good deal to human reason to wrangle about” (229).

While Hester Mulso and Sarah Chapone move to further refinements of a disputed term or idea, Lady Bradshaigh is less resisting reader, frequently finding herself entirely convinced or converted by Richardson. Early in their correspondence, they disagreed about Clarissa’s death, with Lady Bradshaigh suggesting that, perhaps, he could bring the “divine Clarissa to the very brink of destruction” but then have a “turn” to take the story to a happy ending. She realizes he will object to this because she “pretend[s] to know your heart so well, that you must think it a crime, never to be forgiven, to leave vice triumphant, and virtue depressed” (10 Oct. 1748, Corr. 4:179). Suggesting that he could write a note to his readers explaining the change of plan, she calls herself the “mistress of

a consummate assurance, in offering to put words in the mouth of the ingenious Mr. Richardson” (10 Oct 1748, Corr. 4:180). Lady Bradshaigh’s “assurance” or impertinence is surely one of the more notable aspects of the correspondence with Richardson--as her own reluctance to reveal her name or to meet Richardson in person later suggests, she was breaking several conventions of polite behavior and gendered modesty in initiating a correspondence in writing. Just as she maneuvers between forward and shy in writing to Richardson, her letter disagreeing with his ending negotiates disagreement by taking the tone of an apologetic impertinent.

Lady Bradshaigh gradually comes to accept Clarissa’s death as a happy ending, now arguing merely about the early date of her death. “[T]he only difference between us,” she assures him, “is whether she ought to have it now, or after some more years of happiness in this world” (20 Nov. 1748, (Corr. 4:211). She later further re-evaluates her stance on Clarissa’s death: “I am ashamed of my seeming obstinacy, and that I will endeavour to bring myself to your way of thinking, tho’; I dare not promise it” (6 Jan. 1748/49, Corr. 4:248). Lady Bradshaigh has a sense that she and Richardson are in accord at a fundamental level, and because she knows his heart, she suspects he won’t like the new ending. Much later, Lady Bradshaigh again asserts the nearness of her own mind to Richardson’s, wishing that Mrs. Donellen and Mrs. Mulso “had not dissented from us. Is there a similarity in our thoughts, I hope so” (3 Mar. 1754, FM XI, f. 93). After having gone through her letters for their possible publication, Lady Bradshaigh notes some misunderstandings surrounding jokes, which she claims sometimes do more harm than good; she continues that “this is not the only article in which I am your convert.” (21 Apr. 1758, FM XI, f. 240). She early senses that there is a similarity in

their thoughts and hearts, but that similarity only becomes apparent through a process of conversion.

The correspondents evince a determination to keep writing until consensus is reached. Moreover, in this exchange with Hester Mulso, we see the correspondents reading--and misreading--each other closely not to produce textual meaning, which has been the focus of many studies of Richardson correspondence, but to articulate concerns about key aspects of women's lives. As Elspeth Knights suggests, by pushing his female readers toward a "diversity of response" Richardson forced them to "revise their literary and social preconceptions" (229). I would expand this rather unidirectional notion of influence. The pattern of reading I have been tracing--even though Richardson usually refuses to cede much ground and the women he corresponds with seem happy to relegate themselves to the position of impertinent contradictors--shows both Richardson and his correspondents attempting to convince and influence each other.

After Lady Bradshaigh has re-read the correspondence with an eye to having it published, she writes to Richardson that he "will find many passages dismiss'd concerning a subject about which, we never cou'd agree. Indeed I think my self much more blameable upon a repersual, than I did when they were wrote, but many of my too lively ridicules I have left for the sake of your instructive and just rebukes" (21 Apr. 1758, FM XI, f. 240).<sup>4</sup> Disagreement continues to be framed as instructive, with the instruction here clearly moving from Richardson to his initial reader, Lady Bradshaigh, and then, by example to the imagined later readers of the correspondence. But while some moments of productive dispute remain, other moments are "dismiss'd," and it is the gesture toward avoiding appearance of dispute to which I now turn. Although



correspondents such as Sarah Chapone and Hester Mulso assert agreement and deflect contention by turning to new terms and ideas, Richardson's correspondents frequently express a more explicit desire to hide or cover over any form of disagreement.

When Richardson and Lady Bradshaigh debate Harriet's frankness, in Sir Charles Grandison, for example, Lady Bradshaigh uses an image of hiding disagreement drawn from the novel itself. Richardson and Lady Bradshaigh are considering whether Harriet is overly frank (in admitting her admiration for Sir Charles), and Richardson has noted "Inflexibility" in Lady Bradshaigh's position in comparison to some of his other "Readers who are less inexorable" (11 Dec. 1753, FM XI, f. 58). Lady Bradshaigh claims that she will "drop" her argument if he persists in calling her "inflexible and inexorable," which are "two strong words, considering how small a matter there remains" between them on the subject, emphasizing the diminishing matter of disagreement. Lady Bradshaigh has a material way of dealing with the strong words: "I have a work bag," she announces, "as well as Charlotte and this shall lie in the bottom of it" (5 Feb. 1754, FM XI, f. 70). Like Charlotte Grandison who puts quarrels in her work bag and takes them out later for judgment (5.11.1216), Lady Bradshaigh will stockpile these unflattering letters in her own bag, in order to take them out for discussion when they meet later (5 Feb 1754, FM XI, f. 70). That she wants to hide the letters suggests that they serve as unpleasant embodiments of contention. Charlotte's use of the work-bag device suggests that she believes a personal conversation, and the judgment of additional acquaintances, will dissipate the quarrel. Invoking Charlotte, Lady Bradshaigh asserts her reliance on the ameliorative effect of face-to-face discussion in the broader social context of North End (Richardson's house).

Lady Bradshaigh and Richardson tease each other quite frequently, and, in spite of Lady Bradshaigh's insistence that the instruction is on his side, they disagree as equals. At times, Richardson was quite a perverse reader, suggesting that there were emotional stakes that might lead to the glossing over of dispute. Sarah Wescomb found herself in the position of needing to apologize to Richardson for not writing while she was visiting with friends (at Ankerwyke). Apologizing for the delay, she describes all of her activities (rowing, walking in the hills, dancing, whist), wonders whether he disapproves of them, and then compliments herself on being "frank and open" (15 Oct. 50, FM XIV, 3, ff. 57-8). Richardson scolds her, prompting her to term his letter "ill-natured:" "[F]or how cruelly has it pulled mine in Pieces! not dissected, but tortured and mangled! Poor thing! it was so disfigured after passing your Hand, I should scarce have known it again; my best Meanings perverted" (23 Nov. 50, FM XIV, 3, ff. 59-61). The topic continues over several letters, with Wescomb eventually claiming that she is "really frightened" by the "many heavy charges" which have "bent" her "round shouldered" (25 Jan. 1750/51, FM XIV, 3, f. 65 v.). Richardson closely reads and responds to her letters, but perverted and mangled her intentions to frightening degree. Although Sarah Wescomb is, of the correspondents I examine here, the least likely to stand up to her adopted papa, the knowledge of such a potentially cruel reader certainly plays into the willingness and ability to disagree with Richardson for all of these readers. Richardson later apologizes for his sternness, telling Wescomb that he took on this tone as an exercise in style. "Perhaps it was only Vanity, to shew you how I cou'd vary my Style," he writes (1 Feb 50/51, FM XIV, 3, f. 69). Indeed, William McCarthy suggests that Anna Barbauld retains this exchange in her edition of the correspondence because of its "novelistic

character” and “its relevance to questions of child-parent relations” (205-206). The question implicit in Richardson’s appropriation of the creative or fictional aspect of the Ankerwyke exchange, though, is whether parent or child is allowed to be novelistic.

