

**MINISTRY OF HIGHER AND SPECIALISED
SECONDARY EDUCATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
UZBEKISTAN**

FERGHANA STATE UNIVERSITY

**FOREIGN LANGUAGES FACULTY
THE CHAIR OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING
METHODOLOGY**

This is submitted for

**BACHELOR'S DEGREE
DIPLOMA PAPER**

Theme: “Epistolary novel genre in English Literature”

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Ferghana-2019

EPISTOLARY NOVEL GENRE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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INTRODUCTION

For over the years of independence the Republic of Uzbekistan has carried out fundamental, structural and substantive reforms that have encompassed all levels of education system and its components, which were aimed at ensuring its compliance with the long-term objectives and interests of the country, modern requirements, as well as international standards. The appropriate legal framework reforming this sector was created, which defined as a priority the growth of investment, as well as the investments in human capital, training of educated and intellectually developed generation, which is the crucial asset and a decisive force in the achievement of democratic development, modernization and renewal, ensuring stable and sustainable growth of the economy.

At the initiative of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan two important laws - "On Education" and "On the National program for personnel training" were adopted, which laid a solid foundation for the creation of a harmonious system of continuous education of the modern type. As the result of their implementation in short historical period radical transforms happened not only in the form but in essence of the education system of the country.

Today, thanks to the consistent implementation of the provisions of these laws in the country, the national model of personnel training has been formed which is based on the principle of "person - state and society - continuous education - science - production".

The current modern system of continuous education in Uzbekistan consists of preschool, general secondary, specialized secondary and vocational, higher and postgraduate education, training and retraining, as well as extra school education. In this continuous chain of links there is a fundamentally new specialized secondary and vocational education, realized in educational institutions of a new type - the academic lyceums and vocational colleges. This system provides young men and women with an opportunity to get along with general subjects on 2-3 professional skills which are in demand in labor market, as well as the study of one

or several foreign languages. Like many other subjects taught in school, the subject of the English language and English Literature is one of the most relevant and demanded. The relevance of learning English is dictated by the needs of the modern world. Nowadays, the English language has become an international language of communication. The President of our country Shavkat Mirziyoyev pays special attention to this sphere, which has an important place in ensuring the future of the country and its development. In the Decree of President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev «On Uzbekistan's development Strategy " is mentioned about achieving major improvement of in quality of general secondary education, facilitating in-depth study of foreign languages, computer science, and other important and popular disciplines.¹

Before making the investigation in our qualification work we should give some notions on its organization structure.

Theme of qualification work.

The theme of my qualification work sounds as following: “**Epistolary novel genre in English literature**” about new genre and new types of novel in English literature of the 18th century. This work gives an overview of the epistolary genre and its role in literature. The attempts to define this genre, its characteristics that make it different from the other genres (autobiographies, memories, journals etc.) are being analyzed and its most important characteristic of having a dialogue nature is being emphasized. In my diploma work I also present the different classifications of this genre, depends of the author who writes about this.

Actuality of the theme.

The 18th century is commonly known as the great age of letter writing: postal routes rapidly expanded, and the epistolary novel emerged as a hugely popular genre. Letter writers of the period used the form to describe and explore the self and everyday experience. As a mode of writing that sits ambiguously between public and private worlds (associated both with domestic seclusion and public self-

¹ President Decree 4947«On Uzbekistan's development Strategy " February 7, 2017. The Decree 1875 «On measures to further improvement of foreign language learning system» December 10, 2012.

exposure), letters offer an enticing glimpse into other people's thoughts, feelings and lives. In this period, for the first time, so-called 'private' letters were published to promote and sustain literary celebrity. Just as social media streams today allow modern celebrities to present versions of their intimate lives for public consumption, so early modern and 18th-century figures carefully constructed themselves in their letters for particular audiences keen to read these kinds of works. Personal (or 'familiar') letters were commonly connected in the 18th century with ideas of sincerity and truth.

Women played a prominent role as consumers of printed texts, especially in urban settings. New readers were just one element of a larger thesis that relied on social and economic factors and the rise of individualism to account for a realistic type of writing that originated in England during the first half of the eighteenth century.

Consideration of this set of practices provokes several questions: How did new readers and writers develop literary expertise? How did they respond to and affect the mainstream world of letters, and for what ends? Can we identify patterns, issues, and strategies that helped them to develop a culture based on reading novels and other secular material? Answers to these questions are suggested by analyzing the epistolary practices of a provincial reader, Jane Johnson (1706–1759), in relationship to the epistolary writings of Samuel Richardson (1689–1761). Though we know that provincial readers were increasingly connected to the London book market, they rarely occupy center stage. Johnson's story is therefore particularly important.

The aims of the work to provide an overview of Samuel Richardson's social networks, with a special focus on the stylistic features of epistolary exchanges between the novelist and other members of his circles. In the light of the social network theory, which investigates linguistic variations and changes influenced by discourse communities, the present research paper mainly concerns aspects related to register, and investigates the influence of Richardson's 'dramatic style' upon the

members of his epistolary networks, as well as the interpersonal involvement strategies he deploys with regard to the addressee and his/her discourse.

The tasks of the work

1. To analyze the literature of the Enlightenment period
2. The exceptional characteristics of the epistolary genre are represented through various novels of Samuel Richardson and Tobias George Smollett, famous writers of the 18th century.
3. The role of woman without formal education constructed a provincial literary world that lay midway between popular and elite culture.

Practical significance of the results of investigation consists in the fact they can be used:

1. in teaching English for Uzbek and Russian students.
2. in compiling practical courses of English literature.
3. in writing essay on literature.

In our opinion, the practical significance of our work is hard to be overvalued. This work reflects modern trends in linguistics and we hope it would serve as a good manual for those who wants to master modern English language by classical language of The **Enlightenment** century.

Ways of scientific investigation used within the work.

The main method for compiling our work is the method of comparative analysis, translation method and the method of statistical research.

Fields of amplification.

The present work might find a good way of implying in the following spheres:

1. In High Schools and scientific circles of linguistic kind it can be successfully used by teachers and philologists as modern material for writing research works dealing with The **Enlightenment** century
2. It can be used by teachers of schools, lyceums and colleges by teachers of English as a practical manual for teaching English literature.

3. It can be useful for everyone who wants to enlarge his/her knowledge in English.

8. Linguists worked with the theme.

Content of the work.

The present qualification work consists of introduction, two chapters, conclusion and bibliography. Within the introduction part, which includes the brief description of our qualification work and gave general notion of the theme. The first chapter of my qualification work includes two items. There we discussed general characteristics of the significance of epistolary genre in literature, especially classifications and characteristics of the genre. The second chapter of my qualification work includes also two items. This chapter reconsiders “the rise of the novel” in light of a new cultural category “epistolary literacy” – a set of practices that involves letter writing, reading, interpretation, and response. The epistolary practices of a provincial reader, Jane Johnson, are examined in relation to the writings of Samuel Richardson. Johnson offers a rare view of how a woman without formal education constructed a provincial literary world that lay midway between popular and elite culture.

Her epistolary literacy, along with a wide range of books from London, helped her to create original poetry and prose. Richardson, I suggest, was well aware of the epistolary literacy of Jane and other readers. Moreover, he both encouraged and manipulated it to his advantage. He is presented as an astute observer of historical trends: the rise of literacy, the growing wealth of the middling-sort, the uses of print culture, and the literary aspirations of women like Johnson. She responded to Richardson’s fiction in ways that he encouraged. Yet her epistolary literacy also influenced the way he wrote and marketed his novels. Their relationship was clearly a two-way street. The study of the novel, I suggest, can benefit by linking Johnson’s epistolary literacy to Richardson’s historical insights.

The exceptional characteristics of the epistolary genre are represented through various novels of Samuel Richardson, Jane Johnson and Tobias George Smollett, famous writers of the 18th century.

From them it can be concluded that the authors applied and combined the different epistolary elements on different manner. While epistolary genre dominates in some works and their novels were written in a form of a letter.

I. SIGNIFICANCE OF EPISTOLARY GENRE IN LITERATURE

From all types of (non) fictional prose, none is less subjected to critical definition and categorization as it is the case with the letter. What distinguishes the epistolary genre from other realistic-autobiographical fiction, such as diaries, is the desire/demand for exchange. Thus, in the epistolary exchange the reader of the letter "is asked for" a response and thus contributes as a writer in this type of narration, which suggests the existence of some kind of "epistolary pact" between the sender and the recipient of the letter.

Definition of Epistolary

An epistolary work of literature is one written through a series of documents. Most often, these documents are letters, though they can also be diary entries, newspaper clippings, and, more recently, blog posts and emails. The definition of epistolary novels can be further classified into monologic (the letters or diary entries of only one person), dialogic (letters between two characters), or polylogic (three or more characters who write letters, have diary entries, etc., as well as other external documentation like newspaper articles).

The word epistolary comes from the Greek word (*epistolē*), which means “a letter.”

Attempt to define the genre

According to the definition, the letter is a form of communication that expresses thoughts, feelings, describes a series of events or philosophical discussions. The most important characteristic of the letter as a literary or a semi-literary genre is its dialogical nature. Regardless whether the letter is of personal or

business nature, whether it's formal or informal, it almost always requires a certain response from those to whom it is addressed².

According to various on-line sources the epistolary form is the form of letters written/indicated to someone else, and "an epistolary novel" is a novel written in the form of a letter or series of letters written by one or more characters. Such form allows the author to omniscient viewpoint, but still to change the viewpoints among several characters throughout the narration.³ In the Dictionary of Literary Terms⁴, the term "epistolary" implies "a set of templates for letters and addressing which with small changes can be used on various occasions", and "epistolary novel" implies - "a novel in letters."

Several types of letters were distinguished in ancient literature. By studying the epistolary genre, Milorad Pavić notices *literary* and *non-literary form* and concludes that epistolography will gradually get its rightful place in literature as a real literary kind and will lose the status of unintentional/accidental literary activity, which is usually found in the Baroque era.⁵

According to Elizabeth Campbell, the epistolary novel is a novel written in the form of letters, exchange of letters between two or more correspondents, one or more letters sent by a correspondent to one or more recipients.⁶ Ruth Perry, however, expands this definition, indicating that the epistolary form requires the deeper truth that people keep locked deep down, in their subconscious.⁷

Accordingly, the epistolary novel relies on the subjective viewpoint⁸, in other words, it is a literary genre in which prevails intimate provenance.⁹ This means that it presents the intimate point of view of the character, his/her thoughts

² Pismo kao književna vrsta, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/40240424/Pismo-kao-knji%C5%BEevna-vrsta>, accessed on 01.03.2014

³ Literary terms and definitions, http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_E.html, <http://epistolary.askdefine.com/>, accessed on 01.03.2014.

⁴ Rečnik književnih termina, Institut za književnost i umetnost, Zdenko Škreb, Dragiša Živković, i dr., Nolit, Beograd, 1985, p.179.

⁵ Milorad Pavić, Istorija srpske književnosti i baroknog doba (XVII i XVIII vek), Nolit, Beograd. 1970.

⁶ Elisabeth Campbell, Re-vision, Re-reflections, Re-creations: Epistolarity in Novels by Contemporary Women, *Twentieth Century Literature* 41, 1995, p.332-348.

⁷ Ruth Perry, *Women, Letters, and the Novel*, New York, AMS, 1980.

