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THE OTHER ENLIGHTENMENT: EXCESS AND THE EPISTOLARY NOVEL IN THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

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This is a dissertation about eighteenth-century epistolary novels and their somewhat "dangerous liaisons" with the Enlightenment. It seeks to explain why their popularity is no mere accident and why letter-novels in many ways facilitate and reinforce the Enlightenment ethos. My study of the relationship between the Enlightenment and eighteenth-century epistolary novels, however, takes a slightly different turn: while epistolary novels promote a sense of order and sequence, bounding the writing self within the confines of epistolary verisimilitude, they often display signs of excess that run counter to the premise of the Enlightenment and therefore produce in readers a sense of disorientation or disproportion that refracts the illuminating effects of the Enlightenment. I argue that the "peak of the epistolary novel" in the eighteenth-century should not merely be seen as part of the rise of the novel; it in fact responds to a larger cultural suspicion toward Enlightenment discourses, such as rational subjectivity and empirical claims of authorship, authenticity, identity, and materiality. The eighteenth-century epistolary novel thus calls our attention to a burgeoning awareness of excess as a fundamental part of modernity.

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Introduction:

This is a dissertation about eighteenth-century epistolary novels and their somewhat "dangerous liaisons" with the Enlightenment. It seeks to explain why the popularity of epistolary novels in the eighteenth century is no mere accident and why letter-novels in many ways facilitate and reinforce the Enlightenment ethos.[1] That the eighteenth-century epistolary novel is very much invested in recording authentic and private personal experiences, both in terms of the content and the form, has a lot to do with the Enlightenment demand for a rational subject.[2] Indeed, the very fact of writing letters constitutes a kind of personal enlightenment, as Richardson's Pamela, for example,

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[1] I privilege works by Immanuel Kant, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau when I refer to the Enlightenment. Kant's "What is Enlightenment?", for example, emphasizes the importance of self-dependence and the use of reason. Locke's idea of human consciousness as a blank page that acquires experiences over time shows the human capacity for growth and progress. Rousseau constantly raises questions about truth and origin. As for the modern critiques of the Enlightenment, I consider Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Jürgen Habermas. I especially rely on Foucault to talk about the experience of modernity as a kind of "vertigo" in contrast to Kant's experience of the Enlightenment as a "vocation" and "calling." I will go into details of the specific texts in the "Enlightenment" section. Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" *What is Enlightenment?: Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, Ed. James Schmidt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 59-60.

[2] Ian Watt sees *Pamela* as the "first true novel," remarking that part of its success depends on Richardson's attention to formal realism—in other words, "the authenticity of its presentation." Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (Los Angeles: University of California Press), 175-177. All other references in the text and the notes will be in parenthesis. Jill Campbell shares a similar opinion and point out that Richardson's close affiliation with the print industry helps him adopt the "language of 'closed and detailed,' particularized description that became the hallmark of his novelistic style," as we see in *Pamela* and *Clarissa*. Jill Campbell, "Domestic Intelligence: Newspaper Advertising and the Eighteenth-Century Novel." *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 15, 2 (Fall 2002): 252.

becomes more and more threatening to Mr. B as she finds her epistolary voice, defying the existing patriarchal order he represents in the process. The epistolary theme of spontaneous narration also helps "illuminate" the interiority of modern consciousness, creating an illusion of unmediated self-narrative. Moreover, epistolary correspondence within the novel, though tending to be private missives, anticipates and encourages participation in public matters.[3] St.Preux in *Julie* writes extensively about political economy in his letters, and characters in Rousseau's novel debate a range of cultural, social, and aesthetic issues. Finally, letters in these novels often promote a sense of propriety as advocated by letter manuals and the reigning culture of politeness, and therefore further reflect the Enlightenment's view of a well-ordered world.[4]

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[3] Jürgen Habermas uses Addison and Steele's *Tatler* to explore epistolary correspondence as a way of "mutual enlightenment." Habermas also suggests that the free exchange of opinion in the public sphere can find its root in the intimate space of the family, as private individuals view themselves "as persons capable of entering into 'purely human' relations with one another." The main medium, for Habermas, is the letter. John Howland states that "the sending of a letter, like a statement made orally, invites a reaction, an answer, on the part pf the addressee and thus suggests exchange, interaction and equality among correspondents." Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Thomas Burger, Trans. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991), 42, 62. All other references in the text and notes will be in parenthesis. John Howland suggests that letter accommodates the Enlightenment demand for truthfulness. What is even more important, using letter to participate in public affairs and showing personal opinions creates an illusion of civil society. This is in the balance between individual performance and public interest that he finds the epistolary paradox. John Howland, *Letter Form and the French Enlightenment: The Epistolary Paradox* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991). While John Howland studies how letter forms might or might not be suitable for the Enlightenment, he still sees the Enlightenment as a project of progress and reason.

[4] When discussing the epistolary correspondence in the *Tatler*, Habermas recognizes the edifying possibility of the literature. Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 43. The culture of politeness and decorum and the number of epistolary manuals in the eighteenth century also show how letter writing requires a certain formality. Eve Bannet, for example, suggests that Richard Steele promotes a sense of propriety and functionality through his letter fragments in *The Spectator*. Eve Bannet, *Empire of Letters: Letter Manuals and Transatlantic Correspondence, 1688-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 288.

That the prevalence of letters and epistolary novels has contributed immensely to the promotion and circulation of the Enlightenment has been well documented. My study of the relationship between the Enlightenment and eighteenth-century epistolary novels, however, takes a slightly different turn: while epistolary novels promote a sense of order and sequence, bounding the writing self within the confines of epistolary verisimilitude, they often display signs of excess that run counter to the premise of the Enlightenment as outlined. By excess, I mean to suggest something out of the reach of reason, a sense of disorientation or disproportion that refracts the illuminating effects of the Enlightenment. I want to suggest that the epistolary novelist registers and explores epistemological shifts of the period in the form of the letter itself, which is often viewed, uncritically, as a metonym for the heart. Textually, these excesses might surface as an "accidental" note that is exposed to scrutiny in the course of the novel and which subsequently presents a categorical difficulty, blurring the distinction between the letter proper and non-letter; or perhaps we might encounter a copied letter that we have already read, but which makes an uncanny return in a different temporality.[5] Almost all the epistolary writers included in this project problematize the notion of a mannered and conventional epistolarity and

[5] By distinguishing the letter from the note, I hope to demonstrate the insistence on the formality and candor is temporarily relieved in the note due to its urgency, informality, and fragmented nature. The note is therefore a good place to explore the "excess" of the self, an "extra-epistolary" that might not be recognized by the writing self.

each of them complicates the epistolary boundaries by providing new models. The epistolary excess could also been seen in the role of the editor that so often, out of necessity, appears within the form structure of these novels, as they not only collect and interpolate the letters outside of the story's diegesis, but also emend and censure problematic passages. It might even be seen in the literary rendering of epistolary forms, forms that continually exceed their own contours, bringing the physical and frequently forgotten margins of the page into signifying relationship with the body of the text, as I shall explain in the *Pamela* chapter.[6] Finally, they also might be witnessed in those self-reflexive moments when letter writers begin to question the capacity of the letter to self-actualize, to deliver powerful feelings to its recipient. In this sense, the letter "performs" one's identity—as it constantly involves dialogue, exchange and correspondence—rather than merely represents it, and thus makes it difficult to locate one's identity in fixed terms.[7] Purloined, transcribed, transformed, enclosed, fragmented, summarized, forged—these letters of excess in epistolary novels often suffer an ill fate,

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[6] Ian Watt also emphasizes this aspect with regards to Richardson's novelistic art in *The Rise of the Novel.* He suggests that Richardson "exploited" this affiliation with printing business in two other ways, namely, "the authority of print" and "the illusion of print" (197-8). The former establishes him as the source of his credibility as the editor. The latter then creates the reality of the enclosed world in Pamela's letters.

[7] I use the idea of "perform" similar to Janet Altman's idea of "epistolarity" in which "the basic formal and functional characteristics of the letter...significantly influence the way meaning is consciously and unconsciously constructed by writers and readers of epistolary works" (4). In this sense, to read a letter is to carefully consider its dynamic interactions with what comes before and after it. Janet Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982). All other references in the text and notes will be in parenthesis.

often losing their origins and referential power. They raise crucial questions of authority and origin, and explore the boundaries of self-identity. Viewed through this prism, the Enlightenment is no longer just about the glorification of reason; if anything, the prevalence of excess in these works suggests another side to the Enlightenment. With the overarching emphasis on the power of reason and demand for clarity and certainty, there is also a sober realization of its own limit; something that is out of the reach of reason needs to be reckoned with.[8] Parodying Descartes' famous dictum "I think, therefore I am," now eighteenth-century epistolary novelists seem to say, "I write letters of excess, therefore I am."

In the sections that follow I look at the entangled relationship between forms of excess (material, epistemological, affective, etc.), the Enlightenment, and the rise and fall of eighteenth-century epistolary novels. I will try to explain how the Enlightenment fosters the idea of excess as one of its underlying themes and how epistolary novels in many ways harbor and even promote the same concerns. Eventually, the dissertation considers various ways in which eighteenth-century epistolary novels use principles of the Enlightenment as a façade to create an epistolary world that goes against the

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[8] I am intentionally constructing a somewhat simplified version of "enlightenment" here that will be complicated as the project unfolds. Needless to say, the enlightenment is more than just a "glorification of reason."

empirical claims of identity, authorship, authenticity, and materiality.

The Enlightenment

> *"It is no accident that the eighteenth-century became the century of the letter: through letter writing the individual unfolded himself in his subjectivity...From the beginning, the psychological interest increased in the dual relation to both one's self and the other: self-observation entered a union partly curious, partly sympathetic with emotional stirrings of the other I. The diary became a letter addressed to the sender, and the first person narrative became a conversation with oneself addressed to another person."* ~ The Structural Transform of the Public Sphere[9]

When Jürgen Habermas makes this statement in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, he envisions a new subjectivity in the eighteenth century whose validity is assured through unmediated self-narrative; that is, the subject is composing his or her own life story and entering a conversation with themselves. Indeed, the eighteenth century is "the century of the letter," and "through letter writing the individual unfolded

[9] Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 48-9.

himself in his subjectivity."[10] Therefore, Enlightenment subjectivity is possible only if one can issue for oneself a voice, a presence such as the circulation of letters in the public sphere. When Richardson's Pamela writes her first letter, for example, she "hides" it in her "bosom," a symbolic gesture for the truthfulness of the letter that is somewhat identical to the self (11-2).[11] At the same time, Habermas's interesting choice of genres also makes this new subjectivity one of excess: if this self-narrative ("diary") has to be sent to the self as a letter, it is also a "first person narrative" that addresses another person, and therefore this subjectivity is compromised, blurred, or at least self-divided. The letter, in this sense, becomes a contested arena of subjectivities, and it is not surprising to sometimes find overlapping epistolary boundaries and futile correspondences in these novels. Pamela proves this by writing her "first" letter, which already contains with a parasitical note, without which the letter is not complete.[12] While Richardson describes

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[10] Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 48.

[11] Samuel Richardson, *Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded*, eds. Thomas Keymer and Alice Wakely (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). All other reference to *Pamela* in the text and notes will be in parenthesis. Habermas indicates that *Pamela*'s appearance on the literary scene has an indirect impact on the inception of first public library. In addition, the familiar letters, like those in *Pamela*, contribute to "the process of enlightenment they together promoted." Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 49, 51.

[12] The presence of Pamela's first letter is "revealed" in the note as Pamela's note marks the difference of temporality in it. Pamela says in the note that follows the first letter, "for just now, I was folding this letter...in comes my young Master!" (12). Yet Richardson treats it as if it is there is a continuation between the letter and the note. The note also proves to be both functional in establishing the boundaries of the letter proper; and at the same time comes to undermine its parasitical role. Note is transitional, abrupt, and of little use "on paper" since everything that is of the heart is already written—why else is it a note if not unimportant? But in the note, it is also the first time that we glimpse of Pamela's questionable moves, like using her late Lady's Dressing-room, and therefore the note is also assigned an ambivalent role in understanding Pamela. In a sense, the note provides a categorical difficulty, challenging the idea of letter proper and its demand for personal and genuine feelings. One can also think of the note's difficulty to

how Pamela defies Mr. B and demonstrates her own innocence, the readers also see another, different Pamela in Mr. B's responses (and strangely in her own letters). Terry Eagleton says it well that "the reader no sooner cynically suspect[s] that Pamela may be a little schemer than Mr. B says it for us."[13] While these preliminary examples only reveal one aspect of excess in the eighteenth century that the present study aims to bring out, one has to wonder why the Enlightenment—in the case of Habermas at least—is bound up with letters and the "scenes of writing" which figure prominently therein.[14] In addition, what is it that makes the letter so enticing and fascinating in the eighteenth century and that justifies Habermas's claim that ever since the publication of Rousseau's *New Heloise* and Goethe's *Werther* "the rest of the century reveled and felt at ease in a terrain of subjectivity?"[15] If epistolary genres also contain in themselves the room for excess, how do we assess their cultural importance in the eighteenth-century?

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categorize in terms of Derrida's idea of a post card: "neither legible or illegible, open and radically unintelligible." For Derrida, the post card reveals letter's openness because it is always open to public and it is less than letter for its lack of formality. Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond.* Alan Bass, Trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 79. All other references in the text or notes will be in parenthesis.

13 Terry Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), 31.

14 Peter Brooks sees the confessional writing constitutes the modern identity in his *Troubling Confessions: Speaking Guilt in Law and Literature.* While the self-writing provides "truth," it also calls into question the "Enlightenment concept of 'Man'" who produces "disturbing infinity of confessions" and shows one's "inability to reach an endpoint." Peter Brooks, *Troubling Confessions: Speaking Guilt in Law and Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 49. See his chapter four for more discussion of the interrelationship between confession and the emergent self.

15 Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 50. Habermas means to suggest that these epistolary novels provide an expression and a mirror for eighteenth-century readers to realize their emotional capacity to know themselves.

To be more specific, I locate in eighteenth-century epistolary novels the place through which the Enlightenment and excess can be negotiated. Intrigued by the "peak" of epistolary novels in this period, I try to expose a double-sided tale of the Enlightenment project. On the one hand, the age of reason might be productively embodied in the ideal of unobstructed exchange of opinion provided by the letter's communicative capacity. One writes and reads letters, as Habermas hints above, for a sense of community and to benefit the self through social exchange, correspondence and rational empathy. On the other hand, it is also a period trying to appropriate and manage feeling, sentimentality, the sublime, the grotesque, and other philosophic and aesthetic categories that often register something excessive and disorienting.[16] While letter writers hope to contain the heart and attendant feelings in the interior of the letter's formality, they also make us aware of that same letter's margins, absences, and gaps in correspondence, spaces where meanings often reside. In this sense, the letter heightens our awareness of the fragmented sense of the self. If the letter genre promotes two kinds of Enlightenment image, one has to wonder why the other side of the story is constantly

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[16] Adam Phillips suggests that "for Burke and Kant the Sublime was a way of thinking about excess as the key to a new kind of subjectivity." Adam Phillips, Ed. "Introduction." *A Philosophical Enquiry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), ix. Also, although the epistolary novel is hardly a genre about the sublime, it is nonetheless used to contain and expatiate feelings of horror and estrangement. *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, for examples, are filled with instances of paranoia and hysteria. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, and recent *New York Times* best seller, *The Historian*, all use the epistolary genre as a way of narrating stories of horror. *Frankenstein*, in particular, proposes a fragmented sense of human identity.

kept in the dark. Indeed, it is the latter that serves as the starting point of the present study: while the letter genre is often seen as the truthful medium of the enlightened self, such a view fails to account for letter's unreliability and susceptibility to failed performance.[17] When it comes to transcription and transmission, the letter genre as it appears in novels often creates interpretive havoc. Fielding, for example, undermines the transparency of Shamela's letters by enclosing them within Parson Oliver's framed epistolary narrative. The rhetorical and epistemological structure of the collection grows shakier still when we learn later that Parson Oliver "transcribes" Shamela's letters, and the originals are sent by Shamela's mother rather than by Shamela herself, such that the subjects of the exchange are compromised at every turn. Similarly, in Goethe's *Werther* the fictional editor claims to diligently collect "everything" that Werther sends to his addressees, but the failure to account for the return side of the correspondence (with Wilhelm and Lotte, most prominently) means that Werther's voice seems stranded, desolate, and the function of the letter is again compromised.

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[17] As above mentioned, Habermas sees the letter as a means through which the eighteenth-century subjects see themselves as well as the public. For a more thorough discussion of how the eighteenth-century letter helps facilitate the Enlightenment, please see the third chapter of John Howland's *The Letter Form and the French Enlightenment: The Epistolary Paradox*. Because the letter invites responses and communications, it naturally becomes a vehicle for advocating the Enlightenment ideals (49). Ian Watt suggests that "the letter form, then offered Richardson a short-cut, as it were, to the heart and encouraged him to express what he found there with the greatest possible precision" (195). See also Tom Keymer's first chapter in *Richardson's* Clarissa *and the Eighteenth-Century Reader*, which explains why traditionally the letter is considered the language of the heart and therefore its truthful medium. Tom Keymer, *Richardson's* Clarissa *and the Eighteenth-Century Reader*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1-15.

It is therefore my contention that epistolary novels have often been the site of excess not only because they produce multiple narrators with psychological complexity that troubles, if not disables, the fantasy of a unified self, but because they eventually give the lie to our faith in the straightforward passage of the letter to its destination. In his *Post Card*, Jacques Derrida's narrator questions the idea that the letter "would still have to be returned to me somewhat, the letter would still have to come back to its destination" (57). Derrida's quotation indicates that one's letter always implies response in exchange for a sense of the unified self or "destination." Yet, it is also here that uncertainty arises, since narrator recognizes that this is only wishful thinking. The epistolary genre, in this sense, is always in danger of stepping over the boundary it set up and relies upon, always in danger of being lost in its network of correspondence. If human consciousness depends on the letter's conspicuousness, it also runs the risk of exceeding its premises, its parameters.

Yet, while the project charts the interrelationship between excess and the Enlightenment through a study of eighteenth-century epistolary novels, it does not presume to see the Enlightenment as a necessary and contested other. What I am proposing is to recognize an underlying theme of excess in the Enlightenment and see it as manifested in the practice of epistolary genres, especially eighteenth-century epistolary

novels. It is my suggestion that we can see the Enlightenment not as a single project of reason; rather a new kind of Enlightenment—acknowledging excess as a vital part of human activity—has emerged as a fundamental part of modernity in recent critical studies of the period.[18] One can see, for example, a powerful undercurrent of feeling and passion in Kant's "What is Enlightenment?" despite his overarching defense of the use of reason.[19] For Kant, it is not so much "the lack of understanding" that hinders one from personal enlightenment; after all, human beings are imbued with reasonable faculties that can eventually produce understanding. Rather it is the "lack of the resolution and the courage to use it without the guidance of another" that makes one incur the state of immaturity. To ensure that enlightenment occurs, "nothing more is required than

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[18] I am building argument on an existing scholarship while trying to include and emphasize the concept of "excess" as an undercurrent of the Enlightenment. In the Epilogue of *Torrid Zones*, Felicity Nussbaum urges for a non-essentialist's view on the Enlightenment. She wants to "displace assumptions about an easily codified Enlightenment and consider instead a richly historicized and contextualized Enlightenment in the hope that it may release us, as Foucault urges from the 'intellectual blackmail' of being 'for or against the Enlightenment.'" Felicity Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 194. Others like Mita Choudhury and Laura Rosenthal also suggest that the Enlightenment should be understood "as a network of ideologies and problems" rather than "a set of axioms." Mita Choudhury and Laura Rosenthal, *Monstrous Dreams of Reason: Body, Self, and the Other in the Enlightenment* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2002), 11. Or in Paul Gilroy's case, one can find ways to deconstruct the "Enlightenment project as the idea of universality, the fixity of meaning, the coherence of the subject, and of course, the foundational ethnocentrism in which these have all tended to be anchored." Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 55.

[19] While I understand the Enlightenment to be loosely clustered around philosophers like Locke, Hume, and Rousseau, Kant's perspective here provides a touchstone for this study because it has also tried to grapple with what it means to be enlightened in the eighteenth century. Indeed, Kant's retrospective view in "What is Enlightenment" has often been the starting point for contemporary scholars to talk about the Enlightenment legacy.

freedom... namely the freedom to make a *public use* of one's reason in all matters."[20] Indeed, it is this implicit link between the public use of reason and the ability to situate or realize oneself in collective terms that prompts one to have the "resolution" to become mature. In a sense, in pointing out the necessity of the "vocation of each man to think for himself," Kant also emphasizes the ethical exigency to recognize the active role that one plays in the public sphere.[21] In other words, a personal inability (e.g. the failure of courage) to use reason triggers a snowballing effect on the road to true Enlightenment. And conversely, only when one takes into consideration a collective inability to use reason is one able to shake off the "yoke of immaturity" for oneself. And courage derives inevitably from one's emotional attachment with the community one is within. Here, Kant's enlightenment project not only presupposes a loss of the autonomous subject—no longer the selfish individual but a passive agent motivated by a collective will—but is always a project of feeling and passion, one that borders on the limits of eighteenth century rationalism. Kant seems to suggest that human enlightenment is not something that you can reason; it is achieved in and through a moment of disorientation outside the structuring consolation of reason. This sense of disorientation, a temporary abandonment of reason, is the excess of the Enlightenment. It is here that I find a convincing link

[20] Kant, "What is Enlightenment?", 59.

[21] Kant, "What is Enlightenment?", 59.

between epistolary practices and excess; in terms of epistolary novels, this sense of disorientation usually occurs when the writing self finds its meaning not in self-authorship but in reciprocity and exchange. In *Julie*, St. Preux and Julie's unbounded passion is mirrored in their epistolary practice; their letters begin to look more and more like each other as they begin to mirror each other's rhetorical strategies. In *Werther*, what is marked as absent becomes more and more conspicuous and integral to understanding the novel: letters that go missing begin to expose the editorial decisions that have made "Werther"—both protagonist and narrative—cohere, and when we reach the tragic end of Werther's testimony, a sequence of informants must gather around the corpse to explain how such destruction came to be.

While Kant sees the underlying value of feeling and passion in the project of the Enlightenment, Foucault's commentary on Kant's essay takes it one step further as a historical imperative of the self. In fact, Foucault's view of Kant and the Enlightenment is guided by the theme of excess throughout. For instance, commenting on Foucault's view on Kant's enlightenment, Felicity Nussbaum suggests that Foucault sees the Enlightenment as a "victim of its own excess" in terms of its rationalist agendas.[22] In his "What Is Enlightenment?" Foucault begins his response to Kant by highlighting Kant's

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[22] Felicity, 195.

implicit negativity on the Enlightenment as an "exit," something out of its own prescribed space. It is in a space like a "revolving door," the entering and exiting of a past, that Foucault sees the process of the Enlightenment as "vertigo," indeed, a moment of mental lapse.[23] This is no longer the Enlightenment that houses conventional notions of will, freedom, and independence. Entering the Enlightenment is like entering a vertiginous zone, where one constantly experiences a state of uncertainty, where one is not sure of one's own existence. Similarly, in commenting on the relationship between eighteenth-century consciousness and the Enlightenment, Terry Castle suggests that

> the very psychic and cultural transformation that led to the subsequent glorification of the period as an age of reason or enlightenment...also produced, like a kind of toxic side effect, a new human experience of strangeness, anxiety, bafflement, and intellectual impasse.[24]

This dream-like state which Foucault imagines as the essence of modernity enables the creation of modern selfhood, a self that is constantly on the brink of becoming, yet never is. Indeed, if letter writing instrumentalizes the creation of self, the letter is, in a sense, always on the brink of becoming. Foucault's modernity, in this sense, depends on the

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[23] Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" Catherine Porter, trans. *The Foucault Reader*. Paul Rabinow, ed. (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 39. All other references in the text and notes will be in parenthesis.

[24] Terry Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 8-9.

creation of an excess of the self, in Baudelaire's words "more than natural" and "more than beautiful" (qtd in Foucault 41). In a sense, the letters' excessiveness—one creates a sense of the self in the physicality of the letter while the letter depends on the correspondence and the "extra-epistolary" for its completion—mirrors the elaboration of self, "a desperate eagerness to imagine it, to imagine it otherwise than it is, and to transform it not by destroying it but by grasping it in what it is" (41). Indeed, letter readers often find that the meaning of the letter resides not within the boundaries of the epistle, but outside, often in the interstices of correspondence or in the margin between the letter and the note. Foucault seems to say that it is only when we are not blinded by the Enlightenment project's superficial criterion that we begin to see excess as a sustaining force in the eighteenth century: "I have been seeking, on the one hand, to emphasize the extent to which a type of philosophical interrogation—one that simultaneously problematizes man's relation to the present, man's historical mode of being, and the constitution of the self as an autonomous subject—is rooted in the Enlightenment." The fundamental attitude of modernity is exactly "the critique of what we are," i.e. "the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them" (50). If for Kant, the Enlightenment entails a teleological human progress, then Foucault, seeing excess as a

constant in the Enlightenment project, demystifies that possibility of human maturity—"I do not know whether we will ever reach mature adulthood" (49). If the Enlightenment does not entail an end, the idea that somehow the letter represents the enlightened self is also problematic.

That is also why Derrida's study of the epistolary genre highlights the idea that "a letter does *not always* arrive at its destination" (489). For Derrida, the letter as a physical presence of the self can only be a metonym, always at the risk of extenuating itself too far. And its ends, be they the addressees or the circulation of correspondence, are open-ended at best. Derrida is forced to ask himself, "Who is writing? To whom? And to send, to destine, to dispatch what? To what address?.... I don't know" (5). The awareness of the excess of letter becomes what haunts the epistolary writers of the eighteenth century. Indeed, if the public sphere of the Enlightenment would suggest a free use of reason, trafficking within the unobstructed circulation of letters, then the ideal of correspondence—the pure communicability between an addressee and addresser—becomes a myth as well.[25] This "Enlightenment" subject will always require

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[25] For Habermas, the Enlightenment is an unfinished project insofar as rational communication can be achieved. In this sense, our experiences of the "lifeworld" are shared and there are no prioritized or privileged positions. He states that "as speakers and hearers straightforwardly achieve a mutual understanding about something in the world, they move within the horizon of their common lifeworld." He therefore sees Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's dire depiction of the Enlightenment as a reverted myth (a new myth replacing the old myth) questionable. Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Frederick Lawrence, Trans. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 298-9.

some "going beyond" (in Foucault's words)—and, in the process, more and more letters—to ensure its autonomy. It is in the idea of "going beyond" that the present project links the Enlightenment ethos with the idea of excess in the eighteenth century.

Excess in the Eighteenth Century

So far, I have been trying to suggest that in the eighteenth century excess can be seen as a kind of otherness to the Enlightenment; at the same time, excess also figures prominently within epistolary practices, which comprise one of the central communication networks of the period. But how then do we speak of excess in the eighteenth century? Is it simply the equivalent of Derrida's "supplementarity"?[26] How might it manifest itself in the registers of culture? It would seem reasonable to assume that excess is everything contrary to norm, proportion and reason: Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary*, for example, lists five definitions, ranging from extravagance to passionate acts.[27] For Johnson, excess represents the opposite of reason because it is difficult to

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[26] Excess is similar to Derrida's idea of "supplementarity," which compensates for the loss of presence yet comes to be marginalized. As he analyzes Rousseau's philosophy of language in *Of Grammatology*, Derrida comments that supplements are that which "transgress[es] a prohibition and are experienced as culpability. But, by the economy of difference, they confirm the interdict they transgress, get around a danger, and reserve an expenditure." Indeed, the Enlightenment's overemphasis on reason and self-presence would suggest a tension with excess since excess represents that which is beyond reason, testing the realm of danger. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*. Gayatri Spivak, Trans. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 165.

[27] The definitions of "excess" are: 1) superfluity 2) exuberance 3) unreasonable indulgence 4) violence of passion 5) transgression of due limits. All of them carry within themselves a sense of uncontrollability.

assess its proper value.[28] Excess proves to be a conceptual challenge, and is therefore usually tagged with a negativity and suspicion. At the same time, "excess" also undergoes literary-historical transformation, as we witness in the rise of Sentimentalism during the course of the long eighteenth century, a shift that openly and dramatically valorizes feeling over reason.[29] Michael McKeon proposes that although literary critics tend to treat Smollett's *Expedition of Humphry Clinker* as a novel of "social and ethical norm[s]," Matt Bramble's body politics nonetheless use "excess" as a cure against ordered stability.[30] Excess comes to denote a sober realization of reason's own limit. Luxurious excesses also undergo serious scrutiny: David Hume sees "excesses" as vulgarities of various kinds that are antonymous to "luxury" in his "Of Refinement in the Arts." At the same time, Hume wants to justify the value of "luxury" in an eighteenth century that often sees it as "excess"—that of extravagance and disproportion—and further suggests that luxury can be beneficial to the Enlightenment and serve as a indicator of the level of civilization.[31] In this sense, Hume seems to suggest the

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[28] Similarly, in *Tatler* No. 51, Richard Steele describes the unsettled circumstances and extravagant behavior of Orlando as "excesses," where a sense of disorder and unreasonableness is implied.

[29] Janet Todd's *Sensibility* points out that writers of Sentimentalism tend to offer textual excesses of all sorts: lacunae, fragments, unfinished works. This suggests that excess as a literary motif is quite prevalent at the mid eighteenth century. Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1986), 5-6.

[30] Michael McKeon, "Aestheticising the Critique of Luxury: Smollett's *Humphry Clinker*." *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century*. Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, eds. (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 57 and 60.

[31] For Hume, "...industry, knowledge, and humanity, are not advantageous in private life alone: They diffuse their beneficial influence on the public, and render the government as great and flourishing as they

prevalence and positive valence of excess in the eighteenth century England and that there is a muddier mutual ground between what is deemed excessive and reasonable. Indeed, Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger suggest that "the language of luxury evolved to redefine 'excess' as 'surplus', 'vanity' as 'refinement'" in the period.[32] Likewise, Roy Porter seeks to explain why sensual pleasures, usually cast as a matter of moral policing, end up becoming fundamental for Enlightenment thinkers trying to recognize the place of feeling in the world: "The eighteenth century gave its blessing to the pursuit of pleasure, but it was able to do this precisely because it redefined the nature of the pleasure it was desirable to pursue."[33] Despite excess's encroachment on Enlightenment program, it is often recognized in the eighteenth century through its antithetical, uncontrollable nature. More importantly, excess reveals its ambivalent relationship with the Enlightenment, and this blurring of distinction shows that excess can be applied in different ways as Enlightenment thinkers see fit.