Lady Echlin’s comments about her alternate ending illustrate the way we can see this issue of hiding disagreement more clearly as one of reading rather than debating (or writing). Just as we may have a difficult time seeing the desire for consensus underneath the language of debate, we have a hard time understanding readers who were truly shocked at Richardson’s story. One of these was Lady Echlin who believed that Clarissa was too pure and too smart to get into Lovelace’s power and be raped. Lady Echlin does not hide the disagreement away, or suggest erasing the disagreeable words, but turns her desire to avoid the unhappy ending into an alternate ending. This ending begins after the fire-scene, when Clarissa has escaped to Hampstead, and Lady Echlin writes a Clarissa who is suspicious of Lovelace’s every move. Belford and Captain Tomlinson are expeditiously reformed and become allies against Lovelace’s schemes. After many assertions, by Clarissa and other characters, of her virtue, Clarissa still dies. James, Jr. dies after running upon Lovelace’s sword, but not before he gives Lovelace a wound that contributes to that man’s death. Lady Echlin’s ending is notable for her insistence that events have material causes. Richardson teasingly notices, for example, that Lovelace dies of “a Consuming Illness and broken Heart” (Alternate Ending 132). And, where Richardson would allow description to speak for itself, Lady Echlin moves into explicitness, describing Clarissa’s “deathly face” and emaciation (Alternate Ending 128); in addition to being emaciated, Clarissa’s death seems related to a persistent cough.

Richardson leaves the reader with a dilemma of faith--we have to believe, or at least feel for a point, as Clarissa does about her spiritual reward. We must believe that she is taken into an after-life reward because she is not thoroughly vindicated in her lifetime. But, Richardson also seems to want the reader to feel and experience the frustration of the issue not being resolved. The lack of resolution, furthermore, illustrates an aspect of Clarissa's submissiveness to her fate. It is part of her overall passiveness and meekness not to protest her innocence even though others may judge her wrongly.

Lady Echlin, according to Elspeth Knights, portrays a "notion of virtue [which] is naively materialistic" (231); this is in contrast to Richardson who relies on the reader's conviction about after-life happiness to fulfill the "Christian plan" of the novel.

Richardson allows the distinction between earthly corruption and spiritual happiness to be implied, but Lady Echlin wants explicit and immediate resolution and vindication. In taking the moral seriously, in objecting to the rape, and in reforming Lovelace, Lady Echlin's reading is, however, partly in keeping with Richardson's didacticism; Dimiter Daphinoff suggests that she "read Richardson very much the way he hoped to be read" (Alternate Ending 24). In spite of her naive materialism, though, Knights sees Lady Echlin as a resistant reader, noting that she "remained impervious to her place in the social subtext" of daughterhood as a rhetorical position. Indeed, Echlin refuses to read according to the internalized voice of paternalized correction, or the desire to reach interpretive consensus I have been tracing in other readers. Writing that "every sensible reader must allow, this History contains many Excellent things," Lady Echlin goes on to assert that she "must freely object against some parts of the story, which . . . serve only to wound good minds, & can not probably contribute toward mending corrupt hearts." "I

absolutely disagree with him in several material points,” she finally proclaims (Alternate Ending 172). These material points appear to be not only the rape, but the duel between Lovelace and Morden, which are “done directly opposite to the Religious system” (Alternate Ending 173). Lady Echlin and Richardson agree that novels should have a didactic point, but disagree about how that should be conveyed.

Knights argues that Lady Echlin was “unreceptive” and unwilling to “acknowledge the evidence of her own emotional responses” (231); Knights understands Echlin’s unarticulated response to be criticism of a world (like her own) in which women are powerless and virtue is not rewarded. But what if we situate Lady Echlin’s response within a paradigm of self-censorship? Taking cues from the way she characterizes her own reaction, we might say that Lady Echlin actively suppresses these emotional responses--emotional responses to the explicit violence and sinfulness of the rape and the duel--and writes her alternate ending, as part of a practice of pious and modest reading. According to Richardson (re-quoting her) the ending was written for “Self-Amusement, and to divert [her] thoughts from every shocking part in the Story” (19 Apr. 19 1755, Berg). Rather than ignoring her response, she knew she was shocked and wanted to divert herself. The ending, thus, reveals the reading habits of a reader who has very strict ideas about what she should and should not read: she feels a moral or religious obligation to suppress and divert herself from such scenes. We might compare this with the silence between the rape and the telling of the rape discussed in the previous chapter. While in that case, Richardson orchestrates his narrative (putting silence between the event and the retelling of the event) to avoid direct offense of female readers’ delicacy, here Lady Echlin, as a reader, composes her own story to address that same concern. Echlin’s

response is less available to us now, or appears as unself-conscious, not necessarily because she was unwilling to acknowledge it, but because she was more willing to accept a world in which women were powerless.

Lady Echlin's alternate ending, and this mode of reading that involves self-censorship, can be usefully compared to Tom Keymer's review of Jane Collier's reading of the fire-scene. Collier responds to Philip Skelton's objections to the scene, and, according to Keymer, "adroitly turned on its head" the notion that the scene would offend women's modesty. Collier notes the implicit masculinity of perspective which leads to such an objection, writing that those who perceive the scene as arousing are guilty of "dwelling more strongly on the Person of the lovely Sufferer, than on her Innocence and Distress." (qtd. in "Jane Collier" 153). Keymer argues that Collier "forthrightly claims the right to read what and as she chooses, returning with interest the patriarchal assumptions about reading that had been used to attack the scene" (153). But is she reading what she chooses within a model of defiance? Collier writes that "should any Improper Ideas arise in my Mind, I shall always condemn myself, and know that it can proceed from no Reason but not keeping within the Bounds . . . [Richardson] intended to prescribe" (qtd. in "Jane Collier" 151). She reads what she chooses because she censors the ideas that arise in her mind as she reads. (I have found one bit of material evidence for a similar practice in a copy of Jonathan Swift's "Letter to Young Lady Newly Married" in the Huntington Library. In a passage warning newly-married women to avoid public displays of affection, he writes that observers of such a display will "assign two very unamiable reasons for it: the one is gross hypocrisy; and the other has too bad a name to mention" (240). The phrase "too bad a name" has been inked out: Did the

reader find it embarrassing merely to be reminded that physical desire existed? The copy has no other markings.) Collier's argument for readerly freedom is tempered by a strong sense that the right to read entails responsibility for curbing improper readings.

I have been suggesting that such a readerly position might be informed by the reader's gender and social position relative to an author (or authorship). The women who read Richardson and thought about his novels, to continue to use Knights' phrase, did assert their emotional responses. But, while they did not always agree with him, they limited their own interpretive authority in these exchanges. They assert agreement even when the issues being debated remain under dispute, thus deflecting contention onto other subject in order to protect their relationship with Richardson. They also consciously seek to hide or cover up disagreement. These techniques, I suggest find a fictional source in Anna Howe's contentious, and yet contained, relationship with her mother. If a good character is a "gauntlet thrown out" to the readers, these readers seem often to have used this model of daughterly disobedience, both explicitly and implicitly, to cover and muffle the hands that held pens rather than picking it up to signal readiness to fight. This chapter attempts to move from these somewhat muffled responses to a habit of reading minds that move between resistance and dispute and acceptance, conversion, and agreement.

---

<sup>1</sup> Parenthetical references to The correspondence of Samuel Richardson . . ., ed. Anna Laetitia Barbauld (6 volumes) are abbreviated Corr.