⁸ Epistolary novel, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/190331/epistolary-novel>, accessed on 01.03.2014

⁹ M. Koh, Does it exist a 'generic pact'? About intimistic genres in prose works of Serbian female writers at the beginning of 20th century. *Zbornik Matice srpske za književnost i jezik*, 51(3), 695-708, 2003.

and feelings without the interference of the author and the course of events takes place with dramatic immediacy. Also, the presentation of events from several points of view, gives the story a dimension and capacity. Although the method is often used in sentimental novels, it is not limited to them. Shortcomings of this form were detected from the very beginning. Depending on the need of the author of the letter, whether he/she expresses his/her virtues through it, vice or weakness, these acknowledgements were subject to suspicion or derision.

The letter as a literary genre is found in the middle between the private and public discourse¹⁰, a high degree of individualization in the discourse is typical for it, and the attention is directed towards the narration and description of personal feelings and psychological states. The epistolary communication situation consists of a sender and a recipient (except in the private communication). In the case of official letters, they are with stereotyped content and consist of dating, naming the recipient at the beginning of the letter, explaining the reason and occasion for writing the letter, and finally, the signature of the sender which explicitly expresses the degree of honesty, because it is written to trustworthy people who can recognize the potential frustrations and intimate dilemmas of the author.

1.1. The Epistolary Novel as a new literary form

A genre of fiction which first gained popularity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the epistolary novel is a form in which most or all of the plot is advanced by the letters or journal entries of one or more of its characters, and which marked the beginning of the novel as a literary form.

Epistolary fiction dates back at least to ancient Roman times, but the epistolary novel as a distinct genre first gained prominence in Britain in the mid-eighteenth century. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Aphra Behn in Britain and Charles Louis de Montesquieu in France produced works of fiction told through the medium of letters, but many scholars still regard Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) to be the first example of the epistolary novel—and

¹⁰ The Letter as Literature, <http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/courses/detail.FA2011.WRTNG-UG1326.001.html>, accessed on 01.03.2014

indeed the first mature novel to be written in English. Richardson's groundbreaking work is marked by a coherence of characterization, plot, and theme that had been missing in earlier fictional efforts, and his use of the epistolary form lends realism, complexity, and psychological subtlety to his story. The epistolary novel enjoyed its greatest popularity in England and France from the mid-1700s to the end of the century, a time when literacy was on the increase and the public sought literary works with more depictions of ordinary experience and greater psychological realism than were found in the old heroic romances. With its reliance on subjective points of view, the epistolary novel by its very nature offers intimate insight into characters' thoughts and feelings without interference from the author, and advances the plot with dramatic immediacy. Epistolary authors commonly wrote about questions of morality, and many epistolary novels are sentimental in nature. Because of the "private" nature of the form, with the depiction of domestic and personal concerns, much epistolary fiction was written by or about women, and the letter-novel was one of the earliest avenues for women writers to achieve public recognition for their art.

Female characters in the novels often wrestle with sexual temptation and moral propriety and find that the only way to express themselves honestly and thoroughly is by confiding in a trusted friend through letters. Many critics in Richardson's day regarded the letters he wrote in the voices of his female protagonists to be the finest expression of feminine concerns and sensibilities of the period. Genuine female voices are also to be found in some of the most popular and best-known epistolary novels of the eighteenth century. Mary Davys, one of the first women to support herself through her writing, produced several epistolary works, including *The Reform'd Coquet: or Memoirs of Amoranda* (1724), which tells of the "taming" of Amoranda, a good but flighty young woman, and *Familiar Letters Betwixt a Gentleman and a Lady* (1725), a satire about politics and women's place in society. Fanny Burney's *Evelina: or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778) is a novel of manners that explores a young, innocent woman's entrance into society. Marie-Jeanne

Riccobini's highly successful *Les Lettres de Mistress Fanni Butlerd* (1757), an exchange of letters between a simple young Englishwoman and her aristocratic lover, makes clear the division between private and public spheres that were a feature of women's social reality in the eighteenth century. Many women writers of the period in their novels point out women's exclusion from public matters, and often their female characters seek to transcend social barriers by making their own autonomous decisions.

While women novelists were certainly read during the eighteenth century, the bias prevailed that serious literary work was conducted by men. The acknowledged great British epistolary novelists of the period included Richardson, Henry Fielding, and Tobias Smollet. Richardson had enjoyed a career as a successful printer, and was asked to compose a guide to letter writing. He worked around a central theme and the result was his moral novel *Pamela: or, Virtue Unrewarded*, the story of a servant girl's victorious struggle against her master's attempts to seduce her. The work was an unprecedented popular and critical success and spawned dozens of imitations and burlesques, the best-known of which was Fielding's *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews*. Fielding with his parody points out some of the inherent problems with the epistolary form, including the fact that simple, uneducated characters convey their sentiments through sophisticated literary means. Still, Richardson continued to favor the form, declaring that it was much better suited to realistically portraying the lives and dilemmas of characters than straightforward narrative fiction. The fact that the important and well-respected novelist Tobias Smollet, who had already achieved fame with his narrative fiction, turned to the epistolary form with *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771) indicates the popularity of the genre in England in the last decades of the eighteenth century.

Fiction told through the medium of letters was also popular on the European continent, and by the mid-sixteenth century in Spain and Italy letters were often used to tell stories of the trials of illicit and prohibited love. Over the next 150 years, letter-writing became increasingly popular in travel books, news stories, and

published personal correspondences. The rise of the epistolary novel as a form on the continent roughly parallels its development in England. Charles Louis de Montesquieu's 1721 *Lettres persanes* and Claude Prosper Jolyot de Cr billon, *fil's*'s 1735 *Lettres de la Marquise de M*** au Comte de R**** lacked the realistic novelistic structure and complexity of Richardson's fiction, but those works certainly influenced Richardson as well as later French epistolary writers. Some of the great French epistolary novels in the eighteenth century include Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *La Nouvelle H lo se* (1761) and Choderlos de Laclos' 1782 *Les Liaisons dangereuses*. These novels, like their English counterparts, are redolent with sentimental romance and melodrama, and a great deal of attention is paid to questions of morality. Several popular but little-remembered epistolary novels appeared in the United States at the end of the century, just as the greatest vogue of the genre was passed in Europe and Britain. As the century drew to a close the novel letter as a form had fallen into disfavor, as readers and writers of popular fiction increasingly turned to Gothic romances, and serious novelists, too, adopted the more straightforward narrative form.

1.2. Classifications and characteristics of the genre

There are three types of epistolary novels: monological (letters of only one character), dialogical (letters of two characters) and polylogical (three or more characters who write letters). Crucial element in polylogical epistolary novels is the dramatic procedure known as "contrary to reason": the simultaneous but separate correspondence of the characters - villains that create dramatic tension.¹¹ According to other sources we distinguish: private letters (which talk about intimate situations and primary existence), open letters (the recipient is the audience in general, oriented towards the social, political or cultural space, and the subject expresses its viewpoints and theses) and appeals (with emotional origin, but addressed towards the public through the media and suggest feedback from the receiver).

¹¹ Types of epistolary novels, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistolary_novel, accessed on 01.03.2014

Therefore, we need to try to define the nature of the epistolary literary genre more closely in terms of literary theory. Like any other text, the letter can be defined as a written linguistic message. In order to realize the message a sender and a recipient are necessary. According to Jakobson's terminology in order to complete the communication model context, code and contact (media) are also necessary. That linguistic scheme is not negligible, because it will be used in literary theory by structuralists, semioticians, advocates of the modern theory of discourse, speech act theory etc. Jakobson's model could confirm that the nature of the definition of the letter is autoreferentiality. The uniqueness of this literary genre is that it can be a whole by itself!

The more systematic and detailed reading of the letters, will reconfirm that they are not necessarily looking for an answer and recipient, but although the code does not necessarily simulate a recipient, the communication code still exists. The writer/author of the letter has in front of himself/herself a fictional interlocutor, recipient. The letter sometimes relies on an imaginary recipient – the reader. Accordingly, several common situations in letters are pointed out:

- the letter as a direct conversation, unburden by informative function
- the letter as a conversation with someone absent ("how to talk to you")
- the letter as a life-like presentation of the absent ("how I look at you")
- the letter as an expression of friendship
- the letter as a reflection of the social reality¹²

Ruth Perry points out several characteristics of this genre. One is that the use of the procedure of exchange of letters as a framework (cadre) contributes for a dose of credibility of the work. Another feature that she suggests is that the moving power of correspondence is an obstruction which typically occurs between two enamored (lovers), i.e. the epistolary narration almost always functions according to one kind of formula: two or more people, separated by an obstruction of various kinds are forced to keep their relationship through letters. Furthermore, Perry

¹² Dubravka Brezak-Stamać, Poslanice Marka Marulića benediktinki Katarini Obirčić,Kolo, br.1-2, Časopis Matice Hrvatske za književnost, umjetnost i kulturu, 2013, accessed on 01.03.2014 at

emphasizes that the protagonists are prevented from acting directly and the only way to overcome the difficulties is by writing about them and hoping for a solution that will bring the separated together again. And finally, Perry also identifies the seduction as a common theme in the epistolary novel. She points out that the process of seduction refers to the psychological rather than the physical domain. Namely, she believes that seduction is considered as an attempt to change the opinion of the other, as an attempt to penetrate into his/her subconscious, to identify the beliefs, and to convert the original intentions. Also, Perry emphasizes that typically the epistolary novel ends with love or death, i.e. the final contact between the separated characters can be seen not only as a reward for those who have proven themselves in loyalty, search or other virtuous qualities, and unlike it, another possible ending of the epistolary novel is the death of one or more characters. These alternatives of rendezvous or death correspond with the paradigm of novel written in letters, especially if one of the characters stops writing letters and to resolve the separation in which the characters have spent their fictitious lives, trying to overcome the difficulties.¹³ According to the nature of adolescent literature, Wasserman points out that it is common for young people who are in the period of adolescence, to turn in conflict situations towards their inner world. On the journey to the world of adults, they often feel doubt and despair at the same time, mixed with a sense of hope. Therefore, Wasserman considers that their personal thoughts and words, as a form of expression, find their place very well in the construction of their identity in the literature for youth. One of the methods used by writers of literature for youth in order to cover all topics that adolescents face (physical changes, their sexuality, relationships with the parents and friends, philosophical way of thinking about themselves, the world and their place in it) is the epistolary form or the form of letter writing.¹⁴

An important segment in the epistolary genre is the style of addressing, which has a purpose to express respect to the listener (the addressee) and to emphasize

¹³ Ruth Perry, *Women, Letters, and the Novel*, New York, AMS, 1980.

¹⁴ Emily Wasserman, *The epistolary in young adult literature*, *The ALAN REVIEW*, The Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of NCTE (ALAN), 30.3, 2003, p.48-51

the mutual behavior of both sides, as well as the degree of closeness and levels of communication. The addressing consists of two elements: from whom and to whom. The introduction can be different: a simple and direct and to consist of only one sentence and it can be short and immediately goes to the point.¹⁵ It usually occurs in the case of overwhelming and tumultuous emotions, sudden feelings and major mental disturbances, such as anger, victory, defeat ...¹⁶

Janet Gurkin Altman in the book "Epistolarity" indicates six important aspects of the epistolary genre and along with analysis of specific texts, dedicates a whole chapter on each of them.

The first aspect is the *intermedia nature* of the epistolary genre. Namely, the epistolary genre functions as a connector of two remote points, as a bridge between the sender and receiver of the letter, the author chooses whether to emphasize the distance or the bridge. The mediator role of the letter in the epistolary narration derives from its position. Namely, the letter is a phenomenon which stands halfway (either-or/neither-nor). As a means for communication between the sender and the recipient, the letter partly fills the abyss between the presence and absence; the two characters who "meet" through the letter, neither are totally separated, nor are totally united. The letter lies halfway between the ability for a complete communication and the risk of communication breakdown.

The second aspect of the epistolary genre, according to Altman, is *the degree of trust between the sender and the recipient* and here it indicates more variants: confidential love letters, friendly letters etc.