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make individuals happy and prosperous. The encrease and consumption of all the commodities, which serve to the ornament and pleasure of life, are advantageous to society; because, at the same time that they multiply those innocent gratifications to individuals, they are a kind of storehouse of labour, which, in the exigencies of state, may be turned to the public service. In a nation, where there is no demand for such superfluities, men sink into indolence, lose all enjoyment of life, and are useless to the public, which cannot maintain or support its fleets and armies, from the industry of such slothful members." See his "Of Refinement in the Arts" for more detailed discussions as to why he thinks that excess is has a reversal effect on the achieving of human progress and liberty.

[32] Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, eds. *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Polgrave, 2003), 9.

[33] Porter continues to suggest that "...the English Ideology, as articulated through Lockean psychology, utilitarianism and political economy, promoted civilized hedonism within the values of rational self-interest in a capitalist system." Roy Porter, "Enlightenment and Pleasure." *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century*. Roy Porter and Marie Roberts, eds. (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 18.

While excess as a concept might undergo some redefinition in the eighteenth century, it remains largely associated with that which is outside of reason. According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, before the eighteenth century the word tended to be associated with extravagance, things or behaviors that are out of proportion and exceeding moderation.[34] In its later sense, excess implies the state of chaos, and thus an association with violence and passion. What might be noted is the potential threat in excess, as it readily contains not only elements of violence, but certain uncontrollability. Interestingly, it is in this uncontrollability that we might find a connection with its archaic meaning. Excess connotes the idea of being suspended, "to go out or forth," or "adjournment." To be excessive, in this sense, means to be held back with a lack of destination and determination, just like the vertiginous feeling that the Foucauldean modernity experiences.

Excess in the Eighteenth-Century Epistolary Novel

So far, our discussion of excess in the eighteenth century has produced several threads, but overall, they all seem to guide us toward excess's otherness, its disorientation, and danger. At the same time, it facilitates, resurfaces, lingers within the rhetoric of the

[34] Among the various meanings chiefly listed in *OED* are "violence of passion," "the overstepping of the limits of moderation," and "extravagant violation of law, decency or morality."

rationality. When Derrida muses on his own letters in *Post Card*, he shares this disoriented feeling by making the analogy to Socrates' letters: just like "Socrates reading Socrates, if you will, and suddenly not understanding a thing, and just on the verge of waking up" (180). For Derrida, to send letters is to send oneself to an unknown destination in a dream-like state, much like the modern experience that both Kant and Foucault describe. Derrida's comment not only reminds us of the epistolary paradox that Habermas faces; it also suggests that to write a letter is to enter a topsy-turvy world where the supposedly transparent self faces surprising turns and outcomes.

While I acknowledge that there is already ample research on the epistolary arts, my study takes a different and more philosophically-invested turn.[35] My study is largely inspired by Janet Altman's formalistic research on epistolarity. In one of her footnotes she offers what might be the starting point of my analysis, suggesting that Derrida's notion of

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[35] After Janet Altman's *Epistolarity*, one has seen a range of studies on epistolary novels and epistolary discourses after the 1980s. Linda Kauffman's *Discourses of Desire*, for example, charts the way "ideology enforces certain stereotypes" in the production of male and female desire in epistolary novels. Linda Kauffman, *Discourses of Desire: Gender, Genre, and Epistolary Fictions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 19. At the same time, "amorous epistolary discourse subverts so many conventional dichotomies and explores so many transgressions and transformations" that they register doubleness in identity and question their own ideology (26-7). The relationship between Enlightenment discourse and the letter, however, is not the focus of the book because Kauffman treats a wide selection of epistolary novels, ranging from Ovid to Austen. Nicola Watson focuses on the post-French Revolution era and posits that the epistolary novels' erotic essence provides a contesting site for both anti-revolutionary and revolutionary discourses due to the epistolary novel's ambiguity. Nicola Watson, *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel 1790-1825* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994). Claimed to be a sequel to Watson's *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel 1790-1825*, Barbara Zaczek's *Censored Sentiments* traces the eighteenth century epistolary history and suggests that because of letter's subversive quality, especially female letters, letter will be "watched," "intercepted," "criticized," "rewrote" so as to "achieve a perfect specimen of female epistolary writing" (12). Barbara Zaczek, *Censored Sentiments* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), 12.

a letter rid of its destination "merits further exploration in careful historical terms" (215). Altman, who coins the term "epistolarity" to describe how letter forms can be "used to create meaning" (4), suggests that the eighteenth-century fascination with the epistolary novel has something to do with the way this form "intensifies awareness of the gap and traps that are built into the narrative representation of intersubjective and temporal experience" (212). Furthermore, I suggest that meaning lies not simply in the diegesis itself—the content of the letter and its presumptive world—but in otherwise neglected places within the letter's communicative system: the periphery, the outside, the seam and the excess. While eighteenth-century epistolary novels continue to effectively create the illusion of reality, their own embedded structural qualities force readers to go back and forth between the content of the letters and their unstable forms, between the addresser and the addressees, and between the linear sequence of each individual letter and the plot of correspondence, constantly producing a feeling of disorientation in both the temporal and spatial sense.

It is in what I call the "margins" of letters—at once the non-functioning parts of the letter; the spaces between exchange; and various failed or superfluous epistolary acts—that one constantly sees the literary figuring of excess. By this, I mean to suggest that while epistolary novels operate according to the sequencing of correspondence, another

force is equally potent in creating a kind of useless consumption in the form of twice copied letters, misdirected or misread letters, and the like.[36] *Pamela*, for example, is filled with letters that are formal and satisfactory at first glance, yet reveal the fact that they are ultimately misplaced, haunting the epistolary order that Richardson sets up. More importantly, because epistolary novelists focus on the letter's formal qualifies of excess, they also incorporate themes of excess into their texts. Throughout the dissertation that follows I will attempt to productively weave together these generic and thematic concerns, although my focus will largely remain on letter's form and function, and its failure to deliver the Enlightenment as we have come to know it. What follows is a brief synopsis of the argumentative arc I trace from the mid eighteenth century to the ascendancy of European romanticism.

In this dissertation, I look at excess in five epistolary novels: Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, Henry Fielding's *Shamela*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The New Heloise*, Johann Goethe's *The Sorrow of Young Werther*, and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. My reading of *Pamela* deals with forms of material excess in the eighteenth century; the chapter on *Shamela* seeks to explain why parody and burlesque, as forms of excess, become a

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[36] Ann Bower sees these formal qualities as "literature encumbered." At the same time, it is "for those encumbrances" that "modern authors come to the form." Ann Bower, *Epistolary Responses: The Letter in Twentieth-Century American Fiction and Criticism* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 10.

double-edged sword that eventually confirms excess's desirability in the eighteenth century; the Rousseau chapter proceeds from the limit of the Enlightenment encyclopedia to the excess of epistolary knowledge in order to show that excess is very much at the heart of Enlightenment thought; and my *Werther* chapter then acknowledges the Enlightenment dream of transcendence and how the letter alternately helps and defies that governing wish. Finally, in a short coda on *Frankenstein* I point to the end of epistolary novels in the long eighteenth century.[37]

My first chapter, titled "The Epistolary Interior and Figures of Waste in *Pamela*," sets up the epistolary paradigm that the rest of the dissertation tries to expose as well as problematize. The dissertation begins with Richardson's *Pamela* not just because this novel provides a prototype of the feminocentric epistolary novel in the eighteenth century, but also because *Pamela*'s popularity tells us how the eighteenth-century came to accept various kinds of excess in the novel, even with Richardson's insistence that models of authenticity and epistolary formality be privileged. While Richardson seems to focus on

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[37] I acknowledge the presence of other famous epistolary novels in the same period: Aphra Behn's experiments with epistolary techniques in *Love-Letters between a Noble-Man and His Sister* offer insights into why epistolary novels might provide intrigues and "dangerous liaisons" before the full-blown maturity in Richardson; Tobias Smollett's *Humphry Clinker* deals with extravagance and morality; Frances Burney's *Evelina* offers insight into both London's modernity and the excesses of theatricality; John Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* demonstrates yet another Enlightenment, a sort of mock version of the female Bildungsroman. The present arrangement, however, allows a better linkage between the Enlightenment ideal and the concept of excess. It begins with the moment when the epistolary novel assumes its supremacy and ironically creates a century-long controversy. Rousseau and Goethe, both are philosophers of the time, help us see the gap between Enlightenment discourse and its literary practice. *Frankenstein* marks the end of epistolary dominance in the long eighteenth century.

how the immediacy of the letter reflects Pamela's true feelings, Pamela's letters sometimes exceed this aim and direct our attention to the wasted spaces in the epistolary novel. Indeed, as I will show, "waste" and "excess," because they contain within themselves both images of barrenness and lavish abundance, help us understand a letter's two-sidedness: that is, as I suggest throughout, letters help establish the image of the rational self as the foundation of the Enlightenment, but also become a matter of indeterminacy at times. Like "excess," waste is also understood as matter "out of place" or dangerous to the status quo.[38] Pamela's story proves again and again how manipulating the sequential order of her letters, or utilizing the marginal spaces within her letters, reveals a Pamela that is surprisingly subversive. Pamela's meticulously designed replies to Mr. B's proposal, for example, reveal an acute awareness of the potentiality of epistolary margins.

I am suggesting that charting the wasted spaces in *Pamela* provides us a chance to study the complex relationship between material excess and how Enlightenment rhetoric seems inadequate to cope with the culture of excess in the eighteenth century. How do Pamela's letters lay bare the latent desires, even as they work tirelessly to formalize and

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[38] The Introduction of William Cohen and Ryan Johnson's *Filth*, for example, discusses several cultural implications of waste matters. They are seen as contaminations that are not only dangerous but also disruptive to the system. They also invoke the image of abject, blurring the line between subject and object. William Cohen and Ryan Johnson, eds. *Filth: Dirt, Disgust, and Modern Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), vii-xxxi.

constrain them? What does Pemala's habit of revising, enclosing, fragmenting letters tell us about the open-endedness of her feelings and identifications? What does it mean to have materials within the letter that are meaningful and yet difficult to categorize at the same time? These are questions that *Pamela* poses to a culture of decorum and formality that sees less and less capacity over its reign.

"'Et Cetera': The Indeterminacy of Parodic Letters in *Shamela*," the second chapter, charts the formal ramifications of Henry Fielding's parody of *Pamela*. I would suggest that once Fielding enters the epistolary scene, he, like Richardson, cannot help but see his parodic work turn into an excessive project of its own. While traditionally Fielding and Richardson are seen as distinctive branches in the making of the early novel, pairing Fielding and Richardson through epistolary novels allows us to see how they both respond to the concept of excess in the eighteenth century. Unlike readings that simply read *Shamela* as a parasitical novel that rarely functions beyond its "literal" meaning as "the sham(e) of Pamela," I would suggest a reading that sees *Shamela* as an self-actualized work that has a surprisingly distinctive epistolary perspective of its own. Fielding in this sense uses the epistolary genre not simply as a poor and corrupted imitation of Richardson's *Pamela*; rather, he tries to imagine the epistolary scene as a way to comment on the epistolary practices of the day as a dangerous enterprise. Indeed,

Shamela, as I will try to show, displays a life of its own, just like the letter-copies whose reproducibility finally subverts the original letters in epistolary novels.

Implicit in this reading of *Shamela* is the connection between parody and excess. Why is it that Augustan literature pride itself as the literature of decorum only to find itself indulging in satire and parody that often displays an excessive nature? In a weird way, the eighteenth century fascination with satire and parody finds its uncanny reflection in epistolary practices, since like Shamela's letters parody is also itself a corrupted letter to the original that could have been written—e.g. Pamela's inherent Shamela-like qualities—but nonetheless repressed. In this sense, might we suggest that Fielding and Richardson's competition best exemplifies what it means to be in excess within the mid-eighteenth-century literary scene? Aren't they both creating for each other a double that they cannot easily dispense with, an excess that is the same but not quite?[39]

The final two chapters add a transatlantic flavor to the study by considering Rousseau's *Julie* and Goethe's *Werther* to show the epistolary genre's prevalence in the long eighteenth century and across national borders. My third chapter, "'These Letters are no Letters': The Excess of Enlightenment Discourse in Rousseau's *Julie, or the New Heloise*," links Rousseau's epistolary passion with his rational discourses. What interests

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[39] For Watt, Richardson and Fielding each represent a different strain of novel's development.

me in *Julie* is how an epistolary novel about forbidden love resists or reconciles Rousseau's apparent affinity with philosophical discourse of reason in his *Social Contract*, *A Discourse on Inequality* and "On the Origin of Language." Similarly, *Confessions* and *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* also concern themselves about the origin of the self. Despite the fact that in these works Rousseau constantly poses as a rationalist, he actually subscribes to a secret desire for excess. Indeed, almost all his critical works rely on a myth of origin that cannot hold. At the same time, the re-occurrence of these original scenes almost always comes with a slight change, and therefore concurs with an anxiety, a repeated nightmare of false writing that he constantly brings up in his *Confessions*. These excesses—i.e. the lies, the false writings, the false speech—therefore constitute who he is, and indeed, his "uniqueness," because for Rousseau the road to self-presence already entails these excesses. Every representation of his self-identity already entails a false identity, like a false writing – "There is not one that I have not had to rewrite four or five times before sending it to the printer."[40] That is also the reason that he needs a second "confessions," *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, as he himself calls it a sequel. In *Julie*, this theme of false writing is seen through Julie and Saint-Preux's correspondence, as they continue to misread each other's letters, and thus cast doubts on

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[40] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions* (London: Penguin Group, 1953), 113.

how letter writing can be transparent. If writing always entails dangerous deviation for Rousseau, then writing letters is doubly so, since now one's letter is read through the eyes of the letter writer and the addressee. We might suggest therefore that Rousseau's awareness of the inherent excess in letter writing anticipates the Enlightenment excess in his philosophical discourse.

The fourth chapter on Goethe's *Werther* studies how Werther's letters try to transform the problematic epistolary excesses that I have been trying to lay out so far. Werther, being proto-romantic at times, envisions an all-encompassing subjectivity that is unbounded by the physicality of the letter. For him, his heart is the source of his imagination but his heart is also something indescribable, subject to continuous extenuation and transformation. The success of *Werther* therefore relies on the editor's meticulous rearrangement of the *Werther* correspondence and his own interpolations. In this sense, the editor foresees the effect of the new Werther in a single voice free of contamination as *Julie* has so often displayed. The marginal role of the epistolary editor has now becomes integral to the Werther project of romantic subjectivity. On the other hand, the overt participation of the editor towards the end of *Werther* also proves to be detrimental to this single voiced narrative. While at the outset, both romanticism and the epistolary novel would prefer a language of excess as an underlying principle, they are

quite different in results. Werther's romantic transcendence proves too much of a burden for the epistolary novel: if excess is taken to mean that which cannot be assumed by self-presence, then Werther's ideal also needs to be undone. What is left in *Werther*, is a failed attempt to valorize one excess over the other. And as we transit into the nineteenth century, this demand for a single, more authoritarian voice becomes more prevalent against the multiple, excessive voices in the eighteenth-century epistolary novel.

The study concludes with Shelley's *Frankenstein*, a widely studied text, although its epistolary frames are frequently neglected. Although literary critics regard the letters as the beginning of the story, they tend to focus more on the nested Frankenstein narratives. I would argue, however, that this oversight not only intimates our sense of the letter's somewhat paradoxical private and transparent quality, but also our desire for a unified narrative structure. Chapter one of Shelley's novel begins with Frankenstein's narrative, not Captain Walton's epistles. Yet if we are to reverse the dynamic of the content and the frame, we might find out that the epistolary frames that Shelley carefully plants in between Frankenstein's story and the reader force us to recognize the letter genre's transgression through permeability. Echoing Derrida's claim that "mixture is the letter, the epistle, which is not a genre but all genres, literature itself" (48), I want to argue that the supposed waning of the eighteenth-century epistolary novels finally is just another

façade, an ironic fate of the letter's excessive nature.

Finally, the dissertation is comparativist in essence because it is inevitably linked to the Enlightenment as a cultural movement in eighteenth-century Europe. In addition, the rise of the epistolary novel is by no means an English phenomenon: although I start with Richardson, there has been a richer French epistolary literature since the seventeenth century. In turn, Richardson also influences Rousseau and Goethe. The project also offers an alternative to several fields of study in the eighteenth century. It puts forth an Enlightenment that is no longer merely a monolithic project of reason: it can be about an unashamed, manifest affiliation with excess as well—Rousseau's attempts to naturalize excess in the love letters, Richardson's attentions to epistolary margins, or Fielding's exuberant style of parodic letters. As for the rise of the novel, while existing scholarly works on the rise of the novel often see it as motivated by a new consciousness of individuality, the dissertation proposes to view this new consciousness as accompanied with a sense of disorientation. Indeed, letters in these novels are concerned themselves to temporarily creating a vertiginous feeling: Pamela's repetitive uses of the same letter; the extensive search for the origin of its true author in *Shamela*; the contagious feeling that crosses over letter boundaries in *Julie* and its editor's playfulness in the second preface. All of them suggest that the epistolary novel presents a candid, genuine, and authentic

self when the novel is a convoluted whole. In the latter sense, we will be able to see a better connection between the Enlightenment and the literature of sentimentality in the second half of the eighteenth century because this movement also highlights the psychological complexity and the loss of origin in human subjectivity.

Epistolary Interior and Figures of Waste in *Pamela*

I

Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* has long been seen as an integral part of the rise of the novel as well as the epitome of eighteenth-century epistolary novels. Ian Watt sees *Pamela* as the "first true novel," remarking that part of its success depends on Richardson's attention to formal realism—in other words, "the authenticity of its presentation."[1] Jill Campbell shares a similar opinion in pointing out that Richardson's close affiliation with the print industry helps him adopt the "language of 'closed and detailed,' particularized description that became the hallmark of his novelistic style," as we see in *Pamela* and *Clarissa*.[2] James Turner goes one step further to suggest that both *Pamela* supporters and the anti-Pamelists share the premise that Richardson's representation of Pamela transcends the paper and produces an "autonomous embodied" Pamela (77-8).[3] That is why, for Denis Diderot, "whether we wish it or not, we play a part

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[1] All other reference in the text and notes will be in parenthesis. Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 175-7.

[2] Jill Campbell, "Domestic Intelligence," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 15.2 (2002), 252. Ian Watt also emphasizes this aspect with regards to Richardson's novelistic art in *The Rise of the Novel*. He suggests that Richardson "exploited" this affiliation with printing business in two other ways, namely, "the authority of print" and "the illusion of print" (197-8). The former establishes him as the source of his credibility as the editor. The latter then creates the reality of the enclosed world in Pamela's letters.

[3] James Grantham Turner, "Novel Panic: Picture and Performance in the Reception of Richardson's *Pamela*," *Representations* No. 48 (Autumn 1994), 77-8.

in your [Richardson's] works," and that during a few hours of reading, "I had heard the genuine language of the passions" (82-3).[4] Tickletext in Henry Fielding's *Shamela* makes a similar, though ironic claim toward *Pamela*: "I have done nothing but read it to others, and hear others again read it to me, ever since it came into my Hand" and "if I lay the Book down *it came after me*" (9).[5]

If Richardson's print strategies and languages of formal realism do not suffice to manipulate readerly identification with the novel, Richardson's choice of genre, the epistolary form, secures its access to the reader's heart. In discussing *Pamela*, Christine Roulston values the epistolary genre's ability to "provide a formal narrative that could represent the subject effectively in its most transparent and unmediated form" (1).[6] Richardson himself states in his Preface to the *Letters written to and for particular friends, on the most important occasions* that

> Nature, Propriety of Character, Plain Sense, and General Use, have been the chief Objects of the Author's Attention in the penning of these Letters; and as he every-

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[4] Denis Diderot, *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, trans. Geoffrey Bremner (London: Penguin Books, 1994), 82-3

[5] Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews* and *Shamela*, ed. Judith Hawley (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 9.

[6] Christine Roulston, *Virtue, Gender, and the Authentic Self in the Eighteenth-Century Fiction: Richardson, Rousseau, and Laclos* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 1. For Roulston, eighteenth-century representation of authenticity often creates an ironic result. While writers of sentimentalism put emphasis on feeling, and thus create a sense of authenticity, their excessive language often diverts them from vicarious experiences. For more discussion on authenticity, see her Introduction. Watt also suggests that "the letter form, then offered Richardson a short-cut, as it were, to the heart, and encouraged him to express what he found there with the greatest possible precision" (195).

where aimed to write to the *Judgment*, rather to the *Imagination*, he would chuse, that they should generally be found more *useful* than *diverting*.[7]

Here Richardson not only stresses the importance of morality that his letters convey but also points out the transparency and accessibility of these letters. After all, they are written "to the judgment," not "to the imagination."

Thus Richardson consciously pursues an authentic Pamela that is shared by his readers. Even he himself constantly revises his novels in response to the reader's comments and critiques. Yet despite these efforts to create an affectively credible Pamela and to confine Pamela within the letter proper so as to see her heart, one opposite result ensues: Pamela's heart, if ever one can access it, often lies not inside the letter but in the excessive and wasted spaces that the epistolary novel creates. Epistolary interior, in this sense, is the multitude of letters that serve as the transparent medium through which Pamela can be authenticated as well as Richardson's textual representation of the letter's formality.[8] On the one hand, just as the "interior monologue" is often tied in with the

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[7] Samuel Richardson, *Letters written to and for particular friends, on the most important occasions, Eighteenth Century Collection Online* (London, 1741), 1-2

[8] Richardson's emphasis on letter's "Nature, Propriety of Character, Plain Sense, and General Use" is crucial to the understanding of letter's formality. In addition, the culture of politeness and decorum and the amount of epistolary manuals in the eighteenth century also show how letter writing requires a certain formality. Eve Bannet, for example, suggests that Richard Steele promotes a sense of propriety and functionality through his letter fragments in *The Spectator*. Eve Bannet, *Empire of Letters : Letter Manuals and Transatlantic Correspondence, 1688-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 288. There are also several studies on the letter conceived in spatial or physical terms. James How use "epistolary space" to indicate the "spaces of connection, providing permanent and seemingly unbreakable

authentic self, so the epistolary interior in *Pamela* is to be conceptualized as a space for the Enlightenment individuality and self-presence.[9] On the other hand, the "interior" is also realized as lacuna and secrecy, something that eludes our eyes. The contrast between transparency and secrecy in the epistolary interior therefore takes us to a moment when Richardson's epistolary representation is at the threshold: between printed pages and manuscripts, between the private and public, between copies and the original, etc.

Hence this essay is interested in how the epistolary interior opens up to the margins and periphery and how it constantly negotiates its boundary through figures of waste.[10] By excess and waste, I mean to suggest that while the epistolary novel focuses on the mimesis of letter writing and epistolary verisimilitude, its literary representation necessarily exceeds its own functions and produces a certain form of textual waste. In *Illuminating Letters*, Paul Gutjahr and Megan Benton have demonstrated how often type

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links between people and places." James How, *Epistolary spaces : English letter-writing from the Foundation of the Post Office to Richardson's* Clarissa,(Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003), 4. Elizabeth Cook reminds us of the physical "body" of the letter, "the trace of a body that has not yet been entirely typographically encoded" in the epistolary novel (3). Elizabeth Cook, *Epistolary Bodies : Gender and Genre in the Eighteenth-Century Republic of Lètters* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). See also Rebecca Earle, ed. *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600-1945* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1999).

[9] Because of the letter's close affinity to the heart, it readily fulfills the promise of modern subjectivity. Jacques Derrida has shown to us how the Enlightenment's priority of the oral over the written establishes the self-presence, the "transparent proximity in the face-to-face countenances and the immediate range of the voice." Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 138.

[10] For further discussion on margins in book, see Evelyn Tribble's *Margins and Marginality: The Printed Page in Early Modern England.* She states that "precisely because the margin was in a fluid relationship to the text proper, margins allow us to see the competing claims of internal authority and plural, external authorities in the margins of the text" (6).

fonts and book designs are not naïve renditions of the manuscript and can be translated into formal representations of reality.[11] Therefore, according to Steven Price, one can find in the third edition *Clarissa* traces of Richardson's typographical manipulation that "produces typeset pages that visually suggest autograph, handwritten manuscripts of familiar letters" and "builds credibility of his novel's didactic message by raising the possibility that the letters in *Clarissa* could be based on authentic documents."[12] To further their arguments, I would suggest that this is not simply a one-way traffic whereby Richardson uses typography simply for perpetuating or imitating reality in the second order; for Richardson, the epistolary form can be a kind of reality, revealing a kind of awareness of the revelry, excess, and doubleness that are embedded in the margin of letters and the figures of waste. As Clare Brant mentions, eighteenth-century letter writers are constantly aware of letters in printed form and the possibility that their letters are to be printed; in a sense, the double meanings of letters—that they are simply a metonymic presence to the heart, to truth, and to authenticity—are often in the back of their mind.[13]

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[11] Paul Gutjahr and Megan Benton, eds. *Illuminating Letters* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001).

[12] Steven Price, "The Autograph Manuscript in Print: Samuel Richardson's Type Font Manipulation in *Clarissa*." *Illuminating Letters*, eds. Paul Gutjahr and Megan Benton (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 119.

[13] Brant's research shows that there is a mutual influence between eighteenth-century epistolary manuscripts and printed letters. For her, "the relationship between script and print is emphatically simultaneous not sequential: that is, correspondence and printed letters co-existed in multiple and complex ways." Clare Brant, *Eighteenth-Century Letters and British Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 9. Temma Berg presents another epistolary doubleness. For her, "letters conveyed news of public events,

In *Pamela*, this awareness is intensified through the use of figures of waste—seemingly useless consumptions or unwanted matters—and for Richardson, they are to be seen or staged as natural and authentic to the eyes so as to make them the source of signification: A letter that repeats a previous letter, a note that is accidental and spontaneous, an enclosed letter that is supposed to expatiate a personal account, and a copied or even a lost letter that we as readers have already read before.[14] Thus, the present study focuses not just textual performances in the margin of letters; it also extends to letters that have been "wasted" and become marginal. These "wasted" letters that traverse the epistolary interior often occur in the interstices of epistolary writing, but their marginalities end up contributing to reading *Pamela*.

Among the various responses that Pamela writes to Mr. B in the novel, one particular letter stands out that best exemplifies epistolary waste—Pamela's enclosure of Mr. B's marriage proposal. One thing that quickly catches our attention is the arrangement of both Pamela's and Mr. B's letters. Both letters are put together on the same page in two columns: on the left-hand side is the ultimatum that Mr. B issues

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but, like novels, they were never uniformly real. Just as novels insisted on their verisimilitude even as they tilted toward the fantastic and romantic, just so the letter, sent from one real person to another and undeniably containing truth, yet employed rhetorical devices to relay reveries and supposition as well as fact." Temma Berg, *The Lives and Letters of an Eighteenth-Century Circle of Acquaintance* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 12.

[14] Berg suggests that "by constructing novels out of private letters, writers could ensure that their discourses remained both factual and fictive." Berg, 12.

regarding matters of their marriage, whereas Pamela's response is on the right-hand side. While this may seem like an oddity, it is based on the miniature of the overall epistolary structure: you write, and then I respond. But at that moment we are no longer just reading "true" letters from Pamela nor enclosed letters that Pamela so often claims to present with her own letters: as if letters alone are not enough to convey to us Pamela's true feeling; we now have Richardson's print arrangement of the particular set of letters. In a sense, we are reading Richardson's imagination of Pamela's mental state; we are reading along side her at that particular moment when she gives him her replies. By highlighting the corresponsive nature of epistolary novels, Richardson tries to capture the reciprocal and dialogical quality of her letter writing. Yet, the ambivalence of this particular scene—that whether we are actually reading a genuine letter that is arranged by Pamela in such a way or whether we are reading two enclosed letters arranged by Richardson or whether there is such a letter—seems to question the effectiveness of Richardson's epistolary ideal and order. At the very least, Pamela's interpolation of Mr. B's letter (she earlier calls it his "Articles") can be seen as a symbolic shattering of the letter proper that epistolary verisimilitude so often relies on. And at that moment, fragments and excesses, shams and wastes—things that temporarily abandon the letter proper—are allowed.

In a sense, this is a story of the "unpublished" Pamela Andrews, and indeed, the

eighteenth century is no fool in picking up this undertone within the novel in the anti-*Pamela* controversy. To be more specific, I would argue that Richardson is not only aware of the extent to which print manipulates readerly emotion and produces successful identification; in so doing, he also takes a rather unexpected "formal" turn that highlights the margins and the peripheries. While margins and peripheries are often neglected in the epistolary ebb and flow, and objects and texts that exist in them are usually seen as wasteful, sometimes only for decorative purposes, Richardson's print strategies—ranging from what functions it perform, what needs to be emphasized and what needs to be excluded, and what can be seen and what is invisible—may have appeared to attach more meanings to the supposedly transparent heart.

Scholars have paid extra attention to the formal qualities of the letter in epistolary novels since Janet Altman's *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form*, which focuses on how letters in epistolary novels finally mean something not just because of the "histoire" but because of the "discourse."[15] In other words, one is constantly mediated by the frame—the letters—if not the narrators. One is therefore reading a story within a story, so to speak, because one cannot get to the epistolary arch-story without first reading other

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[15] Janet Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), 207. For a succinct definition of "story" and "discourse," see Roland Barthes, "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative." *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1988).

people's mail which supposedly only tells a piece of the story. This insight into the epistolary novel shifts our focus to the rim of the letter proper, as the story of the letter readily produce other stories, contributing to the overall understanding of the epistolary novel. In a sense, one is constantly aware of the out-of-the-scene actions and events within the epistolary novel in order to continue and comprehend the seemingly proleptic plotline.[16] Janine Barchas's study on the graphic design and print culture in eighteenth century England presents a different case.[17] She does not focus on eighteenth-century epistolarity per se, but her chapters on *Clarissa* and *Pamela* force us to recognize the materiality of both epistolary novels. For her, there is a definite link between the novel's materiality—the way it is printed, arranged, edited, etc.—and its impact on readers "irrespective of authorial control" (4).[18] It begs further questions as to how such textual excess becomes a trademark of epistolary novels.[19]

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[16] Altman's study shows how the letter's functionality does not necessarily stretch to its own content. Although it is mainly a structuralist's approach to the classification of epistolary novels, she does offer us a new outlook to the relationship between letter's form and its cultural implication in the eighteenth century: "Epistolary fictions tends to flourish at those moments when novelists most openly reflect upon the relation between story telling and intersubjective communication and begin to question the way in which writing reflects, betrays, or constitutes the relations between self, other, and experience." Indeed, if the structuralist impulse dominates her study of the letter form, the final comments seem to gesture toward its material impact on eighteenth-century consciousness (most of her examples are from the eighteenth century). Altman, 212.