<sup>2</sup> Eaves and Kimpel suggest that this letter should be dated 20 Oct 1748 (SR 185).

<sup>3</sup> See in particular letters from John Duncombe (24 Aug 1754, Corr. 2: 295 and 302-304); and letters from William Strahan (17 Aug. 1749, Corr. 1: 138).

<sup>4</sup> William McCarthy, in his article on Anna Barbauld's editing practices, mentions some of the markings and revisions made by Lady Bradshaigh, but there remains work to be done to untangle and interpret the many markings and later comments made to, and within, the letters.

## Conclusion

As I was finishing this project in November 2007, the National Endowment for the Arts published a new “Report on Reading” and I assigned my students--in a writing class exploring the idea of media shift--the task of writing an essay about personal experiences with media. The NEA study reconfirms the trends of the 2003 study I mentioned in Chapter 1: People are reading less, and especially reading less frequently for pleasure. Moreover, the report suggests that “[a]lthough there has been measurable progress in recent years in reading ability at the elementary school level, all progress appears to halt as children enter their teenage years” (5). Many of my students who readily confessed to being non-readers, also observed in their essays that not-reading was a recent habit. I was astonished at the number of students who identified themselves as former readers. We used to read, they said, and we used to be encouraged to read; now we are pressured to simply glean facts for tests or reports; we have to get and keep jobs; we are engaged in extracurricular activities and want to have active social lives. In short, they concluded, we don’t have time to read, and no one encourages or rewards us for reading. Although some blamed the institutional imposition of dull books they called “the classics” for their lack of interest, overwhelmingly these students simply understood the habit of “not reading” as an aspect of adult life. In contrast, the NEA report suggests that there appear to be correlations between habits of reading and academic and life-long financial success. Readers are more likely than non-readers to vote, to volunteer, and to exercise and play sports. “The cold statistics,” the preface to the report, written by Dana Gioia, concludes, “confirm something that most readers know but have mostly been reluctant to declare as fact—books change lives for the better” (6). Readers are, according to the writers of the



report, more likely to have more fulfilled, successful, active, and civically engaged adult lives.

My students, as university students, are not, perhaps, the demographic about which the NEA is most concerned. Having been readers, it seems likely that they will return to earlier reading practices. Additionally, as students in transition from high school to college, they are unsurprisingly--if sophomorically--critical of educational processes and institutions. But it is important, I believe to notice the generational or historical change: these students are moving away from the belief evinced by the study that reading is a necessary component of a worthwhile life. My students' divergent understanding of the place, value, and function of reading illustrates, of course, that assumptions and ideologies about reading change. The reader, however, observes this calm rejection of a bookless world with incomprehension and disbelief; reports on the decline of reading such as the NEA's are littered with words like "alarmingly" and "disturbingly." As exemplified by my (groundless, and yet comforting?) prediction that these students will eventually see the light and become readers again, readers are unable to imagine unreaderly worlds.

A similar failure of imagination works in the opposite historical direction. As this project has suggested, a reading world in which the reader is not, and does not strive to be, an autonomous reading individual is quite disorienting. We have so long considered reading to be foundational to the construction of individual--and political--agency, that we find it difficult to understand reading habits that question the individual's role in interpretation and the construction of meaning. Firmly held beliefs that reading and civic life are beneficially intertwined make it difficult for us to perceive or recognize reading

activities that do not overtly contribute, or intend to contribute, to personal or societal enlightenment.

Furthermore, as I argued in Chapter 1, our methods for discovering the historical reader emphasize these activities because they are the very activities that manifest themselves in the most material forms. In drawing attention to religious reading, in the context both of instructions for engaging in the practice, and in its novelistic representation in Clarissa, I hope to have indicated one direction we might take in beginning to characterize readers who disavow individual interpretive agency. In describing what I have called a limited interpretive authority in this circle of readers, I have tried to describe a readerly position that exists between the implied reader and the resisting reader. The letters between Richardson and his female readers also provide us with a unique example of the way the idea of daughterhood informs such reading practices, shaping a gendered reading practice that simultaneously agrees and disputes. Indeed, this project focuses on the related problems of the methodology of finding and describing historical readers whose practices might not leave evidence and women's reading. Women readers present a particular methodological problem since not only are they less likely to leave material evidence, but they are more likely to be acculturated in a way that subordinates their response and range of expression to existing interpretive authority. In other words, this study has focused on the women readers of Richardson's circle, in part because they most explicitly reveal the problem of limited interpretive authority.

In developing my argument about the interpretive practices represented in Richardson's novel, though, I found it expedient to construct a binary along the lines of

female and male readers--interpretive authority in the first part of the novel, I suggested, came bound with the voices of patriarchal authority. Although I am convinced that Richardson intended a critique of misguided patriarchal authority, as represented by the perverted distribution of power in the Harlowe household, it is not clear, of course, whether the representation of interpretive authority in the novel is strictly illustrative of actual historical reading practices. We still need to ask about the extent to which the problem of asserting only a limited interpretive authority exists for men as well. Although these problems are made most explicit by women's gendered, and thus subordinate and less perceptible, position in the economies of communication and expression, further examinations of both literary representations of men reading, of didactic texts addressed to men, and of men's written responses to their reading experiences, are needed. Aaron Hill was, according to Eaves and Kimpel, hurt by Richardson's cool response to (210 SR) to suggestions--solicited by Richardson--about editing and revising the novel. I hope that this project contributes to further investigations of the way this response accords with the responses of other male readers of Richardson.

Richardson's representation of men readers in the novels, points us not only in the direction of the additional studies of gendered reading that are certainly needed, but, I would argue at those very blind spots--the assumption that readers will assert their own interpretations and inadequately historicized notions of critical reading--that I have argued make a range of historical reading practices difficult to perceive. I argued in Chapter 3, that Lovelace and Belford demonstrate great skill as critical readers; Richardson insists, though, that they are bad readers. Lovelace and Belford consistently

arrive at misreadings. We remember, for example, that Belford and Lovelace see the meditations as aesthetic objects rather than as spiritual guides, and as signs of Clarissa's mental state rather than as signs of her spiritual state. Belford comments upon style and aesthetics, he attempts to situate the composition of the text relative to the writer's biographical and historical situation, and he historicizes the reading experience more generally with his reference to the use of the Bible within educational institutions; surely these are the skills of critical reading. In performing this kind of reading, however, Belford deflects the reading experience away from himself and away from the personal application that Clarissa's reading (and writing) of the same texts illustrates. Lovelace understands aesthetic reading, but his misreading more often takes the form of manipulating interpretation to fit his own line of thinking. Moreover, Lovelace's misreadings are insistently secular, refusing to understand Clarissa's texts as spiritual practices by constructing them as near-allegories of her relationship to him. But while Lovelace can see himself symbolically at the center of some of Clarissa's texts, both Belford and Lovelace are readers so removed from the realm of religious reading that they fail to understand a patently obvious allegory and scriptural allusion when Clarissa writes her letter about meeting Lovelace in her "father's house." Again, many of these habits of reading partake of critical, or even scholarly practices--this is reading marked by its secularism, its situation of reading within historical contexts, its attempt at investigation into the intentions of the author, and its construction of arguments from the available texts. But, while we now might celebrate--and teach--many of these skills, Richardson gives these skills to the most rakish, and villainous characters in the novel.