The third aspect is the reader; whose appearance is sufficient to differentiate the epistolary form of addressing from other forms of narration in the first person. Thus, it suggests the existence of *external* and *internal reader*. The term "internal reader" implies a specific character represented throughout the course of the narration, whose reading of the letters can affect their writing, and

¹⁵ Nela Savković-Vukčević, Retorika i stilistika u pismima i poslanicama crnogorskih vladika Danila, Save, Vasilija i Petra I Petrovića Njegoša, Lingua Montenegrina, god. IV/2, br.8, Institut za crnogorski jezik i književnost, Podgorica, 2011, p.129.

¹⁶ Branislav Nušić, Retorika, Beograd, 1966, p.87

under "external reader" we mean, the overall audience that reads the work as a final product and has no impact on the writing of individual letters.

The fourth aspect is the discourse in the epistolary genre, which differs from other types of discourse in three things:

1. the uniqueness of the I-you relationship; this stems from the dialogical nature of the epistolary genre, as well as from the fact that the pronouns I-you are reversible here, or more precisely, in the epistolary genre, "you" in the text (receiver), in the next becomes "I" (sender);
2. Present tense; as well as the author of the diary, also the author of the letter is "anchored" in the present from where he directs his gaze towards the past or future events; and
3. time polyvalence; the time aspect of any given statement in the epistolary form is relative from several aspects: the time of the event, the time when the event is recorded, the time when the letter was sent, received, read, re-read, etc.

The fifth aspect is *the dynamic in the ending of the letters*, and here Altman discusses the following relationship: inner writer - inner reader, as an important factor that affects the overall structure of the correspondence, which in turn becomes particularly evident in the dynamics in the ending of the letters. The ending of the letters can have two options: 1. Using conventional endings, and 2. The letter to end with an open form in which the writer is always in dialogue with the possible interlocutor. Ultimately, all epistolary narratives end with silence, but in some works, the silence is more motivated unlike in other works. As a very frequent reason for discontinuation of writing letters is death (tragic ending), but also other reasons that prevent the writer to write, and in the case of comic endings of the letters, the most common is the case when epistolary communication ends because the writer has no one to write to, after the correspondence ended with a marriage. Thus, the tragic and comic unraveling, suggest two polarized sides: full attendance (reunion) - complete absence (death).

The sixth aspect is what Altman calls "*an epistolary mosaic*" and that title implies more characteristics of the epistolary genre:

1. Multiple plots
2. Impaired timeline due to non-chronological sorting of letters,
3. Multiple correspondents, each giving an individual tone to the letter,
4. Gaps/intervals that exist between letters and may contribute to the structure of the narration.

These gaps have been called "dead time" by novelists and theorists.¹⁷

¹⁷ Janet Gurkin Altman, *Epistolarity, Approaches to a Form*, Ohio State University Press: Columbus, 1982, p.89,

II. 18TH CENTURY AS A GREAT AGE OF LETTER-WRITING

The 18th century is commonly known as the great age of letter writing: postal routes rapidly expanded, and the epistolary novel emerged as a hugely popular genre. Letter writers of the period used the form to describe and explore the self and everyday experience. As a mode of writing that sits ambiguously between public and private worlds (associated both with domestic seclusion and public self-exposure), letters offer an enticing glimpse into other people's thoughts, feelings and lives. In this period, for the first time, so-called 'private' letters were published to promote and sustain literary celebrity. Just as social media streams today allow modern celebrities to present versions of their intimate lives for public consumption, so early modern and 18th-century figures carefully constructed themselves in their letters for particular audiences keen to read these kinds of works. Personal (or 'familiar') letters were commonly connected in the 18th century with ideas of sincerity and truth. Addison and Steele observed in their popular periodical, *The Spectator*, that 'there is nothing discovers the true Temper of a Person so much as his Letters'.

2.1. The Development of the Epistolary Novel as a New Genre in the English Literature

Alexander Pope's correspondence

The poet Alexander Pope (1688–1744) was the first writer in English to publish comprehensively from his own correspondence in his lifetime, and in doing so he set a new kind of precedent for epistolary self-fashioning by authors and other famous people. Pope had a sense of how letters could display both private virtue (learnt from the classical example of letters by Cicero, Pliny and

Seneca) and wit (via the more recent French tradition of writers such as Mme de Sévigné and Vincent de Voiture). Pope's letters convey studied artlessness, informality and spontaneity. 'All the pleasure of use of familiar letters', Pope wrote, 'is to give us the assurance of a friend's welfare'. In contrast, he declared himself 'a mortal enemy and despiser of what they call fine letters'. Pope was a public satirist but his more private letters reveal him not just as witty and entertaining but more importantly demonstrate his capacity for friendship, and, in particular, document his personal relationships with other great writers of the age, such as Jonathan Swift.

The connection between Pope's correspondence and other writing activity is brilliantly materialized in the manuscripts of his translation of *The Iliad*. When he was translating Homer's poem, which took over six years to complete, Pope used the covers and backs of his letters as paper. We now know that the letters, just like the more obvious literary works of translation, were revised and edited before printed publication.

After being published in 1737, Pope's letters were widely read and admired. A young Frances Burney commented in 1771 'that every Line I read, raises his Character higher in my estimation'. Despite this sympathetic response, Pope's letters have had more skeptical readers. Samuel Johnson recognized that the publication of Pope's letters was enormously influential on the English tradition of letter writing, but doubted their sincerity or capacity to reveal 'the true characters of men'. 'There is', he memorably wrote in his *Life of Pope* (1781), 'no transaction which offers stronger temptations to fallacy and sophistication than epistolary intercourse'. He qualified this with the claim that 'a friendly letter is a calm and deliberate performance' (rather than a spontaneous gesture).

Epistolary fiction

Letters also influenced narrative form in the period. Epistolary fiction first appeared in the 17th century with works such as Aphra Behn's *Love-Letters between a Noble-Man and his Sister* (1684–87). It reached a peak of popularity in the 18th century with novels including Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740)

and *Clarissa* (1747–48), and Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778). This fictional device of writing a novel in letters relies upon effects involving authenticity, intimacy and immediacy. Richardson frequently referred to this technique as 'writing to the moment', and his first foray into fiction had its roots in an earlier composition, a letter-writing manual called *Letters Written To and For Particular Friends, On the most Important Occasions* (1741).

The epistolary novel is a genre most closely associated with the 18th century. During this period, the genre was cultivated by the greatest novelists of the time, and it was a Pan-European form appreciated by writers and readers in Britain, France, Germany, Spain, and beyond. The rather abrupt withering of the genre at the turn of the 19th century has caused many scholars to speculate whether the epistolary novel merely represented the novel form in embryo—a nascent and formally awkward warm-up to the more sophisticated novel narrated in the third person. Increasingly, however, scholars have argued that it deserves attention as a genre in its own right. Since the 1960s, numerous studies of epistolary fiction have appeared, many of them reflecting prevailing theoretical trends within literary and cultural studies. Structuralist studies have shown an interest in the narratological patterns of the genre, emphasizing its intriguing formal peculiarities, affinities with drama, abilities to delineate consciousness—and the sometimes achingly artificial nature of its narrative techniques when seen alongside the third-person novel. Historical studies have traced the genesis of the genre in antique models of letter writing such as Ovid's *Heroides* and have also given greater emphasis to the early epistolary novels of the 17th century, thus disrupting the traditional idea that the epistolary novel started in earnest with Samuel Richardson in the 1740s. Book history and other studies in material culture have shown how the genre is rooted in practical writings such as the journal, whereas works within cultural studies have pointed to the importance of seeing the genre in relation to the contemporary culture of letter writing. A new wave of interest for the genre in the postmodern period shows how the epistolary novel has adapted to new media such as the Internet and mail culture. Since the 1980s, feminist studies have emphasized the

affiliations between women and letter writing, both in terms of topics, authorship, and readership. The 18th-century epistolary novel was, and still is, considered a feminine genre par excellence, with its often-sentimental depictions of courtship struggles, marriage, and damsels in distress. Nevertheless, the great epistolary canon of the 18th century is predominantly male, with Samuel Richardson, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, J. W. V. Goethe, and Pierre Choderlos de Laclos typically seen as the preeminent foursome; scholarship on the epistolary novel as a genre has consequently been dominated by studies of these authors. Research into the many forgotten, minor epistolary novels “by a lady” is still in its infancy; however, it is likely that with the digitalization of early modern texts, a wave of scholarship on neglected novels-in-letters by lesser novelists will emerge, revealing the rich prose tradition of one of the most important early modern genres.

An epistolary novel is a novel written as a series of documents. The usual form is letters, although diary entries, newspaper clippings and other documents are sometimes used. Recently, electronic "documents" such as recordings and radio, blogs, and e-mails have also come into use.

The epistolary form can add greater realism to a story, because it mimics the workings of real life. It is thus able to demonstrate differing points of view without recourse to the device of an omniscient narrator.

There are two theories on the genesis of the epistolary novel. The first claims that the genre originated from novels with inserted letters, in which the portion containing the third person narrative in between the letters was gradually reduced. The other theory claims that the epistolary novel arose from miscellanies of letters and poetry: some of the letters were tied together into a (mostly amorous) plot. Both claims have some validity. The first truly epistolary novel, the Spanish "Prison of Love" (*Cárcel de amor*) by Diego de San Pedro, belongs to a tradition of novels in which a large number of inserted letters already dominated the narrative. Other well-known examples of early epistolary novels are closely related to the tradition of letter-books and miscellanies of letters. Within the successive editions of Edmé Boursault's *Letters of Respect, Gratitude and*

Love (Lettres de respect, d'obligation et d'amour) (1669), a group of letters written to a girl named Babet were expanded and became more and more distinct from the other letters, until it formed a small epistolary novel entitled *Letters to Babet (Lettres à Babet)*. The immensely famous *Letters of a Portuguese Nun (Lettres portugaises)* (1669) generally attributed to Gabriel-Joseph de La Vergne, comte de Guilleragues, though a small minority still regard Marianna Alcoforado as the author, is claimed to be intended to be part of a miscellany of Guilleragues prose and poetry. The founder of the epistolary novel in English is said by many to be James Howell (1594–1666) with "Familiar Letters" (1645–50), who writes of prison, foreign adventure, and the love of women.

The first novel to expose the complex play that the genre allows was Aphra Behn's *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*, which appeared in three volumes in 1684, 1685, and 1687. The novel shows the genre's results of changing perspectives: individual points were presented by the individual characters, and the central voice of the author and moral evaluation disappeared (at least in the first volume; her further volumes introduced a narrator). Behn furthermore explored a realm of intrigue with letters that fall into the wrong hands, faked letters, letters withheld by protagonists, and even more complex interaction.

The epistolary novel as a genre became popular in the 18th century in the works of such authors as Samuel Richardson, with his immensely successful novels *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1749). In France, there was *Lettres persanes* (1721) by Montesquieu, followed by *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Laclos' *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1782), which used the epistolary form to great dramatic effect, because the sequence of events was not always related directly or explicitly. In Germany, there was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774) (*The Sorrows of Young Werther*) and Friedrich Hölderlin's *Hyperion*. The first North American novel, *The History of Emily Montague* (1769) by Frances Brooke was written in epistolary form.

Starting in the 18th century, the epistolary form was subject to much ridicule, resulting in a number of savage burlesques. The most notable example of these was Henry Fielding's *Shamela* (1741), written as a parody of *Pamela*. In it, the female narrator can be found wielding a pen and scribbling her diary entries under the most dramatic and unlikely of circumstances. Oliver Goldsmith used the form to satirical effect in *The Citizen of the World*, subtitled "Letters from a Chinese Philosopher Residing in London to his Friends in the East" (1760–61). So did the diarist Fanny Burney in a successful comic first novel, *Evelina* (1788).