[17] Janine Barchas, *Graphic Design, Print Culture, and the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[18] Barchas, 4. Her opening remark on Swift's poem, for example, takes us back to the "original" scene of his published poem along side with the advertisement and the impact such juxtaposition create.

[19] Barchas's discussion of the way Richardson uses punctuations and graphic designs in *Pamela*, for example, not only demonstrates how temporality is crucially disrupted through non-verbal events, but also

What may interest us is that both studies indirectly draw upon figures of waste as their inspirations. Altman's "epistolarity," after all, is a term that is designed to show how the meaning of the letter is not in the content but in the form. It then directs our attention less to the plot and the epistolary flow than to the peripheries, those otherwise ignored places in the text, and indeed, the wasteland of the letter world. By the same token, Barchas's study on the disappearance of Clarissa's music score and Pamela's use of fleuron reminds us of the dispensable yet crucial status of waste in these letter novels. In a sense, the letter as an embodiment of the Enlightenment ironically carries within itself an image of waste.[20]

While letter-reading requires a bit of the logic of waste, the letter itself can be seen as a kind of waste as well. After all, the books and prints that are piled along the Grub Street—Clare Brant reminds us that one way that the eighteenth century enters print culture is through writing and printing letters—are hardly valuable possessions to the

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shows us that Richardson's epistolary strategy extends to such ignored items as fleuron and illustrations that are deemed insignificant to the understanding of the novel and eventually left out in modern editions. The missing music score originally included in *Clarissa* also "exerts" a "profound thematic sway" (117). Such attentions to the details of print do not burden our interpretations; if anything, Richardson reveals, consciously or unconsciously, a whole other dimension of epistolary correspondence that are usually excessive to the modern eyes—usually in the margin of the text—and therefore needed to be left out even in his own later editions.

[20] In his *Letter Form and the French Enlightenment: The Epistolary Paradox*, John Howland suggests that letter accommodates the Enlightenment demand for truthfulness. What is even more important, using letters to participate in public affairs and showing personal opinions creates an illusion of civil society. This is in the balance between individual performance and public interest that he finds the epistolary paradox.

eyes of eighteenth-century commoners.[21] Moreover, the proliferation of letter manuals in the eighteenth century suggests a sense of formality and prompts one to wonder about the letter's imitative quality that is hardly genuine. In addition, letters in *Pamela* constantly suffer from ill fate, ranging from being hacked, stolen, copied, fragmented, to being enclosed in other letters. If one looks at the history of waste, one starts to see how the letter and waste uncannily reflect each other. Waste, according to *Oxford English Dictionary*, originally comes to represent a vast land of nothingness, usually uninhabited. This vastness is then used for the embodiment of two opposite meanings, that of barrenness like the dessert and a lavish abundance. Like the letter's two sidedness, one that is readily informative and dispensable at the same time, waste is regarded as either pleasurable for its sheer abundance of lavishness or detestable for its unproductiveness. Waste is also associated with damage and ravage. The amount of critical work on the cultural value of waste already suggests waste's contaminating effect on the subject, pointing to its danger to the public because of its permeability.[22] The letter, if the analogy holds, would always be out of bounds, so to speak, for its potential danger, as the rest of

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[21] Brant, 6-9. For a discussion on eighteenth-century print culture and its excess, see James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 61-3.

[22] For further discussion of the various cultural meaning of waste, see the Introduction in *Filth: Dirt, Disgust, and Modern Life*, edited by William Cohen and Ryan Johnson. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

the paper is trying to show. These comparisons between waste and letter all seem to beg the same question: how do the seemingly unproductiveness and damage eventually become the epistolary novel's secret pleasure? How does the advertised Enlightenment subjectivity become excessive? How does the waste reside in the epistolary genre eventually become valuable?[23] I would like to think of these various kinds of wasteful figuring in *Pamela*—possibly the founding text of the epistolary dominance in the eighteenth century England—not as a coincidence that one can easily write off. Rather, they bespeak a larger issue of the culture of excess, which often hides its extravagance in the name of reason and progress that one so readily sees in the Enlightenment.

II

Even without further discussion of figures of waste, it would be difficult not to see Samuel Richardson's 1740 *Pamela* as an excessive novel, or as a novel about excess in various different ways. In a sense, this is a novel constantly invested in opening up its interior. The second part of the novel, for example, morphs into diary entries that sometimes last for pages before Richardson reminds the reader that they are still letters

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[23] Roland Barthes's narrative model on the cardinal and catalyst event might be of help here. If eventually all segments within the narrative are built up toward the cardinal event as if there is a teleological force, then catalyst events become the embodiment of the moments of delay and loitering, without which the narrative would fail to produce its pleasure. See Roland Barthes's "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative" and *Pleasure of the Text*, trans, Richard Miller. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975).

intended for Pamela's parents.[24] *Pamela*'s later editions display an even more excessive nature, for Richardson's continuous revision of the novel becomes a complex collaborative process in which the epistolary novel itself turns out to be in some sense an epistolary correspondence as well, which of course leaves literary critics with some interpretative difficulties.[25] Indeed, while commenting on Richardson's ideological project, Terry Eagleton points out that perhaps one can see Richardson's works not as "a finished, seamless product" but as "*kits*, great unwieldly containers crammed with spare parts and agreeable extras, for which the manufacturer never ceases to churn out new streamlined improvements, ingenious additions and revised instruction sheets."[26] Clearly for Eagleton, the whole *Pamela* business invites not only questions of the excessiveness of authorship but also some readerly speculations as to how well this novel reflects Richardson's own personal views in its ever expanding enterprise. One has to wonder why Richardson, whose novelistic art is often associated with maintaining and "constructing" the ideology of the rising middle class, invests so much energy in the notion of excess, that which constantly eludes forms and boundaries, be they novelistic

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[24] For Ian Watt, "the epistolary convention itself gradually broke down, the letters turned into 'Pamela's Journal,' and the later part of the novel therefore produced a kind of narrative effect "not unlike that of autobiographical memoir in Defoe" (209).

[25] For a brief description of Richardson's collaborative process, see Terry Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson*, 10-12.

[26] Eagleton, 20. For him, the second edition of *Pamela* is a great example of Richardson's continuous involvement in the revision.

confines or the limits of individuality.[27]

Richardson sets up the tension between a virtuous and an excessive Pamela from the beginning. Pamela writes, for example, that her phrasing and "blotted" papers are the direct result of the sadness aroused by her lady's death. Yet the first thing that catches Mr. B's eyes in the same letter is her ability to "write a pretty hand" and "spell tolerably too."[28] Pamela quickly establishes herself as a sentimental writer, which is hardly associated with a servant maid. The first letter then subsequently marks a series of contrasts in which the logic of the epistolary waste eventually prevails in order to allow Pamela to become un-Pamela-like for a while. Indeed, Terry Castle suggests in her *Female Thermometer* that Richardson's epistolary world is much like a dream scenario, "a great dizzyingly recursive structure, where opposites mingle and the truth is always double," and she demonstrates to us the disoriented feeling that is to come once we encounter the Pamela letters.[29] To begin with, once we finish the first letter, we realize

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[27] Eagleton, 7.

[28] Samuel Richardson, *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*, eds. Thomas Keymer and Alice Wakely (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 11-2. All other reference to *Pamela* in the text and notes will be in parenthesis.

[29] Terry Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 66. Also, in commenting on Part II of *Pamela*, Terry Castle points out that Richardson creates a subplot of Pamela's unconscious desire for freedom already seen in the first part. It can be seen as a subconscious manifestation of its first part, i.e. a kind of denied fantasy and shadowy double of the first. Yet the catch is that this re-carnivalization of Pamela is only realized temporarily and then soon repressed. Castle's insight on *Part II* as a kind of repetition then calls our attention to a Richardsonian tendency in highlighting the dynamic between the original and the copy. Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (London: Methuen, 1986).

that there is an addendum, a parasitical note that borders between the letter and non-letter. This note is structured as if it were written at the moment of surprise: it begins with "I have been feared out of my senses; for just now, as I was folding this Letter, in my late Lady's Dressing-room, in comes my young Master" (12). This "Letter" of course refers to the first part of the letter where Pamela tells her parents about her sadness and innocent behaviors, and therefore we know quite clearly that the second part is added only after the first letter is finished. Yet the note's proximity to the first letter, being enclosed with it, gives us an illusion that the note is written with the first. By doing so, Pamela also transfers the kind of submissive tone of the first letter into the note and hence reduces the impact of transgression within it. The note, in this sense, becomes the center of the letter since Pamela deliberately uses it to create a voice of her own while retaining the note's marginal status, something that can be dispensed with easily. The note literally becomes an appendix, a useless organ of the body that captures waste. Mark for example that being a good maid (as described in the first letter), she presumptuously uses her "late Lady's Dressing-room" as her private writing space. Also in the note, she downplays the fact that Mr. B might have done something inappropriate by snatching the letter out of "her bosom" (12). This careful manipulation of her parents' reaction points to not only the dynamic between letter-writing and theatricality but also Pamela's understanding of the limitation

of the epistolary interior as a fixed space for one's truthful self. Her dramatized voice resides somewhere else, in the note that is very difficult to characterize.

This reversal of letter/note dynamic comes with another twist in the following letters and the vertiginous letter world continues its path. One might even say that certain logic of illogicality keeps the narrative going. Letter XV, for example, actually mirrors the structures of the note in the first letter since it also begins with an apologetic gesture: "I broke off abruptly my last letter; for I fear'd he was coming; and so it happened" (29). If in the first letter, the note is the humble abode of Richardson's textual excess, then Letter XV becomes the manifestation of Richardson's secret desire for epistolary excess. Now the note, the addendum, becomes itself a letter. The letter no longer can be distinguished from the note and the role of the letter as evidence of self-presence now suffers a series of transformations as well. Here Pamela does not carry with her the victim image that is traditionally associated with her. In fact, she answers Mr. B's hysterical and desperate moves of coercion with reason and defiance. Similar to her ways of responding to Mr. B's patriarchal interrogations, she now freely appropriates the letter form—as a sign of the Enlightenment—in such a way as to accommodate the notes. Despite the fact that Mr. B continues to accuse her as being a "Boldface" and "Equivocator," suggesting that Pamela's epistolary transgressions will be her "own enemy" and that her "perverse

Folly" will be her own "Ruin" (30-1), Pamela's parody of the letter form—the kind of reversal of letter/note—mocks the notion of the letter as a transparent medium. Just as the note's wasteful status becomes the site of Pamela's textual freedom, so the letter's failure as a transparent interior also allows her to double her unreadability.[30]

The interior of *Pamela*, in this sense, is filled with textual appendices where letters fold unto themselves. Indeed, a certain Gothicization of the epistolary interior—where the interior becomes haunted by its own elusive images—has manifested itself in Pamela's letters.[31] In Letter X, for example, Pamela tells her mother that Mr. B "says to Mrs. Jervis, This Girl is always scribbling; I think she may be better employ'd" (22). But Letter XII—supposedly a letter substitute for a lost letter between Letter IX and X—turns around and repeats what she has already stated in Letter X:

> All the next day I was very sad, and began to write my long Letter. He saw me writing, and said (as I mention'd) to Mrs. Jervis, That Girl is always scribbling;

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[30] In terms of Pamela's unreadability, Mr. B's two symbolic gestures of snatching the letter out of her bosom suggest an implicit link not only between Pamela's writing self and sexuality but also between Pamela and her textuality. It can be also seen in this letter that Pamela's self-reflexive comments on her own textuality—she being Lucretia and him being the Ravisher—further reveals how she treats herself eventually as something intending to be read, like the letter that leaves the confine of the authorial intent and loses its self-referential power. It might also be noted that despite the fact that we as readers are siding with Pamela more or less, we also hear Mr. B's side of the story—although still from Pamela's point of view (the oppositional viewpoints in epistolary novels will eventually be developed in Richardson's *Clarissa* where it becomes even more polyphonic). For Mr. B, he clearly understands that Pamela is operating in a similar rhetoric like his, and his comments on Pamela's artificiality, for example, add to the complexity of how we understand the letter.

[31] If one recalls, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* is not without its secret passages and textual lacunae.

me thinks she might find something else to do, or to that purpose. (26)

At first sight, this déjà-vu passage sort of becomes a comic relief for its sheer repetition. But this is also a self-reflexive moment when Pamela comments on her own writing in hindsight. It not only adds something to Letter X—"all the next day I was very sad"—but also displays Pamela's awareness of her writing as a kind of construction. In the very least, Pamela becomes her own reader. Moreover, one must also experience a sense of disorientation for if indeed Mr. B sees Pamela write the long letter and makes the above comment to Mrs. Jervis, is one to suppose that Mr. B's comments would have been recorded in the long letter as a testament to "writing to the moment"? If this is the case, this self-reflexive moment no longer just serves as a comic relief; it tickles but it also makes the reader uncomfortable.

From this perspective, Pamela's enclosure of Mr. B's marriage proposal provides a curious case as to how Richardson's rearrangement of their letters manifests an impulse to open up its epistolary interior and to destabilize its own presence. Instead of arranging two letters in the usual format or enclosing Mr. B's letter within Pamela's response, Richardson chooses to serialize the two letters and put them side by side as if Mr. B and Pamela are having a conversation right now. Richardson's treatment of epistolary correspondence is hardly new, since eighteenth century tends to see letter correspondence

as conversation.[32] Yet what exceeds Richardson's interior arrangement is the blank spaces now occupy Mr. B's enclosed letter. What they represent is open to discussion, but what may interest us is the idea that the waste matters reside in the letter not only grow and expand but also carve out an interior space that is difficult to characterize. It thus pushes the epistolary interior into several different directions: sometimes it is Mr. B's letter that is burdened by the blank space and sometimes it is Pamela's response spills over to Mr. B's ultimatum. It also opens up several ways of reading them. While we might follow the sequence of their correspondence from left to right, we can also read it from top to bottom in order to read the "real letter." Not only that, these are letters that are self-divisive and multiplied at the same time: both Mr. B's and Pamela's letters beget more letters, as each section becomes a new correspondence. The spatial traversing makes us constantly aware of the rim, as we can actually see the edge of these letters. Richardson seems to suggest that the epistolary interior can easily become an excessive space where Pamela can temporarily enjoy an equal status; after all, she just encloses and fragments Mr. B's letter in such a way that throws the epistolary verisimilitude into questions. Indeed, the correspondence ends when Pamela's letter completely surrounds Mr. B's

[32] For a discussion on eighteenth-century epistolary manuals and conversation, see Brant, 21-4 and 34-5.

letter, a symbolic gesture of Pamela's textual freedom.[33] In addition, these epistolary interiors readily expose themselves to the margin as they always fold and unfold as they go, just as Mr. B's and Pamela's letters suggest.

A similar situation occurs in Richardson's *Clarissa*. After Clarissa's rape by Lovelace, she produces a series of letters which prompts Lovelace to comment that "the original is too much an original to let it go out of my hands."[34] These letters are not just letters: like the letter-note that Pamela produces, these letters are fragments dressed up as letters. One can undoubtedly neglect them, as the editor of *Clarissa* does, and treats them as "papers" (890-1).[35] However, these are also "too much an original," a kind of excess that in Lovelace's word becomes "extravagant" (889). Indeed, Lovelace's subsequent reactions prove to be ironic. On the one hand, these papers are dismissed by Lovelace for their inscrutability. After all, they are fragmented and therefore can only be regarded as a manifestation of Clarissa's madness. As a result, despite the fact that the copy of the fragmented papers will furnish Belford, Lovelace's confidant and correspondent, "with a new weapon" against Lovelace, he nonetheless urges Belford to "spare [his] comments"

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[33] In this particular ending, Richardson again shows us how difficult it is to even begin to talk about the "end" of the epistolary interior. At the end of Pamela's one-on-one epistolary fragments, Pamela continues for another two lines that are not in response to Mr. B before her letter finally moves on to the regular format.

[34] All reference to *Clarissa* will be in parenthesis. Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady*, ed. Angus Ross (London: Penguin, 1985), 889.

[35] These fragments are numbered from I to V (890-891).

since his own reflection will render Belford's criticism "needless" (889). The letter-paper, like Clarissa's violated body and Pamela's imprisoned self, cannot be treated seriously. On the other hand, Clarissa's fragmented papers do have an impact on Lovelace. Immediately after Lovelace "skim[s] over these transcriptions," he tells Belford that "her memory, which serves her so well for these poetical flights, is far from being impaired" (894). In this sense, Clarissa's epistolary interiority is also ironically at its most manifest condition, either when it is fragmented or when it temporarily becomes non-letter so as to blur its own epistemological status.

III

The dynamic between self-presence and metonymic proximity, between masculinity and femininity, and between the original and the copy reveal to us a different scene of the epistolary interior. Richardson's epistolary arrangement is no longer just about various ways of "dressing up;" it is also about how the epistolary interior is always realized and measured through waste matters that constantly lurk behind. In fact, the letter as a kind of ghostly presence does haunt the epistolary confines, especially in the use of doubles. The afore-mentioned Letter XV, for examples, is in some sense a ghostly letter for its duplicity and uncertainty. But the letter is ghostly in another sense, that they

often create a sense of the Uncanny similar to Roland Barthes's "pleasure of the text" where it—the uncanny—is no longer just a somatic and bodily pleasure caused by the textual bliss; it is now a revelation which lays bare of its own insignificance.[36] In this sense, the ghostly letters in *Pamela* work to undo the epistolary flow and order; they are the mirror image of the letter proper yet always remain wasteful for their silence in the text.

Again, Pamela's prison letters present a curious case. In a letter titled "Friday, Saturday" (supposedly the ninth and tenth day of her imprisonment), Pamela produces a lengthy diary entry recounting a series of correspondence with Mr. B and Mr. Williams. As these letters by Mr. B and Mr. Williams could very much become one of the letter entries, they become "enclosed" letters, waiting to be sent out by Pamela. Their existence in Pamela's letters literally becomes a kind haunting, trapped within letters and kept lingering in the epistolary world of *Pamela* due to the recycling of their "face values"—they are often taken as face value, as a signifier of a prior appointment or a prior diary entry. Not only does this constant recycling of the enclosed letters in *Pamela* remind us of their status as wastes but the loss of their contexts and functions—their waywardness and

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[36] In *The Pleasure of the Text*, Barthes suggests that the pleasure that the text provides yields the contrary result; instead, it "suspends" its "signified value." Indeed, since the signifier is always "extravagance," it produces no value at all: "value shifted to the sumptuous rank of the signifier" and therefore loses its referential capacity. In the context of the ghostly letters, they resist any measurement for their sheer excessiveness. Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, 65.

their mis-directions—reflects the epistolary condition of the novel, that the letters in *Pamela* are too in search of a destination, be it the epistlers, Mr. B, or the readers. Ian Watt's curious comment that "in *Pamela* there was only one main correspondence—that of the heroine and her parents" shows us how even the enclosed letters from Mr. B can be misleading or faulty since we have no guarantee as to the authenticity of the letters (208). For him, "there was no direct presentation of Mr. B's point of view, and our picture of Pamela was completely one-sided." That Mr. B's letters are constantly mediated and taken out of context should not be regarded as a mere coincidence. These enclosed letters reveal in them what should have been kept repressed, i.e. the letters that should never be appearing in the epistolary novel.

That the uncanniness of the letter, i.e. the doubled letter that should have been repressed yet is nonetheless revealed, becomes a figure of waste should not come as a surprise. After all, we are never sure of the authenticity of the letter since it is Pamela who collects and interpolates them into her own diary entries. Yet, these enclosed letters are wasted in another sense, since their simultaneous attaching and detaching from the epistolary order resemble that of Julia Kristeva's process of abjection, where the boundary between object and subject becomes blurred.[37] Here, Pamela's enclosure of

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[37] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon Roudiez. (New York: Columbia

these letters problematizes their status as letter, and like abject, they represent the waste that should be cut out yet intimately associated with the making of Pamela's letters. Indeed, the whole episode on the ninth and tenth day of Pamela's imprisonment has orchestrated this highly complex process of abjection, the simultaneous alienating from and bonding with these enclosed letters. The first enclosed letter, for example, is originally an enclosed letter from Mr. B to Mrs. Jewkes. Although the double enclosure of Mr. B's letter indicates the difficulty of communication as well as the confusion about the authenticity of the letters that is to come, we have no problem reading Mr. B's letter as it is. Pamela's replying letter, however, presents a peculiar counterpart. For a moment, we are told that she has sent this letter to Mr. B as if she is reading the letter along side with the addressee, yet her reaction takes a different turn: she has "taken a Copy of this," then "folded it up," and has Mrs. Jewkes "convey" it (139-40). Obviously, the one that we are reading as a "real" letter is no more than a copy, since the "real" one has already been sent to Mr. B. To add to the complexity of the matter, the copy that we are reading at the moment is only, as Pamela suggests, written "as follows" (138). The copy becomes a sort of ghostly double and in a weird way, our participation in the reading of the letter helps to bring out its presence. In a sense, we are involved in the meaning-making

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University Press, 1982).

process of the novel through these ghostly presences.

We can see Pamela's further exploitation of the original/copy tension. Earlier in the letter when Pamela recovers Mr. Williams's letter, she has "intimated" to him Mr. B's letter and has sent out a secret letter. Yet, we have never seen this letter since Pamela has "not time to take a Copy of this Letter" because she was "so watched" (136). A few pages later, as one again reads through two enclosed letters from Mr. B, responding to Mr. William and Mrs. Jewkes, Pamela states that

> "I had hardly time to transcribe these Letters, tho' writing so much, I write pretty fast, before they both came up again in high Spirits" (147).

Pamela smoothly weaves the two enclosed letters into her narrative as if we are reading along side Pamela. Yet, it is only afterwards that we find out that these enclosed letters are only partial letters "transcribed" by her. These can be seen as mockeries to the authentic letters supposedly enclosed in Pamela's, yet Richardson treats them as if they are the originals. In a sense, they reflect Richardson's ambivalence toward the epistolary waste that keeps haunting the verisimilitude of his epistolary interior.

A week later, a similar line of events occurs when Mr. William sends a letter to Mrs. Jewkes. Pamela treats the letter as if it is part of her enclosed letter, only to contradict herself by claiming that Mrs. Jewkes reads the letter to her (150-1). These are

only summaries of the letters instead of the real ones, yet the letters' material forms in Pamela's letter make them look as if they are the original ones. In other words, despite Richardson's effort to bring out the genuine quality of the letter, much like what he does in the Preface, it continues to elude him, hiding behind the epistolary waste that he cannot do without. In a weird way, these letters continue to show their physical existence yet remain to be invisible. In a similar fashion, we are kept from realizing that the letters sent by Mr. Williams are actually intercepted by Mr. B and we only know these secrecies after Mr. B reveals his undertakings. The letters that we are reading at the moment are artificially weaved into the narrative or again transcribed by Pamela as copies into her letters. Despite the claim for truthfulness and authenticity in epistolary novels, what we have instead are the copies or simulacra: they are the kind of Derridean Différance that disguises as sameness.[38] They are those that should be repressed—unproductive wastes—yet are nonetheless revealed.

If Derrida's Différance reveals to us our inability to tell the difference within difference, then Richardson's letters in *Pamela* give us a taste of how this excess can be seen through the material wastes embedded within the textual mimesis of Pamela's letters. This seeing-as-not-seeing tells us the paradox of materiality in the eighteenth century: on

[38] For Derrida, "differance is recognized as the obliterated origin of absence and presence." Derrida, 143.

the one hand, the Lockean empiricism and Burkean universalism maintain a comprehensible body of knowledge through human senses; on the other hand, the letter as a physical presence of the heart may never be fixed and located. In fact, it has taken on a life of its own, lurking behind epistolary scenes. Indeed, it may be observed that Mr. B's continuous demand to read Pamela's letter right before or after the marriage, and his continuous production of letters for Pamela ironically locate themselves in the letter and thus put more weight on the epistolary practice than their actions. As Pamela puts it, "tho' I don't remember all I wrote, yet I know I wrote my heart" (230). Yet, even those letters are fruitless in mapping out Pamela's interior, because they are always mediated in some ways, and twice removed from their origin and destination. Right before Pamela's reconciliation with Mr. B, she loses her second parcel to Mrs. Jewkes, and is forced to recount to her parents in another letter "to the best of Remembrance, the Contents of the Papers" (227). While we have read these letters already, Pamela forces us to re-read them again. In a sense, those letters are cast upon a new light: miraculously recovered later but used as the origin of Pamela's heart, they are nonetheless mis-directed to Mr. Williams, stolen by Mrs. Jewkes, and eventually rewritten by Pamela. Pamela's recounting of these letters, it seems to me, presents another version of Pamela's heart, since now we are reading along side with Mr. B, who comes in to read them after Pamela's recounting

passages. These letters no doubt have lost their power of reference—or simply become too excessive—to the extent of being unproductive. But if anything, Richardson seems to be content with just that since these wastes have become so prevalent in the novel that one cannot help but to suspect that Richardson employ these figures of waste in letters with a purpose of his own; there is a politics of excess that seems to emerge out of the well-structured world of his epistolary interior that is so often regarded as the paradigm of novels and letters alike. While we continue to enjoy the genuineness of Pamela's letters, it is the epistolary waste that provides the intriguing correspondence that perhaps fuels the debates over Pamela's supposed innocence over the years.

IV

There are other kinds of wastes in the novel: that the characters in *Pamela* are interested more in being written and read about shows us how these "characters" are no more than empty vehicles waiting to filled in with romances, fables, and letters. Lady Davers, for example, wants to be read as texts. After their reconciliation, she demands that Pamela continue to write and send to her, and that she would personally come visit her to be her "guest," indicating that she would prefer to be seen as a character as well (498). The editor, another wasteful figure for his marginal presence, often exceeds his

own role and becomes the imposer of meaning. That he can traverse in and out of the epistolary interior makes him elusive, much like the ghostly letters that lay bare the tension between self-presence and its excess.[39] The interior of *Pamela*, in this sense, literally becomes a wasteland, where letters offer safe passages as much as impasses. What this eventually suggests is that despite the kind of formal qualities that are required of the epistolary novels, Richardson, it seems to me, replaces the formal letters with a politics of wastes. Indeed, with the Enlightenment demand for order and progression, still, there is another kind of Enlightenment going on, a darker one perhaps, that is constituted of wasteful and excessive figures, as *Pamela* attests. This oxymoronic situation, that is, upholding a narrative order while disrupting it, does not necessarily suggest that Richardson heralds the kind of Shandean narrative or rejects the Augustan social value. Yet, it does suggest there is a burgeoning awareness of the wasteful and excessive figures whose ghostly presences might not be so detested, after all.

Richardson's conscious manipulation of the print types that exceeds the formal qualities of the letters, his fascination with the marginal spaces in his epistolary novel, his

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[39] The two instances where the editor intrudes the epistolary flow seem rather surprising. The first one occurs when the editor comes in to explain the situation with Mr. B and the fact that Mr. B has already read Pamela's letters to her parents (92). The second one is even odder since to end the story, the editor uses a lame excuse of the reunion between Pamela and her parents, where in fact we know for sure, as in the case with Lady Davers and Mr. B, that Pamela will continue to write. Instead, the story goes on, and becomes the editor's reflection on Pamela story's ramification (498-503).

persistent pursuit of a dialectic of subject and object, letter proper and note, copy and non-copy, original and sham, all indicate that Richardson's participation in formal realism might take him to a different turn. Indeed, his textual aposiopesis—lost letters, transcription of letters, enclosed letters, notes, things that we regard as epistolary wastes—often creates excessive spaces that impede our interpretation and thus requires us to temporarily abandon our judgment. What is there? What is it that we are actually reading? What is beyond the epistolary confines? All these throw us into an uncertain state about materiality, forms, spaces, and eventually subjectivity in the eighteenth century. Cynthia Wall's recent comment on the Pamela's fantastic descriptions of the things around her points out new ways of describing, categorizing, inventing materiality and spaces in the eighteenth century.[40] For her, "all these things rise around Pamela and become visible as she moves through them, vanishing again once she's gone."[41] Spaces "tend to form around her" and the "implied spaces" are always present.[42] Like the epistolary interior that Richardson creates, here Wall indicates that fantastic turnarounds in *Pamela*, be they objects or rooms, can be created uncannily at will. Similarly, Terry Castle's notion on the "spectralization of the Other" in the eighteenth century also

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[40] Cynthia Wall, *The Prose of Things: Transformations of Description in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).
[41] Wall, 140.
[42] Wall, 141-2.

suggests that with the prevalence of the Enlightenment, there is also a feeling of uncertainty when it comes to empirical perceptions: "everything merges—inside and outside, cause and effect, mind and the universe—in a vertiginous sense of 'cosmic fusion.'"[43] Richardson's epistolary wastes, in this sense, are no mere idiosyncratic arrangement of letter's formal qualities but are evidence of a larger cultural suspicion toward material functionalities. Finally, by studying *Pamela*'s epistolary wastes, we will be able to see a clearer picture of the literary trajectory toward Literature of Sentimentalism and Gothic novels in the second half of the eighteenth century, which, coincidentally, are also interested in the human psyche, the loss of origin, and the ghostly presence.

[43] Castle, *The Female Thermometer*, 127.