Richardson famously suggested that he wanted his readers to be “Carvers” of the text. Tom Keymer contends that Richardson figures the reading and interpretative processes in his novels, and especially in Clarissa, in order to teach readers how to read: He “knowingly fostered the active participation of his readers, whom he expected to become, ‘if not Authors, Carvers’” of the text. “The instructiveness of the novel,” Keymer continues, “derives precisely from this method of putting readers, morally and intellectually, on their mettle. It is by an active encounter with difficulties and not by the passive reception of lessons, that Richardson’s reader may learn” (RC, xviii; the quotation about “carvers” is from Richardson to Lady Bradshaigh, 25 Feb. 1754, SL). Keymer’s argument that Richardson wanted to put his readers appears persuasive because it sketches a form of reading with which we are already familiar. This argument allows us to believe that Richardson wanted his readers to be critical readers. My argument, on the other hand, points out that the most critical readers in the novel are also its most egregious misreaders.

Indeed, we have another Richardson, a Richardson who just as famously called those did not get the moral lessons of the novel--its Christian plan--the “Vulgar readers”--and anticipates, in some ways, the current methodological dilemmas this project attempts to articulate. As he writes to Aaron Hill, “I find, Sir, by many Letters sent me, and by many opinions given me, that some of the greater Vulgar, as well as all the less, had rather it had had what they call, an Happy Ending” (qtd. in Eaves and Kimpel, SR 217-218). This is certainly the Richardson who creates Lovelace as a frustrated reader at the end of Clarissa, always hoping that she will communicate with him when she is actually communicating with God. Even if we are not part of the “greater Vulgar” who want a

happy ending, I would suggest that Richardson's sense of "the Vulgar" as the secular readers looking for earthly justice and the tangible reward (of marriage), uncannily predicts the development of a contemporary reliance on material evidence and individually assertive readers in the history of reading. Richardson's warning about the kinds of misreadings and misreaders his novel produced will be instructive as we attempt to comprehend the readers who declined to send letters or give opinions.

## Works Consulted

### Primary Works

- Barbauld, Anna Letitia. Selected poetry and prose. Ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft. Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2002.
- Bennett, John. Letters to a young lady, on a variety of useful and interesting subjects: calculated to improve the heart, to form the manners, and enlighten the understanding. London, 1789.
- Chapone, Hester Mulso. Letters on Filial Obedience. Bluestocking Feminism: Writings of the Bluestocking Circle, 1738-1790. General Ed. Gary Kelly. Vol. 3: Catherine Talbot and Hester Chapone. Ed. Rhoda Zuk. London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999. 205-247.
- . Letters on the Improvement of the Mind. Zuk. 261-356.
- Chapone, Sarah. The hardships of the English laws in relation to wives. With an explanation of the original curse of subjection passed upon the woman. In an humble address to the legislature. London, 1735.
- Echlin, Elizabeth, Lady. An Alternative Ending to Richardson's Clarissa. ed. Dimiter Daphinoff. Bern: Franche AG Verlag, 1982.
- Duff, William. Letters on the Intellectual and Moral Character of Women. 1807. Ed. Gina Luria. New York: Garland, 1974.
- Fénelon (François de Salignac de la Mothe- Fénelon). Instructions for the Education of a Daughter, by the Author of Telemachus. To which is added a Small Tract of Instructions for the Conduct of Young Ladies of the Highest Rank with Suitable Devotions Annexed. Done into English, and Revised by Dr. George Hickes. London, 1707.
- . "The Education of Girls." Fénelon on Education. Ed. H.C. Barnard. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1966. 1-93.
- Fielding, Sarah. Remarks on Clarissa. 1749. Ed. Peter Sabor. Los Angeles: Augustan Reprint Society, William Andrews Clark Library, 1985.
- Fordyce, James. The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex . . . . A Discourse in three parts. London, 1776.
- . Sermons to young women: in two volumes. London, 1766.
- Gregory, John. A Father's Legacy to His Daughters. 1774. Ed. Gina Luria. New York: Garland, 1974.
- Johnson, Samuel. "Rambler #4" Samuel Johnson. Ed. Donald Greene. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1984.
- Locke, John. Some Thoughts Concerning Education. Eds. John H. and Jean S. Yolton. Oxford: Clarendon, 1989.
- Lowth, William. Directions for the Profitable Reading of the Holy Scriptures together with some Observations for the Confirming their Divine Authority and Illustrating the Difficulties thereof. London, 1708.
- Manley, Delarivier. Secret Memoirs and Manners of several Persons of Quality, of both Sexes. From the The New Atalantis, an Island in the Mediterranean [1709]. Ed. Rosalind Ballaster. New York: Penguin, 1991.

- Milton, John. Paradise Lost [1667]. Ed. Scott Elledge. New York: Norton, 1993, 1975.
- Murry, Ann. Mentoria: Or, the Young Ladies Instructor, in Familiar Conversations on Moral and Entertaining Subjects: Calculated to improve young minds, In the essential, as well as ornamental Parts of Female Education. Dublin, 1779.
- Ostervald, J[ean] F[rédéric]. The holy Bible . . .with the Arguments prefixed to the different Books and Moral and Theological Observations at the end of very Chpater composed by the Rev'd Mr Ostervald. Translated at the desire of the SPCK. Glasgow, 1771
- . The Necessity and Usefulness of reading the Holy Scriptures and the Dispostions With which they ought to be Read. Trans John Moore. London, 1750.
- . An Abridgement of the History of the Bible. London, 1715.
- Pennington, Sarah, Lady. An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to her Absent Daughters; in a Letter to Miss Pennington. London, 1761.
- Pope, Alexander. Poems. Ed. John Butt. New Haven: Yale UP, 1951-1969.
- Richardson, Samuel. Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady 1747-48. Ed. Angus Ross. New York: Penguin, 1985.
- . A Collection of the Moral and Instructive Sentiments. 1755. Ed. James E. Evans. New York: Scholars Facsimiles and Reprints, 1980.
- . The correspondence of Samuel Richardson . . . selected from the original manuscripts . . . To which are prefixed a biographical account of that author and observations on his writings by Anna Laetitia Barbauld. 1804. New York : AMS Press, 1966.
- . Familiar Letters on Important Occasions. 1741. New York: Dodd, Mead & CO, 1928. Ed. Brian W. Downs.
- . The history of Sir Charles Grandison. Ed. Jocelyn Harris. New York, Oxford UP.
- . Pamela or, Virtue Rewarded. 1740. Ed. T.C. Duncan Eaves and Ben Kimpel. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1971.
- . Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson. Ed. John Carroll. Oxford: Clarendon, 1964.
- Savile, George, Marquess of Halifax. The Lady's New-Year's-Gift: Or, Advice to a Daughter. 1688. The Complete Works of George Savile, First Marquiss of Halifax. Ed. Walter Raleigh. Oxford: Clarendon, 1912. 1-46.
- Scott, Sarah. A Description of Millenium Hall. 1762. Ed. Gary Kelly. Peterborough, Ont: Broadview, 1995.
- . A Journey Through the Various Stages of Life. Bluestocking Feminism: Writings of the Bluestocking Circle, 1738-1790. General Ed. Gary Kelly. Vol. 5: Sarah Scott. Ed. Gary Kelly. London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999.
- Swift, Jonathan. "Letter to Young Lady Newly Married" The Lady's Pocket Library. London, 1797.
- Talbot, Catherine. Reflections on the Seven Days of the Week. London, 1770.
- Talbot, James. The christian school-master: or, the duty of those who are employ'd in the publick instruction of children: especially in charity-schools. To which is added, a collection of prayers upon several occasions, for the Use of the Master and Scholars. Together with Directions and Instructions concerning Confirmation; and suitable Devotions Before, At, and After it. London, 1707.
- Waterland, Daniel. Advice to a Young Student. With a Method of Study for the First Four Years. Oxford, 1755.