The epistolary novel slowly fell out of use in the late 18th century. Although Jane Austen tried her hand at the epistolary in juvenile writings and her novella *Lady Susan* (1794), she abandoned this structure for her later work. It is thought that her lost novel *First Impressions*, which was redrafted to become *Pride and Prejudice*, may have been epistolary: *Pride and Prejudice* contains an unusual number of letters quoted in full and some play a critical role in the plot.

The epistolary form nonetheless saw continued use, surviving in exceptions or in fragments in nineteenth-century novels. In Honoré de Balzac's novel *Letters of Two Brides*, two women who became friends during their education at a convent correspond over a 17-year period, exchanging letters describing their lives. Mary Shelley employs the epistolary form in her novel *Frankenstein* (1818). Shelley uses the letters as one of a variety of framing devices, as the story is presented through the letters of a sea captain and scientific explorer attempting to reach the north pole who encounters Victor Frankenstein and records the dying man's narrative and confessions. Published in 1848, Anne Brontë's novel *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is framed as a retrospective letter from one of the main heroes to his friend and brother-in-law with the diary of the eponymous tenant inside it. In the late 19th century, Bram Stoker released one of the most widely recognized and successful novels in the epistolary form to date, *Dracula*. Printed in 1897, the novel is compiled entirely of letters, diary entries, newspaper clippings, telegrams, doctor's notes, ship's logs, and the like.

There are three types of epistolary novels: monologic (giving the letters of only one character, like *Letters of a Portuguese Nun* and *The Sorrows of Young Werther*), dialogic (giving the letters of two characters, like Mme Marie Jeanne Riccoboni's *Letters of Fanni Butlerd* (1757), and polylogic (with three or more letter-writing characters, such as in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*). In addition, a crucial element in polylogic epistolary novels like *Clarissa*, and *Dangerous Liaisons* is the dramatic device of 'discrepant awareness': the simultaneous but separate correspondences of the heroines and the villains creating dramatic tension.

An important strategic device in the epistolary novel for creating the impression of authenticity of the letters is the fictional editor.

2.2. The Epistolary Literacy of Jane Johnson and Samuel Richardson

In his widely known study of the novel, first published in 1957, Ian Watt linked the rise of the genre to the emergence of a middling-sort reading public.¹⁸ This new audience lacked formal education but had time and money to devote to literary activities. Women played a prominent role as consumers of printed texts, especially in urban settings. Watt's new readers were just one element of a larger thesis that relied on social and economic factors and the rise of individualism to account for a realistic type of writing that originated in England during the first half of the eighteenth century. Watt's arguments have been challenged over the last fifty years by writers who have revitalized approaches to the novel, including Catherine Gallagher, J. Paul Hunter, Paula Mc Dowell, Michael McKeon, John Richetti, Patricia Meyer Spacks, Janet Todd, and William Warner¹⁹. Watt's ideas, they maintain, were too Anglo-centric, dismissive of writings by women and minor authors, neglectful of links to earlier types of literature, and too rigid in their stress

¹⁸ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (Berkeley, Calif., 1957). For updates of Watt's work, see the issue "Reconsidering the Rise of the Novel," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 12:2-3 (2000); and Robert Folkenflik, "The Heirs of Ian Watt," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 25 (1991): 203-17.

¹⁹ Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace 1670-1820* (Berkeley, Calif., 1994); J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (N.Y., 1990); Paula McDowell, *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics, and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace 1678-1730* (Oxford, 1998); Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore, 2002); John Richetti, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge, 1996); Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Novel Beginnings: Experiments in Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New Haven, Conn., 2006); Janet Todd, *The Sign of Angelica: Women, Writing, and Fiction, 1660-1800* (1989); William Warner, *Licensing Entertainment: The Elevation of Novel Reading in Britain, 1684-1750* (Berkeley, Calif., 1998).

on realism. Yet Hunter called Watt's "then defiant act of attributing creative power to readers...his most important and...enduring contribution."²⁰

It is to Watt's notion of a creative reader that this chapter now turns. We will see how an untrained provincial woman read, wrote, and interacted with eighteenth-century texts. I examine "the rise of the novel" in light of a cultural category that I call "epistolary literacy,"— a dynamic set of practices that involves letter writing, reading, interpretation, and response by networks of individuals with shared conventions and norms. Messages are received and sent regularly by writers, who are at ease with handling a quill pen. Epistolary literacy provides a narrative template

to lay over random events and gives order and meaning to a writer's life. A stage in a broad spectrum of literacy, it lies midway between mere name signing and the Latin epistles of males trained in the classics.²¹

Consideration of this set of practices provokes several questions: How did new readers and writers develop literary expertise? How did they respond to and affect the mainstream world of letters, and for what ends? Can we identify patterns, issues, and strategies that helped them to develop a culture based on reading novels and other secular material? Answers to these questions are suggested by analyzing the epistolary practices of a provincial reader, Jane Johnson (1706–1759), in relationship to the epistolary writings of Samuel Richardson (1689–1761). Though we know that provincial readers were increasingly connected to the London book market, they rarely occupy center stage²². Johnson's story is therefore particularly important. The recent discovery of the Johnson's family papers makes this detailed study possible²³.

²⁰ Hunter, *Before Novels*, xx.

²¹ For an elite example, see Whyman, "Advice to Letter-Writers: Evidence from Four Generations of Evelyns," in Frances Harris and Michael Hunter, eds., *John Evelyn and his Milieu* (2003), 255–66.

²² John Feather, "The Country Trade in Books," in R. Myers and M. Harris, eds., *Spreading the Word: The Distribution Networks of Print, 1550–1850* (Winchester, U.K., 1990), 165–83; and *The Provincial Book Trade in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1985).

²³ Bodleian Library, *Catalogue of the Papers of Jane Johnson of Olney, Buckinghamshire and her Family, 17th–19th Centuries: MSS. Don.b.39–40, c.190–96, d.202, e.193–200*

Johnson is able to construct her literary world because she possesses epistolary literacy – a skill that Samuel Richardson will manipulate to his advantage. Once functional needs are met, letter writing helps writers like Johnson fulfill cultural aspirations. Her epistolary skills thus bring her to a higher form of literacy, in which letters are constructed in an imaginative, or literary, way. Critics accustomed to examining works of high culture may question the “literariness” of Johnson’s work, for it is as mundane in some respects as the epistolary literacy that underpins it. Yet her writings reveal the practices of untrained readers, which are usually hidden from view.

Epistolary literacy provides a new way to measure reading and writing skills²⁴. I suggest that its possession is a key criterion for inclusion in the “middling sort” -- a group usually defined by wealth, status, occupation, or values by social and economic historians.] Jane’s tale is only one of many “middling-sort” narratives, for the term may refer to a range of people from wealthy merchants to artisans with little time for reading and writing²⁵. Yet Johnson is representative of upper middling-sort women, who are below the level of gentry and are either self-taught or educated in the home. These provincial women are united by their possession of reading and writing skills, access to printed materials, and enjoyment of poetry and prose. As they learn new skills and adapt to intellectual stimuli, their literary aspirations grow. Johnson’s case, I believe, is a telling one that sheds light on cultural practices and values. In addition, a substantial body of recent work on women writers confirms many of the patterns and strategies found in this study²⁶.

²⁴ The study of literacy has traditionally relied on counting signatures in historical documents. In *A Culture of Letters: Letter Writing, Literacy, and Literature in England (1660–1800)* (Oxford, forthcoming), I offer a complementary model based on actual use. Previous studies include David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1980); Keith Thomas, “The Meaning of Literacy in Early Modern England,” in Gerald Baumann, ed., *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition* (Oxford, 1986), 97–133; David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England, 1750–1914* (Cambridge, 1989); Rab Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe: Culture and Education, 1500–1800*, 2d ed. (Harlow, U.K., 2002); Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy, The Technologizing of the Word* (1982); Jack Goody, ed., *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, (Cambridge, 1968).

²⁵ J. Barry and Christopher Brooks, eds., *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society, and Politics in England, 1550–1800* (Houndmills, U.K., 1994); Charles Harvey, Edmund Green, Penelope Corfield, *The Westminster Historical Database* (Bristol, 1998); H. R. French, “Social Status, Localism, and ‘the Middle Sort of People’ in England, 1620–1750,” *Past & Present*, no. 166 (February 2000), 66–99; Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680–1780* (Berkeley, Calif., 1996).

²⁶ Elspeth Knights “‘Daring to Touch the Hem of her Garment’: Women Reading *Clarissa*,” *Women’s Writing* 7:2 (2000): 221–45; Charles Wallace Jr., “‘Some Stated Employment of Your Mind’: Reading, Writing, and Religion in the Life of Susanna Wesley,”

Epistolary literacy is, of course, linked to larger social, economic, and cultural changes: the expansion of publishing, libraries, readers, and leisure; the emergence of women as authors; shifts in the commercial print marketplace; and the changing relationship between popular and elite culture. I have argued elsewhere that by the late seventeenth century a culture of literacy was developing in England through the practice of letter writing—a development overlooked in most modern scholarship. At this time, the letter assumed new functions, and solitary meditations began to be replaced with writing based on personal exchange. Once the Civil War ended, the Post Office could at last develop and a boom in mail service led to a shift in the way people communicated with each other. Moreover, after the Restoration, higher levels of literacy and wealth created a vast nation of letter writers²⁷. We can track the rise of epistolary literacy quantitatively in expanding postal services and statistics, and in the presence of letters in every genre. In addition, massive collections of unpublished letters in local record offices show that letter writing had become indispensable to non-elite writers, from merchants to paupers²⁸. Qualitative progress can be observed in family correspondence, as we see untrained writers struggling to write, improving visibly, then passing their skill to the next generation, usually at a higher level.

The ordinary act of letter writing underpins Johnson's literary pursuits. In fact, her epistolary way of thinking shapes all of her poetry and prose. She uses her writing to examine the meaning of her life and to confront its problems. But letter writing is also a crucial training ground for entering the mainstream world of letters—a world in which Samuel Richardson is a central figure.

Church History 58 (1989): 354–66; Patricia Howell, "Women in the Reading Circle," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 13:3 (1989): 59–60; Charlotte Sussman, "Women's Private Reading and Political Action, 1649–1838," in Timothy Morton and Nigel Smith, eds., *Radicalism in British Literary Culture* (Cambridge, 2002), 133–50; Maire Kennedy, "Women and Reading in Eighteenth-Century Ireland," in Bernadette Cunningham and Maire Kennedy, eds., *The Experience of Reading: Irish Historical Perspectives* 30 (Dublin, 1999), 78–98; Peter H. Pawlowicz, "Reading Women: Text and Image in Eighteenth-Century England," in Ann Bermingham and John Brewer, eds., *The Consumption of Culture, 1600–1800: Image, Object, Text* (1995), 42–53; James Raven, Helen Small, and Naomi Tadmor, eds., *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England* (Cambridge, 1996); Marjorie Reeves, *Pursuing the Muses: Female Education and Nonconformist Culture, 1700–1900* (1997); Jan Fergus, "Women Readers: A Case Study," in Vivien Jones, ed., *Women and Literature in Britain, 1700–1800* (Cambridge, 2000), 155–78; and "Provincial Servants' Reading in the Late Eighteenth Century," in Raven, et al., eds. *Practice and Representation of Reading*, 202–25; Stephen Coclough, *Reading Experiences 1700–1840: An Annotated Register of Sources...in the British Isles* (Reading, U.K., 2000).