"Et Cetera": Indeterminacy of Parodic Letters in *Shamela*

I

In order for me to talk about Henry Fielding's particular treatment of his parodic work, *Shamela*, I begin with a detour to an appendix entry concerning "personal identity" in David Hume's 1739 *A Treatise of Human Nature*.[1] In a series of inquiries about what forms the self and its material relationship to substance, Hume stumbles into a "labyrinth" that he confesses he does not know "how to render [it] consistent" (633). He finds first that when reflecting upon himself, he can "never perceive this *self* without some one or more perceptions" nor can he "ever perceive anything but the perceptions" (634). The thinking self depends on its perceptions to see itself; yet it is also the perceptions that constitute the self. This self-reflexive moment, one that finds itself as it defaces it, establishes the recursive structure which breaks away from the Cartesian "I think therefore I am."[2] For Hume, while one relies on human perceptions to shape the material reality, human perceptions alone render oneself both the thinking subject and the

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[1] All reference to *A Treatise of Human Nature* will be in parenthesis. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

[2] Hume acknowledges the contingency of Descartes' position by claiming "many philosophers seem inclin'd to think, that personal identity arises from consciousness; and consciousness is nothing but a reflected thought or perception" (635). Yet he constantly admits his lack of answer to the question of self and substance.

empirical object. The thinking subject no longer guarantees the connection between what one perceives and what is out there. In other words, if the subject's perceptions have no empirical basis ("consciousness" is perception, as Hume claims), how can one be sure of the material distinctions of the world? Conversely, if the self is only equivalent to an empirical object, how is it different from its own extensions?

Hume, of course, ends up acknowledging his own limit:

> In short, there are two principles, which I cannot render consistent; nor is it in my power to renounce either of them, viz. *that all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences*, and *that the mind never perceives any real connexion among distinct existences*.... For my part, I must plead the privilege of a sceptic, and confess, that this difficulty is too hard for my understanding (636).

Hume's departure from empirical science may be temporary and contingent, as he admits that there are always two "doctrines," one of the "philosophers" and one of the "vulgar" (634).[3] Yet, his anxiety about the extent of human perceptions and the distinct properties of existence seems rather alarming in the context of eighteenth-century empiricism: if one's perceptions of the physical world dictate the existence of self-identity, Hume then

[3] Although of a slightly different theme, Hume suggests that the doctrine of the philosophers sees perceptions as universal, whereas the doctrine of the vulgar sees each perception as distinct and unique. For him, "there is no contradiction, therefore, in extending the same doctrine to all the perceptions" (634).

involuntarily comes to the conclusion that such confidence might be crippled by the indeterminacy of the empirical world. Human perceptions might not be able to find their counterparts in reality, and subsequently the self in the physicality of the body.[4] If this is the case, the empirical sense of the world will, it seems to me, always fluctuate between the self and its perceptions of the world and what may seem ostensible may very well be muddy and layered.

My own interest in the dynamic between *Shamela* and *Pamela* derives from this eighteenth-century cultural concern—this ontological crisis of the "self and substance"—that becomes part of the foundation for Hume's skepticism. *Shamela* certainly is not the physical counterpart of *Pamela*, nor is *Shamela* by any means mistaken for *Pamela*. For the most part, *Shamela* is merely the parody of *Pamela*. But what is worth exploring here is the fact that both Richardson and Fielding worry about the question of the author and thus the blurred distinction the book and the author.

This fluctuation from subject to object, from fraud to original, or from book to author, *et cetera*, is the backbone of the current chapter on Fielding's parodic *Shamela*

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[4] Please see the 2007 fall special issue of *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* for a thorough discussion of the ways empiricism shapes and is shaped by eighteenth-century narratives: "eighteenth-century narrative and figural modes are equally invested in activating and resolving the crises of perception precipitated by the period's empiricist turn. At the same time that empiricism inaugurates such crises of perception, it insistently pursues new modalities of substance." Helen Thompson and Natania Meeker, "Empiricism, Substance, Narrative: An Introduction - The Eighteenth Century 48:3" *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 48.3 (2007), 186.

following the publication of Richardson's *Pamela*. While Fielding is busy poking fun at Richardson's seriousness and naiveté in *Pamela*, he is also aware of the obvious status of his *Shamela* as a fraud, as a copy, and as a parody, which at the same time aims to be a "true writing". After all, *Shamela* exposes the weakness of *Pamela* for who Pamela is from Fielding's perspective, despite the fact that Shamela does so in her own expense. In other words, Shamela's usurpation of *Pamela* also depends on her ability to cover up her own identity, and as a result, turning herself into a fluctuating signifier.

More importantly, Fielding's choice of epistolary genre complicates his satiric purpose since to write in letters in some sense already implies looking at oneself (the letter) from the outside. Such a position naturally puts one in a self-conscious or even ironic position.[5] In a weird way, the combination of a parody and an epistolary novella—both imitate and the alienate at the same time—no longer serves as Fielding's frivolous literary creation; its indeterminacy, both in the sense of the content and the form, best exemplifies Fielding's effort to improve the epistolary genre in *Shamela* based on Richardson's project of excess as shown in the previous chapter.

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[5] In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Jürgen Habermas suggests that writing letters not only provide self-observation but also an interaction with the "other I." For him, "the diary became a letter addressed to the sender, and the first-person narrative became a conversation with one's self addressed to another person." Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Thomas Burger, Trans. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991), 49.

In the following sections, I try to suggest that while Fielding uses *Shamela* to show his understanding of the limits of Richardson's epistolary paradigm, he unwittingly stumbles into the "labyrinth" set up by the mixtures of genres and the indeterminacy of self and substance. Indeed, if as I try to suggest in the first chapter, epistolary novels utilize figures of waste and tend to present an ironic version of the heart, then Fielding's epistolary parody is doubly excessive. This can be further seen in one of the central cruxes in *Shamela*—Shamela and Mr. Booby's marriage banquet—in which Shamela uses "et cetera" to refer to a certain tabooed knowledge for and about women. Indeed, as Judith Hawley and Thomas Keymer both suggest, "Etc." has "the same slang meaning—'vagina'—as fanny" at the time.[6] This certainly reminds us of Derrida's notion of "invagination" which indicates textual folds that traverse textual boundaries.[7] What is it about "et cetera" that makes it dangerous and transgressive? And why is Shamela unable to name it? If we tentatively see "et cetera" as a textual aposiopesis (from *OED*), we realize that Shamela's inability points to her own limitation as a pure replica of or as a totally different Pamela. She becomes the "et cetera" itself, a vacillating

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[6] Judith Hawley, Ed. *Joseph Andrews and Shamela*, (London: Penguin, 1999), 336, 339. Thomas Keymer and Peter Sabor, Eds. *The* Pamela *Controversy: Criticisms and Adaptations of Samuel Richardson's* Pamela, Volume I, (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2001), lii.

[7] Jacques Derrida's "The Law of Genre," edited by Martin McQuillan. *The Narrative Reader*, (New York: Routledge, 2000), 222-5.

signifier that is waiting to be named. After all, "etc" is a figure of enumeration, of a list that is open-ended and thus excessive. At the same time, she is also an excess—"the rest"—that needs to be contained and to be re-categorized. Through highlighting "et cetera," *Shamela* expatiates a larger story of excess's outlandish styles in the parodic form, its subversion and unsettling effects that blur the boundaries of empirical categories, such as that of the author and book.

II

How does one read *Shamela* against *Pamela*? Is Henry Fielding's 1741 novel simply a parody of the latter? What and how does *Shamela*, in excess of *Pamela*, tell us something about the epistolary excess in *Pamela*? In this chapter, I want to read *Shamela* not simply as a parody of *Pamela*, but as a text that participates in sorting out questions of epistolary excess in the eighteenth century.

Literary critics have long fixated on their intertwined history, and it is difficult not to treat them as a pair. Eric Rothstein's pioneering study of *Shamela*'s framework in 1968, for example, sees *Shamela* as both "realistic and preposterous, the one as a corrective to *Pamela* and the other as an exaggeration of *Pamela*."[8] Fielding's deliberate use of the

[8] Eric Rothstein, "The Framework of *Shamela*." *ELH*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (Sep., 1968), 401.

framework then directs one's attention to Fielding's mastery of the burlesque as well as his contention of the letterform. Similarly, Hugh Amory suggests that one can read *Shamela* as an Aesopic satire against *Pamela*; indeed, the somewhat inaccurate picture of the characters in *Pamela* serves only to intensify its satiric effect.[9] More recently, Richard Gooding charts out the history of the two camps after the inception of *Pamela*, *Shamela* being on the anti-*Pamela* side.[10] More importantly, he suggests that Fielding's treatment of *Pamela* is unique not just because of the parody of the letters, but also because of "he exploits Pamela's psychological complexity instead simply suppressing it;" hence a surprisingly more motivated and multidimensional Shamela.[11] Yet, despite their striking differences, *Pamela* and *Shamela* reveal an uncanny similarity in terms of their involvement in the larger issue of epistolary polemics in the eighteenth century. By treating them as equal instead of hierarchical, one may then suggest that the reversal of the role—the host and the parasite—reveals not only the theme of excess in which the boundary of the text can be easily crossed and traversed but also the epistemological inability to sustain the valid presence of the original.[12] Each becomes the letters that

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[9] Hugh Amory, "*Shamela* as Aesopic Satire." *ELH*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Jun., 1971), 252-3.

[10] Richard Gooding, "*Pamela, Shamela*, and the Politics of the *Pamela* Vogue." *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 7, no. 2 (January 1995), 126.

[11] Gooding, 126.

[12] The editor obviously treats Shamela as his own "book." The same thing goes with Parson Oliver, who claims that he has also written this book. *Pamela*, although is not a fictional fabrication as the editor

should and could have been written but are nevertheless left out of the epistolary traffic.

Such is the condition of letters, since letters always await their supplements or counterparts, i.e. their correspondence, in order to complete themselves and eventually "know" themselves. If *Shamela* somehow reveals Pamela's "true" self, it is because *Pamela* already leaves some room for a sinister reading and interpretation. After all, with all the intentions of exposing the higher-class world of Mr. B, Richardson also does so through an out-of-her-place Pamela, who is just a servant girl. And while Pamela's letters "seem" to give us "intimate access to the ebb and flow of consciousness", they also present some dubious moments: Pamela, for example, constantly shows her forced kissing scenes in her letters, though such actions tend to be toned down in the novel.[13] In the first letter, she mentions that when Mr. B catches her using her late lady's dressing room, she has to hide her letter in her bosom. When he snatches the letter out of her bosom, Pamela simply uses the verb "take," which of course leaves one to wonder why Pamela does not feel indignant, even violated by this affront to her virtue. Her comment at the end of the letter seems even more suspicious: "to be sure I did nothing but curchee

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suggests, constantly endures the editorial intrusion and interpolation. Indeed, the title page of *Shamela* suggests that Pamela is a "Book."

[13] Keymer, xiv. Thomas Keymer suggests that Richardson's "writing to the moment" has two associated qualities: "not just its capacity to register the flux of consciousness over time, but more particularly its dramatic synchronizations of narration and crisis, which focus above all on the immediate psychological impact of 'moments' in the sense of turning-points or critical junctures" (xiv).

and cry, and was all in Confusion, at his Goodness. Indeed, he is the best of Gentlemen, I think!" (13).[14] Pamela makes it seem as if she wants to cover something up. Yet, even her parents know exactly what is missing in the following letter: "But what avails all this, if you are to be ruin'd and undone!" Her father continues to show his worry over Pamela by wishing "the good 'Squire has no Design" (13).

In another incident during her Lincolnshire imprisonment, Pamela clearly understands the limits of her epistolary transparency. After she rejects Mr. B's proposal for marriage, she recounts having a long walk with him:

> My Master just now sent for me down to take a Walk with him in the garden. But I like him not at all, nor his Ways. For he would have all the way his Arm about my Waist.... After walking about, he led me into a little Alcove...and really made me afraid of myself. For he began to be very teasing, and made me sit on his knee, and was so often kissing me, that I said, Sir, I don't like to be here at all, I assure you. (208)

The episode also features her own reasoning as to why Mr. B always "professed Honor at all the Time with his Mouth, while his Actions did not correspond" (209). While the tone sounds calm enough, she is at the same time describing Mr. B's notorious behaviors as if

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[14] All reference to *Pamela* will be in parenthesis. Samuel Richardson, *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

she is just watching the whole episode from the outside—"I know not how far he would have proceeded: For I was forc'd to fall down upon my Knees" (209). Yet, as one may remember, this letter comes after the Mr. B's ultimatum to make her his mistress: Why does not she take a firmer stand against Mr. B? At least, she always has her pens, her inks, and her letters as a measure against Mr. B's brutality. She has, after all, just assaulted Mr. B in her response letter with reason, virtue, and forcefulness, and even as a symbolic gesture, has fragmented his proposal letter (please see Figure 1 in Chapter 1). In a similar situation, she describes Mr. B's kiss nonchalantly as if this is just another passing conversation (233). The readers keep wondering why she is not furious at Mr. B's obvious encroachment at all. The more Pamela alienates or distances herself from the sexual undertone of her plight in order to keep her virtue, the more she invites scandalous innuendo.

Fielding is quick to pick up the implication and emphasizes Pamela's artfulness through Shamela.[15] Such imitation of *Pamela*, both as a book and the eponymous heroine, can be seen everywhere in his *Shamela*. Fielding starts out in the title page of *Shamela* emphasizing the fact that *Pamela* is a "Book" that has "many notorious FALSEHOODS and MISREPRESENTATIONS, whereas *Shamela* is "the exact Copies

[15] In *The* Pamela *Controversy*, Volume I, Thomas Keymer lists several reasons why *Pamela* becomes so easily the target of its parodies.

of authentic Papers delivered to the Editor."[16] The need to establish *Shamela* as the authentic yet totally different other is imperative right from the beginning, but at the same time, the difference has to be "true" enough in order to evoke the memory of Pamela. In other words, *Shamela* has to be false and misrepresented; it has to reveal Pamela's secret as a book; and it has to reveal *Shamela* as a "sham" of *Pamela*. Yet, if Shamela somehow reveals theme of the unreliability of copies, how does Fielding acknowledge its own unreliability? If *Shamela* is false, how can one be sure Shamela is not also cunning about her "falsehoods," just as Fielding claims? The ambivalence of this economy of the imitator and the imitated does not seem to bother Fielding. In fact, Fielding continues to operate on both, exactly the kind of attitude that Hume adopts when it comes to the lingering uncertainty of the ideal and the empirical.

It would be easy to find evidence in *Shamela* that later fuels the controversy over Pamela. Shamela, to begin with, always speaks of "vartue" when she intends to refer to "virtue". When she finally makes sure that Mr. Booby would fall for her, she pretends that she values her "vartue" in front of Mrs. Jewkes. Then they continue to discuss her "vartue" which precedes her secret meeting with Parson Williams later. Vartue here constitutes the ironic version of virtue, a "var"cical version of virtue if you will.

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[16] All reference to *Shamela* will be in parenthesis. Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrew s* and *Shamela*, (London: Penguin, 1999), 23.

Characters in *Shamela* also turn topsy-turvy. Mrs. Jervis, who is supposed to be the benevolent character in *Pamela*, turns out to be playing a part in ensnaring Squire Booby. Mrs. Jervis's Letter VII tells the reader firsthand how she helps Shamela pretend to be "Miss Sham" (19). The same thing can be said of Parson William, who is revealed very early on to have been a hypocrite and already had an affair with Shamela. Mrs. Jewkes, the one who serves as the pawn of Mr. B in *Pamela*, has a totally different demeanor in *Shamela*: while she tortures and keeps Pamela always in check, she becomes a comical figure in Fielding's novel. Mark for example the reversal of role in Letter IX when Mrs. Jewkes calls her a "mynx":

> Mynx! No more Mynx than yourself, says I; with that she hit me a Slap on the Shoulder; and I flew at her and scratched her Face, i'cod, 'till she went crying out of the Room. (24)

A similar change of fate can be seen in Squire Booby. Even the loyal Jervis is given a first name "Lucretia" that reminds us of the virtuous Lucretia in *Pamela* while all along Shamela confides in Jervis every schemes she has to ensnare Squire Booby.

III

Fielding's parody of *Pamela* is shown on another level. If the characters in *Shamela*

are to be discredited in order for the parody to work, then the two parsons in the frame letters are to be seen as the anchors of the parody. In other words, they are to be taken seriously in order for the parody to be effective. After all, they have to give us the inside information as to how the book is gathered and how the Shamela letters are to be read. As one of the two outside narrators, Parson Tickletext tells Parson Oliver that *Pamela* is a "book" that inflames the ranks of the clergy (9). Already there is an indication that he sees *Pamela* for its public didactic function as a book, not as a servant maid's collection of private letters. This is no longer the ordinary collection of letters that are edited only by chance in Richardson's case. In Tickletext's view, this is clearly written for a purpose. Half parodying *Pamela*, he asks himself,

> But, now I think of it, who is the Author, where is he, what is he, that hath hitherto been able to hide such an encircling, all-mastering Spirit, "he possesses every Quality that Art could have charm'd by: yet hath lent it to and concealed it in Nature. The Comprehensiveness of his Imagination must be truly prodigious! It has stretched out this diminutive mere Grain of Mustard seed (a poor Girl's little, etc.) into a Resemblance of that Heaven, which the best of good Books has compared it to (10).

Tickletext is not sure of the author, nor is he treating the text as private letters to be

collected and published. Yet, he does suggest that the book has a root in Nature, that the book somehow captures the essence of Pamela. Tickletext seems to suggest that the book can always find its counterpart in Nature. That there is a distinct connection between Pamela the real person and *Pamela* is furthered when Tickletext marvels at the effect of *Pamela*: "I find I am like to do nothing else, for I know not how long yet to come: because if I lay the Book down *it comes after me*" (9). And not just the physical presence of a moving object, as Tickletext confesses to Oliver, "methinks I see Pamela at this Instant" (10). Similarly, Tickletext suggests that "happy would it be for Mankind, if all other Books were burnt, that we might do nothing but read *thee* all Day, and dream of *thee* all Night" (Emphasis mine; 10). It is no longer the book that some author writes into being; it is now Pamela herself. Both quotations indicate that the author somehow presents a true Pamela, who is able to transcend the material book. The Parson's assertion that the book has a life of its own becomes an ironic version of Hume's skepticism, that there is, after all, a counter part in the reality.

One can start to sense that even with Tickletext's strong convictions, multiple Pamela begin to proliferate, since Pamela is at once the author, the book, and the physical presence that somehow attaches to the name "Pamela". Pamela becomes the fluctuating signifier that is discussed earlier. Yet, Tickletext's confidence is soon to be shattered by

Parson Oliver's ensuing letter. Upon receiving Tickletext's letter of admiration, Oliver claims to have the original letters and thus the knowledge of a fraud. He suggests to Tickletext that *Pamela*, and therefore, the letters of *Pamela*, are not written by Pamela herself: "for though we do not imagine her the Author of the Narrative itself, yet we must suppose the Instructions were given by her, as well as the Reward, to the Composer" (12). At the same time, we are reading Oliver's version of the story—later he claims to have possession of the Shamela letters—since the Shamela narratives could very well be made up by Oliver: he, like the editor, has a say over what will be exhibited and what will be left out. He is therefore comparable to the author of *Pamela*. Tickletext's comic response to *Pamela*'s effect and Oliver's stern rejection of Pamela's virtue therefore provide the necessary fuels for the parody of *Pamela*.

The frame narratives come with a twist. While we are to read Parson Oliver's letter literally, it is not without its own irony and ambivalence. Already Oliver informs us that he will send Tickletext "some Papers relating to this Matter, which will set *Pamela* and some others in a very different Light, than that in which they appear in the printed book" to solidify his claim (12). In fact, the rest of the letter seems persuasive enough as evidence of Pamela's transgression and cunning tricks. But Oliver seems to be caught up in his own confusion about the author and the book as well. At the end of Oliver's letter,

we realize that these are enclosed letters—the Shamela narratives—in his letter to Parson Tickletext. The framed letters are created to make us believe the Tickletext and Oliver are on the outside looking in, but in the actual textual arrangement, there is no clear-cut division between Oliver's letter and the beginning and end of the Shamela narratives. We are, in fact, reading the whole Shamela story as letters within a letter. However, as I suggested in the first chapter, enclosed letters create temporal and spatial illusion as if these letters are somehow miraculously recovered only to be read as part of the present letters. They lose their referencing power since now they are out of their functions and contexts, exactly the kind of unsettling effect that undoes the essence of things. While Oliver assures us that these letters are "authentick," he tells Tickletext earlier that he will only send the real letters till later (13). Already there is ambivalence about the authenticity of the enclosed letters: If the real letters are only on the way, what are the letters we are reading at the moment? If we are to take Oliver's words seriously, can we be sure that the Shamela narrative and correspondence are written by Shamela and the company? Both Oliver and Tickletext's inability to discern and create boundaries of things—between letters, between books and authors, between originals and copies—are indicatives of their acceptance to the idea of excess—things in excess of themselves or voided of their self-referential power—that we have been discussing so far.

Oliver continues to be present us with problematic, if not contradictory, accounts about the author of the Shamela letters. He, for example, tells Tickletext that "the true name of this Wench was SHAMELA, and not *Pamela*, as she stiles herself" (13). Indeed, Shamela's last letter confirms that for the purpose of publishing the now-circulating *Pamela*, Shamela's "first syllab[le] hath too comical a Sound, so it is to be changed into *Pamela*" (40). Yet, in the second letters among the enclosed letters, Shamela also admits that she was called "Pamela"—"for so I am called here" (14). Here, Oliver's ambiguous statements are too many to be taken lightly. Eventually, we realize in the concluding frame letter that he casually acknowledges that the whole Shamela narrative are "transcribed" by himself "from the Originals, send down by her mother" (41). Even he cannot be sure whether the book (or the heroine) he transcribed is called "Mrs. *Shamela* or *Pamela*" (41). Oliver's letter too like *Shamela* start to lose its credibility and readers gradually come to realize that the Shamela narrative might not be the true account that both Parson Oliver and Tickletext spend time debating in the beginning of correspondence. While the reader might never engage in the kind of serious reading in *Shamela* as in say *Pamela*, but these plays and explorations on what it means to write are too many too ignore.

Oliver's irony can also be seen from his confidence in "handwriting." Earlier on, we

learn from Oliver that upon receiving Tickletext's letter, he suspects its authenticity: "if I had not known your Hand, I should from the sentiments and the stile of the Letter, have imagined it to have come from the Author of the famous Apology" (11). In a sense, the letter is believable not only because it is a letter by its own right but also because it bears the handwriting of the addresser. For the same reason, the book of *Pamela* is not to be trusted because it is not written and published by Pamela herself.[17] Yet, the mistrust of the printed book is to be seen in the Shamela story as well. Shamela herself admits that to be painted by the author in a book is to "*make black white*" (40) so Shamela's flaws would naturally be altered on purpose. Even at this moment, more ambivalence arises, for as Shamela expatiates,

> for to be sure I shan't confess any of my secrets to them, and so I whispered Parson *Williams* about that, who answered me, I need not give my self any Trouble; for the Gentleman who writes Lives, never asked more than a few Names of his Customers, and that he made all the rest out of his Head; you mistake, Child, said he, if you apprehend any Truths are to be delivered (40-1).

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[17] Fielding seems to show us there is a mistrust of print in the eighteenth century? Oliver claims that his Shamela story will "set Pamela and some others in a very different Light, than that in which they appear in the printed Book" (12). Coupled with the overall tone in the story, there seems to be a genuine mistrust in print. Obviously, one of the reasons that *Pamela* enjoys such a tremendous success is due to Richardson being a printer of his own works.

As it turns out, Shamela never reveals herself to the unknown author, so both Tickletext and Oliver's attacks on Shamela (or Pamela in that matter) seems unfounded. More importantly, Shamela's unwitting revelation, if we can take the face value of her words, points out the obvious gap between the originals and the printed work as copies, for the Shamela story is a copy written by someone else. Even Parson Tickletext becomes a converted anti-Pamelist at the end of the story. In his postscript, he also claims, "since I writ, I have a certain Account that Mr. Booby hath caught his Wife in bed with Williams; hath turned her off, and is prosecuting him in the spiritual Court" (43). Which is of course doubtful to the eyes of the readers, since if we are to believe both Parson Oliver and Tickletext's words, then we also face a paradoxical situation where we also have to discredit their words in terms of the logic of the narrative: if *Shamela* is a true story, then we know that Mr. Booby is not capable of catching his wife in bed with Williams and turning Shamela off (it might be more believable that he should mistake Williams for his wife).

Such a paradox also occurs when Parson Oliver reveals early on in his letter that the Shamela story is "the History of Pamela I was acquainted with long before I received it from you, from my Neighborhood to the Scene of Action" (11). Now we realize Oliver not only has access to the letters but to the actual "scene of action" as well. Why then he

chooses to adhere to her mother's letters remains to be further explored. But one thing is for sure, that the Pamela story has many competing versions, be it Richardson's continuous revision of his *Pamela*, Fielding's *Shamela*, the unknown author's *Pamela* as the frame letters seem to point out, Mrs. Henrietta Maria Honora Andrews's collection of letters, or Parson Oliver's final transcription of Shamela's letters.[18] Here Parson Oliver reveals his final irony. If handwriting is the deciding factor of a work's authenticity, then his transcription of the Shamela narratives put him in an awkward position: bearing his handwriting, are the Shamela narratives therefore worthy of one's attention? Is he, by re-producing the Shamela narratives, then the author of the Shamela narratives? If so, how is it different from Richardson's editorial treatments of *Pamela*? Where are we to find Shamela's own handwritings and her own stories?

All these questions, it seems to me, recount the eighteenth century concerns surrounding the blurred relationship between the author and the book, authenticity and the representation. That there is an attempt to replace the original text or an understanding of the improbability of attaining something original—in the Shamela story and its frame letters—together seek to tell the eighteenth-century story of excess of printed texts—both as a metaphor of excessive number or as a metaphor of its affective potentials. They each

[18] One might even look into the questions of how Shamela's mother has access to those letters that are not addressing her.

strive to claim the legitimacy of the original; yet none seems to have the final say of the matter. Even Richardson's "original" *Pamela* is belittled to the extent of gradually losing its credibility, not just because of Fielding's parodic attack, but because of *Pamela*'s edited nature—just as Shamela's letters are produced by the unknown parson. If such is the condition of the author and book, then in a sense, *Pamela* already is *Shamela*, since both undergo a series of transformation and artificial transcription as well.[19] If *Pamela* already is an instructed work, then readers do not need *Shamela* to uncover the secrets, that is, *Shamela* already is a shadowy/shadowed *Pamela*. The framed letters in *Shamela* seem to suggest that the original already contains in itself its own copy (in other words, already things have no fixed identity), and vice versa, as the *Pamela* and *Shamela* controversy attest to. For Fielding, to enter the world of parody is to enter a vertiginous zone, where the copy is to become the original, the book to have a life of its own, and the authors to be too many to be named. In a sense, there is no longer the need for *Shamela* to be in order for us to read *Pamela* as a fake. Furthermore, we might observe one constant in the *Shamela* fiasco: that there is never just one single text when we read, as the original tends to beget more texts, letters beget more letters, and finally the content begets frame apologies. The text is always in a constant state of excess.

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[19] Enclosure of letters and the figures of waste in *Pamela* can be seen as a kind of transformation of the self and artificial transcription.

IV

If we put Fielding's parody in a larger historical context in the eighteenth century, we realize that it is no accident that Fielding deliberately uses the parody form as a way of divulging his idea of the indeterminacy of *Shamela* and *Pamela*, both as a book and an author, copy and original. Roger Lund has suggested that Fielding's use of burlesque and parody has an experimental dimension that aims to take over the original. In other words, however lowly or laughable Fielding's parody may seem, it tries to cement its own status as something new.[20] But this awareness of what counts as original and fraud—if the aim of parody is to replace the original and thus prioritize itself—also questions their limitations. In reading Robert Phidden's deconstructive approach to parody, Simon Dentith suggests that "parody emerges as a formal practice in which the densely allusive intertextual nature of all writing is made especially transparent, so that its 'authorship' becomes problematic."[21] Parody therefore possesses a "rare and disarming *honesty* in its gestures towards multiplicity and plurality – a 'celebration'...of all that resist[s]

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[20] Roger Lund, "Augustan Burlesque and the Genesis of *Joseph Andrews*." *Studies in Philology*, Volume 103, Number 1, Winter 2006, 88-119.

[21] Simon Dentith, *Parody*, (New York: Routledge, 2000), 15. Robert Phidden, *Swift's Parody*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 13-4, 203.

stabilization or confinement."[22] As I have been trying to show, parody as a project of excess in the eighteenth century tends to orient toward an open approach when it comes to the question of author and authenticity. But before we go on to the content of *Shamela*, we can linger on another text for a while, and trace this literary disposition in Jonathan Swift's extensive use of parody to see that to parody is not only to ridicule the intended original; its another function lies in the laughter of oneself as an imposter, since such laughter is an indicator of one's awareness of the limitation as an author.[23] For Mack,

> Parodies, after all, are the textual products of a myriad of sophisticated literary processes that seek not to obscure but rather to highlight—and, not infrequently, ostentatiously to flaunt—their status as in some way marked or derivative. The originality of any given parody...would appear paradoxically to lie precisely in the simple fact of its unoriginality.[24]

Furthermore, the "preliminaries" that parodied the content continues to tell the same story of excess: if the text is void of an author, then it is also self-multiplied in the form of its growing frames.

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[22] Robert Mack, *The Genius of Parody: Imitation and Originality in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century English Literature*, (New Work: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 3.

[23] I am certainly aware of the various kinds of parody produced in the long eighteenth century. To say the least, *Pamela* itself creates a media phenomenon that breeds a lot of parodies in its first year of publication. The choice of *A Tale of a Tub* and its frame is merely a choice based on similar use of its own frame.

[24] Mack, 3.

Similar to Tickletext and Oliver, the outside narrator in Swift's *A Tale of a Tub* writes the "Apology" for the content to remind the readers of the parodic purposes that are involved in the making of the tale. The narrator, supposedly Swift himself, does everything he can in his frame narrative to assure us that the tale in the middle is by no means an unwitting parody that aims to mock the author himself (despite the fact that the apology becomes a parody of the content).[25] In fact, the narrator even helps us see the inside narrator's authorial intention as honorable and well-intentioned. As the narrator suggests, the author of *A Tale of a Tub* "had endeavour'd to strip himself of as many real prejudices as he could."[26] The outside narrator also helps explain the situation. For us, the inside narrative might be a tale of a "tub"—a story of fragments, digressions, and figments, and therefore is subject to ridicule—but for the outside narrator, the story should be read as otherwise, as the author "thought the numerous and gross corruptions in Religion and Learning might matter for a satire that would be useful and diverting" (2). To further support the idea of a non-prejudiced author, the outside narrator weighs in on the correct ways of reading *A Tale of a Tub*. For example, the narrator points out that "some of the passages in this discourse which appear most liable to objection, are what

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[25] The narrator is quite aware of the new literary adaptation to parody. He points out that John Dryden's L'Estrange is such new renovation in his own time.