Wilkes, Wetenhall. A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to A Young Lady: In a new and familiar method; Being A system of Rules and Instructions to qualify the Fair Sex to be useful and happy in every State. London, 1744.

### Manuscript Works

Richardson, Samuel. Correspondence, 1748-1762. Victoria and Albert Museum. Forster Collection, MSS. XI-XVI.  
 ---. Correspondence. New York Public Library. Berg Collection.

### Secondary Works

Aldburgham, Alison. Women in Print: writing women and women's magazines from the restoration to the accession of Victoria. London, George Alland and Unwin, 1972.  
 Altick, Richard. The English Common Reader. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1957, 1998.  
 Anderson, Jennifer and Elizabeth Sauer, eds. Books and Their Readers in Early Modern England. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2002.  
 Anderson, Jennifer and Elizabeth Sauer. "Current Trends in the History of Reading." Anderson and Sauer 1-20.  
 Armstrong, Nancy, and Leonard Tennenhouse, eds. The Ideology of Conduct: Essays in Literature and the History of Sexuality. New York: Methuen, 1987.  
 Ballaster, Ros. Seductive Forms: women's amatory fiction from 1684-1740. Oxford: Clarendon, 1992.  
 Barchas, Janine. The Annotations in Lady Bradshaigh's copy of Clarissa. Victoria, B.C., Canada : English Literary Studies, University of Victoria, 1998.  
 Barker, Gerard A. "The Complacent Paragon Exemplary Characterization in Richardson." SEL 9.3 (Summer 1969): 503-19.  
 Barker, Nicolas. "Typography and the Meaning of Words: The Revolution in the Layout of Books in the Eighteenth Century." Buch und Buchhandel in Europa im achtzehnten Jahrhundert. The Book and the Book Trade in Eighteenth-Century Europe. Ed. Giles Barber and Berhhard Fabian. Hamburg: Dr Ernst Huaswedell & Co, 1981. 126-165.  
 Barney, Richard A. Plots of Enlightenment: Education and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999.  
 Baron, Sabrina Alcorn, Elizabeth Walsh, and Susan Scala, eds. The Reader Revealed. Washington D.C.: Folger, 2001.  
 Baron, Sabrina Alcorn. "Red Ink and Black Letter: Reading Early Modern Authority." Baron, Walsh, and Scala, 18-30.  
 Bartine, David. Early English Reading Theory: Origins of Current Debates. Columbia, SC: U of South Carolina P, 1989.  
 Battigelli, Anna. "'To Conclude Aright Within Ourselves': Narcissus Luttrell and the Burden of the Protestant Reader, 1678-88." Baron, Walsh, and Scala. 75-83.  
 ---. "John Dryden's Angry Readers." Anderson and Sauer. 261-281.  
 Beasley, Jerry. C. "Clarissa and Early Female Fiction." Flynn and Copeland. 69-96.

- Benedict, Barbara, "Jane Austen and the Culture of Circulating Libraries: The Construction of Female Literacy." Revising Women: Eighteenth-Century 'Women's Fiction' and Social Engagement. Ed. Paula R. Backscheider. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000. 147-199.
- Berlin, Isaiah. "Two Concepts of Liberty." Four Essays on Liberty. London: Oxford UP, 1969. 118-172.
- Borck, Jim Springer. "Composed in tears: The Clarissa Project." Studies in the Novel 27.3 (1995): 341-50.
- Bottigheimer, Ruth B. The Bible for Children from the Age of Gutenberg to the Present. New Haven, Yale UP, 1996.
- Brewer, John. "Reconstructing the reader: prescription, texts and strategies in Anna Larpent's reading." Raven, Small, and Tadmor. 226-245.
- Brink, J.R., ed. Female Scholars: A Tradition of Learned Women before 1800. Montreal: Eden Press, 1980.
- Broder, Janice. "Lady Bradshaigh Reads and Writes Clarissa: The Marginal Notes in her first edition." Flynn and Copeland. 95-118.
- Brown, Murray L. "Authorship and Generic Exploitation: Why Lovelace must Fear Clarissa." Studies in the Novel 30.2 (1998): 246- 259.
- Carnell, Rachel. "Clarissa's Treasonable Correspondence: Gender, Epistolary Politics, and the Public Sphere," Eighteenth-Century Fiction 10.3 (1998): 269-286.
- Castle, Terry. Clarissa's Ciphers: Meaning and Disruption in Richardson's Clarissa. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982.
- Cavallo, Guglielmo and Roger Chartier, eds. A History of Reading in The West. Trans. Lydia G. Cochrane. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1999.
- Cavallo, Guglielmo and Roger Chartier. "Introduction." Cavallo and Chartier. 1-36.
- Cavallo, Guglielmo. "Between *Volumen* and Codex: Reading in the Roman World." Cavallo and Chartier. 64-89.
- Chaber, Lois. "Christian Form and Anti-Feminism in Clarissa." Eighteenth-Century Fiction 15.3-4 (2003): 507-37.
- Chartier, Roger. Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988.
- . Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Codex to Computer. Philadelphia: U Pennsylvania P, 1995.
- . The Order of Books. Trans. Lydia G. Cochrane. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1994.
- . "Reading Matter and 'Popular' Reading: From the Renaissance to the Seventeenth Century." Cavallo and Chartier 268-283.
- Clarke, Norma, "Soft Passions and Darling Themes: from Elizabeth Singer Rowe (1674-1737) to Elizabeth Carter (1717-1806)." Women's Writing 7.3 (2000): 353-371.
- Collinson, Patrick. "The Coherence of the Text: How it Hangeth Together: The Bible in Reformation England." The Bible, The Reformation, and the Church: Essays in Honor of James Atkinson. Ed. W.P Stephens. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.
- Cragg, Gerald R. The Church and the Age of Reason, 1648-1789. London: Penguin, 1988.
- Crawford, Patricia. Women and Religion in England 1500-1720. London: Routledge, 1993.

- Cressy, David. Education in Tudor and Stuart England. London: Edward Arnold, 1975.
- . "Levels of Illiteracy in England, 1530-1730." Historical Journal [Great Britain] 1977 20(1): 1-23.
- . Literacy and Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980.
- Crosman, Inge, and Susan R. Suleiman, eds. The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980.
- Crosman, Robert. "How Readers Make Meaning." College Literature 9 (1982): 207-215.
- Culler, Jonathan. "Prolegomena to a Theory of Reading." Suleiman and Crosman. 46-66.
- . "Readers and Reading." On Deconstruction. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982. 31-83.
- Curran, Stuart. "Dynamics of Female Friendship in the Later Eighteenth Century." Nineteenth-Century Contexts 23 (2001): 221-239.
- Darnton, Robert. The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History. New York: Norton, 1990.
- de Certeau, Michel. The Practice of Everyday Life. Trans. Steven Rendall. Berkeley: U of California P, 1984.
- DeMaria, Robert Jr. "Samuel Johnson and the Reading Revolution." Eighteenth-Century Life 16 (November 1992): 86-102.
- Dolan, Frances E. , "Reading, writing, and other crimes." Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture. Ed. Valerie Traub, M.Lindsay Kaplan, and Dymphna Callaghan. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. 142-167.
- Doody, Margaret. A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson. Oxford: Clarendon, 1974.
- . "Richardson's Politics." Eighteenth Century Fiction 2.2 (1990): 113-126.
- Doody, Margaret Anne and Peter Sabor, eds. Samuel Richardson: Tercentenary Essays. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989.
- Eaves, T.C. Duncan, and Ben Kimpel. Samuel Richardson: A Biography. Oxford: Clarendon, 1971.
- . "The Composition of Clarissa." PMLA 83 (1968): 416-428.
- Eagleton, Terry. The Rape of Clarissa : Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982.
- Erickson, Robert A. Mother Midnight: Birth, Sex, and Fate in Eighteenth-Century Fiction (Defoe, Richardson, and Sterne). New York: AMS, 1986.
- . "'Written in the Heart': Clarissa and Scripture." Eighteenth-Century Fiction 2.1 (1989): 17-52.
- Ezell, Margaret. "John Locke's Images of Childhood." Eighteenth-Century Studies 17.2 (1983/4): 139-155.
- . "Mr Spectator on Readers and the Conspicuous Consumption of Literature." Literature Compass 1 (2003) 18C 014, 107.
- Favret, Mary. Romantic Correspondence: women, politics, and the fiction of letters. Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1993.
- Fergus, Jan. "Provincial servants' reading in the late eighteenth century." Raven, Small and Tadmor. 202-225.