²⁷ Whyman, "'Paper Visits': The Post-Restoration Letter As Seen Through the Verney Archive," in Rebecca Earle, ed., *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter Writers, 1600–1945*, (Aldershot, U.K., 1999), 15–36.

²⁸ The National Archives Website/Global Search searches catalogues and finding aids in many local record offices

As is well known, Richardson's novels center around the experience of letter writing. His heroines in *Pamela* (1741) and *Clarissa* (1748) tell epistolary tales of female virtue in distress²⁹. *Pamela*, a household servant, staunchly defends her chastity and is rewarded by marrying her master. *Clarissa*, on the other hand, is raped by her lover and abandoned by her family. Rather than sacrifice her virtue, she chooses death, a conclusion that caused heartbreak to some readers. *Pamela* created a media sensation. "[A]t Ranelagh," notes the editor of Richardson's correspondence, "it was usual for ladies to hold up the volumes of *Pamela* to one another, to shew they had got the book that everyone was talking of."³⁰ The storm of response to *Clarissa* was even greater, with international impact.

One explanation for this extraordinary furor, I suggest, lies in Richardson's awareness, encouragement, and manipulation of his readers' epistolary literacy. Unlike previous writers of epistolary fiction, Richardson consciously encouraged readers to engage with him in a dialogue about his work. This invitation is in keeping with the way he structured his texts. His epistolary method offers multiple points of view and latitude for varied interpretations, with little sense of closure. Moreover, the serial format and his use of "cliffhangers" gave Richardson time to respond to his readers. As his novels rolled off the press in edition after edition, he asked readers for comments, material for prefaces, alternate versions of plots, and original letters appropriate to his fictional characters. Many willingly complied, especially women³¹, yet only readers with epistolary literacy could participate in this dialogue. Though he said that he depended on readers for inspiration, however, few of their suggestions were incorporated. In fact, he constantly invited, though rarely responded to, their suggested revisions³². This technique drew his audience into networks of interpretation. At the same time Richardson maintained strict

²⁹ Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa. Or, the History of a Young Lady*, 7 vols. (1748).

³⁰ Barbauld, i:lviii; Thomas Keymer and Peter Sabor, *Pamela in the Marketplace: Literary Controversy and Print Culture in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2005); Warner, TITLE 76–230.

³¹ Thomas Keymer, *Richardson and His Eighteenth-Century Readers* (Cambridge, 1992); *Clarissa*, *The Clarissa Project* (1751; reprint ed., N.Y., 1990), introduction, i; Carol Flynn and Edward Copeland, eds., *Clarissa and Her Readers; New Essays for the Clarissa Project* (N.Y., 1999), introduction, 1–17; Knights TITLE 222–29, 240; Hunter, TITLE 142.

³² Samuel Richardson/Hester Mulso, 21 August 1754 and Sarah Chapone, 2 March 1752; John Carroll, ed., *Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson* (Oxford, 1964), 199–206, 311–12.

control over his texts. He hoped he would eventually convince readers to read in ways that he chose—ways that would lead to moral regeneration.

The desire to reform reading was accompanied by an energetic struggle to sell books in a competitive market. Richardson was self-conscious about both motives, and they existed in tandem. To sell his books, he employed techniques that resemble modern-day marketing strategies—for example, Pamela was available for purchase along with fans and other memorabilia. Rival authors quickly let into the fray with anti-Richardson fiction, as well as plays, an opera, and public endorsements or criticisms. Richardson responded with sequels, dedications, letters of advertisement, and postscripts.³³ The media blitz was even more intense with the publication of *Clarissa* and its many editions, separate spin-offs, and commentary, both pro and con. Into his ever-changing texts he integrated extra textual material such as tables, indexes, and abstracts of letters, revisions, restored passages marked by tiny dots, and indexed collections of moral sentiments and meditations.³⁴ His intention, he noted, was to avoid misreading's and to assure every reader's "[u]nderstanding of it, in the Way I chose to have it understood." Richardson required an audience with epistolary literacy, cultural aspirations, and literary skills, both to interpret his texts and to buy each sequel. Yet his motives were not just commercial; they also embraced a moral project. While he borrowed and profited from earlier romance narratives, he carefully distinguished his own work from this tradition. In fact, his goal was not only to reform reading practices, but to reform lives as well. In doing so, Richardson appealed to the creative power of the reader and, as we shall see, Johnson took the bait. Studying her epistolary

³³ For a summary, see *Pamela in the Marketplace*, Appendix: A Chronology of Publications, Performances and Related Events to 1750, 216–25. *Richardsoniana* (1974) includes [Henry Fielding], *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews* (1741); *Pamela Censured* (1741); [John Kelly] *Pamela's Conduct in High Life*(1741); [Eliz Haywood?] *Anti-Pamela: or, Feign'd Innocence Detected*, 2d ed. (1742); James Parry, *The True Anti-Pamela or Memoirs of Mr. JP....*(1741); *Pamela in High Life : or Virtue Rewarded* (1741), Charles Povey, *The Virgin in Eden, or, the State of Innocency*(1741); *Pamela: Four Versions* (1741–45); *Three Criticisms of Richardson's Fiction 1749–54* and other works.

³⁴ Samuel Richardson's *Published Commentary on Clarissa, 1747–65*, 3 vols. (1998), vol. 1, Prefaces, Postscripts, and Related Writing, vol. 2, Letters and Passages Restored from the Original MSS...1751, vol. 3, A Collection of the Moral and Instructive Sentiments, Maxims, Cautions, and Reflections... 1755 ; *Meditations Collected from the Sacred Books 1750* (reprint, 1976). *Richardsoniana* (1974) includes *Three Criticism of Richardson's Fiction 1749–54*; *The Paths of Virtue Delineated; or, the History in Miniature* (1756) and other works.

archive shows that he achieved both goals: she read his books, created her own Clarissa story, and questioned her society's morality as she did so.

As we shall see, the relationship between reader and novelist was a two-way street. Johnson and others like her did not just absorb novels: they had their own important impact on a literary culture that extended deep into the provincial world. As we analyze Johnson's epistolary literacy, we will observe the ties that bind Johnson to the novelist in both directions—Richardson's influences on her work and her influence on his.

Johnson used letter writing for two fundamental purposes. First, it was an entry point into a larger world of print culture that was spreading to the countryside. Though Johnson had access to a clergyman's library, she lacked academic training. Through letter writing she developed techniques needed for more complex forms of expression, such as the short story and poetry that relied on more sophisticated sources and conventions. Johnson's second motive for writing letters was to work out problems that she faced as a parent, wife, friend, and servant of God—that is, problems of hierarchy, authority, and obedience. The evidence for this claim lies in a group of themes that continually surface in her writing. In all of her work, Johnson asks the same questions—which are also at the center of Richardson's novels: How can a woman attain goodness in this world and salvation in the next? How can a woman work out her religious beliefs, encircled by nonconformists in a world riddled with inequality? How can a woman best express her values to family and friends? As she writes, Johnson constructs a moral perspective that she passes on in letters, initially to her children, then to other women, who provide a sympathetic network of listeners.

Johnson's writing was informed by constant reading, through which she found both literary models and ideas for moral guidance. First she copied out passages and paraphrased them in her own words. Later she integrated them into poetry and prose. A great deal of what Johnson read was in the form of letters, including those found in her favorite thriller, the eight-volume *Turkish Spy*. Other

collections she read include Alexander Pope's Letters, Letters of the English Nation by a Jesuit, Persian Letters, and of course the fictional letters in Samuel Richardson's Clarissa, which I discuss in detail below. Like the novelist, Johnson was not well versed in classical languages. We see her taking shortcuts into history and literature by gleaning information from translations and more popular books, including facts and maxims that she copies from the Turkish Spy. Because of the book's popularity, William Warburton suggested that Richardson make Pamela "a plebian Turkish Spy," or Indian, who satirizes all the "follies and extravagances of high life."

The Turkish Spy is supposedly based on "real" letters, a device that Richardson also uses. Its readers enjoy the adventures of its Muslim hero and examine the hypocrisy of European states and their religions along the way. Johnson used it to comment on her own world as she copied a quotation that begins, "This Western World lies drown'd in Wickedness." Then she notes in the margin: "This is the exact picture of Great Britain at this present time Anno Domini 1755. Pray God Grant my sons may escape the contagion, & live Virtuous in a nation flowing with...wicked practices. Amen." This is one of many examples of Johnson's use of secular nonfiction to address moral problems. Yet the primary purpose of her reading is to know God. "When I read, O Lord," she prays, "strengthen my memory, that I may always retain those Things that may well contribute to my increase in the Knowledge and Love of Thee." The Psalms comfort her and apocryphal books provide stories. She consults The Psalm-Singer's Pocket Companion and makes copies of her favorite hymns. Nevertheless, the most remarkable characteristic of Johnson's reading is the diversity and breadth of secular material. Though the extracts are heavily didactic, there is also room for bawdy jokes. Still her favorite authors, which she helpfully lists, are entirely respectable:

The Books that are to be Read by All that would be Eloquent, Polite, Genteel & agreeable; Wise in this world, & Happy in the next; are the Bible, Homer, Milton, the Guardians, Spectators & Tatlers. These should

be Read over & over again, & short Extracts Learn'd by Heart...these are the only Books necessary to be read for improvement, all others only for Diversion. Whoever follows this rule will think justly, & write & talk eloquently +:

Johnson's comment shows that she read for entertainment as well as moral instruction. It also indicates that her desire for polite learning shaped her choice of reading. The marketplace provided her with abridged translations of the classics, which she used in her writing. Thus she knew Homer through the words of Pope. "Can any man of sense be tired with reading Homer?" she asks on two different occasions. Then she repeats the quotation that starts with this sentence in an original poem, but varies the fourth line. Like the Spectator numbers she read, Johnson also quotes lengthy extracts from Milton, Horace, and Juvenile's satires, which she then paraphrases in her own words. Classical texts provide maxims about the battle between virtue and corruption. Johnson's extract from Plutarch's Lives cites Aristotle, Plato, Demosthenes, and Theophrastus. Like Richardson, Johnson probably did not read their works in the original languages, but she knew their place in literature, through works that "modernized" ancient authors. Still, she also relishes more popular fare such as editions of Arabian Nights Entertainments and Aesop's Fables. Richardson would have approved of the latter, for he published his own edition of the Fables early in his career.

After *The Turkish Spy*, Johnson's most frequently consulted sources are the London periodicals—the Spectator, Guardian, and Tattler. By providing models of letters to and by the editors, they acknowledged and encouraged their readers' epistolary literacy. Letters, which comprise over half of the Spectator's 555 numbers, are an integral element -- one that invited reader participation.⁸⁹ This practice of course dates back to the 1690s in the pages of John Dunton's *Athenian Mercury*.

Epistolary novel, a novel told through the medium of letters written by one or more of the characters. Originating with Samuel Richardson's *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740), the story of a servant girl's victorious struggle against her

master's attempts to seduce her, it was one of the earliest forms of novel to be developed and remained one of the most popular up to the 19th century. The epistolary novel's reliance on subjective points of view makes it the forerunner of the modern psychological novel.

The advantages of the novel in letter form are that it presents an intimate view of the character's thoughts and feelings without interference from the author and that it conveys the shape of events to come with dramatic immediacy. Also, the presentation of events from several points of view lends the story dimension and verisimilitude. Though the method was most often a vehicle for sentimental novels, it was not limited to them. Of the outstanding examples of the form, Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748) has tragic intensity, Tobias Smollett's *Humphry Clinker* (1771) is a picaresque comedy and social commentary, and Fanny Burney's *Evelina* (1778) is a novel of manners. Jean-Jacques Rousseau used the form as a vehicle for his ideas on marriage and education in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761; "The New Eloise"), and J.W. von Goethe used it for his statement of Romantic despair, *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774; *The Sorrows of Young Werther*). The letter novel of Pierre Choderlos de Laclos, *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1782; *Dangerous Acquaintances*), is a work of penetrating and realistic psychology.