[26] All other reference in the text and notes will be in parenthesis. Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub and Other Works*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2.

they call parodies, where the author personates the style and manner of other writers whom he has a mind to expose (3)." Thus contrary to our reading that sees the inside narrator as a laughing stock, the frame narrator anchors the reading. The idea that the outside narrator helps clarify our understanding of the inside narrator is clearly present in the "Apology" frame.

As it follows, he "resolved to proceed in a manner that should be altogether new, the world having been already too long nauseated with endless repetitions upon every subject" (2). The writer of the apology urges the reader not to easily deal out judgments about the author's intention:

> There are three or four other passages which prejudiced or ignorant readers have drawn by great force to hint at ill meanings, as if they glanced at some tenets in religion. In answer to all which, the author solemnly protests he is entirely innocent; and never had it once in his thoughts that anything he said would in the least be capable of such interpretations, which he will engage to deduce full as fairly from the most innocent book in the world (4).

At the same time, the frame narrator does not forget to belittle himself and thus diminishes the credibility of his "apology." In other words, the apology becomes just like a tale of a tub, another parody that grows out of the content. Swift's purpose lies not in an

apologetic gesture toward the *Tale of a Tub*; if anything, he aims at ridiculing himself as the author as well, with the apology itself serving as something that can be easily dispensed with—like the notes in *Pamela* that are both central and excessive at the same time. The frame narrator says it best that

> this apology being chiefly intended for the satisfaction of future readers, it may be thought unnecessary to take any notice of such treatises as have been written against this ensuing discourse, which are already sunk into waste paper and oblivion after the usual fate of common answerers to books which are allowed to have any merit. They are indeed like annuals, that grow about a young tree and seem to vie with it for a summer, but fall and die with the leaves in autumn and are never heard of any more (4).

Swift understands the limit of textual influence of a frame. More importantly, he seems to suggest an acute awareness of textual death in that their circulations are only short-lived, if not neglected. If indeed, the frame narratives are integral to the anchoring of the parody, they, being parodies themselves, are wastes at best. Nothing, in this sense, is a reference to anything else, not even to itself. The anchoring frame now becomes a highly self-conscious piece that questions its own designation as a parodied work. In this sense, the frame narrator is in no better position than the "answerers" of the *Tale of the Tub* that

he so vehemently dismisses. After all, he is an answerer too, "when he would have it observed that the author's wit is not his own" (7). Thus, the ultimate irony lies in that even if the apology writer is the writer of the Tale of a Tub, by adding this apology, he indirectly confirms one of the answerer's "mistaken" "conjectures" that "the author is dead" (8).

For Swift, this convoluted mess of the frame and content, parody and original, is shown at another level. At the beginning of the Apology, the narrator suggests that "the greatest part of that book was finished above thirteen years since, 1696, which is eight years before it was published" (2). Like the lengthy discussions as to how the Shamela letters come to being in the frame letters, here the frame narrator also mentions how the book is published. But where is the limit of book as a physical object? Is it 1696 when the greatest part of that book was finished? Or is it 1704 that sees the actual publication of the book? How do we account for the missing eight-year interval? Even the apology writer is not sure about this. He tells us that "how the author came to be without his papers is a story not proper to be told and of very little use, being a private fact of which the reader would believe as little or as much as he thought good" (8). He eschews the question of the original text and he fails to "apologize" for the author's absence. Moreover, he now contradicts himself by continuing to defamiliarize the reader with

numerous accounts of how the book comes about. The book now is based on "a blotted copy" that the inside narrator possesses which "he intended to have writ over with many alterations" (8). While "a blotted copy" might assure the readers of its authentic nature (much like Pamela's letters in Chapter one), it was not the final product because these blotted passages are never shown to the readers. What alterations? What has been blotted? The apology writer tells us that

> in the author's original copy there were not so many chasms as appear in the book, and why some of them were left, he knows not; had the publication been trusted to him, he would have made several corrections of passages against which nothing hath been ever objected.

One has to wonder, if the author cannot have control over his own written work, what is the extent of the excess of authorship and book? Again, the apology writer makes it difficult for the readers to pin down the origin of the *Tale of a Tub* by adding that the section "A Fragment" is something that the author "once lent a gentleman who had designed a discourse of a somewhat the same subject" and "he never thought of it afterwards" (8-9). Even the author admits that "it was a sufficient surprise to see it pieced up together" with the *Tale of a Tub*. Even the explanatory notes are not intended by the author in the first place (10).

By now, we realize that the frame is just another parody of the *Tale of a Tub*, because the frame is full of vain talk, ellipses, and digressions. We cannot use the apology to anchor the inside tale nor can we locate the real author in both of them. Swift seems to destabilize his own position as a parodist by subverting whatever messages that both the inside and outside narrator try to convey. If there is one set of logic that we can get out of Swift's sometimes elusive approaches to his text, it seems to me that for Swift any "thing" is readily a sort of parody of itself, like the frame narrative that grows out of the original text or like the original text that expands and decreases as it wishes. Every "thing" is more or less "like" itself. This indeterminacy as I have been suggested so far becomes the backbone of a large cultural fascination with what counts as original and copy, author and book, and eventually perception and materiality. Phidden tells us that "parodic erasure disfigures its pretexts in various ways that seek to guide our re-evaluation of refiguration of them. It is dialogical and suggestive as well as negatively deconstructive, for it (at least potentially) can achieve controlled and meta-fictional commentary as well as purely arbitrary problematisation."[27] While parody assaults its pretext, it also prompts us not only to question the necessary hierarchy between the original and its fraud, but also reconsider the originality of the original. The parody, in

[27] Phiddian, 13.

this sense, is no longer just to make fun of the intended target or the satirist himself; it in fact participates in a philosophical inquiry of the empirical world.

V

There is therefore an explicit link between the use of parody and epistolarity in Fielding's *Shamela*. *Shamela*, in this view, is neither a mere addendum to Richardson's *Pamela* nor a creative attempt to replace it. *Shamela* itself poses questions about its own origin, its own ontological status and therefore becomes an indeterminate object. *Shamela*'s frame letters provide ample examples about how parody works to undermine itself; similarly, *Shamela*'s content letters extend the concern about the excess of authorship and empirical claims. But more importantly, for Fielding to successfully facilitate his view on parody and excess in *Shamela* there must be moments in the novel where all Fielding's endeavors fail. These moments, perhaps, are confirmations to the apology writer's inadvertent assertion that "the author is dead." In other words, how does Fielding reveal his letters as "shams" but still is able to make them serious? How does he talk about excess by using excessive genres like parody and letters without jeopardizing his own epistolary project? As I approach the end of this chapter, I will try to show Fielding's particular treatment of the letter genre rarely mentioned in earlier criticism and

try to show that by engaging in the parody of *Pamela*, Fielding enters a loop where the more he makes fun of Richardson's artificiality, the more he perpetuates Richardson's unfinished project of epistolary excess.

The reversing effect of Fielding's mockery can be clearly felt throughout the Shamela letters. From the beginning, we see the first two Shamela letters model upon the structure of Pamela's first letter. While Richardson relegates Pamela's subversive message to the note in the first letter (and therefore reduced the effect of Pamela's transgression), Fielding has no problem rendering the note its proper status as a letter. After all, he is mocking Richardson's seriousness regarding the letter's transparency and Pamela's virtues. Here the mourning for the old mistress is non-existent, and the subtle transgression in Pamela's note becomes too obvious. Shamela tells us that she "pretend[s] to be shy" while Mr. Booby is making a move on her (14). Similarly, Pamela's latent desire emerges in Shamela's overt claim of her sexuality. In the second letter, for example, Shamela is upset by Mrs. Jervis's interruption during her sexual encounter with Mr. Booby. Indeed, she describes extensively how she entices Mr. Williams and Booby in her letters. Later when she tricks Mr. Booby to her bed—a parodied scene from *Pamela*—she makes it no secret to the reader that she is "only pretending" to be innocent. She continues to pretend even to the schemer Mrs. Jervis.

If Richardson's letter veil hides Pamela's darker side, Fielding throws it to the reader's face. At the same time, as I have been trying to suggest so far, Fielding's parody can only be an excess, something that is almost the original but not quite. For Richardson, letter is "supposed" to be transparent (despite what the ironies of his print rendition); Fielding's letter mockery makes it explicit and therefore unwittingly confirms that letter *is* transparent, because we need to take the face value of what Shamela says in order for the parody to work. In this sense, whatever Fielding tries to achieve in his writings will always be put in this double-bind: how do you mock the original without becoming the mocked as well? How do you write a letter novel without a suspected agenda? How can the letter novel not simultaneously call attention to the excess of authorship inherent in letters?

Fielding's problematic double-bind is reflected in his epistolary "innovation" in Shamela's letters. If we go back to the first letter in *Shamela*, we sees that it is not just a parodied letter that shows how *Pamela* should be a sham; in parodying the first letter, Fielding actually creates a totally different dimension than what *Pamela* and "the Sham of *Pamela*" can offer. By this, I mean the use of italicization in her letters, and specifically those italicized sentences that serve as her inner thoughts. At the first sight, one might assume that the italicization functions as an en dash to indicate her sudden

epiphany or a breaking away from her current train of thought. When she mentions in the first letter, "*O! How I long to be in the Balcony at the Old House*," she is expressing her longing to go back home (14). But at the same time the en dashes surround the sentence makes the italicization redundant. It is in the second time (in the second letter) that the italicization appears that one starts to wonder at the full effect. In the second letter—supposedly the note in Pamela's letter—as I mentioned before, we observe an unashamed Pamela/Shamela addressing us her pretensions. Why would Shamela need an italicization to show us who she really is? The letter is supposed to present the truth of Shamela's heart, and she never fails to show that, even her pretensions—her pretending to be ignorant—are carefully chronicled in her letter. The only explanation, it seems to me, is that while Fielding demystifies the notion of the letter's transparency by inventing an italicized voice inside the letter and Shamela's heart, he in fact sets up a new dimension for Shamela and the epistolary genre. Fielding now creates for Shamela a monologue within a monologue as well as a parody of a parody (*Shamela* being a parody already), exactly like the kind of recursive structure and economy in Hume. In a sense, if Fielding tries to present an excessive Shamela in order to mock Richardson's idealization of the epistolary transparency, his own version of the epistolary transparency is not only redundant but also exceeds the dimension of a coquettish Shamela: this is no longer just a

Shamela that is lustful; now you have a calculating, multidimensional one. Shamela becomes the excessive signifier whose meaning fluctuates between the letter and her inner voice.

The instances of Shamela's use of monologue inside her letters are numerous, and I will come back to this point later. For now, we realize that Fielding's parody achieves its effect by attacking and revealing Richardson's weakness in *Pamela*. This is especially true in his use of "writing to the moment" in his parodied version. In mocking one of the sexual scenes in *Pamela*, Fielding deliberately has the whole episode written in the mode so as to denigrate Richardson's idealization of letter's potential for unrestricted feelings. In letter VI, Shamela describes to us one of her seduction scene, where she suggests that she writes "in the present Tense" (18). The whole scene is hilarious exactly because Shamela is reporting everything that happens in bed with Mr. Booby in real time. For example, she would "shout out" to her reader that she is surprised by Mr. Booby's entrance—"Odsbobs! I hear him just coming in at the Door" (18). Of course we know Fielding is not serious at all because mid-way through the letter, Shamela changes the letter back to the past tense. But right before that, she again uses her inner voice in italicization—"*O what a difficulty it is to keep one's countenance, when a violent Laugh desires a burst forth*" (18). Shamela's inner voice suggests that she is laughing at how

gullible Mr. Booby is and at the comic scenes that ensues. One might even say that Shamela is poking fun at the effect of this "writing to the moment." At the same time, this italicization also puts the reader in a difficult position: which voice (her letter or her voice) is closer to her "self"? Isn't this inner voice also a sort of writing to the moment? Moreover, this one speaks to the reader in a direct way as if one has an access to her heart. The reader is forced to recognize the illusion of writing to the moment while accepting it as the prerequisite of Fielding's sarcastic attacks. In a weird way, the more Fielding makes fun of Richardson's seemingly seamless narrative flow or his "writing to the moment," the more he confirms Richardson's own epistolary agenda. Like Tickletext and Oliver, Fielding puts himself in an ironic position and therefore casts doubt on his own position as someone who tries to amend Richardson's "faults" through satirical attacks. In a sense, Fielding is admitting that even these improvements are futile: one can never access Shamela's heart through the letter or through her inner voice. She is always at large.

I will now turn to a central passage in *Shamela* that best exemplifies Fielding's awareness of the futility of his own epistolary project. What we have is a moment in the text where Shamela is literally suspended—in a state of undecided chaos. Caught between her letters—the editor suggests that "the following Letter seems to have been

written before *Shamela* received the last from her Mother" (29)—and her two homes (Lincolnshire and Drury-Lane), she now receives a letter tossed into her chariot by a man on horseback. The tossed letter that Parson Williams sends Shamela soon multiplies and one reads a second enclosed letter from Parson Williams to Mr. Booby within Shamela's letter to her mother. While Fielding's satirical tone and haphazard rendition of the characters from *Pamela* seem natural enough for one to assume that Fielding inserts Parson William's second letter into Shamela's letter without much deliberation, one soon realizes that the enclosure of the "second" letter is by no means inadvertent. By relegating the enclosed letter's authenticity and authority to an "exact Copy" transcribed by Shamela and disrupting the succession of the epistolary undertakings among Shamela, her mother, Parson Williams and Mr. Booby, a certain "un"-willing suspense of disbelief on the reader's part can emerge. Earlier on, we know this letter is supposed to be written after she receives her mother's letter, yet the editor's inserted comment on the letter's belatedness—a mocking gesture of the Richardsonian epistolary order—reveals a series of confusion about the epistolary communication. Indeed, at the end of Shamela's letter, one knows that Shamela also receives an incoming letter from Mr. Booby desiring her return to Lincolnshire; however, this letter is "unhappily lost," as the editor claims, "as well as the next which Shamela [writes], and which contain[s] an Account of all the

Proceedings previous to her Marriage" (33). He then goes on to tell the reader that

> The only remaining one which I could preserve, *seems* to have been written about a Week after the Ceremony was perform'd, and is as follows (emphasis mine; 33).

One has to wonder, if the editor, being part of the epistolary enterprise, can only offer an assurance of a seeming truth, how is he able to proclaim the ownership of the collection of letters, such as the Editor in Goethe's *Werther*? If he has access to the letters, why does he choose not to show the crucial letter linking Mr. B's proposal and the wedding night? Moreover, if the letters are collected from the mother as he later claims, how can he get hold of other letters with different addressees?

This central lacuna embodies one of the recurrent images of the kind of epistolary excess that this dissertation tries to elaborate. What attaches to this image is literally an abandonment of the project itself, just like the letter's sudden failed assurance. There goes the self-referential power of the letter itself; what replaces it is an excess, something that is quaintly bundled up with the letter itself yet never fully appreciated. Indeed, while the epistolary novel itself tries to imitate the reality of the epistolary decorum—the mimesis of the epistolary traffic of the eighteenth century, at the same time it creates—or even to some extent intends—a world of topsy-turvy, sometimes burlesque or carnivalesque, sometimes serious and formal, that to preside over the world of letters

means to relinquish some rights of being the rational subject of the eighteenth-century, of the reality that one is used to in order to make a certain adjustment, in order to safely return to the homeland of the canny. Fielding, in this sense, forces the reader to enter a zone of phantasm while abandoning all the knowledge that one accumulates so far in the reading of *Shamela*.

Reading *Shamela* in light of this means that *Shamela* is no mere copy of *Pamela*, just like the copy of the letters are not just referential points of departure for the process of mimesis. In a sense, *Shamela* becomes more than *Shamela* itself; it now can be read as an epistolary novel, no longer subservient to the "vartue" of *Shamela* (as well as *Pamela*). One cannot fail to detect a change in Shamela's attitude once entering this vertiginous zone. In the final letter, Shamela recounts the story of a dinner feast:

> After dinner Mr. *Williams* drank the Church *et cetera*; and smiled on me; when my Husband's Turn came, he drank *et cetera* and the Church; for which he was very severely rebuked by Mr. *Williams*; it being a high Crime, it seems, to name any thing before the Church. I do not know what *Et cetera* is, but I believe it is something concerning chusing Pallament Men.... (38)

In contrast to Shamela's display of cunning and cleverness earlier on, now there is a Shamela that is rather innocent and even dull to some extent. Why is it now, after 30

pages of parodic work of *Pamela*, that Fielding intends a different Shamela? As if controlled by ventriloquism, she is now the domesticated Pamela that the anti-Pamela camp fights against. Indeed, one page earlier one sees a sexualized Pamela who is obviously well-versed in the art of seduction, who doesn't even require the mother's instruction. Shamela even reverses the gender power relationship inherent in traditional marriage contract:

> Truly, says I, Sir, I shall live like other Ladies of my Fashion; and if you think, because I was a Servant, that I shall be contented to be governed as you please, I will shew you, you are mistaken (35).

But here at this real long letter, she suddenly realizes her own position as a servant girl of the eighteenth century. No longer the manipulative "saucybox" for Mr. Booby and Mr. Williams, She now knows nothing of politics and can only refer to it as "et cetera." Yet, if one sees these "et ceteras" as part of Fielding's textual scheme of aposiopesis—Shamela refuses to name them and replace the contents by using "et cetera"—one sees the matter in a different light: now that Shamela is out in the open, she does not have to be Pamela's otherness; she in fact enjoys a temporary space of her own, a space of double-entendre, where she can be read differently, much like what Fielding does to *Pamela* by creating *Shamela*. Much to the reader's dismay, now Shamela becomes an excessive signifier, one

that may or may not subscribe to the idea of a *Shamela* as a corrupted copy of *Pamela*. Similarly, the letter cannot be the window to the soul; it becomes a façade that hides, et cetera.

VI

It is clear by now that Shamela as an undecided signifier is quite dangerous. She can be the book that instigates unguarded fervor as in Tickletext's case; she can be the copy that pretends to be the original and eventually subverts it; she can also be the author that is not named (Pamela or Shamela), et cetera. But more importantly, she is the "et cetera" itself, an excess or an addendum that at the same time needs to be repressed (it shall not be named). *Shamela*'s lack of critical attention attests to the fate of such a project of self-denigration. As we transit into another eighteenth-century epistolary, *Julie*, which according to Habermas, provides a "terrain of subjectivity" within which the eighteenth-century "reveled and felt at ease", *Shamela* provides an interesting case of the kind of epistolary endeavor to figure out how its own ontological status, both as a way of self-representation as well as self-understanding.[28] This understanding of the self as an imposter is felt not only in Hume or other eighteenth-century philosophers when they

[28] Habermas, 50.

struggle to sustain the link between self and the substance, but also in Swift whose parodic efforts shatter every claim of origin. *Shamela* therefore severs its own ties with *Pamela* and cancel off its own parasitical status. In this view, Fielding's observation of implicit connection between parody and the excessive nature of the epistolary genre therefore instructs us to read *Shamela* as a way of masquerading the seriousness for lowness, the philosophical for vulgarity, in order to convey the final significance of *Shamela*: only when *Shamela* ceases to mean anything, only when *Shamela* loses its referential powers, then perhaps it can start to reveal an anti-empirical message, however difficult it may be.

"These Letters are no Letters": The Excess of Enlightenment Discourse in Rousseau's *Julie, or the New Heloise*

I

I end the second chapter by suggesting that *Shamela* can be read not just as a parodied work intended for fun; rather it in fact points toward a greater cultural obsession about the ontology of things themselves. In *Shamela*, portraits that are painted are not necessarily of good likeness; authors that present themselves as authentic are frauds; and books that claim to be the real thing never cease to deface and expose themselves. In *Julie*, questions of authenticity and the status of things also have a similar valence in Rousseau's conceptualization of excess and epistolary novels. As I divulge below, the oxymoronic claim "these letters are no letters" becomes a recurrent theme in *Julie* that speaks to Rousseau's idea that excess is just a natural part of reason, and that what seems ostensible often has a surprising underlying message.[1] Unlike Richardson or Fielding who are mostly concerned with the formality of the letter and its implication for the heart, Rousseau uses the letter genre to take on the problematic of the Enlightenment head on, and particularly one of his lifelong obsessions: what is the limit of reason? what is the porous nature of letter

[1] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, Philip Stewart and Jean Vache, Trans. (London: University Press of New England, 1997), 7. All other references to *Julie* will be shown in parenthesis.

and its consequences for understanding the boundaries of the subject in writing? And unlike Goethe's romantic hero Werther, who seeks to transform the contaminating effects of epistolary writing by purifying it down to a single voice, Rousseau's characters are aware of the implications of correspondence and in many ways continue the "shameful traffic" that eighteenth-century morality struggles to curtail.

Because Rousseau straddles the historical movements commonly designated Enlightenment and Romanticism, this is in many ways the central chapter in the dissertation dealing with the Enlightenment rhetoric of reason and its constant foreclosure of excess. But before I go into the analysis of how Rousseau's *Julie* presents a secret desire to naturalize excess, I want to begin with the Prefaces to the novel, which serve to introduce Rousseau's fixation with excess and its discontents. Not surprisingly, one preface would not suffice, and the author's sense that a second preface was necessary already begins to suggest how Rousseau never feels he can achieve a definitive writing.[2]

The second preface consists of a conversation between Rousseau the editor (R) and an unknown reader of *Julie* (N). The whole conversation centers around whether *Julie* is a fictional creation or a real collection of letters. To N's dismay, R never really

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[2] Rousseau's mistrust in writing is well-documented. One may begin with Jacques Derrida's critiques of Rousseau's idea of writing as a "dangerous supplement." Rousseau therefore "valorizes and disqualifies writing at the same time." Please see Derrida's "...That Dangerous Supplement..." in *Of Grammatology* for more details on the Rousseauist prioritization of the speech over the writing. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, ed. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press: 1976), 141-2.

confirms N's suspicion that this is all a fiction. At the same time, N never clearly explains why one feels the need to get determine such things, which R continually questions: "I don't see that it matters. To say whether a Book is good or bad, how does it matter how it came to be written?" (7). At an impasse, N answers his own governing question, concluding that in *Julie*: "these Letters are no Letters; this Novel is no Novel; the characters are people from the other world" (7). N wishes to denounce *Julie* on the ground of its unlikely correspondence to human experiences, such as Julie's nearly impossible moral resolve, or the array of unusual or uncommon characters within the novel. But N's statement is also curious, paradoxical: *Julie* cannot easily be categorized, and if it does attempt to reflect or copy Nature, it does so in a corrupted, nearly impossible fashion. Indeed, when N tells R that "these Letters are no Letters," N is implying that he does not know how to properly assess *Julie*, formally, critically, aesthetically, even perhaps ontologically. It is in N's continuous inquiry about *Julie*'s status that Rousseau casts a shadow over his novel that is not a novel, what I am calling the other of eighteenth-century epistolarity: Rousseau sees a kind of uncategorizable excess as a fundamental part of the Enlightenment, cautioning at the same time about its bewildering effects on its readers.

Even the first preface has already underscored *Julie*'s ambiguous origin: "Have I done the whole thing, and is the entire correspondence a fiction? Worldly people,

what matters it to you? It is surely a fiction for you" (3). In the second preface, R repeats the same gesture and reiterates the insignificance of knowing "how it came to be written" (7). For N, the lack of a conspicuous origin means that *Julie* is an unnatural product, an excess that cannot be properly measured by common sense. Significantly, N uses the analogy between a "portrait" and a "tableau" to argue that Julie is a poor imitation of an "original," whether it is an attempt to capture the essence of a real thing, or to capture the commonality of human experience.[3] N's contention is not groundless, for some readers have found something utopian in its vision, and alienating in its plotting.[4] N sums it up best when he suggests that in *Julie* there is "not a single evil deed; not a single wicked man to make us fear for the good ones" (8). Furthermore, the characterization in *Julie* depicts "neither features nor shape" with a "veil for raiment" (8). In other words, the characters are vague, sometimes unnatural in making the choices and decisions that they have to make and thus further the impression that these characters are "from the other world." Finally, the letters are too "stilted," pompous and passionate, according to N (9). To be sure,

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[3] For N, "a Portrait always has some value provided it is a good likeness, however strange the Original. But in a Tableau based on imagination, each human figure must possess features common to mankind...." (7).

[4] James Jones Jr. suggests, *Julie* reveals "one of the most important and original variations of the eighteenth-century *topos* of utopia" and the "utopian undercurrents" culminate in the final setting of Clarens. James Jones Jr., La Nouvelle Heloise: *Rousseau and Utopia* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1977), 28 and 30. As for the worry about alienating the readers, the Editor does tell us in the First Preface that "should an austere man leafing through this collection be put off by the early parts, throw the book down in anger, and rail at the Editor, I will not complain of his injustice; in his place, I might have done the same" (4).

Julie offers no immediate satisfactions to those who anticipate simple, mannered epistolary satisfactions and leaves readers like N—a surrogate for Rousseau's general reader perhaps—with questions about its posturing, characterizations, and plot development.

N bases his dislike on the ground of the novel's unnaturalness: "If your characters are in nature, admit that their style is not very natural" (9). But N is also very ambiguous about what it is that makes *Julie* unnatural. On the one hand, if *Julie* is a fiction, then it is "so natural" that it is "too much so" (8). On the other hand, if it is a real collection of letters, it is too excessive, too unnatural for contemporary taste and morality. For N, "unnatural" is never a fixed idea, and thus even the most natural quality can uncannily cross over into the "unnatural" if such categorical judgments are never given definition. *Julie* is difficult to assess not because it is indeed unnatural, but because *Julie* is never just a novel or a collection of letters. It is always more or other than what it is.

If this is the case, then N unwittingly reveals a problem about what it means to be natural in the Enlightenment. After all even N, who uses it to protest against Rousseau's novel, cannot properly define it. But even without trying to figure out what is natural or reasonable for N, we can recognize that all of this is a pretense concocted by Rousseau, staging an indeterminacy that will haunt the reception of the

novel, in part by pointing out this "ambiguity" in nature itself. If for N, there is always a chance that something can be "too natural," then for R, it is only natural to acknowledge N's position and claim that "excess" is the fundamental condition of nature: "Who is daring enough to assign exact limits to Nature, and assert: Here is as far as Man can go, and no further?" (7). Such a question is then traceable in the characterizations within the novel, such that Claire is characterized by her "excessive indulgence"; St. Preux is "full of weakness and fine words"; Monsieur Wolmar "sacrifice[es] everything to opinion"; and finally, Milord Edward is "forever driven by wisdom, forever reasoning without reason" (8). R is clearly utilizing a language of extremity to portray these characters and in turn add to the excessive quality of *Julie*.

Furthermore, in terms of the rhetorical devices of *Julie*, R also tries to suggest it is *Julie*'s lack of proper form, or propriety, that makes it moving:

> Read a love letter written by an Author in his study, by a wit trying to shine. If he has at least a little fire in his brain, his letter will, as we say, scorch the paper; the heat will go no farther. You will be charmed, even stirred perhaps; but with a stirring that is fleeting and arid, that will leave you nothing to remember but words. In contrast, a letter really dictated by love; a letter from a truly passionate Lover, will be desultory, diffuse, full of verbose, disconnected, repetitious passages. His heart, filled with an overflowing

> sentiment, ever repeats the same thing, and is never done, like a running spring that flows endlessly and never runs dry. Nothing salient, nothing remarkable; neither the words, nor the turns, nor the sentences are memorable; there is nothing in it to admire or to be struck by. And yet one feels the soul melt; one feels moved without knowing why. The strength of the sentiment may not strike us, but its truth affects us, and that is how one heart can speak to another (10).

R's statement reminds us of Richardson's mimetic process in Clarissa's letters of madness. In a sense, the epistolary genre reaches its full sentimental capacity when it becomes most volatile. Thus, the letters in *Julie* are supposed to be excessive because this is a novel about the inscrutability of love and passion, and the impossibility that reason will subsume them; conversely, because the letter genre provides a greater freedom with its excessive qualities, *Julie* can never be finished, "like a running spring that flows endlessly and never runs dry." Only when the letter becomes "disconnected" and "repetitious" can one feel the genuine quality of the letters in *Julie*. The ability of the Julie letters to move people relies on the reasonableness of unreasonableness and the commonness of its uncommonness. In a sense, R deliberately makes a case for writing an epistolary novel about love because of the implicitly parallel structure between the heart and the letter. Indeed, as R continues,

love is

> but illusion; it fashions for itself, so to speak, another Universe; it surrounds itself with objects that do not exist, or to which it alone has given being; and as it renders all its sentiments by images, its language is always figurative. But such figures lack precision and sequence; its eloquence is in its disorder; it convinces more when it reasons less (10).

By yoking love and letter together, R indirectly suggests that the letters of the novel will often fail in their function to convey propriety and proper feeling, making them somewhat akin to the wasteful figures we saw in chapter one (figures that frequently serve no ostensible function or meaning). They often exceed epistolary norms as they struggle to present something as elusive as love, which partakes of eloquent disorder. According to R, letters can no longer afford the luxury of their own style: "How can you speak of Letters, of epistolary style? When writing to one's beloved, who cares about that! It is no longer Letters one writes, but Hymns" (11). Now, in order to write love, the letter has to be other than itself. It is at once a letter, *and* some other genre, for as we've learned the letter always has room to be more than it is. Thus it can be a hymn, but more generally, it can defy its own style or its own existing rules in order to be even more "letter-like," finally settling only when it is groundless.

A series of questions persist: if N indeed is this reader that Rousseau openly

defies in the first preface, why then are there so many parallels between R and N in the second?[5] Why are they both interested in and perhaps feigning anxiety about the idea of excess, even to the extent of secretly admiring it? Why does N, being the novel's interlocutor, develop such a contentious, if ambiguous, attitude toward R's *Julie*? After all, he is one of the few people that actually finish reading *Julie*:

> N: Here's your manuscript. I have read it all the way through.
>
> R: All the way through? I see: you expect few will do the same?
>
> N: *Vel duo, vel nemo.* (7)

It seems to me that the uncanny resemblance between N and R and the questions resulting from their conversation not only serve to reveal Rousseau's anticipation of readerly critiques, but also achieve another hidden agenda, showcasing the author's dissatisfaction with Enlightenment reason. Indeed, when R tells N that all that exists in love is "figurative," he is making a case against empirical certainty and universality. To be figurative is exactly to be elusive. To take it one step further, if everything is figurative in love, then might we not say that Julie's textual existence in her love letters is figurative too? It is therefore not too difficult to see why N and R are so much alike. If they are the product of a figurative language in the second preface, then they are also similarly elusive. When N says that only a few will finish reading *Julie*,

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[5] The Editor tells us in the First Preface that "should anyone, after reading it all the way through, dare censure me for publishing it; let them proclaim it to the world if he pleases, but let him not come tell me: I feel that I could never in my life have any regard for such a man" (4).