- . "Women readers: a case study" Women and Literature in Britain, 1700-1800. Ed. Vivien Jones. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. 155-176.
- Ferguson, Frances. "Rape and the Rise of the Novel." Representations 20 (1987): 88-112.
- . "Reading Morals: Locke and Rousseau on Education and Inequality." Representations 6 (1984): 66-84.
- Finkelstein, David, and Alistair McCleery, eds. The Book History Reader. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Fish, Stanley. Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1980.
- . The Living Temple: George Herbert and Catechizing. Berkeley: U of California P, 1978.
- Flint, Kate. "Reading Practices." Finkelstein and McCleery. 316-323.
- . The Woman Reader, 1837-1914. Oxford: Clarendon, 1993.
- Flynn, Elizabeth A. and Patrocínio P. Schweickart, eds. Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP; 1986.
- Freeman, Lisa A. "'A Dialogue': Elizabeth Carter's Passion for the Female Mind." Women's Poetry in the Enlightenment: The Making of a Canon, 1730-1820. Ed. Isobel Armstrong and Virginia Blair. London: Macmillan, 1999. 50-63.
- Frei, Hans W. The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics. New Haven: Yale UP, 1974.
- . Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays. Ed. George Hunsinger, William C Placher. New York: Oxford, 1993.
- Genster Julia. "Belforded Over: The Reader in Clarissa." Flynn and Copeland. 142-162.
- Gill, Sean. Woman and the Church of England: from the eighteenth century to the present. London: SPCK, 1994.
- Gilmont, Jean-François. "Protestant Reformations and Reading." Cavallo and Chartier 213-237.
- Ginzburg, Carlo. The Cheese and the Worms. Trans. John and Anne Tedeschi. New York: Penguin, 1976, 1980 (trans.).
- Goody, Jack, ed. Literacy in Traditional Societies. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1968.
- Gordon, Scott Paul. "Disinterested Selves: Clarissa and the Tactics of Sentiment." ELH 64.2 (Summer 1997): 473-502.
- Graff, Harvey. The legacies of literacy: continuities and contradictions in western culture and society. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987.
- . "Reflections on the History of Literacy." The Labyrinths of Literacy: Reflections on Literacy Past and Present. New York: The Falmer Press, 1987. 15-43.
- Grafton, Anthony. "The Humanist as Reader." Cavallo and Chartier. 179-212.
- Grundy, Isobel. "'A novel in a series of letters by a lady': Richardson and some Richardsonian novels." Doody and Sabor. 223-250.
- . "Seduction pursued by other Means? The Rape in Clarissa." Flynn and Copeland. 255-267.
- Guest, Harriet. "Bluestocking Feminism." Reconsidering the Bluestockings. Pohl and Schellenberg. 59-80.

- . Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2000.
- Guillory, John. "The Ethical Practice of Modernity: The Example of Reading." The Turn to Ethics. Ed. Marjorie Garber, Beatrice Hanssen, and Rebecca L. Walkowitz. New York: Routledge, 2000. 9-46.
- Hackel, Heidi Brayman. "'Boasting of silence': women readers in a patriarchal state." Sharpe and Zwicker. 101-121.
- . "The Countess of Bridgewater's London Library." Anderson and Sauer. 138-159.
- Hamesse, Jacqueline. "The Scholastic Model of Reading." Cavallo and Chartier. 103-119.
- Heller, Deborah. "Bluestocking Salons and the Public Sphere." Eighteenth-Century Life 22.2 (1998): 59-82.
- Hoggart, Richard. The Uses of Literacy. New York: Oxford, 1957, 1970.
- Houlihan, Carol Flynn, and Edward Copeland, eds. Clarissa and Her Readers: New Essays for the Clarissa Project. New York: AMS, 1999.
- Hudson, Nicholas. "Arts of Seduction and the Rhetoric of Clarissa." Modern Language Quarterly 51.1 (1990): 25-43.
- Hunter, J. Paul. Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth Century English Fiction. New York: WW Norton, 1990.
- Hynes, Peter. "Curses, Oaths, and Narrative in Richardson's Clarissa." ELH 56.2 (Summer 1989): 311-326.
- Ingrassia, Catherine and Claudia N. Thomas. eds. "More Solid Learning": New Perspectives on Alexander Pope's *The Dunciad*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2000.
- Iser, Wolfgang. The Implied Reader; patterns of communication in prose fiction from Bunyan to Beckett. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974.
- . "Interaction between Text and Reader." Finkelstein and McCleery. 291-296.
- Jardine, Lisa and William Sherman. "Pragmatic Readers: knowledge transactions and scholarly services in late elizabethan England." Religion, culture and society in early modern Britain: Essays in honour of Patrick Collinson. Ed. Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994. 102-124.
- Johns, Adrian. "The physiology of reading Restoration England." Raven, Small, and Tadmor. 138-161.
- . The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998.
- Jones, Vivien. "The Seduction of Conduct: Pleasure and Conduct Literature." Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century. Ed. Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey Roberts. New York: New York UP, 1996. 108-132.
- Jones, Vivien, ed. Women and Literature in Britain, 1700-1800. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000.
- Kelly, Kevin. "Scan This Book!" New York Times Magazine. 14 May 2006: 43-71.
- Keymer, Tom. "Clarissa's Death, Clarissa's Sale , and the Text of the Second Edition." Review of English Studies 45. 179 (1994): 389-96.
- . "Jane Collier, Reader of Richardson and the Fire Scene in Clarissa." New Essays on Samuel Richardson. Ed. Albert J. Rivero. New York: St. Martin's, 1996. 141-61.
- . Richardson's Clarissa and the Eighteenth-Century Reader. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.