Some disadvantages of the form were apparent from the outset. Dependent on the letter writer's need to "confess" to virtue, vice, or powerlessness, such confessions were susceptible to suspicion or ridicule. The servant girl Pamela's remarkable literary powers and her propensity for writing on all occasions were cruelly burlesqued in Henry Fielding's *Shamela* (1741), which pictures his heroine in bed scribbling, "I hear him coming in at the Door," as her seducer enters the room. From 1800 on, the popularity of the form declined, though novels combining letters with journals and narrative were still common. In the 20th century letter fiction was often used to exploit the linguistic humour and unintentional character revelations of such semiliterate as the hero of Ring Lardner's *You Know Me Al* (1916).

The epistolary method, most notably used by Samuel Richardson in *Pamela* (1740) and by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *La nouvelle Heloise* (1761), has the advantage of allowing the characters to tell the story in their own words, but it is hard to resist the uneasy feeling that a kind of divine editor is sorting and ordering the letters into his own pattern. The device of making the narrator also a character in the story has the disadvantage of limiting the material available for the narration, since the narrator-character can know only those events in which he participates. There can, of course, be a number of secondary narratives enclosed in the main narrative, and this device—though it sometimes looks artificial—has been used triumphantly by Conrad and, on a lesser scale, by W. Somerset Maugham. A, the main narrator, tells what he knows directly of the story and introduces what B and C and D have told him about the parts that he does not know.

Language and Letters

Typesetter, printer, editor, author, Samuel Richardson covered all the necessary roles and stages which make up the writing process. However, he has also been studied and appreciated as an innovator of language as far as grammatical, syntactic and lexical aspects are concerned (Tieken-Boon 1987): Dr. Johnson acknowledged him as a ‘word-maker’, admired his ability to transmit feelings through words (Eaves & Kimpel 1971, 338), and repeatedly quoted him in his *Dictionary* (1755). Richardson’s influence should be understood in the light of his social and socio-linguistic collocation. Geographically and socially mobile, he belonged to a lower-class family, ‘a Family of middling Note’, as he writes to Johannes Stinstra³⁵. He moved to London from Macworth, Derbyshire, and, though the son of a joiner, he became a wealthy and established printer, and the owner of his own printing house. As a printer artisan who, therefore, belonged to the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie, Richardson did not have a classical education: in his letters he defines himself as a businessman with all the duties and limits that this

³⁵ ‘My Father was a very honest Man, descended of a Family of middling Note in ye County of Surry’; to Johannes Stinstra (Carroll 1964, 228-235).

entails. At the same time, however, his role as an author brought him into contact with the languages and styles of the upper class, with people and personalities who were to become models for the favourite characters in his novels. This is a recurrent concern in his correspondence and when writing to ladies who are members of the aristocracy, he often takes pains to ask for advice about expressions considered appropriate for their environment.

Richardson's first novel *Pamela* often collapses the time of action with the time of narration. This sense of the novel's focus on temporality can be seen in the following moment when Pamela, a 15-year-old servant girl under threat from her master's sexual advances, wonders what her ultimate fate will be in a letter to her parents:

I don't know what to think – nor how to judge; but I shall ne'er believe I am with you till I am on my Knees before you, begging both your Blessings. ... There is, I see, the Chariot drawn out ... What will be the End of all this!

Epistolary form encouraged a reading style that was emotional and immediate. Denis Diderot described reading Richardson's novels as akin to understanding not just his characters' thoughts, but their unconscious motives and desires: 'I had seen the secret springs of self-interest and self-love operating in a hundred different ways; I had become privy to a multitude of incidents and I felt I had gained in experience'. A later commentator remarked of Richardson's prose style that it enabled its readers to 'slip invisible, into the domestic privacy of [their] characters, and hear and see everything that is said and done'. On the title pages of each of his novels, Richardson identified himself as the 'Editor' of his works, not the author. In this sense, his protagonists write their own stories, inviting their readers to enter into the privacy of their closets and their thoughts.

Pamela's authenticity is established through the immediacy of her letters, as if they are emotional outbursts, with little separation between the tears she sheds at her lady's deathbed and those she weeps over the subsequent letter to her parents,

right at the beginning of the novel. This aspect of its style divided Richardson's readers.

In spite of all this, the potential influence of Richardson's style on his correspondents' familiar letters, and the impact of his letters as far as his epistolary stylistic strategies are concerned have been largely neglected and are worthy of investigation. Among similar examples of epistolary liaisons where almost only one side of the writing couple may be read, Richardson offers a special and favourable case in that his personal letters may be defined as less one-sided than others. What I claim is that Richardson develops linguistic and stylistic strategies aiming both at an interpersonal and linguistic involvement of the addressee: in doing so he enhances the conversational quality of epistolary exchanges and, ultimately, teaches a grammar of affectivity, which had quite a few enthusiastic learners, especially among his female correspondents

Along with the issues typical of the familiar letter, such as long descriptions of daily routines, or discussions dedicated to the relationship between parents and children, or to the signs of friendship, the most recurrent topic debated among Richardson's correspondents was literary writing, or rather Richardson's literary writing. He was the focus or *ego* of those circles because of his innovatory strategy in planning the plots of his novels through the help and practical advice of his correspondents. The personalities and sentiments of his characters were debated thanks to the exchange of letters which embedded long excerpts of 'dialogues in letters' among the characters of his novels, to be commented, amended, abridged, or otherwise changed. His correspondents were well aware of the fact that the man they exchanged letters with was a novelist and their exchanges resulted not only in examples of literary criticism *ante litteram*, but also of creative writing in that the writer was expected not only to discuss the actions and words of the characters, but also to contribute to the very writing of the narration.

The subject of the exchange is the episode of Lovelace's death in *Clarissa*. As is well known, Lovelace is the rake and libertine of the story, who abducts and rapes Clarissa; he dies in a duel with Clarissa's cousin, Morden, and the event is

described by De la Tour, Lovelace's valet. Moore is objecting to the very writing strategy adopted by Richardson and in particular to the voice and point of view chosen to tell the story; Richardson replies, confirming his decisions and giving reasons for this³⁶.

The addressee's letter, mentioned in the very first lines ('You have done me great Honour, and given me great Pleasure, by yours of the 23rd'), is brought literally inside the page: the words of the addressee are quoted in this case by a tagged direct speech, in order to be commented on, point by point:

1. *You say, Sir, that 'Lovelace shd have given Belford an acct. of his own Remorses after the Duel, or, if that had been improper Morden might have visited him privately, and have written the acct. himself.' Run thro' the Body, delirious, vomiting Blood, the first was impossible: To the second I answer – Morden was wounded himself – They fought in the Austrian dominion: It was concerted that the survivor to avoid public animadversions shd. make off to the Venetian territories.*
2. *You wish, Sir, that 'this acct. had been given by any but a Servant.' Shall we suppose that Mowbray or Tourville had been sent abroad with him (Belford was too much engaged) Mowbray wd. have given a Brutal or Farcical acct., if I had respected his Character, as he did of Lovelace's delirious behaviour on the first communication of Clarissa's death...*
3. *'The triumphant Death of Clarissa, (you say, Sir) needed a more particular contrast than in the Deaths of Belton & Sinclair.' – I have a few things to offer on this head, after I have observed that Lovelace's Remorses are so very strongly painted by himself in Letter CXI a very few days before the Duel, that*

³⁶ Richardson's strategy to lure his readers and correspondents into a cooperation on his plots, only to reaffirm his power as author is well known: 'though he said that he depended on readers for inspiration, few of their suggestions were incorporated' (Whyman 2007, 583). As Johnson put it in a letter (28 March 1754) to him: 'You have a trick of laying yourself open to objections, in the first part of your work, and crushing them in subsequent parts' (Redford 1992, I, 79). See also Keymer 2000; Montini 2003.

there cou'd not be a necessity for any persons giving an acct. of them after in was fought. ... 'Then seeming ejaculation, – then speaking inwardly but so as not to be understood' – how affecting such a circumstance in such a Man! And at last with his wonted haughtiness of spirit – LET THIS EXPIATE all his apparent Invocation and address to the SUPREME. Have I not then given rather a dreadful than a hopeful Exit, with respect to the Futurity, to the unhappy Lovelace! (Carroll 1964, 118-122)

This is a strategy Richardson usually follows as a reaction to the addressee's absence typical of epistolary form. In this special case, however, rather than a confrontation with the interlocutor's 'here and now' world, the pragmatic procedures of the letter focus on fictional plots, and on the 'here and now' of the fictional characters, according to ideological and cultural schemata, apparently shared by both correspondents (Fitzmaurice 2002). The writer seems to appeal to the reader by quoting Lovelace's or Morden's voices from the novel, in an interplay between orality features and literary dialogues. Thus, if the subject of the letter is closely connected to the written mode, what cannot escape notice is that writing is meant and used as a help to informal conversational traits, such as the use of abbreviations ('shd', 'acct.', 'thro', 'wd.', 'cou'd'), which mimic conversational speed, the capitalization as a form of emphasis (ex. 3), the frequency of questions, and, especially in this case, the embedding of the characters' exclamations.

In a letter to Hester Mulso dealing with a similar topic – the plot of *Sir Charles Grandison* and a possible unhappy ending – Richardson sketches different scenarios and he does so by increasing aspects of face-to-face interaction:

June 20, 1752

4. *My dear Miss Mulso, 'won't I let you know when Harriet is married?' And you really expect no back-stroke of fortune? All to be halcyon to the end of chapter? Think you not that Harriet can shine by her behaviour in some very deep distress? –Would*

you, if the thing be ever published, have people be inquiring which is sir Charles Grandison's house in St. James's Square? and so forth? Poor Sir Charles Grandison! Would it not be right to remove him? – But shall we first marry him? – Shall we shew Harriet, after a departure glorious to the hero, in her vidual glory?... There, my Miss Mulso! —And the work to be published piecemeal! —What a surprise would this great catastrophe occasion! (Carroll 1964, 215-216)

Apparently he writes as he would talk, and markers of interactive-involved discourse

are all present (Biber 1988): address terms, especially the second person pronouns, the use of the inclusive *we* so as to establish a sense of cooperation and an ideological bond with the recipient, temporal and spatial deixis related to the time and space both of the addressee and of the fictional characters, in other parts of the letter the imperative construction, but especially questions and exclamations, an add-on strategy typical of spoken language.

Given this double nature of letters, as a genre embedding both writing and oral-centred traits, Richardson's correspondence displays a wide range of interesting linguistic choices. The syntax of his letters is generally made up of a heavy hypotactic structure, very long sentences, a disjointed relationship between the verb and the subject of the action, to the point of making the reader forget who the agent of the utterance is. In this context, however, the letters to female correspondents show great differences in register, and Richardson tends to shift to significant oral forms – and the women also seem to do this with him³⁷.

The influence of Richardson's letters on his correspondents, both on the linguistic level and the register level, can only be confirmed and increased, if we think that his recipients were also his readers, enabled and entitled to correspond only after a close, and often addictive, reading of Richardson's novels, or again, of

³⁷ Following Nurmi and Palander-Collin 2008, I use *register* and *register variation* as reflected by the writer-recipient relationship, and in this sense linked to what they also call *style*.

the letters in his novels. The writing-to-the-moment technique is well known with its specific linguistic kit, together with features of pathetic enunciation (Altman 1982). Clarissa's letters provide numerous examples of this style: the writer's emotion fills the page, it is not narrated but staged, visualized on the page, as in the *Mad Papers*. It is not only a story of tragic events, but also a linguistic representation of passions, which affects the reader to the point of determining a reaction conveyed precisely by the deeply interactive nature of a letter³⁸.