N sounds very much like Rousseau as he would later show up in the opening of his *Confessions*: "I am made unlike any one I have ever met; I will even venture to say that I am like no one in the whole world. I may be no better, but at least I am different."[6]

Both N and R identify themselves as unique, having read through the whole *Julie*. To take this one step further, their similarity reflects the ambiguity of the origin of the author as well as the ambiguity of the existence of the characters within the letters that follow. For instance, toward the end of the second preface, when pressed upon the question of the reality of the characters, R has the following conversation with N:

> R: What does it matter whether they ever existed? In vain would you seek them on the earth. They are no more.
>
> N: They are no more? Then they once were?
>
> ...
>
> N: In faith, it won't do you any good, you will be figured out in spite of yourself. Don't you see that your epigraph alone says it all?
>
> R: I see that it says nothing about the point in question: for who can know whether I found this epigraph in the manuscript, or whether it is I who put it

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[6] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions*, J. M. Cohen, trans. (London: Penguin, 1953) 17. All other references will be in parenthesis.

there? Who can say that I am not in the same doubt as you? (21)[7]

R even goes on to suggest that even when he tries to visit the actual locations detailed in the novel, "nothing" is "similar to the house described in these Letters" (22). Plus, as R's research shows, no local residents claim to know about the name of Monsieur de Wolmar and the Baron d'Etange. Like N, R cannot even be sure of the authenticity of the Julie letters. When discussing the "transpositions of place and errors of Topography" in the letters, R suggests that such mystification exists "either because the Author indeed knew it no better than that, or because his design was to confuse his Readers" (22). While it might be true to suggest that the lack of a clear origin—R claims to be the editor—might help establish a certain emotional distance and prove the letters' authenticity like those in Richardson's epistolary novels, I think more importantly R's refusal to reveal the origin show us Rousseau's playful attitude toward what is considered excessive or outlandish. Unlike the "Rousseau" who is usually associated with the Enlightenment, here we have a Rousseau that tries to think about the playfulness of writing, not just the "dangerous supplements" that writing comes to represent. In a final sleight of hand, Rousseau creates an even more confusing show, as N tells R: "One thing, though, I advise you to transpose our roles. Pretend it is I who am urging you to publish this Collection, and that you are reluctant.

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[7] Rousseau translated two lines from Petrarch's sonnet on the title page: "The World did not know her while she was here:/ I knew her, I who remain alone here to weep." N uses this as evidence of *Julie*'s root in real life.

Give yourself the objections, and me the replies" (22). And just when R seems to be on board, N makes a curious final admission: "No, I was setting a trap for you. Leave things as they are" (22). Now, after coming a full circle, N finally becomes R in a sense, since N *can* be R at any point, their roles can be "transposed." N can as easily be the one who publishes this collection, as the one who writes it, as the one who reads it.

I am tempted to read this as Rousseau's sense of self-effacement within his own writing, something that is commonly staged across his wide array of literary and philosophical texts. While Derrida discusses at length Rousseau's general mistrust of writing and views him as a defender of the idea of "self-presence" in the eighteenth century, the Rousseau of *Julie* reveals a more ambivalent attitude towards writing.[8] By adding the second—seemingly superfluous but finally quite significant—preface, Rousseau anticipates the confusions that will follow in the letter collection proper, but also shows us how excess can be textually pleasurable rather than morally reprehensible. Witness the playful attitude that both N and R adopt toward the end of the preface to demonstrate how both performance and self-effacement are very much at the heart of the Julie letters. Even N urges R to "do more, write down this

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[8] Derrida regards Rousseau as an important figure in the Western logocentrism because Rousseau sees writing as a danger that "threatens" the concept of self-presence. Self-presence as understood by Derrida means an "objectivity takes the form of *representation*, of the *idea* as the modification of a self-present substance, conscious and certain of itself at the moment of its relation to itself." Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 97.

conversation as the sole Preface," recognizing that they are becoming part of the strategies that follow (22). As a result, the second preface also contains for R the desire to replace the first preface and signifies to us the possibility for an endless sequence of addendums that would subvert the order of things.

Rousseau is attempting to rethink the relationship between the letter and the heart: how, if the letter and the heart are inexplicably linked together, can we imagine an epistolary language that can accommodate excess without jeopardizing its genuine quality? What does it mean when the heart is indeed without boundary? How do we think about excessive subjectivity in *Julie* against an Enlightenment framework? What are the differences between Rousseau in *Julie* and Rousseau in his philosophical mode? If excess is indeed undesirable, why does *Julie* become one of the most popular novels in the eighteenth-century? These lingering questions can only be glimpsed in the preface, and I will try to use the Julie letters to suggest that for Rousseau the fixation on excess will be a constant in his writing in dealing with the rhetoric of the Enlightenment.

II

The prefaces to *Julie* suggest that the Julie letters will be read with difficulty due to their excessive nature. They present the reader with certain categorical and

affective difficulties: "This book is not meant to circulate in society, and is suitable for every few readers.... Whom then will it please? Perhaps no one but me: but very certainly it will please no one moderately" (3). R suggests that he would "throw them into the fire" if he "lived in another age" (2). And he openly calls for readers' tolerance of the novel: "he must tell himself in advance that their writers are not French, wits, academicians, philosophers; but provincials, foreigners, solitary youths, almost children, who in their romantic imaginations mistake the honest ravings of their brains for philosophies" (2). For Rousseau, these letters defy expectations, scandalize the propriety of fashionable epistles, and most important of all, are not intended for everyone. In chapter one I noted that when people write letters in the eighteenth century, there was an understanding that their correspondence may be preserved, even printed. When N urges R to admit the possibility of these letters "written to be printed," R refuses to concede this, posing the idea that the Julie letters are of a particular kind, excessively private and notably "genuine" (9). The prefaces continually raise questions about the genuineness of the letter form and the decorum surrounding the processes of correspondence. It is exactly because of such difficulties that N says that "these letters are no letters." Even Rousseau himself "prided himself on having succeeded in sustaining a long narrative '*sans episodes, sans aventure Romanesque, sans mechancete d'aucune espece ni dans les personages, ni dans les*

actions" (qtd. in Fuchs 5). For Rousseau, the value of the Julie letters lies exactly in the idea of being "without," constantly exceeding the expectation of common sense.[9]

Much like N, critics have long been interested in the various interpretive challenges posed by *Julie*. For M. B. Ellis, Rousseau's use of key terms (terms such as "nature" or "reason") in his works is "ambiguous and arbitrary in the extreme," which can result in a dangerously "schizoid character" to the ideas in the author's *Julie*.[10] In another instance, Christie Vance claims that *Julie* is "a work in which one finds interaction between virtually all of Rousseau's major preoccupations," making it therefore hard to unify opposite views existing in Rousseau.[11] She also raises affective issues regarding the apparent conflicts within *Julie*, such as how passionate love can be compatible with the social demands. Regarding the characters in the novel, Maurice Funke has suggested that "Rousseau was well aware of his inability to resolve the conflict...between the desires and frustrations of the hidden personality and the virtuous performance of the public figure."[12] Therefore, "Julie's life ends in both triumph and defeat."[13] Examples of Rousseau's polarized and conflicted stances

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9 Philip Stewart claims that "Julie sets out from the start to shock expectations." Philip Stewart, *Half-Told Tales: Dilemmas of Meaning in Three French Novels* (Chapel Hill: University of North Caronlina Press, 1987), 123.

10 M. B. Ellis, Julie or La Nouvelle Heloise: *A Synthesis of Rousseau's Thought (1749-1959)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1949), viii.

11 Christie McDonald Vance, *The Extravagant Shepherd: a Study of the Pastoral Vision in Rousseau's* Nouvelle Heloise (England: Cheney & Sons LTD, 1973), 9.

12 Maurice R. Funke, From *Saint to Psychotic: The Crisis of Human Identity in the Late 18th Century* (New York: Peter Lang, 1983), 204.

13 Funke, 205.

seem too many to name. Julie's final revelation that she is still in love with St. Preux, for example, contradicts the reformed Julie that emerges in the latter half of the novel. The Julie-St. Preux correspondence, which Julie calls the "shameful traffic," spins out of control and becomes the necessary condition upon which the whole narrative hinges. Perhaps the most influential analysis appears in Paul De Man's *Allegories of Reading* where he notices that "serious attempts to come to terms with the structure and diction of *Julie* have always tended towards a bi-polar, pseudo-dialectical reading, the main issue being the definition of the poles that set up the tension of the textual field."[14] All these polarities themselves stem from a certain "referential indeterminacy" and therefore result in ambiguous, even confounding readings.

"That *Julie* is ultimately ambiguous is not a new idea," writes Philip Stewart in *Half-Told Tales*, and this has a lot to do with "the persistent contradictions of its author."[15] Stewart therefore focuses on how the Julie letters create their own ambiguities by assigning different valences to different textual emphases, such as "chastity", "love" or "duty." But perhaps a middle ground can be reached, that is, Rousseau's ambiguous treatment of *Julie* can be seen in his ambivalent attitude toward excess, a life-long obsession that is so often reflected in his works, be they political, biographical, or literary. Because excess represents something unstable,

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[14] Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 190.
[15] Stewart, 116.

Rousseau has to constantly get around it in order to consolidate his philosophical system. But especially in *Julie*, such avoidance tends to be futile, creating the wavering attitude between the two extremes. Indeed, as de Man suggests, for Rousseau "suspended meaning is not for him, disinterested play, but always a threat or a challenge."[16] The ambiguity and indeterminacy offered by Rousseau in the Second Preface can therefore be seen as symptomatic of what is to come in terms of excess in *Julie*. In fact, in *Julie*, the reader constantly experiences questions regarding authenticity and veracity: is the letter that I am reading here different from any other letters? Is this a true letter in the sense that it is written from the heart? Even if this is a genuine letter, why is it that I still have a feeling that there is something suspicious about the letter itself? Even the letter writers in *Julie* are aware of these problems, often stopping to comment on them. For example, in the second half the novel when Julie suggests to Monsieur de Wolmar that she would include him as her confidant when St. Preux comes to visit them, she says she would "hold no private interview that would not be reported to him, and to write no letter he would not be shown" (354). More importantly, she would even "oblige" herself "to write each Letter as if he were not to see it, and then to show it to him" (354). That Julie would "oblige" herself to write a faithful letter to St. Preux tells us the inherent difficulty in producing a letter

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[16] De Man, 208.

that is not artful. Indeed, as Monsieur de Wolmar explains why he refuses to read such letters from Julie, he asserts that

> although you never say anything between you that you would not like to inform me of, take care not to make a rule of it, lest such duty becomes a constraint, and expressing your intimate thoughts be less easy as the audience for them is extended (354).

To write epistolary novels is to "extend" the "audience" and each writer's letter is never innocently motivated. After all, as Wolmar tells Julie, "the presence of any witness at all holds back the out-pouring of friendship" (354). Moreover, to write a genuine letter is to reveal its own secrecy thoroughly, a kind of self-reflexive moment where its self-presence is established. Wolmar indicates to us that such a moment is only possible when two people are close to each other and in this case, writing letters to each other without the interruptions of others: "there are a thousand secrets that three friends need to know and can only tell each other by twos" (354). Wolmar is lamenting that the possibility of a genuine feeling—the "out-pouring" of friendship or the exhausting of secrets—can only occur when two friends are at their closest. At the same time, the audience is always extended and one's secrets are "a thousand," not "by twos." In other words, the letter is excessive even if it is written out of a genuine intent.

Through the ambiguity of the *Julie* letters, we can start to see how the epistolary genre not only provides a greater freedom for the letter writer to touch upon issues of self-identity but also tests the limit of the Enlightenment rhetoric of reason. While the Julie letters are not a direct revelation of Rousseau's thoughts on excess—unlike his philosophical works or autobiographical writings, he rarely says anything about "excess" specifically—they serve an even better purpose for Rousseau, as everything is scattered among the different narrators in the epistolary novel. The prefaces have taught us that excess may only be something to be hinted at, and Rousseau's fixation with excess is something that needs to be recognized but cannot fully be named: this is the condition of production in *Julie*. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to explaining how for Rousseau the idea of excess is not just a simple matter of othering the Enlightenment, but is a latent desire in the novel itself.

III

But how does Rousseau dwell on excess without making it explicit? How can he be promoting Enlightenment ideals while secretly admiring the idea of excess? So far we have seen that Rousseau deliberately obscures any attempts to define what is excess or letter's excess. In the following sections, I propose looking at excess through the lens of its relationship with Enlightenment discourses of reason, universality, and subjectivity. Eventually I would like to offer an explanation as to

why excess becomes an underlying theme in Rousseau's work, even if it proves to be contradictory and even destabilizing to his thought system.

Perhaps we can start with how the Enlightenment is never just a project of reason but a project that hinges on testing its own limits. Indeed, if Foucault's formulation of the Enlightenment subject holds true, then one would always feel uncertain about being's ontological status. Commenting on Kant's "What is Enlightenment?", Foucault makes the case that

> it seems to me that Kant's reflection [on the Enlightenment] is even a way of philosophizing that has not been without its importance or effectiveness during the last two centuries. The critical ontology of ourselves has to ... be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them (49-50).

For Foucault, the ultimate lesson of the Enlightenment is perhaps a sober realization that one's identity is based on its own demise and that eventually the "imposed" limits only presuppose the "possibility of going beyond them." Jürgen Habermas shares the same concern. Although Habermas constantly defends the Enlightenment by critiquing Foucault's idea of a hegemonic Enlightenment, a process "understood as an unmasking reversal of the self-idolizing that subjectivity carries on and at the same

time conceals from itself," he nonetheless agrees on this point with Foucault (308). In his *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Habermas proposes to view the Enlightenment spirit in light of its advocacy of a community based on communicative subjects.[17] Indeed, that is not too far away from Kant's idea that "the public use of reason must at all times be free, and it alone can bring about enlightenment among men" (59). For Habermas, the Enlightenment is always about communication and the free exchange of opinions, and therefore entails what he calls a "non-subject-centered reason."[18] In other words, the subject utilizes reason while at the same time admits that one's opinion hinges upon other's as well, a condition similar to the postmodern de-centered subject yet with possibility of agency. For him, a non-subject-centered reason relies on one's ability to

> realize that their discourse is never definitively "purified" of the motives and compulsions that have been filtered out. As little as [one] can do without the supposition of a purified discourse, [one has] equally to make do with "unpurified" discourse.[19]

Like Foucault's enlightened subject that constantly needs to go beyond the limits of reason, now Habermas's subject has to presuppose the possibility of an unpurified

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[17] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Frederick Lawrence, Trans. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990).

[18] Habermas, 294.

[19] Habermas, 323.

discourse embedded in one's pursuit of purified discourse, very much like Wolmar's proposition that every letter contains within itself secrets that are not revealed. The result is a not only a communicative subject but also an excessive one, constantly bordering on the limit of truth and reason.

If excess is such a destabilizing force, it naturally incurs the attacks of reason. In this sense, excess is similar to Derrida's idea of supplementarity, which compensates the loss of presence yet comes to be marginalized. As he analyzes Rousseau's philosophy of language in his *Of Grammatology*, he comments that supplements are that which

> transgress a prohibition and are experience as culpability. But, by economy of difference, they confirm the interdict they transgress, get around a danger, and reserve an expenditure. In spite of them but also thanks to them, we are authorized to see the sun, to deserve the light that keeps us on the surface of the mine.[20]

Indeed, the Enlightenment's overemphasis on reason and self-presence would suggest a tension with excess since excess represents that which is beyond reason, testing the realm of the unknown and danger. Derrida's idea of différance also tells a similar tale. In analyzing the problem of western logocentrism, he proposes to use the word

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[20] Derrida, 165.

différance as a way of critiquing reason's transcendental status, which ironically puts reason at once at the center of meaning and its guiding principle (therefore transcending the meaning). As an invented word, "différance" shares the same pronunciation with "difference" in French. It recalls a time when the word "difference" finally came to mean two things at the same time, i.e. to differ and to defer, whose otherwise different histories can only be yoked together because of a certain metonymic process. Yet, différance's ambivalence and potential transgression (after all they share the same pronunciation) also becomes that which needs to be contained or obliterated. Indeed, it becomes a non word, a kind of gerund, always in the process of becoming only to find itself fall short again. Excess, in this sense, comes to figure that which undermines reason and also becomes marginalized in the process.

I would propose, however, a third model to examine excess, that excess's predominant presence in eighteenth-century literature suggests a more vital sign of ambivalence. Using Freud's psychoanalytic notion of the uncanny, one can start to see why excess becomes the site of considerable fixation in the Enlightenment cultural logic.[21] For Freud, the word canny (in German, heimlich) comes to mean its opposite uncanny (unheimlich) through a metonymic process. Looking into German

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[21] Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," *The Uncanny*, translated by David McLintock (London: Penguin, 2003)

dictionaries, he found that canny (homely) comes to mean that which belongs to the home and something familiar, and then came to mean a private space, and eventually secrets only known to the family. It eventually drifts away to mean something unknown, and therefore unfamiliar and unhomely. Freud suggests therefore that the idea of the uncanny not only is associated with an aesthetic experience of horror, but also describes the condition in which what is supposed to be repressed or covered up nonetheless comes to be revealed.

What Freud hints at is that the uncanny becomes the site of fixation exactly because of its familiarity and its homeliness. In that sense, excess is already something that can be found in the rational discourse of the Enlightenment. If one believes in the power of science and the capacity of the human being as a knowing subject, then every process of producing knowledge is already a kind of mental creation. After all, as Freud suggests, one is never too far away from the childhood one once experienced, a period in which everything is one's own desire or serves as an extension of one's desire. Yet to know is also to set up a boundary and to be able to define a space, and therefore one ends up repeating the uncanny processes, in which one finds oneself in a vertiginous zone of bewilderment. What Freud seems to suggest then is that in submitting to the power of reason, one also in turn idolizes excess, its double that one was once familiar with.

IV

Perhaps one can begin with Rousseau's belief in reason (and therefore self-presence) and the human capacity to produce self-knowledge.[22] For Rousseau, the possibility to use reason as the guiding principle relies exactly on its affinity with the self. As Derrida points out in *Of Grammatology*, following the traditional western logocentrism, Rousseau prefers speech over writing in that writing is less immediate than speech, and therefore belongs to the realm of exteriority. Writing, by supplementing speech, becomes an excess, potentially causing confusion and therefore needing to be perfected. Indeed, in several junctures of his *Confessions*, he stresses the fact that he cannot write or he needs more time to perfect his writing. Having confessed that he cannot write immediately because of his "passionate temperament" (113), he has to offer his "blotted, scratched, confused, illegible manuscripts" as evidence for his inability to write (113). Writing thus presents a challenge to him, and indeed becomes something he needs to conquer in order to be an author. Similarly, he attributes his inability to talk in public to his passion, as he states, "in my anxiety to fulfill my obligations as quickly as possible I hastily gabble a few ill-considered words, and am only too glad if they mean nothing at all" (115).

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[22] If one treats reason as the guiding principle of self-knowledge, then reason is the result of the state of self-presence. For further analysis, see Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, 97 – 100.

Being in a conversational setting, Rousseau has to make immediate responses, and therefore his speech becomes fragmentary, much like his fragmented writing. Plagued by broken down language, Rousseau finds obstacles to his self-presence, the possibility of self-identity. One can see clearly in these two examples that whenever Rousseau pairs two things together, he always prioritizes self-presence, that which comes closer to the logos, to the self. In other words, he believes in the power of subject's ability to create a clear identity as long as he is able to control excess.[23]

Rousseau's prioritizing of the logos has its own problems as well. Already Rousseau's self-presence depends on the excess it marginalizes. Using the intermission of the Italian opera as a metaphor for writing, he suggests that in order to get to true writing, one has to endure "all the long tumult" in between acts, and then "little by little everything falls into place," "nothing is missing," and there appears "a delightful spectacle" (113). He concludes that, "this is almost exactly the process that takes place in my brain when I want to write" (113). For Rousseau, writing becomes excessive because it is powered by passion; whereas true writing is a kind of mental writing, being closer to one's true self and therefore with the chance of reflection (another sign of self-presence). At the end, "nothing is missing" because of his belief

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[23] Jeanne Fuchs also suggests that the desire for Rousseau to "go back to something simple or natural, can be interpreted as a manifestation of his deeper urge to go into himself and to strip away the denatured, corrupt veneer which has hidden his true self." Jeanne Thomas Fuchs, *The Pursuit of Virtue: A Study of Order in* La Nouvelle Heloise (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 11

in the ability of reflection. Reason, in this case, already is self-divisive, given the fact that true writing has to be distinguished from all other writing, the kinds of writing fragment because of the lack of reflection. Furthermore, Rousseau's image of the opera hinges on the image of the intermission. It is exactly because of these "dangerous supplements," as Derrida calls them, that Rousseau is able to form his true writing (141). Realizing potential contradictions, he continues to state that

> it is only on my walks, among the rocks and trees, it is at night in my bed when I lie awake, that I compose in my head; you can imagine how slowly, for I am completely without verbal memory and have never been able to memorize half a dozen verses in my life. Some of my paragraphs I have shaped and reshaped mentally for five or six nights before they were fit to be put down on paper (114).

His intermission now no longer consists of "blotted and scratched" writings as he called them earlier, since he is not relying on "verbal memory"; instead, it would be a kind of graphic writing. Rousseau sidesteps the question of verbal memory—another kind of false writing—in order to confirm his self-presence, e.g. the ability to use "imagination" to authorize the self. Imagination therefore supplies the memory. Yet, for Rousseau, imagination and feeling are interchangeable, as he suggests that he "has only one faithful guide on which I can count; the succession of feelings which have marked the development of my being, and thereby recall the events that have acted

upon it as cause or effect" (262). Now Rousseau's memory depends on his ability to feel. If one recalls earlier when Rousseau discussed his inability to write, it is exactly because feelings "bring no illumination" (113). He continues, "I feel everything but I see nothing" (113). Feeling is not true seeing, therefore it cannot provide him with a good graphic memory so as to finally make up true writing. Rousseau's true writing, or in this case, any writing, can be possible only if he is able to renounce it as writing at the same time, forming a self-divisive excess.

This tension between the heart and the letter, between the interiority and the exteriority, is played out in *Julie* fairly early on. In the second Preface, N has already shown his mistrust of these letters. They are not only self-involved and self-interested but often display a skewed sense of reality. The letters in this sense become the "false writings" that Rousseau so frequently tries to avoid. For Rousseau, *Julie* becomes a contested arena where different claims about the validity of letter writing clash.[24] Sometimes letters are stolen, enclosed, and fragmented so that they are no longer the window to one's soul but a sort of deviation from self-presence.[25] Some letters are

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[24] De Man, for example, suggests that even "Julie is unable to read her own texts" in the sense that *Julie* can be seen as an "allegory of unreadability." De Man, 217.

[25] The editor of the Julie letters has indicated on several footnotes that these letters are always in danger of or subject to change and interpolation. Regarding St. Preux's letters that describe the Parisian social scenes, the Editor makes it clear that "without anticipating the Reader's Judgement and Julie's about these narrations, I think I can say that if I had to make them and did not make them different. On several occasions I have been on the verge of removing them and substituting some of my own; ultimately I am leaving them in, and pride myself on my courage" (190).

repeated or complemented so that the same event can be recounted several times.[26] Other letters will be reread and re-commented, and readers will derive from them different readings and opinions. Finally, letter-writers in *Julie* constantly instruct their readers (who are frequently letter-writers themselves) how to "properly" read their particular letters, as well as letters in general. When St. Preux is forced to leave for Paris, he produces a letter that is very much like Clarissa's mad letter. Julie picks up the dramatic parallel quickly and criticizes St. Preux for staging his own madness: "No, my respectable friend, it is not you I recognize in this *effeminate* letter which I want to forget forever and already consider you to have disavowed" (emphasis mine; 174).[27] Julie understands what it means to produce a fragmented letter, which clearly violates the propriety of the letter (as I have discussed in Chapter 1). More importantly, Julie is able to see through the epistolary façade to know how letter-writing can be manipulated to create a certain expected readerly response. She herself knows only too well that letter-writing is never just the writing of the heart according to the dictates of propriety. Julie sees the letter as the site of

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[26] The end of Part One and the beginning of Part Two recount how St. Preux and Edward leave Julie. Claire, Edward, and St. Preux all write long letters regarding similar events.

[27] Katherine Ann Jensen suggests that there is a social ideal of "epistolary woman" created in the late seventeenth-century France. It seeks to "moderate women's discursive power by defining women as natural writers of letters." "Her allegedly natural affinity for writing love bound women who emulated her to a single and 'nonliterary' genre—the love letter—which further limited them to a self-defeating heterosexual plot of seduction and betrayal." In this sense, for St. Preux to occupy the position of the epistolary woman when he is forced to leave Julie means that he is meticulously exploiting the existing epistolary role so as to plead his case. Julie understands these implications as seen in *Clarissa* as well as in *Lettres portugaises*, and therefore points out St. Preux's effeminacy. For more details, please see the Preface of Jensen's *Writing Love*. Katherine Ann Jensen, *Writing Love: Letters, Women, and the Novel in France, 1605-1776* (Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1995), 5and 3.

self-empowerment, viewing herself the equal of her correspondents. Letter-writing in this sense is personal and self-motivated, and anyone else who enters this private space would be considered an outsider. Julie discourages St. Preux from using letters to flatter her: "Take it from me, do not take it upon yourself to tell me the truth about myself, you would do too poor a job" (105).

From a structural level, one can clearly see that writing is as much a source of self-knowledge as it is the communication between different parties: after all, there are no letters written between St. Preux's maritime departure and his eventual return to see Julie, whereas only when St. Preux and Julie are closest to each other do they write most of their letters to each other. So on the one hand, Julie, Claire, and St. Preux subvert the epistolary purposes of communication by writing extensively about themselves repeatedly, letter after letter.[28] The act of letter-writing becomes the cornerstone of *Julie*, and Julie. On the other hand, letter-writing becomes the source of deviation (Wolmar's idea of letter's secrecy) and temptation, as the love story does begin with St. Preux's initial attempt to seduce his young student.[29] In this case, every letter could potentially possess the corrupting power to alienate the narrators from

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[28] De Man, 212 and 213.

[29] Janet Altman suggests that this continuation of epistolary linkage is essential to epistolary novels, especially the section ones. These letters are "instrument of destiny," and the "very continuation of their correspondence reflects the fatality of their passion." On seduction plots in letter novels such as *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, she notices an "apparent determinism operating." For her, "the more confidential and secret the relationship between the writers, the more dangerous and necessary the maintenance of their tie becomes" and even result in a "fatal" ending. She also mentions that "secrets, particularly in *La Nouvelle Heloise*, are often fatal." Janet Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), 61-2.

themselves.

In Part III, Julie recounts the initial correspondence with St. Preux, and comes to the conclusion,

> instead of throwing your first letter into the fire, or taking it to my mother, I made so bold as to open it. I meant to refrain from answering these fatal letters which I could not refrain from reading. That frightful struggle impaired my health. I saw the chasm into which I was about to plunge (281).

The love letters are fatal not just because they are passionate and therefore potentially dangerous to one's reason, but because once letter writing begins, it only begets more letters. Early on, Julie confesses to St. Preux that

> Had you in your lessons bent philosophy to your aims, had you tried to establish maxims favorable to your interests, then in attempting to deceive me you would soon have undeceived me; but the most dangerous of your seduction is to use none (50).

From the outset, Julie tells St. Preux that it is his innocence and the purity of his love that makes her drop her guard. As the reader knows from St. Preux's love letters, he never just "use[s] none" and in fact meticulously calculates the effect of his love letters. That Julie unconsciously overlooks St. Preux's letters suggests that in

eighteenth-century sentimental registers, people often regard the letter as an equivalent of the heart. But more importantly, St. Preux's letters seduce when they are most lacking in rhetorical embellishment and sometimes literally without a physical presence—"use none." Like Edger Allen Poe's purloined letter, under their innocent façade letters continue to be a destabilizing force, confounding the eye and heart. This corruptible and destabilizing force of the letter is even more obvious in the central episode in Part III (the "Inoculation of Love" scene as the Fifth engraving suggests) where St. Preux deliberately contracts smallpox from Julie despite knowing the danger. Claire recounts the episode to Julie later on in another letter:

> Unable to heal your disease, he meant to share it. Remembering the way he kissed your hand, I cannot doubt that he inoculated himself deliberately (274).

Love is seen as an act of contamination and contagion, just like their correspondence is a "shameful traffic" that both Julie and St. Preux blame themselves for (299). Once it starts, it cannot be stopped, even if their correspondence/love is seen as dangerous. Julie says it best when she suggests that if St. Preux is "less dear" to her, she would make the letter "shorter" (300). Julie implicitly points out the letter as a substitute of love or passion would share the same kind of seductive power.[30]

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[30] De Man talks extensively about how *Julie* can be seen as a novel where referential power of passion and love becomes so excessive that it also resists a proper reading. See page 198 for more details.

The whole episode ends with Julie's rejection of St. Preux. The idea that the letter is somehow seen as corrupted excess is further employed by Julie when she writes a letter demanding St. Preux to stop his letters. She writes,

> despite the security of my heart, I no longer wish to be judge of my own cause, nor as wife succumb to the same overconfidence that was my undoing as maiden. This is the letter you shall receive from me. I beg you also to write me no more. Yet as I shall never cease to take the tenderest interest in you and since this sentiment is as pure as the light of day, I will be most pleased to have news of you betimes (309).

For Julie, the heart can be secure and contains the purest sentiment, yet the letter as the heart's content is always dangerous and corruptible. Only when the letter ceases to be the heart's content—"I will be most pleased to have news of you betimes"—is St. Preux allowed to write. The letter is therefore seen as the extension of the self, always risking deviation from self-presence. Yet despite all this discussion of the letter as a dangerous sign, Rousseau's letter-writers continue to revel in the letters they write and the secrets they possess and exchange, as if epistolarity can take on life of its own.[31] Even when Monsieur Wolmar and Julie are married after Part IV, Julie still insists on writing to him.