- . "Richardson's Meditations: Clarissa's Clarissa." Doody and Sabor. 89-109.
- Kilfeather, Siobhán. "The rise of Richardson criticism." Doody and Sabor. 251-266.
- Kinkead-Weekes, Mark. "Clarissa Restored?" Review of English Studies. n.s. 10.38 (1959): 156-171.
- . Samuel Richardson: Dramatic Novelist. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1973.
- Kirkpatrick, Kathryn. "Sermons and Strictures: Conduct Book Propriety and Property Relations in Late Eighteenth-Century England." Ed. Beth Fowkes Tobin. History, Gender and Eighteenth-Century Literature. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1994. 198-226.
- Klein, Lawrence. "Gender, conversation and the public sphere in early eighteenth century England." Ed. Judith Still and Michael Worton. Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices. Manchester: Manchester UP; 1993. 100-115.
- . "Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytic Procedure." Eighteenth-Century Studies 29.1 (1996): 97-109.
- Knight, Mark and Thomas Woodman eds. Biblical Religion and the Novel, 1700-2000. Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006.
- Knights, Elspeth. "'Daring but to Touch the Hem of her Garment': Women Reading Clarissa." Women's Writing 7.2 (2000): 221-245.
- Kowaleski-Wallace, Beth. "Milton's Daughters: The Education of Eighteenth-Century Women Writers." Feminist Studies 12.2 (1986): 275-291.
- Laquer, Thomas. "The Cultural Dimensions of Popular Literacy in England, 1500-1850." Oxford Review of Education 22.3 (1976): 255-275.
- Larson, Edith Sedgwick. "A Measure of Power: The Personal Charity of Elizabeth Montagu." Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture 16. Ed. O M Brack, Jr. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1986.
- Lawson, John, and Harold Silver. A Social History of Education in England. London: Methuen, 1973.
- Leranbaum, Miriam. "'Mistresses of Orthodoxy': Education in the Lives and Writings of Late Eighteenth-Century English Women Writers." Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society 121.4 (August 1977): 281-301.
- Lewis, Jayne Elizabeth. "Clarissa's Cruelty: Modern Fables of Moral Authority in the History of a Young Lady." Houlihan and Copeland. 45-67.
- "Literacy declines among college grads." On Campus Magazine March/ April 2006, 5.
- Lyons, Martin. "New Readers in the Nineteenth Century: Women, Children, Workers." Cavallo and Chartier. 313-344.
- Mack, Phyllis. "Religion, Feminism, and the Problem of Agency: Reflections on Eighteenth-Century Quakerism." Signs 29.1 (2003): 149-177.
- Mahmood, Saba. "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival." Cultural Anthropology 16.2 (2001): 202-236.
- Mandelbrote, Scott. "The English Bible and its Readers in the Eighteenth Century." Rivers, New Essays. 35-78.
- Martin, Mary Patricia. "Reading Reform in Richardson's Clarissa." SEL 37 (1997): 595-614.

- McCarthy, William. "What Did Anna Barbauld Do to Samuel Richardson's Correspondence? A Study of her Editing." Studies in Bibliography 54 (2001): 192-223.
- McCrea, Brian. "Clarissa's Pregnancy and the Fate of Patriarchal Power." Eighteenth-Century Fiction 9.2 (1997): 125-48.
- McKenzie, D.F. Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986, 1999.
- . "Typography and Meaning: The Case of William Congreve." Buch und Buchhandel in Europa im achtzehnten Jahrhundert. The Book and the Book Trade in Eighteenth-Century Europe. Ed. Giles Barber and Berhhard Fabian. Hamburg: Dr Ernst Huaswedell & Co, 1981. 81-125.
- Mir-Hosseini, Ziba. "Muslim Women's Quest for Equality: Between Islamic Law and Feminism." Critical Inquiry 32 (Summer 2006): 629-645.
- Myers, Mitzi. "Impeccable Governesses, Rational Dames, and Moral Mothers: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Female Tradition in Georgian Children's Books." Children's Literature 14 (1986): 31-59.
- Myers, Sylvia Harcstark. The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship, and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England. Oxford: Clarendon, 1990.
- National Endowment for the Arts. "Reading at Risk;" ([n.p.], 2004).
- Neuberg, Victor E. Popular Education in Eighteenth Century England. London: Woburn, 1971.
- O'Brien, Karen. "The History Market in Eighteenth-Century England." Rivers, New Essays. 105-134.
- Ong, Walter. Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word. New York: Routledge, 1982.
- Osland, Dianne. "Complaisance and Complacency, and the Perils of Pleasing in Clarissa." SEL 40.3 (2000): 491-509.
- Pearson, Jacqueline. Women's Reading in Britain, 1750-1835: a dangerous recreation. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999.
- Perry, Ruth. "Bluestockings in Utopia." Tobin 159-178.
- . "Clarissa's Daughters; Or, the History of Innocence Betrayed. How Women Writers Rewrote Richardson." Houlihan and Copeland. 119-141.
- Petrucci, Armando. "Reading to Read: A Future for Reading." Cavallo and Chartier 345-367.
- Phillips, Mark Salber. "If Mrs Mure be not sorry for poor King Charles': History, the Novel, and the Sentimental Reader." History Workshop Journal 143 (1997): 111-131.
- Pohl, Nicole, and Betty A. Schellenberg, eds. Reconsidering the Bluestockings. San Marino, CA: Huntington Library P, 2003
- Poovey, Mary. The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984.
- Price, Leah. The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel. Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2002.
- . "Introduction: Reading Matter," PMLA 121.1 (January 2006): 9-16.
- . "Reading: The State of the Discipline," Book History 7 (2004): 303-318.

- Prickett, Stephen. "From Novel to Bible: The Aestheticizing of Scripture." Knight and Woodman. 13-23.
- Radway, Janice. Reading the Romance: Women Patriarchy, and Popular Literature. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1984.
- Raven, James. "The Book Trades." Rivers, New Essays. 1-34.
- . "From promotion to proscription: arrangements for reading and eighteenth century libraries." Raven, Small and Tadmor. 175-201.
- . "New reading histories, print culture and the identification of change: the case of eighteenth-century England." Social History 23.3 (1998): 268-287.
- Raven, James, Helen Small, and Naomi Tadmor, eds. The Practice and Representation of Reading in England. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996.
- Raven, James, Helen Small, and Naomi Tadmor. "Introduction: the practice and representaion of reading." Raven, Small, and Tadmor. 1-21.
- Richetti, John. Popular Fiction Before Richardson: Narrative patterns: 1700-1739. Oxford: Clarendon, 1969, 1992.
- Rivers, Isabel, ed. Books and and their readers in eighteenth-century England. New York : St. Martin's Press, 1982.
- . Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England: New Essays. London: Leicester UP, 2001.
- Rogers, Pat. "Richardson and the Bluestockings." Samuel Richardson: Passion and Prudence. Ed. Valerie Grosvenor Myer. London, Vision, 1986. 147-164.
- Rose, Jonathan. "A Conservative Canon: Cultural Lag in British Working-Class Reading Habits." Libraries and Culture 33.1 (Winter 1998): 98-104.
- . "How Historians Teach the History of the Book" Canadian Review of Comparative Literature (March 1996): 216-224.
- . "How to Do Things with Books." Victorian Studies (Spring 1994): 461-471.
- . The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes. New Haven: Yale UP, 2001.
- . "Rereading the English Common Reader: A Preface to a History of Audiences." Journal of the History of Ideas 53.1 (1992): 47-70.
- Saenger, Paul. "Reading in the Later Middle Ages." Cavallo and Chartier. 120-148.
- Scheiber, Andrew J. "'Between Me and Myself': Writing as Strategy and Theme in Clarissa." Texas Studies in Literature and Language 30.4 (1988): 496-509.
- Schofield, R. S. "The Measurement of Literacy in Pre-Industrial England." Literacy in Traditional Societies. Ed. Jack Goody. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1968. 311-325.
- . "Dimensions of Illiteracy, 1750-1850." Explorations in Economic History 10.4 1973. 437-454.
- Sharpe, Kevin. "Reading revelations: prophecy, hermeneutics and politics in early modern Britain." Sharpe and Zwicker. 122-163.
- . "Uncommonplaces? Sir William Drake's Reading Notes." Baron, Walsh, and Scala. 58-65.
- Sharpe, Kevin and Steven W. Zwicker. "Introduction: Discovering the Renaissance reader." Sharpe and Zwicker. 1-37.
- Sharpe, Kevin and Steven W. Zwicker, eds. Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003.
- . Refiguring Revolutions: Aesthetics and Politics form the English Revolution to the Romantic Revolution. Berkeley: U of California P, 1998.