The interpersonal involvement strategies practiced by Richardson in his letter writing seem to reach out and capture the recipient even in her/his extra textual world, only to bring her/him back within the epistolary text, which is the space and the time where the linguistic event takes place.

His great literary rival Henry Fielding pointed to the impossibility of this claim to immediacy in his parody of Richardson's novel, *Shamela* (1741).

Shamela contains scenes that ridicule Pamela's scribbling fervor, such as this one describing Pamela lying in bed with her housekeeper and waiting for her master, Mr. B, to find them:

Mrs. Jervis and I are just in Bed, and the Door unlocked; if my Master should come – Odsbobs! I hear him just coming in at the Door. You see I write in the present Tense ... Well, he is in Bed between us, we both shamming a Sleep, he steals his Hand into my Bosom, which I, as if in my Sleep, press close to me with mine, and then pretend to awake. (Letter VI)

Here Fielding mocks what he considered to be the sham virtue of Richardson's book and draws attention to its repeated scenes of titillation (most obviously, as here, Pamela lying in her bed in a state of undress). Fielding reminds us that there is inevitably a gap between action and writing, in which reflection

³⁸ For the aesthetic, performative and pedagogical aspects of the 'sentimental' in a historical and cultural perspective, see among others Todd 1986; Mullan 1988; Gordon 2002

takes place; a writer selects what they want to say, and may even assume a performative role.

Frances Burney's *Evelina*

In a similar way to Richardson's hidden authorship, Frances Burney's name was not printed with her first novel *Evelina* (1778). Instead, she frames herself as an anonymous 'Editor'. The letters are therefore presented as edited versions of real letters mostly written between Evelina and her guardian, the Reverend Mr. Villars, which document the experiences and challenges of being a young woman. Evelina's first letter from London to her guardian in the countryside has the breathlessness of real-time narration:

This moment arrived. Just going to Drury-Lane theatre. The celebrated [18th-century actor] Mr. [David] Garrick performs Ranger. I am quite in extacy... I can write no more now. I have hardly time to breathe. (Letter X)

Burney, though, is more aware of the challenges of immediacy and adapts her narration accordingly. Through letter writing, Evelina learns in the course of the novel how to best shape her history, becoming more constructive and less merely descriptive a storyteller:

I have a vast deal to say, and shall give all this morning to my pen. As to my plan of writing every evening the adventures of the day, I find it impracticable; for the versions here are so very late, that if I begin my letters after them, I could not go to bed at all. (Letter XI)

In this passage, Burney, through the character of Evelina recognizes the problems of realism and epistolarity that Richardson had encountered in his second work, *Clarissa*. Notoriously lengthy (it is one of the longest English novels ever written), it is doubtful whether *Clarissa* could have had enough time in her daily

existence to produce the volumes of letters that she is depicted as writing. Yet the epistolary style is appealing in such works because it combines politeness with familiarity of expression. Such fiction both reflects an expanding social spectrum of readers, particularly female readers, in the 18th century, and is a move in the period towards cultivated informality. The letters that constitute both *Pamela* and *Evelina* authenticate women's domestic and urban experience, whether it is the justification of a servant girl's experience of virtue under threat, or the more poised letters of a young woman making her way in the world and seeking social legitimacy.

Epistolary invention blurs the line between fact and fiction in many actual letters of the period, too. Swift wrote a letter to Henrietta Howard (mistress to the future King George II) as if from the pen of his famous fictional creation, Lemuel Gulliver. Many of Frances Burney's letters read more as experiments in fictional form than straightforwardly personal missives in the way that they employ satiric techniques derived from fiction and the manner in which they use dialogue. The example of Pope's publication of his letters earlier in the century influenced how authors viewed the value of their letters and epistolary renown more generally.

In 1767, the novelist Laurence Sterne (1713–1768), made famous by the publication of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1759–67), compared the economic value of his stash of personal letters (amounting to '4 Vols the size of Shandy') with his literary output. He predicted that 'they would sell well – & produce 800 p[oun]ds at the least'. In the event, his daughter Lydia published in 1775 a three-volume edition of the *Letters of the Late Rev. Mr. Laurence Sterne, to his most Intimate Friends*. An unplanned effect of this publication was to elevate one of Sterne's correspondents, the Anglo-African writer and patron Ignatius Sancho (?1729–1780), to literary celebrity.

Ignatius Sancho's Letters

Sancho had initiated a correspondence with Sterne in 1766, praising the author for a passage in one of his sermons criticizing slavery, and requesting that

he continue to address the plight of Sancho's fellow Africans. Sterne answered this call, remarking to his correspondent that 'tis no uncommon thing ... for one half of the world to use the other half of it like brutes, & then endeavour to make 'em so'. Sancho's own letters, published posthumously as *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African* (1782), are heavily influenced by Sterne's writing style and its Shandean techniques of idiosyncratic punctuation, jests and word play. Take, for example, the following extract from a letter to a friend, in which Sancho apologises for neglecting to answer an earlier letter quickly enough:

Your poor letter is a type of what daily happens – merit oppressed and smothered by rubbish. – Alas! poor letter, it shared the fate, the poor world, which we inhabit, will hereafter undergo – one bright gleam of imitation of the mind that dictated it – some few sparks. – Alas! alas! my poor letter – pass but a few years – perhaps a few months – thy generous friendly compost may – thy friend whose heart glows while he writes – who feels thy worth – yea, and reveres it too. – Nonsense, why we know the very hinges of our last cradles will rust and moulder; – and that, in the course of another century, neither flesh, bone, coffin, nor nail – will be discernible from mother earth. – Courage – while we live – let us live – to Virtue – Friendship – Religion – Charity – then drop (at death's call) our cumbrous (you are thin) load of flesh, and mount in spirit to our native home. – Bless us, at what a rate have I been travelling! – I am quite out of breath –

(Letter L)

The way that Sancho muses wittily here on the material fate of his letters indicates how the literary style of a novelist had begun to impress itself upon the everyday style of the ordinary letter writer. At a more profound level, Sancho's *Letters* became used as evidence by the abolitionists of the refined

feeling of their author, and therefore of the intrinsic humanity and equality of Africans more broadly.

Around this time, the significance of letters as authentic documents in biographies of authors and other celebrities was growing, alongside biography itself as a distinct art form. Examples of this include William Mason's edition of the *Works of Gray* (1775), and, more famously, James Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (1791). Boswell used letters as a way of 'interweaving what [Samuel Johnson] privately wrote, and said, and thought'. Letters, therefore, are a crucial influence on the evolution of biography, constituting part of a deliberate and considered record of an author's life. At the same time, the heyday of the epistolary novel had passed in favour of a more realistic form of fiction, though there would continue to be notable exceptions, such as the letters that form the outer layers of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818).

2.3. Epistolary travel writing and national character in Tobias George Smollett's novel "The Expedition of Humphry Clinker"

Tobias (George) Smollett (1721-1771) was a Scottish novelist, satirist, poet, and dramatist. 'Smollett belonged to the glorious company of English hack-writers who have turned their hands to anything. Verse, drama, travel, political writing, a treatise on midwifery, translation – he translated Cervantes, Le Sage, and Voltaire – and a history of England in many volumes poured from his pen'³⁹. Smollett's (last) novel, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771) is an epistolary novel. It is a genre of fiction which first gained popularity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the epistolary novel is a form in which most or the entire plot is advanced by the letters or journal entries of one or more of its characters. As the epistolary novel relies on the subjective point of view, it offers proximity to the characters' internal perspective without any authorial interference. In Mikhail M. Bakhtin's words, the seventeenth and the eighteenth century epistolary novel 'had

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

a great stylistic significance for the subsequent history of the novel' and representations of consciousness'⁴⁰.

The eighteenth century culture was, among many other things, a culture of letter-writing; letters were an essential part not only of daily life but also travel writing⁴¹. Letters infer a geographical distance between writer (addresser) and recipient (addressee) as 'the letter writer is always travelling, explicitly through time and either explicitly or implicitly across space'. The correspondence between letter-writer and addressee tests their identity, i.e. letters were a medium that allowed writer and reader redefine the borders of the self. Letters also empowered letter-writers – travelers to renegotiate the outward and the inward, public and private.

In *Humphry Clinker*, through their letters the characters provide different points of view of their travels (a tour of England and Scotland) and of each other. We learn about the personality of each letter-writer directly through what they say, but also through what the other writers (addressees) say about him or her. We also learn about those who are absent, i.e. their correspondents. We learn about them through their – hypothetical – letters. Hypothetical letters, as a form or elliptical presentation of reality, appeals to the imagination of the reader: the reader is forced to reconstruct the elements that he is not directly given, to understand what is implicated. To all this, Walter Allen adds saying that *Humphry Clinker* 'recounts a tour of England and Scotland in the form of letters; but the letters are used in a way quite different from that of Richardson. They aim at a direct revelation of character – or in most instances of caricature – but they also serve to show a single incident, a place, a person from different and conflicting points of view'⁴².

Humphry Clinker is engaged in an epistolary form of travel writing: the traveler writes letters to correspondents back home. Epistolary travel writing provides a detailed account of the topography of the journey, it also reflects on the customs of the places visited; and provides observations on the different aspects of character,

⁴⁰ Joe Bray, *The Epistolary Novel. Representations of Consciousness*, London and New York: Routledge, 2003, 1-3.

⁴¹ Clare Brant, *Eighteenth-Century Letters and British Culture*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

⁴² Walter Allen, *The English Novel*, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1963, 73.

both individual and national. Smollett draws on the philosophy of David Hume (1711-1776) who, in “*An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*” (1748), says that humanity is made of ‘the diversity of characters, prejudices, and opinions’ evident in the world⁴³. In *Humphry Clinker*, national character is given thoughtful reflection in the Scottish leg (aspect) of Bramble’s tour: it serves to outline the differences within Great Britain itself. The Scots, as Jerry observes, ‘are far from being servile imitators of our modes and fashionable vices. All their customs and regulations of public and private economy, of business and diversion, are in their own style. This remarkably predominates in their looks, their dress and manner, their music, and even their cookery. Our ’squire declares, that he knows not another people upon earth, so strongly marked with a national character’⁴⁴.

The characters in the book observe the (individual) character of the characters they travel with: in his letters to his friend in Oxford, Jerry Melford creates the verbal portraits of what he repeatedly calls ‘originals’, including Sir Ulic Mackilligut and his half-blind, half-lame dancing master. Of Squire Bramble himself, Jerry writes: ‘Mr. Bramble’s character ... opens and improves upon me every day. — His singularities afford a rich mine of entertainment; his understanding, so far as I can judge, is well cultivated; his observations on life are equally just, pertinent, and uncommon. He affects misanthropy, in order to conceal the sensibility of a heart which is tender, even to a degree of weakness’.

Characters: Smollett’s ‘original genius’ in sketching character has been acknowledged: ‘Many of the characters are drawn with a free but a masterly hand; in some particulars perhaps they are exaggerated, but are not therefore the less entertaining or instructive: Some appear to be pictures of particular persons, but others of human nature, represented indeed in individuals peculiarly distinguished, but drawn from imagination rather than life ... In this part of the work consists its principal excellence, and its principal defect is the want of events’⁴⁵. Indeed, *Humphry Clinker* is a novel about character (the book has got about 233

⁴³ David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1977.

⁴⁴ T.G.Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker*, London: Penguin Books, 2008, 248.