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[31] Indeed, the plots of both halves of *Julie* depend on two secrets: Julie and St. Preux have to leave each other because of their correspondence is recovered, and the second half begins with Julie laments about the guilt she feels regarding St. Preux.

While letters in *Julie* do secure a sense of the self, their seductive quality always threatens to jeopardize its boundaries. Just by looking at the correspondence between Julie and St. Preux one cannot help but wonder how their letters come to resemble each other, even to the extent of being indistinguishable from one another. When learning about the fate of their love, both utilize the same dramatic effect of the fragmented letter: Part Two begins with a fragmented letter from St. Preux when he is forced to leave and ends with Julie's nervous scribbles about the loss of St. Preux's correspondence (160, 251). Both St. Preux and Julie assume the double role of the mentor and the mentee, and they instruct each other as well as being instructed on how to read their correspondence. It is quite notable in *Julie* that letter-writers often utilize and share the same sentiments and the same rhetoric devices over and over again. Julie, for example, accuses St. Preux's Paris letters for being too embellished:

> Pray tell me, my friend, in what language or rather in what jargon in the narration in your latest Letter? Might it not by chance be an instance of wit? If your design is to use it with me often, you really should send me the dictionary. What, pray, is the sentiment of a man's attire? A soul dons like a livery? Maxims measured by the fathom? What do you expect a poor Swiss woman to understand by these sublime figures? (195)

St. Preux's epistolary descriptions of Parisian scenes demonstrate his cultural

knowledge but not his pure sentiments—they are not out of his heart. Therefore Julie is mocking him for making pompous claims that an innocent girl in the countryside like her cannot comprehend. More importantly, this recalls the earlier letter where she instructs St. Preux on the seductive power of his plainer letters (50). St. Preux then reveals his understanding of Julie's epistolary instruction, and in turn teaches her how to read his letter:

> All right, my Julie, scold me, quarrel with me, beat me; I will bear it all, but I shall continue to tell you what I think. Who shall be the custodian of my sentiments, if it is not you who enlightens them, and with whom would my heart consent to speak, if you refused to hear it? When I give you an account of my observations and judgments, that is you will correct them, not so you will approve them, and the more errors I may commit, the more I must hasten to tell you about them. If I find fault with the disorders that strike me in this great city, I shall not apologize on the pretext I am speaking to you in confidence; for I never say anything about a third party that I am not prepared to say to his face, and in everything I write you about the Parisians, I am merely repeating what I say to their faces everyday (215).

St. Preux enjoys the reversal of the mentor and mentee dynamic as he repeats the same rhetoric over and over again (see also 105). At the same time, he reverses

Julie's comment on his pompous style and suggests that there is not much difference between Julie's and his own letters: both can be read as having double meanings and what is deemed innocence can be considered pompous to a trained eye. That is why later on Claire (Now Madame d'Orbe) can scold Julie for being "pompous" too (332).[32] Imitating St. Preux and Julie's earlier fragmented epistolary style, now Claire attempts to teach Julie how to read her own letter:

> My goodness, Cousin, what pleasure your letter gave me! The charming preacher! .... charming in truth. But preacher all the same. Splendid *orations*: almost nothing about works. The Athenian architect!.... that fancy talker!.... you know... in your old Plutarch.... Pompous descriptions, a superb temple!.... after he has finished talking, the other one comes forth; a plain man; of simple appearance, grave and poised... like your Cousin Claire, for instance.... In a feeble, slow, and even slightly nasal voice.... *What he has said, I will do*. He stops, and all applaud! Exit the phrase-monger. My child, we are these two *Architects*; the temple in question is that of friendship (emphasis mine; 332-3).

While Claire uses this to talk about their friendship, she is also commenting on their writing styles, one pompous and the other plain. But she also cautions Julie that her

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[32] It can also be noted that Claire acts neutrally during most of the first half of the love story but suddenly changes her attitude toward Julie. She now takes on an assertive role and even at times reminds Julie of her hypocrisy when they are younger.

sincerity can very well be artificial. Claire's is a self-reflexive moment, for she is thinking not just about their contrasting epistolary styles but also deliberating on the "production" of letters in general, the architecture of that epistolary world. In some sense Claire's letter complements Julie's because Claire's letters serve to tease out the "hidden" meanings in Julie's letter (just as we need Julie's letters to read St. Preux's). Moreover, Claire's mocking letter calls attention to how epistolary boundaries—and the selves that are constructed therein—are gradually eroding. The textured world of *Julie* requires readerly vigilance when it comes to who is writing whom, and who is reading what. A lot of letters in *Julie* are simply titled as "Reply" or "To [whom]" or "From [whom]" as a deliberate play on the uncertain state of the addressers and addressees. In other words, not only might letter-writing lead to the possibility of losing oneself, but if you cannot tell the addresser from the addressee, and the imitator from the imitated, how can you recognize the imposter? While for Rousseau the ability to tell the pure from the corrupted is critical in the love affair between Julie and St. Preux, there is also this other side of Rousseau that secretly enjoys this ambivalent picture of epistolary excess.

V

The blurred distinction between the original and imposter, between author and

reader, and eventually between all the characters in his novel, is made increasingly conspicuous. If reason is the overarching emphasis of the Enlightenment, then it is also reason that needs to constantly incorporate the Other.[33] In other words, it is not enough to be within reason's confines; in fact, despite all the talks of reason's reasonableness, the Enlightenment often goes beyond itself and attempts to include "everything".[34] Indeed, one of the objectives of Rousseau's confessional project is to include everything so as to be able to reach the limit of himself, or as he puts it:

> Since I have undertaken to reveal myself absolutely to the public, nothing about me must remain hidden or obscure. I must remain incessantly beneath his gaze, so that he may follow me in all the *extravagances* of my heart and into every least corner of my life (65; emphasis mine).[35]

Already readers of his *Confessions* feel the same kind of the tension between excess and reason as is prevalent in his *Julie*. Indeed, if *Julie* provides a rational account of

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[33] One of Habermas's contentions against postmodern critiques is their unfair assessment of the subject's ability to rationally critique oneself. If the postmodern critique of the Enlightenment always points out reason's inability to facilitate its other, then through using non-subject-centered reason, one is able to ensure a possible civil community. Ironically, if the Enlightenment project relies on its ability to assume otherness, it in turn suggests another kind of excess, a kind of paranoid economy in which one is at once oneself and its other. As one can see, Foucault's enlightened subject always tests reason's limit and therefore risks going beyond.

[34] It is no surprise that the eighteenth century sees the flourish of encyclopedias. Elizabeth J. MacArthur, *Extravagant Narratives: Closure and Dynamics in the Epistolary Form* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 19960), 20-22.

[35] This "investigative spirit" in the Enlightenment, particularly in the forms of eighteenth-century encyclopedias, dictionaries, and letters, "presents multiple perspectives and internal commentary, putting into question the possibility of objective truth or stable authority." See Elizabeth MacArthur's *Extravagant Narratives*, 19-22, for more details.

the heart, it is also most reasonable when the heart is at its utmost *extravagant* state.[36] In the *Confessions*, excess becomes that which propels him to continue to write: after all, without "all the extravagances" of his heart, he would have nothing that "remain[s] hidden or obscure." In this sense, the *Confessions* as an encyclopedic project of self paradoxically relies both on his heart ("every least corner of his life") and on its "extravagances," something that constantly eludes every corner, or something that figures itself as a kind of bad writing in excess of himself. Rousseau's *Confessions* thus demands the public's (or his readers') incessant "gaze," which he turns inwardly onto himself; or better yet, he projects himself into the mind of the others as a way of completing his encyclopedia project. Rousseau has to go beyond the limit, repeatedly begging the reader to "suspend" one's "judgment" till the reader has "read" him "to the end" (261), suggesting that he will continue to write only to guarantee his authorial grip and fulfill his project. In a sense, Rousseau's encyclopedic project of himself is also a project of his excessive identity because he has to continue to write to prove to readers that he has told them everything; or, as he later states, "I am repeating myself, and I know it; but it is necessary" (386). He is, as we can see, at

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[36] We may recall that in the second preface, R suggests that a love letter is most "reasonable" when it is at its most excessive situations: "In contrast, a letter really dictated by love; a letter from a truly passionate Lover, will be desultory, diffuse, full of verbose, disconnected, repetitious passages. His heart, filled with an overflowing sentiment, ever repeats the same thing, and is never done, like a running spring that flows endlessly and never runs dry. Nothing salient, nothing remarkable; neither the words, nor the turns, nor the sentences are memorable; there is nothing in it to admire or to be struck by. And yet one feels the soul melt; one feels moved without knowing why. The strength of the sentiment may not strike us, but its truth affects us, and that is how one heart can speak to another" (10).

once inside within the recesses of his mind, and outside among the public.

If we were to borrow Freud's idea of paranoia, we might suggest that while Rousseau's *Confessions* wishes to explore himself to infinity, he also finds himself inextricably bound up with others, be they the public or his readers. For Freud, paranoia often reveals itself in the form of "projection into another one": "I do not *love* him" will be turned into "I *hate* him" and by projection turned into "He *hates* (persecutes) me."[37] What is worth exploring further is that for Freud subjects can freely replace each other in the case of paranoia. Therefore it is not just a simple matter of internalizing others (the author of course is always worried about what others see in him and his work), but a matter of the breakdown of subjectivity (everyone is in me and, vice versa, I am in everyone). Rousseau, in this case, not only shows his anxiety over his authorial intention, but also reveals the fact that there is always a strange feeling that somehow he might not be himself, and that what he says or writes may not always provide an authentic account of himself. If Freud's paranoia produces symptoms of feeling disoriented and uncertain, then Rousseau constantly reminds us of his uneasy relationship with himself: on the one hand, there might

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[37] Sigmund Freud, *Three Case Histories*, Philip Rieff, ed, (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 139. Accompany this is Rousseau's constant self-defeating apology: in order to ensure his authority, he has to repeatedly plead his innocence in representing himself despite his own suffering: "I am laying myself sufficiently open to human malice by telling my story, without rendering myself more vulnerable by any silence" (65). Breaking away from the traditional confessional genre in which one's life story serves didactic purposes, Rousseau seems to partially understand that to write is also to lose one's identity in the reader/author relationship – the Foucauldian lesson that the Enlightenment is entails a sober realization that one's identity is based on its own demise.

always be a part of him, the "extravagances of his heart," that elude him, and it becomes the source of anxiety as exemplified in the paranoia economy of his *Confessions*. Conversely, if he is defined by the "extravagances of his heart" then his identity is also excessive, always encompassing everything, like his encyclopedia project attempts to achieve.

A more full-blown parallel can be seen in his *Julie* since it involves not only the letter, but also more diverse narrative voices. In fact, it is not uncommon for epistolary narrators to feel paranoid or to be involved in some sort of paranoiac dynamic with his or her correspondents. For example, Pamela constantly worries about her letters' status; and she has every right to do so since her letters are actually stolen and read without her awareness.[38] Despite her realization of her letters' ill-fate, she continues to write in various forms, suggesting that paranoia in letters need not be seen as crippling the pen.[39] As I have tried to show in Chapter 1, while Richardson tries to render the truth of the heart through manipulation of epistolary print, he ironically creates a Pamela whose heart lies not inside the interior of the letter but often outside in its margins. Rousseau's encyclopedic project of himself also ironically relies on the outside. In *Julie*, while Rousseau's letters lack the kind of

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[38] "Plot" in *Pamela*. Even after she realizes her letters are stolen, she continues to write her letters for writing's sake. That characters in *Pamela* like to be "read" should be read as a symptom of this paranoia.

[39] It is no wonder that Thomas Pynchon's *Crying of Lot 49*, a modern classic on paranoia, centers itself around the secret sign of Thurn and Taxis, a German princely house that was in charge of the postal service in Europe during the sixteenth century.

editorial manipulation—e.g. Richardson himself is a printer of his own novels—they do concern themselves very much with the authenticity of subjectivity and often cast doubt on the validity of such an over-confident position that the Enlightenment so often endorses.

In *Julie*, such suspicion of one's control over one's own words and selves is shown throughout. Letter writers take turns revealing how their letters are never just a product of themselves and how often their feelings are often created from without. After all, as I have shown earlier, for R, love is figurative, and figures and characters in love letters are doubly so. Letter writers extend, retract, and traverse the confines of their epistolary selves. In the earlier quote that I use when St. Preux pleads Julie to be his "custodian of his sentiments," St. Preux does not just talk about how Julie should "enlighten" him and his sentiments; in fact, he is using this occasion to demonstrate how he and Julie are always bound up together once they are entwined in their letter correspondence.[40] If Julie safeguards and monitors St. Preux's feeling, she does so by becoming one with St. Preux: "I am, I confess, no longer my own, my alienated soul is entirely in you.... O Julie, conceal nothing from your own self" (83). While St.

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[40] "All right, my Julie, scold me, quarrel with me, beat me; I will bear it all, but I shall continue to tell you what I think. Who shall be the custodian of my sentiments, if it is not you who enlightens them, and with whom would my heart consent to speak, if you refused to hear it? When I give you an account of my observations and judgments, that is you will correct them, not so you will approve them, and the more errors I may commit, the more I must hasten to tell you about them. If I find fault with the disorders that strike me in this great city, I shall not apologize on the pretext I am speaking to you in confidence; for I never say anything about a third party that I am not prepared to say to his face, and in everything I write you about the Parisians, I am merely repeating what I say to their faces everyday" (215).

Preux's plea may seem wishful and rhetorical, he is unwittingly pointing to an epistolary moment where a shared identity is possible, exactly because letters provide the occasion for such a connection: Just as St. Preux speculates that Julie would "see" him "like a madman" in the same letter, so Julie refers to him as "madman" in her letter to Claire a few pages earlier (83, 77). Epistolary communication encourages or even facilitates a kind of paranoiac relationship where everyone becomes more and more like each other because no one singular epistolary identity can exist without the others, even invisible or implied others. After all, the question of author—Who is the author of this letter? Who is the author of these letters? Who is reading or writing this letter?—is at the very heart of any epistolary correspondence.

In this light, St. Preux's curious plea that Julie should "conceal nothing from your own self" is not curious at all but is actually quite sincere since to engage in any epistolary communication is in some sense to share an identity. Julie shares the same sentiments when she says in her last sent letter before her death that

> the whole charm of the [epistolary] relationship prevailed among us lies in that openness of the heart that places all sentiments, all thoughts in common, and makes it so that each one, feeling he is what he ought to be, reveals himself to all such as he is (566).

In a sense, to write letters is to "conceal nothing from your own self"; after all,

epistolary writers pride themselves in concealing nothing from themselves. At the same time, this "revelation" is also predicated upon the idea of writing to the others, and thus the sharing: my self-realization is on the premise that I am writing to someone. Therefore, for Julie to "conceal nothing" from her own self is also to conceal nothing from St. Preux's self (punning of "your own self" since St. Preux regards himself as Julie's own self), which St. Preux ironically seeks after. In *Julie*, therefore, Rousseau seems to suggest that to write letters implicates the letter writers in a web of identities; letter writers would always be paranoiac because they are constantly worried about whether they have included everything ("conceal nothing"), therein creating an illusion that they are not losing control of their words.[41] We can then more properly assess what St. Preux has been hinting at in terms of the question of a genuine self: "for I never say anything about a third party that I am not prepared to say to his face, and in everything I write you about the Parisians, I am merely repeating what I say to their faces everyday" (215). St. Preux is saying that he includes everything about everyone so that he can ensure his integrity and his genuine self.[42]

This question of who is writing and what has been written therefore becomes the

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[41] In discussing epistolary fragments in French novels, Janet Altman discovers that these fragments often alternate between different pronounces to indicate "the writer's inner confusion" (58). And certainly for her, *Julie* is no different. She points out that in Part II, St. Preux addresses Julie from "you" to "her", indicating his unstable mental state.

[42] This statement is also an example of Rousseau's idea of self-presence where what writes is no difference to what one says then to what one thinks or knows.

question of excessive identity.[43] One might even suggest that if indeed nothing is to be concealed from one's own self, then why is it that in the letter genre the confidant is constantly invoked?[44] In other words, if there is nothing to conceal, why do you write to someone who can share your secrets (if secrets can be shared, are they secret still)? The letter confidant is not just a mere other (like any other addressee or addressers); the letter confidant is the *necessary* other because a letter writer can never finish an encyclopedic project of himself, such as Rousseau has been attempting to achieve, without the letter confidant sharing in the excess. For example, in Part Four Julie writes to Claire that she needs to add Monsieur Wolmar as her letter confidant in order to gain his trust when St. Preux visits them. This act prompts both Julie and Claire to think about the impact of the letter confidant on the epistolary self. Julie tells Claire,

> it was to elect my husband himself as confidant, to hold no private interview that would not be reported to him, and to write no letter that he would not be shown. I even oblige to write each Letters as if he would not to see it, and then to show it

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[43] In fact, right before St. Preux's plea, he repeats R's idea of excess in that reason has no boundary: "How do you expect a sensible soul to taste infinite joys in moderation? How do you expect it to bear so many kinds of transport at one time without losing control? Do you not know that there is a limit where no reason can hold out, that there is no man in the world whose common sense can stand up to every test?" (83).

[44] Janet Altman's Epistolarity devotes a whole chapter on "confidence and confidants". Although Altman mainly discusses the function of confidants as a narrative device that reflect the changes in the epistolary heroes or heroines, she does point out one paranoiac aspect of them: "the sudden disappearance of a real confidant emphasizes the mental isolation of a traumatized epistolary hero who continues, even in his imagination, to address an unseizable and unreachable addressee." Altman, 58.

> to him.... although I could not prevent myself, when writing it, from being aware that he would see it, I bear myself witness that this did not lead to change a word for it (354).

The watchful eyes of the confidant are ever-present. Even Julie, who earlier believes that "there was a time" when their letters "were easy and charming; the sentiment that dictated them flowed with an elegant simplicity; it required neither art nor coloration, and its purity was its only ornament," has to admit that she cannot prevent herself from "being aware" that Wolmar would see it (83). In a sense, Julie's letter is not just exposed to St. Preux; it is also extended to her confidants, whose otherwise secret presences nonetheless compliment Julie's letter and ensure the letter's authenticity. Claire admits that if she knows that a third party has

> pried about in my letters, I would take no further pleasure in writing to you; little by little coolness would insert itself between us together with reserve, and we no longer love each other except as any other two women (356).

At the same time, what makes this a two-way relationship is that Julie's confidants are never just mere correspondents; they reply in ways that not only reveal the letter's weaknesses and incapacities, but also expose its genuine quality in unexpected ways. After realizing his role as a confidant to Julie, Wolmar, for example, tells Julie that

> You indeed convey the same things to your friend [Claire] and to your husband,

but not in the same manner; and if you insist on lumping *everything* together, it will come to pass that your Letters will be written more for me than for her, and you will feel comfortable with neither the one nor the other (354; emphasis mine).

Wolmar suggests that the epistolary desire to include "everything" is inextricably bound up with the desire of being recognized by others (here in the form of one's confidants). I am finally myself only when I write to my confidant. But at the same time, by a sheer change of audience, the letter's content changes, e.g. "not in the same manner". I am both myself and everyone else. While Claire suggests that letting other men read their letters is revolting, she and Julie constantly share their letters with others, enclose others' letters, and become themselves letter voyeurs. Therefore, Rousseau's sensitivity to the role of confidant and the kind of paranoiac relationship intrinsic to letter correspondence suggests that he too realizes how paranoia is very much at the heart of any project of encyclopedia, and how the epistolary selves he envisions in *Julie* will always be exposed to one another, ironically making them complete and fragmented at the same time.

VI

If for Rousseau, there is always the possibility of not accounting for oneself in

terms of identity or memory, he turns it into a recurrent theme of his in order to make sense of it, to the extent of enjoying it. We have already seen how N and R teasingly treat their own textual existences in the Second Preface, despite showing a serious interest in the authenticity of these letters and the author. We may turn to another of Freud's essays, "The Uncanny," to think about these contradictory attitudes toward what is the truth behind everything and subsequently the loss of origin. If the uncanny contains a moral about the Enlightenment, then it tells the story of how one's past desire (the uncanny) comes to be "surmounted," if only to be later revealed.[45] Indeed, one of the stories that the Enlightenment constantly retells is the story of excess, or the story of its fixation on excess. In this respect, despite Rousseau's attempt to contain excess, the whole of *Confessions* is about excess. One of the things that repeatedly come into place is that Rousseau's *Confessions* has a secret confession, namely, a confession of his desire to confess. Indeed, over and over again, Rousseau repeats the same story: "I have only one thing to fear in this enterprise; not that I may say too much to tell untruth, but that I may not tell everything and may conceal the truth" (170). Rousseau seems to over and over again reassure the reader that he will never consciously tell any lie, although he has to admit that he may unconsciously leave out some details. Even the ending of the *Confessions* ends with this confession.

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[45] See Terry Castle's Introduction to *The Female Thermometer* for more details. Terry Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 155.

In a self-reflexive moment, Rousseau ends the text by reading to his friends the ending of the *Confessions*:

> I have told the truth. If anyone knows anything contrary to what I have here recorded, though he prove it a thousand times, his knowledge a lie and an imposture; and if he refuses to investigate and inquire into it during my lifetime he is no lover of justice or of truth (606).

The reason why he feels the need to reassure his reader is exactly because there is something that he has to confess, a secret guilt, that he does enjoy all the excesses that he nonetheless openly regards as a deviation. In other words, these are the things that are repressed but nonetheless resurface in his *Confessions*.

Indeed, one of the lessons of Freud's "Uncanny" is exactly the blurring of the division between reason and excess. If excess and reason eventually share a certain affinity, it also helps to explain why he constantly confesses that he cannot be sure of truth, because self-presence (the ability to set up boundary and therefore define the self) is already excessive. That is why he will admit that he repeats things in his *Confessions*, because until he can be sure that he has reached the moment of truth, he has to stage the repetition again. He has to confess several times in the autobiography that he is unique and natural at the same time. He has to fret over the same points exactly because they represent something of an anxiety, a threat to his

self-identity. Similarly, he continues to set up the same promise of self-presence only to find himself externalized: he can't write, but he writes the *Confessions* any way. This point also bears further theoretical inquiry outside the *Confessions*. For example, in his *Social Contract*, *A Discourse on Inequality*, and "On the Origin of Language," the theoretical framework always hinges upon an original scene, namely, the scene of the first man, the first human society, or the first utterance. Yet at the same time, these points of origin also bear in themselves differences. We can see this in the famous episode in Book II of the *Confessions* when young Rousseau confesses that he lied about his stealing of a pink ribbon accusing Marion instead. He repeats the episode again in the fourth walk of his *Reveries of the Solitary Walk* only to deny his former lie about his lying on the ground of "irresistible impulse of temperament" (52). The constant reassurance of his inability to lie in his writings is not only excessive, but also becomes a secret desire. The excesses, i.e. the lies, the false writings, the false speech therefore constitute who he is, and indeed, his "uniqueness," because for Rousseau the road to self-presence already entails these excesses. Every representation of his self-identity already entails a false identity, like a false writing: "There is not one that I have not had to rewrite four or five times before sending it to the printer" (113). That is also the reason that he needs a second "confessions," *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, as he himself calls it a sequel. His encyclopedic

project will never end. At the same time, he is not particularly worried: he actually enjoys the repetitions, "the compulsion to write" (263), because if every form of self-presence has already voided its origin, then every attempt and every repetition is also in the process of becoming.

As we have seen, one of the traits that is central to an epistolary narrative is exactly the concern over how events are narrated and repeated: often letters authors take turns writing or commenting about the same event, while at other times they might even relay, appropriate, or interpolate each other's sentiments or opinions to the extent of losing track of the idea's origin. While Rousseau is concerned about what we might call epistolary technology—i.e. how letters are transmitted, delivered, etc.—his *Julie* provides other points of interest, namely, an extensive exploration of the letter's origin. It is in this light that we can perhaps revisit N's idea that "these letters are no letters." While he tries to defy the legitimacy of the Julie letters, his reading ironically points out Rousseau's politics of excess: something finally has its grounding when it is at its most excessive state.

I would like to offer a point of interest within *Julie* to highlight this simultaneous built-up and erasure that has eventually become too prominent to ignore. In many cases, the Julie letters culminate in Clarens, a place that not only houses the Wolmars but also serves as the space of moral idealism of the novel. After all, this is where

Julie finds her inner peace and avoids St. Preux's contacts.[46] At the same time, the seeming utopia is also filled with its own inner conflicts. In Clarens, we not only witness the final death of Julie, who confesses the irreconcilability between duty and passion; by doing so, Julie reveals that her love for St. Preux never ends and "the virtue that separates [them] on earth shall unite [them] in the eternal abode" (610). That Clarens can only be a substitute for a higher ideal is no surprise. We do have the head of Clarens, Wolmar, as a self-proclaimed atheist and despite Julie's devotedness, there always seems to be aloofness between them. But Rousseau also spends the latter half of the letter detailing this idealized location and thus calling our attentions to some of the recurrent themes in Clarens, especially the discussion of excess disguised as order and reason and that of another "original scene".

St. Preux recounts his experience in Clarens in separate letters to Edward. In Part Four, Letter XI, he starts to depict Julie's secret orchard "Elysium" in Clarens in great detail. This garden is maze-like, creating a disoriented feeling for St. Preux. He can no longer see where he "had entered" and "found [himself] there as if [he] had dropped from the sky" (387). St. Preux is baffled by the sight and thinks that "I was looking at the wildest, most solitary place in nature, and it seemed to me I was the first mortal

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[46] Michael Metteer suggests that Clarens is, supposedly, "meant to be the community of reconciliation, of moral transparence and of a harmonious order that is progressively social, individual, aesthetic, moral and religious." Michael Metteer, *Desire in Fictional Communities* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1988), 100.

who ever had set foot in this wilderness" (387). Again, Rousseau's preoccupation with the origin is again shown here, and Clarens and Elysium prove to be highly relevant too. After all, St. Preux's previous letter to Edward recounts his "principal observations on the part of this house's economy that concerns domestics and paid labors" (386) and thus links Clarens' ideal setting to Rousseau's thoughts on political economy.[47] Indeed, what makes Elysium a stunning and "enchanting" place is its artless artfulness. Julie tells St. Preux that "nature did it all" and at the same time, it is under Julie's direction, and "there is nothing here" that she has not "designed" (388). Rousseau's original myth thus bespeaks a human effort to establish civility from scratch. Different from the ones that go astray, Julie's Elysium has to be excessive in order for it to be reasonable and ideal. St. Preux continues to marvel at "everything," "everywhere" and "on every side" in this letter. What St. Preux has painted is a harmonious relationship between human labors and nature. His description thus reminds us of R's words earlier, that no one can "assign exact limits to Nature" and "assert" that "here is as far as Man can go" (7).

The idea that something excessive can be tamed therefore becomes the rationale behind the establishment of Elysium, and eventually Clarens. While Rousseau admits

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[47] There are many examples in this letter to promote an allegorical reading in terms of Rousseau's political ideals. To name a few, Julie uses the animals in Elysium to explain how master and slave relationship should be reversed, and Wolmar attacks the wealthy for not having "patience and time" to nurture civil relationships (391).

that this place may be too ideal to obtain—Julie tells St. Preux that "in a moment you will have returned from the ends of the earth" (388)—nonetheless he continues to feature the excessive parts of Elysium as a way of returning to his idea of excess. As soon as they emerge from Elysium, St. Preux asks Wolmar how Elysium can be cultivated without the "slightest trace of cultivation" (393). For St. Preux,

> Everything is verdant, fresh, vigorous, and the gardener's hand is not to be seen: nothing belies the idea of a desert Island which came to my mind as I entered, and I see no footprint. (393)

Wolmar's answer anticipates Rousseau's true writing in his *Confessions*: the only true cultivation is the one that looks least cultivated (or so excessively cultivated that one cannot recognize it as cultivated). Wolmar reminds us again and again that an idealized place is ideal exactly because of its lack of human contact. At the same time, he has to take great care to "erase" these contacts in order to establish the Elysium. In the same line of thinking, Wolmar assures St. Preux that "You see nothing here that is aligned, nothing levelled; never did the line enter this place; nature never uses a line in its plantings" (393). It is a line without a line, and every structure in Elysium, once upheld, will immediately be "deconstructed," no pun intended. Indeed, even the "windings in their feigned irregularity" are manmade to erase its artificial edges. Indeed, Wolmar's dilemma is also Rousseau's dilemma: how do you capture nature,

without being excessive? On the one hand, if nature can be described, can it still be nature? True nature is unnatural, in the sense that it cannot be perceived by finite being such as human beings. Thus only in the most excessive state can we perceive nature; after all, Wolmar asks, "does nature constantly employ the square and ruler?" (396). Similarly, St. Preux tells Edward about gardens in China in which "nature there appeared in a thousand different guises, and the whole taken together was not natural" (397). On the other hand, such nature also contains "art," something that Julie calls "a modicum of illusion" (393, 394).[48]

It is in these repetitive writings about the original scene—nature without being natural, line without a line, true taste that hides art—that we finally realize that the origin is indeed without an origin. What this tells us, in light of N's comment that "these letters are no letters," is that perhaps for Rousseau the letter is most letter-like when its essence as a letter is exhausted. In this sense, Rousseau deliberately chooses a literary medium that is formless and without an origin to uphold a rhetoric of reason that is excessive at best. The irony of this, of course, is even in the end, we are not sure the Rousseau that we know of in his later philosophical works has ever stepped foot into the confines of these letters. As we move on to the next chapter on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther*, we will start to see the impact of

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[48] This is also reflected in the letter form. True letter should be excessive and formless exactly because only in that condition that letter can continue to be a letter. This can be seen in the earlier discussion on St. Preux's fragmented letter.

such excessive claims of the Enlightenment will have on Werther, specifically a conscious effort to purge these excesses out of his epistolary narrative.