- Sherman, William H. "'Rather soiled by use': Renaissance Readers and Modern Collectors." Baron, Walsh, and Scala. 84-91.
- Shevelov, Kathryn. "Fathers and Daughters: Women as Readers of the *Tatler*." Flynn and Schweickart. 107-123.
- . Women and Print Culture: the construction of femininity in the early periodical. London: Routledge, 1989.
- Spufford, Margaret. "First Steps in Literacy: The Reading and Writing Experiences of the Humblest Seventeenth Century Spiritual Autobiographers." Social History 4 (1979): 407-35.
- . Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and Its readership in Seventeenth-Century England. Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 1981.
- St Clair, William. The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period. Cambridge; Cambridge UP, 2004.
- Stallybrass, Peter. "Books and Scrolls: Negotiating the Bible." Anderson and Sauer. 42-79.
- . "The Library and Material Texts." PMLA (October 2004): 1347-1352.
- . "Shakespeare, the Individual, and the Text." Cultural Studies. Ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Carl Nelson, Paula A. Treicher. New York: Routledge: 1992. 593-610.
- Staves, Susan. "Church of England Clergy and Women Writers." Pohl and Schellenberg 81-103.
- Stephens W. B. Education in Britain, 1750-1914. London: Macmillan, 1998.
- . "Literacy in England, 1640-1900." History of Education Quarterly 30.4 (1990): 545-571.
- Stone, Lawrence. The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800. New York: Harper & Row, 1977.
- . "Literacy and Education in England, 1640-1900." Past and Present 42 (1969): 69-139.
- Suarez, Michael F., SJ. "The Production and Consumption of the Eighteenth-century Poetic Miscellany." Rivers, New Essays. 217-251.
- Suleiman, Susan R. "Introduction: Varieties of Audience-Oriented Criticism." Suleiman and Crosman 3-45.
- Sussman, Charlotte. "Women's private reading and political action, 1649-1838." Radicalism in British Literary Culture, 1650-1830. Ed. Timothy Morton and Nigel Smith. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. 133-150.
- Tadmor, Naomi. "'In the even my wife read to me': women, reading and household life in the eighteenth century." Raven, Small, and Tadmor. 162-174.
- Thomas, Claudia. Alexander Pope and His Eighteenth-Century Women Readers. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1994.
- . "'Th'Instructive Moral, and Important Thought': Elizabeth Carter Reads Pope, Johnson, and Epictetus." The Age of Johnson 4. Ed. Paul J. Korshin. New York: AMS, 1991. 137-169.
- Thomas, Keith. "The Meaning of Literacy in Early Modern England." The Written Word: Literacy in Transition. Ed. Gerd Baumann. Oxford: Clarendon, 1986. 97-131.
- Thompson, Peggy. "Abuse and Atonement: The Passion of Clarissa Harlowe." Eighteenth Century Fiction 11.3 (1999): 255-270.

- Tobin, Beth Fowkes, ed. History, Gender, and Eighteenth Century Literature. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1994.
- Tribble, Evelyn B. "Godly Reading: John Foxe's Actes and Monuments (1583)." Baron, Walsh, and Scala. 39-43.
- Udpike, John "The End of Authorship." New York Times 25 June 2006, Book Review: 27.
- Van Marter, Shirley., "Richardson's Revision of Clarissa in the Second Edition." Studies in Bibliography 26 (1973): 105-132.
- . "Richardson's Revision of Clarissa in the Third and Fourth Editions." Studies in Bibliography 28 (1975): 119-152.
- Vincent, David. "Reading Made Strange: Context and Method in becoming literate in eighteenth and nineteenth century England." Silences and Images: The Social History of the Classroom. Ed Ian Grosvenor, Martin Lawn, and Kate Rousmaniere. New York: Peter Lang, 1999. 180-197.
- Wallace, John M. "'Example Are Best Precepts': Readers and Meanings in Seventeenth-Century Poetry." Critical Inquiry 1.2 (1974): 273-290.
- Walsh, Marcus. "Biblical Scholarship and literary criticism." The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism. Vol.4: The Eighteenth Century. Ed. H.B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. 758-777.
- . "Literary Scholarship and the Life of Editing." Rivers, Books. 191-216.
- . "Profession and Authority: The Interpretation of the Bible in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries." Literature and theology 9.1 (1995): 383-398.
- Warner, Michael. "Uncritical Reading." Polemic; critical or uncritical. Ed. Jane Gallop. New York; Routledge, 2004. 13-38.
- Warner, William Beatty. Reading Clarissa : the struggles of interpretation. New Haven: Yale UP, 1979.
- Wiles, R.M. "Middle Class Literacy in Eighteenth-Century England: Fresh Evidence." Studies in the Eighteenth Century. Ed. R.F. Brissenden. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1968. 49-65.
- Williams, Carolyn D. "Poetry, Pudding, and Epictetus: The Consistency of Elizabeth Carter." Tradition in Transition: Women Writers, Marginal Texts, and the Eighteenth Century Canon. Ed. Alvaro Ribeiro, SJ, and James G. Basker. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996. 3-24.
- Wilson, Penelope. "Classical poetry and the eighteenth-century reader." Rivers, Books. 69-96.
- Wittmann, Reinhard. "Was there a Reading Revolution at the End of the Eighteenth Century?" Cavallo and Chartier. 284-312.
- Young, Brian. "Theological Books from The Naked Gospel to Nemesis of Faith." Rivers, New Essays 79-104.
- Zaret, David. "Religion, Science, and Printing in the Public Spheres in Seventeenth-Century England." Habermas and the Public Sphere. Craig Calhoun, ed. Cambridge: MIT P, 1992. 212-235.
- Zwicker, Steven N. "Reading the Margins: Politics and the Habits of Appropriation." Sharpe and Zwicker. 101-115.
- . "The Reader Revealed." Baron, Walsh, and Scala. 10-17.

**KATHRYN L. STEELE****Education**

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Jan. 1991-Dec. 1995 | University of Colorado, Denver<br>B.A. English, (Spanish minor)                           |
| Aug. 1997-Dec. 1999 | University of Colorado, Boulder<br>M.A. English   |
| Aug.2000-Jan. 2008  | Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey<br>M.A. English (May 2003); Ph.D. (Jan. 2008) |

**Positions**

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| 1997-1998         | ESOL Instructor, Adult Learning Source, Denver        |
| Fall 1998         | Teaching Assistant, University of Colorado            |
| Fall 1999         | Teaching Assistant, University of Colorado            |
| Jan.- July 2000   | ESOL Instructor, DPT Business School, Denver          |
| 2000-2001         | Graduate Fellow, Rutgers University, New Jersey       |
| 2001-2002         | Coordinator, Rutgers Eighteenth Century Reading Group |
| 2001-2003         | Teaching Assistant, Rutgers University, New Jersey    |
| 2003-2004         | Lead Teaching Assistant, Rutgers Writing Program      |
| 2003-2004         | Graduate Fellow, Rutgers University, New Jersey       |
| June 2004         | NACBS Fellow, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA      |
| 2004-2007         | Teaching Assistant, Rutgers University, New Jersey    |
| Summer 2006       | Fellow, Mellon Dissertation Writing Fellowship        |
| Fall 2006         | Fellow, Mellon Dissertation Writing Seminar           |
| March 2007        | Fellow, Daniel Francis Howard Travel Fellowship       |
| July 2007-present | Lecturer, Expository Writing Program, U of Oklahoma   |