⁴⁵ Lionel Kelly (ed.), *Tobias Smollett. The Critical Heritage*, London, New York: Routledge, 2005, 206

characters); action in it is subordinated to character: the action of the plot is episodic, interrupted by accidents, detours, flashbacks, and interpolations.

Public spaces

The group visits cities and towns: Bath, London, and Edinburgh, etc. Smollett sees them as the urban spaces of filth. At the same time, thematically, Smollett extends those urban spaces beyond the city, i.e. he extends them into to diverse forms of social and political discourse:

'Now, mark the contrast at London--I am pent up in frowzy lodgings, where there is not room enough to swing a cat; and I breathe the steams of endless putrefaction; and these would, undoubtedly, produce a pestilence, if they were not qualified by the gross acid of sea-coal, which is itself a pernicious nuisance to lungs of any delicacy of texture: but even this boasted corrector cannot prevent those languid, sallow looks, that distinguish the inhabitants of London from those ruddy, swains that lead a country-life--I go to bed after mid-night, jaded and restless from the dissipations of the day--I start every hour from my sleep, at the horrid noise of the watchmen bawling the hour through every street, and thundering at every door; a set of useless fellows, who serve no other purpose but that of disturbing the repose of the inhabitants; and by five o'clock I start out of bed, in consequence of the still more dreadful alarm made by the country carts, and noisy rustics bellowing green peas under my window. If I would drink water, I must quaff the mawkish contents of an open aqueduct, exposed to all manner of defilement; or swallow that which comes from the river Thames, impregnated with all the filth of London and Westminster--Human excrement is the least offensive part of the concrete, which is composed of all the drugs, minerals, and poisons, used in mechanics and manufacture, enriched with the putrefying carcasses of beasts and men; and

*mixed with the scouring of all the wash-tubs, kennels, and common sewers, within the bills of mortality*⁴⁶.

Although T.G.Smollett sees urban spaces as the spaces of (scatological) filth (it is by some critics defined as inclusive realism), Smollett does raise “the contemporary city” (London, Edinburgh, Bath) to the level of a major theme in literature: he closely examines the intricate economies of the cities that he visits: while in Bath, he scrutinizes the dynamics of its public places:

‘You must know, I find nothing but disappointment at Bath; which is so altered, that I can scarce believe it is the same place that I frequented about thirty years ago. [...] --But, I believe, you will not deny, that this place, which Nature and Providence seem to have intended as a resource from distemper and disquiet, is become the very center of racket and dissipation. Instead of that peace, tranquility and ease, so necessary to those who labour under bad health, weak nerves, and irregular spirits; here we have nothing but noise, tumult, and hurry; with the fatigue and slavery of maintaining a ceremonial, more stiff, formal, and oppressive, than the etiquette of a German elector. A national hospital it may be; but one would imagine, that none but lunatics are admitted’;

whereas Lydia Melford, his niece, draws a completely different contour of the city:

‘Bath is to me a new world--All is gayety, good-humour, and diversion. The eye is continually entertained with the splendour of dress and equipage; and the ear with the sound of coaches, chaises, chairs, and other carriages. The merry bells ring round, from morn till night. Then we are welcomed by the city-waits in our own lodgings: we have music in the Pump-room every morning, cotillions every fore-noon in the rooms, balls twice a week, and concerts every other night, besides private assemblies and parties without number’

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 135.

The Enlightenment discourse is firstly a public discourse, i.e. the advent of public discourse was defined by historical context. According to Jürgen Habermas, ‘capitalist relations’ brought a flow of ‘traffic in commodities and news’. With this phase came an explosion of social spaces for public dialogue and information exchange: ‘Around the middle of the seventeenth century’, states Habermas, ‘not only tea—first to be popular—but also chocolate and coffee had become the common beverages of at least the well-to-do strata of the population, the coachman of a Levantine merchant opened the first coffee house. By the first decade of the eighteenth century London already had 3,000 of them, each with a core group of regulars’⁴⁷.

In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), Jürgen Habermas developed the concept of the public sphere (*Öffentlichkeit*), which emerged in the eighteenth century in Europe; the public sphere was a democratic space of critical discussion; it was outside of the control by the state, where ‘individuals exchanged views and knowledge’. Habermas argues that prior to the eighteenth century European culture had been dominated by a ‘representational’ culture. In Habermas’s view, the growth in newspapers⁴⁸, journals, reading clubs, and coffee-houses in eighteenth century Europe marked the gradual replacement of ‘representational’ culture with *Öffentlichkeit* culture. In one of her letters, Lydia Melford speaks about such public places in Bath: ‘Hard by the Pump-room, is a coffee-house for the ladies; but my aunt says, young girls are not admitted, inasmuch as the conversation turns upon politics, scandal, philosophy, and other subjects above our capacity; but we are allowed to accompany them to the booksellers shops, which are charming places of resort; where we read novels, plays, pamphlets, and news-papers, for so small a subscription as a crown a quarter; and in these offices of intelligence, (as my brother calls them) all the reports of the day, and all the private transactions of the Bath, are first entered and discussed’ and toy-men; and commonly stop at Mr. Gill’s the pastry-cook, to take a

⁴⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: the MIT Press, 1991, 32.

⁴⁸ *The Times* 1785; *The Sunday Times* 1821

jelly, a tart, or a small bacon of vermicelli. There is, moreover, another place of entertainment on the other side of the water, opposite to the Grove; to which the company cross over in a boat--It is called Spring Garden [..]'. Public discourse brought people together, consolidating the diverse community.

Capitalism and self-sufficiency, the city and the country: During the first half of the eighteenth century, new commodities in the form of oriental produce (sugar, rum, tea, chocolate, and coffee, etc.) entered England. Their arrival was followed by the anxiety of otherness: they challenged England's idea of itself as a homogeneous society. Such imports undermined England's claim to national self-sufficiency, especially during the period in which *Humphry Clinker* was written: 'Between 1765 and 1774 homegrown supplies [of food] were insufficient to meet the needs of a growing population'⁴⁹. The problem of how to assimilate, or acculturate, other cultures was driven into a problem of consumption: 'to avoid becoming the other, one must simply avoid eating the other'. *Humphry Clinker* holds on to an ideal of cultural self-sufficiency as it comes in the form of "pure" English food. Syntactically, Bramble's reiteration of possession — 'my veal ... my salads ... my desert ... my pigs'—reinforces domesticity as a refuge from the Other which comes in many forms:

'Shall I state the difference between my town grievances, and my country comforts? At Brambleton-hall, I have elbow-room within doors, and breathe a clear, elastic, salutary air--I enjoy refreshing sleep, which is never disturbed by horrid noise, nor interrupted, but in a-morning, by the sweet twitter of the martlet at my window --I drink the virgin lymph, pure and crystalline as it gushes from the rock, or the sparkling beverage, home-brewed from malt of my own making; or I indulge with cyder, which my own orchard affords; or with claret of the best growth, imported for my own use, by a correspondent on whose integrity I can depend; my bread is sweet and nourishing, made from my own wheat,

⁴⁹ Charlotte Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties: Consumer Protest, Gender and British Slavery*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.

ground in my own mill, and baked in my own oven; my table is, in a great measure, furnished from my own ground; ⁵⁰ .

The journey narrative and healing: As an epistolary travel novel, *Humphry Clinker* adds a new – healing – aspect to the journey (road) narrative of the eighteenth century English literature: Mr. Bramble thinks he feels ill, therefore, his doctor orders him to take a tour for his health. The healing aspect of the journey is reflected on through the theme of mind and body, a theme which is examined through the relationship between a physician and a patient, between Dr. Lewis and the hypochondriacally Matthew Bramble:

‘The pills are good for nothing- -I might as well swallow snowballs to cool my reins --I have told you over and over, how hard I am to move; [//] Prithee send me another prescription--I am as lame and as much tortured in all my limbs as if I was broke upon the wheel: indeed, I am equally distressed in mind and body—⁵¹.

In the book, an individual’s physical and moral health is the physical and moral health of the state as the *social body*, which is diseased and in need of a cure. Bramble is an acute observer of social evils; he is emotionally indignant over them. Smollett ‘s clearly voices his political assessment of the abuse of the liberty of the press, the menace of an unthinking mob, etc.:

‘As for the liberty of the press, like every other privilege, it must be restrained within certain bounds; for if it is carried to a breach of law, religion, and charity, it becomes one of the greatest evils that ever annoyed the community. If the lowest ruffian may stab your good-name with impunity in England, will you be so uncandid as to exclaim against Italy for the practice of common assassination? To what purpose is our property secured, if our moral character is left defenseless? People thus baited, grow desperate; and the despair of being able to preserve one’s character, untainted by such vermin, produces a total neglect of fame; so

⁵⁰ T.G. Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker*, London: Penguin Books, 2008, 133.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

that one of the chief incitements to the practice of virtue is effectually destroyed' ⁵².

Overall, the fictional epistolary travel forms enabled Smollett to engage his reader in the polemics on such subjects as moral observation, the description of customs and manners, and reflections on human nature, and (national) 'character'. *Humphry Clinker* deals with social, economic, and political history of the specific topographical settings (Bath, London, Edinburgh, and the Scottish Highlands) described in the letters of Mr. Bramble, Jerry Melford, and others in the family expedition of Welsh tourists. On one level, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* presents its readers with one family, including the tatterdemalion Humphry Clinker himself; on the other hand, it provides an eighteenth-century portrait of England as a 'body politic', which, as the narrative implicates, is in need of a cure.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 118.

CONCLUSION

According to the previously stated, it can be concluded that the epistolary genre has its ancient historic background. Based on the author's integration regarding communication either with real or with imaginary reader, the dialogic nature is dominant, as well as the subjective form of perception, i.e. the intimate provenience. It was established in this paper that the number of definitions for this literary genre, its theoretic considerations, its characteristics as well as its classifications are numerous.

Richardson's and his correspondents' personal letters may be considered and studied as a peculiar repertoire in the vast corpus of eighteenth-century personal correspondence. The homogeneous literacy of the participants and a certain constant intimacy of the writer-addressee relationship, which may vary only according to parameters of gender and age, are the most relevant features of his network clusters. In addition to a qualitative analysis, a quantitative approach would be needed to reconsider and further investigate the sociolinguistic features of this correspondence, such as factors related to region or to class differences, or to male-female linguistic variables. With the data I had at my disposal, I started with the writer variables which are more easily identifiable considering the relevance and the public standing of a figure such as Samuel Richardson's. In the face of writers and topics which might entail a formal tone, the register of Richardson's letters seems rather to veer towards informal and face-to-face

conversational traits, as if the celebrated writing-to-the-moment style was meant not only as a lesson in fictional writing, but also as a reference style for the various topics and functions of a familiar letter. Thus, both the discussion of narrative worlds and an everyday argument appear to be treated with similar linguistic strategies.

Each of the three examples presented may be approached and expanded from other perspectives, but what may be read as a dominant trait in Richardson's personal letters is the special focus on the interlocutor, the deliberate effort to make his discourse extremely persuasive, and the constant display of a conative function which may also achieve elocutionary effects. These aspects are accompanied by a set of linguistic and pragmatic involvement features all aimed at including, even graphically embedding, the addressee (with)in the writer's discourse and writing, in a rhetorical, as well as a physical way. The result is a form of epistolary communication which tends to fill in the canonical gap of distance and absence of the addressee, and through a constant double-voiced exchange, to produce the illusion of a dialogue within a monologue. Nothing else but the quintessence of a letter.

However, besides all of these, the fact that epistolary genre is specific narrative form which offers a lot of perspectives and opportunities for further researches remains. This paper reviews the epistolary elements in the works of Samuel Richardson, Jane Johnson and Tobias George Smollett, famous writers of the 18th century.

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