"I have Diligently Collected Everything": Editorial Ellipses and Interpolations in Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*

I

As we move into the last chapter on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, we begin to see fewer and fewer concerns with the epistolary formality so emphasized in the earlier epistolary models. Already we find in *Julie* the lack of the formal concerns, not just in Rousseau's casual dismissal of addresser and addressee in the letter title, but also in the diminished use of the material letters—the way letters are arranged, transmitted, or enclosed so as to convey layered meanings. Although *Julie* is an epistolary novel mainly about two lovers, it still heavily relies on a network of addressers and addressees: Claire, Edward, and Wolmar all play their parts in creating an Enlightenment model of "unobstructed use of reason" and cater to a sense of familiarity and sociality that Jürgen Habermas observes in the rise of the eighteenth-century familial letter.[1] There is still a communal sense in the function of the letter in *Julie*. *Werther*,

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[1] Kant emphasizes the freedom of "public" and "private" uses of reason as indicators of enlightenment. My emphasis here is merely to point out the unrestricted circulation of opinions in the Enlightenment, at least as an ideal. For more details, please see Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" *What is Enlightenment?: Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, Ed. James Schmidt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 58-64. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Thomas Burger, Trans. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991), 48-56.

however, as one of the representative texts of the movement of "Sturm and Drang," no longer affords this kind of textual luxury: Werther as a proto-Romantic hero possesses an highly subjectivized vision, and the novel signals the final turn away from an enlightenment model of epistolarity into a fully operative—almost paradigmatic—romanticism.[2] Goethe wants to create a narrative that seems almost solipsistic, with the romantic subject always in view. Where early epistolary novels insist on sociality, on exchange and correspondence, and the broader formal pressures that shape the "genre" of letters (and that privilege materiality and audience), *Werther* is, until the death of the subject, almost hermetic, with the protagonist's exaggerated feels suffusing the entirety of the world and its representation. Textually and narratively, no one writes back to Werther, and the line between "letter" and "journal entry" is continually blurred: save for the dates, and an occasional apostrophe to his friend, there are few signs that these are even letters, and thus Goethe seems interested in testing the contours of the letter as a sufficient vehicle for romantic pathos.

But it is also here that I see in *Werther* a specific link to the formal excess of past epistolarity. While Goethe tries to pursue a romantic aesthetic in Werther's single voice,

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[2] Frederick Garber reminds us that "Werther evinces throughout much of the novel a radiant urge toward happiness that depends in part (and dangerously) upon a compulsive insistence on personal freedom, an expansiveness of self so total as to be almost with-out bounds." Indeed, Werther is "quite sociable" at first. Frederick Garber, "Self, Society, Value, and the Romantic Hero." *Comparative Literature* Vol. 19, No. 4 (Autumn, 1967), 331.

such an ideal also depends on the editor of the letter collection. After all, who else would be able to collect Werther's letters that have already been sent and dispersed among his addressees? Why is it that Werther's letters survive but not Wilhelm's and Lotte's letters that address him? Indeed, that the editor transforms himself from almost non-existent throughout most of the Werther collection, to omnipresent after Werther's death forces us to recognize the specific connection between Werther and the editor, as well as the conspicuous correspondence between writing and life. Werther's singular voice represents a romantic urge to transcend the epistolary excesses that endanger the hero's wish to "withdraw into" himself,

> and discover a world, albeit a notional world of dark desire rather than one of actuality and vital strength. And everything swims before my sense, and I go my way in the world wearing the smile of the dreamer.[3]

And the editor certainly tries not to intervene significantly until after Werther's death. At the same time, Werther's demand for purity proves to be futile as the editorial function is also a form of epistolary excess, highlighting how the romantic letter makes a spectacle of its finitude. This chapter will try to demonstrate Goethe's formal struggle in *Werther* and what it means for the eighteenth-century epistolary novel to adapt to a romantic

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[3] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, translated by Michael Hulse (London: Penguin, 1989), 31. All references to *Werther* will follow parenthetically.

subject. The full thrust of the critical possibilities will be discussed in the dissertation's Conclusion (on *Frankenstein*), but for now, we will consider the ways in which the editorial interpolations and ellipses in *Werther* help highlight Werther's romantic outlook and the conundrums that the editor faces in bring out Werther's heightened sensitivity and unbounded subjectivity.

II

I begin with a seemingly simple question: Can an epistolary novel end itself? To answer this question, there has to be, it seems to me, some more sub-questions: What do we mean by ending itself? What epistolary novel? Of course every epistolary novel ends somewhere in some way, at least in the physical sense of the book. At the same time, some epistolary novels, especially those ending in the death of the eponymous hero, often have trouble ending themselves. The death of the protagonist signifies the termination of the self-narrative and immediately shifts the focus to the editor: what once seemed like an unmediated and singular account of the protagonist's deepest feelings and desires suddenly is revealed to rely heavily on the intervention of an editor, who collects, organizes, and often supplements the self-narrative that had once felt so intimate. The role of the editor becomes not only important but also integral: beforehand, we read often

uninterrupted correspondence between the hero and related parties, creating an illusion of the gradual unfolding of the life-events of the eponymous hero; now we have to rely on the editor to confirm that which signals the ending, namely the death of the hero and what comes afterwards. The editor prolongs what should have ended when the hero writes the last letter and turns it into what is fittingly the life story of the eponymous hero.[4] In this sense, the editor helps create an epistolary subjectivity that is in excess of itself but never loses sights of what is important. Consider the real-life counterpart, Samuel Richardson, who served as the editor and the author at the same time, and who frequently made conspicuous what was added and subtracted from his novels: "Constantly in motion 'in itself', Richardson's text is rocked into further instability by the 'supplementary' material added to ballast it," Terry Eagleton observes in *Rape of Clarissa*.[5] Richardson also undertakes to revise and self-police his own works, and as Eagleton suggests, "the more Richardson plugs and patches to disambiguate his writing and aver incorrect readings, the

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[4] I broadly define the role of the editor in the hope of pointing out the necessity of editorial function in epistolary novel. Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* has a Conclusion (with an indication that it is "supposed to be written by Mr. Belford") and a Postscript. *Julie* "needs" the editor to include Wolmar's and Claire's letters to end the *Julie* story, and until the very end, the editor is still very much active in shaping the way we read the novel's ending. *Werther* takes on the same feature as the editor not only edits and collects the letters but also "assembles" all sorts of information from various related parties. In this regard, the editor has a "split" personality as it were: he can be the author, one or many of the letter-addressees, or simply the editor within the diegesis of the letter story.

[5] Terry Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), 21. For more details on Richardson's editorial practice, please see the Introduction to *Rape of Clarissa*.

more he piles on matter for yet further misconstruction."[6] The editor, in this sense, tries to help the reader construe the story of the eponymous hero at the risk of further deviation.

The editor is definitely an important plot device in the making of the novel, but more so in the making of an epistolary one. In *Julie*, Rousseau claims to be the editor in the preface, and thus equates the editor with the author. Without the editor, *Julie* could not be assembled; otherwise, the Julie letters will only be a bunch of letters circulating among a certain strata of society. In *Julie*, the editor is like an epistolary confidant, one who has access to everyone's secret; he makes comments and interprets the meaning of particular letters, often ironically. The editor, for example, makes fun of St. Preux's serious tone and philosophizing, as well as Julie's excessive sentimentality.[7] The editor makes constant trips in and out of the diegetic world, as it were, and interacts with these letter-writers in the collection as well as the readers of the letter collection.

Despite the deep involvement at the diegetic level, the editor also tries to maintain the image of an outsider and the faithful keeper of the records. The editor, for example, reassures the readers that he will not meddle in the narrative produced through the letters.

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[6] Eagleton, 23.

[7] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, translated and annotated by Philip Stewart and Jean Vache (New England: University Press of New England, 1997), 190, 218, 244, and 580. All references to *Julie* will be in parenthesis.

In one footnote regarding a letter of St. Preux's, the editor assures us:

> On several occasions, I have been on the verge of removing them [St. Preux's love letters] and substituting some of my own; ultimately I am leaving them in, and pride myself on my courage..... Let us then leave these Letters as they are (190).

Meanwhile, he also informs the readers that Edward's adventure letters (addressed to St. Preux) are not to be included here because he "could not bring [himself] to spoil the simplicity of the two lovers' story with the romantic side of his" (512). Yet, at least in two places, the background of Edward's adventure does resurface and is eventually appended (ironically reduced to a third-person narrative form).[8] If comprehensiveness is his main concern, he also confirms that these letters are no longer in their complete form:

> One can tell there is a lacuna here, and there will be others in the course of the correspondence. Several letters have been lost; others have been suppressed; others have suffered curtailment: but nothing essential is missing that cannot easily be supplied with the help of what remains (38).

He also tells us, in another instance, that St. Preux's name is a substitute for his real name (272), and will only be revealed in Part IV. However, every letter writer and addressee has a name in the letter title, as designated by the editor, and one has to wonder why St.

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[8] In another instance, he tells the readers that he "cares not a whit whether these Letters please" the novel's critics (518).

Preux should be treated otherwise. Despite the editor's claim for being non-meddling, he is everywhere, shaping how the epistolary novel expands and affecting how we read it (however effective it may be).[9]

While Rousseau or *Julie*'s editor occasionally puts himself in the spotlight—after all, he does appear in the two prefaces, and on numerous occasions throughout the collection—the editor in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Werther* does not have the same kind of recurrent role to play. The opening page of *Werther* reads, "I have diligently collected everything I have been able to discover concerning the poor Werther," but then the editor fades into the collection, appearing only within an occasional footnote. Even though the editor in *Werther* does not reveal his involvement in the letter collection, he marks his appearance through disappearance, that is, his choice of letters will help us read the Werther story in a certain way: while the earlier letters stress their materiality and literariness, *Werther*'s editor seals over the breaks or protuberances that might distract from the urgency of Werther's romantic vision. In this chapter, I am trying to suggest that the editorial arrangement central to, if mystified within *Werther* presents a consistent effort to rectify the kind of excess that the epistolary genre so often offers, even

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[9] One can see another parallel between the later epistolary novels and the Richardsonian model: the editor is a form of epistolary conceit, a fabricated complexity that tries to capture and ensure the realism behind the letter collection.

accommodates. By limiting his appearance in the Werther collection, the editor successfully creates an illusion of a one-man narrative without any interruptions, and thus without the kind of epistolary excesses that I have been trying to show so far in the dissertation. But to what effect does the editor achieve this goal? How does Werther's letter content and his aesthetic concerns correspond to the editor's formal representations? I will first turn to the end of the *Werther* to show that while Goethe intends to manage, and even transcend the multiplicity inherent in epistolary excess through Werther's singular voice, the editor's involvement actually reveals the formal problem of such unbounded passion.

III

That *Werther*'s editor tries to keep a distance from the actual Werther story should not come as a surprise. After all, he only shows up in three places in the collection proper with more or less insignificant consequences. Even with his more prominent appearance toward the end of the Werther letters, he still insists that he has "diligently" collected everything regarding Werther as a way of excusing for his reluctant intrusion into *Werther*:

I wish very much that we had enough of our friend's *own testimony*, concerning the

last remarkable days of his life, to render it unnecessary for me to interrupt this series of preserved letters with narration (106; emphasis mine).

The editor continues to suggest that it is his "duty to gather precise information from the mouths of those likely to be best acquainted with his history" (106). In a sense, he tries to assure the reader that even with his forced involvement, Werther's account remains uncorrupted "except on a few insignificant details" (106). Indeed, the editor does have everything under control, even down to the last few details of Werther's final excruciating minutes. He has "seen" the last letter sent out to Wilhelm—though we never know about the content (131). He will be the one who witnesses the suicide scene for the reader and gives the reader the horrific specificities of Werther's dying body, almost in a forensic manner:

> When the surgeon reached the unfortunate man, he found him on the floor, beyond hope; his pulse was still beating but his limbs were powerless. He had shot himself above the right eye, blowing out his brains. To crown it all, a vein was opened in his arm; the blood flowed; he still continued to breathe (133-4).

While the gory details might disturb some of readers, they read like a calm journalistic report by modern standards. Obviously, the editor's prosaic style can be construed as just another way to keep himself out of the emotional vortex within *Werther* in order to

establish, or at least masquerade, as the objective editor who is worthy of the office. In the *Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau suggests that the final scene tends to be "ob-scene" and therefore constitutes what we consider as "unnamable": "censured, deprived of language, wrapped up in a shroud of silence."[10] That the editor would promote the scene's visibility suggests a certain marginal utility: instead of over-sentimentalizing his dying body, the editor chooses to provide a steady hand to shore up the emotional overflow.[11] Indeed, De Certeau postulates that death is "immediately transformed into a scientific and linguistic object foreign to everyday life and language."[12] In this sense, the editor adapts to a different writing strategy. Whereas Werther's passion spills over his own letters, the editor provides every detail of Werther's last moment in the hope of anchoring himself as the moral authority and providing the faithful source of that which we know as *Werther*. Everything is accounted for, even the meticulous breakdown of Werther's whereabouts before his suicide. The editor reports the event in real time, suggesting that Werther's end "was expected soon" (134).

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[10] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 191.

[11] In parallel, Cynthia Richards provides another famous eighteenth-century death scene, albeit a real one. She suggests that Godwin's horrific description of Mary Wollstonecraft's death-bed scene reveal a scientific desire to assign the dying body at least some values. Cynthia Richards, "The Body of Her Work, the Work of Her Body: Accounting for the Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft." *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* Vol. 21, No. 4, (Summer 2009), 565-592.

[12] De Certeau, 191.

This idea of a reporter or an investigator with a composed demeanor is reinforced when the editor refuses to describe Albert's and Lotte's reactions before Werther's death in fear of the emotional involvement (134). Throughout the last section of *Werther*, the editor actively takes on the role of the objective outsider who interprets and interpolates the letters of the final moments only out of necessity. While Werther's one-man narration has brought us thus far without any difficulty in "understanding" what is going on, the sudden need to insert the editor is necessary for bringing closure to *Werther*. In order to present a seemingly credible account, the editor has to consider several other narrative options. He, for example, claims to have listened to "what Albert's friends say" regarding the mental status of Werther (106). If the Werther letters start to lose their capacity to show Werther's immediate thoughts—now that we need the editorial interpolation—the editor makes sure that we also read Werther's "papers" and notes to add to the *Werther* collection's completeness. There are various attempts to render the *Werther* collection true to its transparent epistolary quality before its ending, while at the same time supplementing the epistolary narratives with non-epistolary texts.

The immediate consequence of the editor's intrusion would be the presence of different "genres" and narrative voices. The novel can no longer unfold in its epistolary mode. One of the unambiguous signs of his editorial intrusion appears when Werther's

epistolary narrative is replaced by the editor's narration. Even if some occasional Werther letters are provided for the purpose of guaranteeing the reliability of the story, these letters fail to become the vehicles of unmediated feelings.[13] Letters become fragmented, necessitating the editor's encroachment into the narrative and the inside of the letter.[14] The letter of 14 December, for instance, marks the first instance of the editor breaking in to explain in detail the hero's mental state. The gradual dissolution of the line between the letter and non-letter can also be seen here, for the editor claims that the second part of the letter belongs to "an undated note that was found among his papers and which was probably the beginning of a letter to Wilhelm" (113).[15] Still, he arranges the undated note as if it is taken out of the second half the 14 December letter. In a sense, the note is added as a supplement to the letter, all the while containing in itself the form of a letter. The following letter on 20 December again has no clear separation with the final letter Werther sends to Lotte. This last letter contains several things—a note, a series of Werther's own translation of the songs of Ossian, and the fragments of Werther's final

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[13] Regarding his influence from Richardson, Goethe believes that "the letter-form was thoroughly dramatic, the reader really lives with the characters and experiences with them their emotions, and it has the additional virtue of giving greater scope for detail than any other form." James Boyd, Goethe's *Knowledge of English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932), 120-1. Martin Swales and Erika Swales suggest that Werther's success was because the novel was "utterly attuned to the contemporary discourse of *Empfindsamkeit*, with its stress on the supreme truthfulness of the heart." Martin Swales and Erika Swales, *Reading Goethe: A Critical Introduction to the Literary Work* (Rochester: Camden House, 2002), 64.

[14] We may have recalled the letter fragments have several different meanings in *Pamela*, *Shamela*, and in *Julie*.

[15] It is still very ambiguous as to how we should treat the *14-December Letter*.

account, all intertwined with the editor's commentary—and is difficult to characterize. At times the editor in this last part of *Werther* even sounds like an omnipresent third-person narrator. We can perhaps consider the following passage about Lotte's preparation of her pistol for Werther to better judge the editor's deep involvement in the Werther collection:

> She handed the fateful implements to the servant, unable to utter a word, and once he had left the house she packed up her work and retired to her room in an inexpressible quandary. Her heart was filled with terrible foreboding (130).

It seems that the editor knows exactly where to break the chronology of the letter so as to orchestrate the succession of events to add to the verisimilitude. But more importantly, the editor sees what Lotte thinks, presenting a sense of Lotte's interiority.

This resort to a third-person narrator in an epistolary novel is certainly not Goethe's invention. In fact, recognized by some critics as the "first English (epistolary) novel," Aphra Behn's *Love Letters Between a Nobleman And His Sister* (1684-7) shares the same epistolary trait in which the dominant epistolary voices regress to a third-person one as the story unfolds.[16] As a pioneering epistolary novel in the late seventeenth century England, Behn's *Lover-Letters* certainly contains an experimental dimension and to this

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[16] Judith Kegan Gardiner, "The First English Novel: Aphra Behn's *Love Letters*, The Canon, and Women's Tastes", *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Autumn, 1989), 201-222.

end, the mixture of genres and voices should not come as a surprise to the readers.[17] It is a "composite" text, as Janet Todd points out, as the result of the "negation of fiction and history."[18] This suggests that as the novel genre assumes its gradual literary dominance in the eighteenth century, its author also has to experiment with different forms and voices in order to find the appropriate medium. Goethe's editor, however, fulfills more than an experimental function. His role largely involves choosing and weeding out letters in the Werther collection so as to "complete" the Werther narrative. We will discuss in detail the kind of implication of a composite work in *Werther* when we turn to Werther's aesthetic ideology below, but for now, the idea that the editor can somehow supply the reader with a genuine wholeness in the Werther collection is problematic. Commenting on the mixture of genre in Behn's *Love-Letters*, Todd shows us that

> the change in literary genre from a first-person epistolary fiction to a third-person narrative meant a change in vision, and inevitably a reinterpretation of what had gone before. The assumed sincerity of Part I of *Love-Letters* does not merely contrast with the insincerity and artifice of Parts II and III...but is retrospectively

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[17] Janet Todd, introduction to *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*, by Aphra Behn (London: Penguin, 1996), xvi.
[18] Todd, xvi

undermined by them.[19]

While it might be worth exploring why the letter necessarily possesses an "assumed sincerity," Todd does expose the epistolary problem of an intruding voice uncontrolled by the existing addressers. In the *Werther* narrative, the editor gives an unmediated narrative of *Werther*, as it were, but then again, his existence also raises questions as to why Werther even needs to present his letters in an uninterrupted manner if the editor supposedly can weave his own composite narrative. We can see further editorial involvement when quite a few people collaborate with the editor to complete the Werther story. We are not just talking about established characters like Albert or Lotte; characters like the servant are integral to realizing the plot: the details of Werther's whereabouts at the last minutes must come to the editor second-hand (128). It seems the more the editor meddles with Werther's narrative, the more *Werther* strays away from its supposed singular vision.[20] Ellis Dye has pointed out Goethe's extensive use of "romantic irony," which

> exposes the perverseness of language and of generic and conceptual systems of all

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19 Todd, xvi.

20 One can spot the German literary tradition of what Martin Swales and Erika Swales call the "narrative of reflectivity." They suggest that Goethe's exploration of "various narrative modes" derives from this reflectivity: "many of his works operate with processes of embedding and re-contextualizing narrative statements, so that the text as a whole becomes a self-thematizing and self-commenting universe of discourse." Martin Swales and Erika Swales, 58.

sorts. It thus reveals, and enjoys revealing, the inherent fictionality and ambiguity of art.[21]

For Dye, "Goethe's irony shows the futility of transparent representation, the necessity of mediation" and his "narrators are critiques as interlocutors."[22] In this sense, the editor's irony lies in his unawareness of his own limitation as mere mediation. By appropriating and continuing Werther's aesthetic outlook, his narrative becomes a second order to the supposed purity of Werther's letters, and therefore necessarily produces an outcome different from what Werther would have envisioned.

This exploration of different narrative modes challenges our existing notion of the letter and its formal qualities: if the letter is the dominant vehicle of the novel, Werther's notes, part of which is later destroyed, suddenly become the spotlight.[23] As the last part of the Werther narrative unfolds, the note is no longer subservient to the letter collection: before we have the editorial intrusion, Werther's narrative always appears in the letter form, even though some of the letters are short and fragmented, like notes, since Werther the romantic hero is less concerned with formalities and more committed to expressivity. More importantly, notes grant immediacy to Werther's vision as his romantic imagination

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[21] Ellis Dye, *Love and Death in Goethe: "One and Double"* (Rochester: Camden House, 2004), 264.

[22] Dye, 264.

[23] Richardson's *Pamela* has given the note a similar role. Please see chapter one for more details.

is changing all time: Werther writes to Wilhelm that "I am often filled with longing, and think: ah, if only you could express this, if only you could breathe onto the paper in all its fullness and warmth what is so alive in you" (27). Thus, the editor tells us that he would "attend to even the slightest scrap of paper" to add to the collection of letters; so naturally the note, fragmented or not, will accrue more textual valences when the editor attempts to piece them together into a unity (106). Indeed, it is the note's immediacy that provides the editor with more insight into Werther's soul. Upon hearing the prisoner's fate, Werther tells us in a note that, "You cannot be saved, unfortunate man! I well see that we cannot be saved" (110). The editor supposes that Werther's note registers the impact of the prisoner's similar fate. A paragraph later, the editor tells us that Werther's aversion to Albert's reaction to the prisoner can be found in a note "among his papers" (110).

While the note might serve a specific function, it also has other qualities that might contradict the editor's wish to present a truthful account of Werther towards the end. The letter dated 14 December letter is followed by an undated note which the editor regards as "the beginning of a letter to Wilhelm" (113). The note therefore can be the letter that has never been finished, or it can be part of a letter, seeing that there is no clear distinction between the letter proper and the note as arranged in the 14 December Letter. Interestingly enough, it is exactly the note's resistance to easy categorizations that is used

to the editor's advantage. Mark for example that the whole 20 December letter has been serialized and broken into fragments so that the editor can better explain the situation in detail and further create a sense of real actions: "His confusion, his passion, his restless energies and endeavours, and his weariness of life, are most powerfully attested in a few surviving letters which we interpolate at this point" (111). In a sense, the note or the fragment is preferred for their ability to provide more immediate access to Werther's mind. Similarly, letters in the final moments are to be sometimes mistreated as "papers" (113). Right before Werther kills himself, the editor mentions to us the existence of these unarranged papers that are torn up and thrown into the stove (131). These papers are his "short essays and stray reflections" which eventually become the bulk of the unseen letter he addresses to Wilhelm that we as readers have never gotten the chance to read. If such interchangeable use of papers, notes and letters are present in the final editorial arrangement of *Werther*, then it also depicts a messier picture of how letters, notes, or papers each fulfill their functions. There is no longer a clear-cut boundary as maintained in the earlier *Werther* narrative proper.

The biggest contradiction might be the problem of the third-person voice that the editor adopts. Initially, the editor lets us know that it is a collective "we" who are witnessing, reporting, and eventually commenting on Werther's last moments (106).

When commenting on Werther's "anxiety in his heart" that has "sapped his remaining mental vigor, his vitality, and his insight," the editor assures us it is based on "what Albert's friends say" (106). Occasionally, the editor would also use "I," but the third-person narrative gradually takes over. Here the editor is presented with the same conundrum as in the treatment of the note: how does he interpolate Werther's letters without contravening their integrity, which is at the heart of Werther's letters? He does present us with some disclaimers: that despite being an editor who has been diligently collecting everything regarding Werther's life-story, there is always a limit that he cannot cross, remaining always an objective outsider to the story itself. Regarding the letter of 20 December, the collective "we" report that

> We scarcely feel able to express in words what was happening in Lotte's soul at this time, or to describe her feelings towards her husband and her unfortunate friend; although our knowledge of her character makes it possible to conceive of them, and any sensitive female soul will be in a position to enter into Lotte's frame of mind and share her emotions (114).

Already here we start to see the slippery ground that the editor travels: although the editor might not be able to describe Lotte's feelings in words, he certainly possesses the

knowledge (just like what Werther mentions before).[24] He, in a sense, becomes the third-person narrator who, omniscient or not, fulfills the objectivity that he wishes to adopt.

This third-person narrative offers some advantages, as the editor can present a totalizing view instead of relying on guesswork and rumor. The reader would be able to see what a normal epistolary narrative cannot offer. While the epistolary novel tends to present various viewpoints from different epistolary writers, they always are, in a sense, limited within and by their own epistolary confines. These letter writers are also limited in that they cannot respond properly to the situation until another letter comes along.[25] They cannot project themselves into the future either, in terms of the narrative structure, bound as they are the present of the writing moment. But the editor in *Werther* has no such problem. He has assumed the authoritative position as soon as he makes the disclaimer about his effort to collect everything there is to know about Werther's last moments. He immediately documents in detail what is going on in Werther's mind as if he was there to witness everything (107). However, if Werther's self-questioning can be

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[24] Joyce Walker observes that in *Werther* that "Lotte never speaks for herself; rather, she is always mediated by Werther or der Herausgeber [the editor]. Lotte is always a beautiful object, never a subject in the narrative." Joyce S. Walker, "Sex, Suicide, and the Sublime: A Reading of Goethe's 'Werther,'" *Monatshefte*, 91, No. 2 (Summer, 1999), 210.

[25] We still note the presence of Werther's correspondents despite his one-way "correspondence."

faithfully represented, why not present them in epistolary form?[26] After all, these questions are Werther's, and what else would be more intimately revealing than those written in the epistolary form? If Werther has not produced the papers that contain these words, who else could have access to them? The only explanation, it seems to me, is that the editor is determined to produce an authentic narrative that can be said to best fit both *Werther* and Werther the character, even if it means he has to sometimes overzealously involved.

The treatment of Lotte is no different. On the one hand, the editor admits his limitations when it comes to describing Lotte's feelings. On the other hand, the editor also gives us an unobstructed view into Lotte's heart:

> Her pure and untroubled blood was feverishly agitated, and a thousand different feelings rent her virtuous heart. Was it the fire of Werther's embraces that she felt in her bosom? Was it resentment of her outrageous behavior? Was it the sad comparison of her present state with earlier times of ease, freedom, innocence and unruffled confidence in herself? How was she to approach her husband and confess a scene which she had no reason to conceal and which she was nevertheless loath to

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[26] The editor notes that as Werther becomes entangled in his passion for Lotte, he starts self-doubting and at the same time "harbouring a secret resentment" of Albert. In the editor's third-person narrative, these emotions are manifested in the form of Werther's self-addressed questions (107-8).

tell him of? (128).

By using the free indirect style, the editor adopts a voice that mimics Lotte's inner thoughts. It also gives the reader a chance to approach Lotte without any restriction. After all, it is Lotte who is telling us what she thinks in the form of a series of rhetorical questions. Yet as Porter Abbott points out, one of the features of free indirect style is to allow "a character's voice momentarily to take over the narrative voice." As a result, it makes us "wonder about the status of the narrator" and presents "a challenge for interpreters who are trying hard to locate a unified sensibility on which to base their interpretation."[27] In another instance, the editor describes in detail how Lotte and Werther feel when they cross the line and attest to their long latent desires:

> They could sense their own wretchedness in the fates of the noble heroes; they sensed it together, and shed tears in harmony. Werther rested his feverish lips and eyes on Lotte's arm; she trembled; she wanted to go, yet pain and sympathy lay numbingly upon her like lead (125).

Certainly Werther is not going to write about this right before his suicide and Lotte is not going to "report" this to the editor. The omnipresent narrator therefore presents the truth about Werther, yet it also violates to some extent the reader-editor contract he articulates

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[27] H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 70-1.

earlier. He is no longer the objective third party but an active agent in making *Werther* possible.

This ability to access a character's mind becomes ironically the way that the editor loses control of his narrative composure toward the end. In adopting the omnipresent narrator, the editor forces us to recognize his narrative desire to add to the collection more than what is needed—more than what should be there. "Lotte was meanwhile in a singular frame of mind," suggests the editor, at which point "Werther wrote the following paragraph of his final letter to Lotte" (117-8). We are not only witnessing the interiority of Lotte; we are also given the temporality of the two simultaneous events. Moreover, we can now access Lotte's mind in such a way that it is no longer limited to her "singular frame of mind." A few paragraphs later (in which we learn about Lotte's struggle to come to term with Werther's passion), the editor reveals to us "all of these reflections prompted a profound realization, albeit one which she was not consciously aware of, that her secret heart's desire was to keep him for herself" (118). In a weird way, the editor's third-person narrative serves the function of missing correspondence wherein one's unconscious is often uncannily revealed in another's letter (as I have shown in previous chapters). It performs the job of a responsive addressee, which has been altogether missing in the Werther narrative. But more importantly, now we can see what the characters cannot see

from their limited capacity. We can access Lotte's unconscious and her secret desires.

All of this prompts us to ask the following questions: if indeed, the third-person narrative is much better for detailing the events and the interiority of the characters, why do we need Werther's letters in the first place? Conversely, if Werther's one-way letter correspondence give us unobstructed view to his sentiments, why does not the editor simply include his final letters and end the story there without the third-person interpolations and the gory details of the final moment? I will now turn to the *Werther* collection to show the kind of philosophical/aesthetical outlook that eventually promotes the editorial decisions as effected in *Werther*.

IV

That *Werther* is explicitly about a newly modern aesthetic experience is by now a familiar scholarly claim.[28] After all, Goethe himself is one of the instigators of the *Sturm und Drang* ("Storm and Stress") movement in late eighteenth-century Germany.[29] Elliot Schreiber suggests that Werther gives "precise expression to the modern sense of

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[28] Elliot Schreiber discusses Werther's "aesthetic of the instant" through Karl Philipp Moritz. For him, modernity promotes "an awareness of time as always radically new" (193). Elliot Schreiber, "Towards an Aesthetics of the Sublime *Augenblick*: Reading Karl Philipp Moritz Reading Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*." *The Enlightened Eye: Goethe and Visual Culture*, edited by Evelyn K. Moore and Patricia Anne Simpson, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 193-217.

[29] Angus Nicholls suggests that "in *Werther* Goethe can be seen to offer an early diagnosis of the aesthetic preoccupations of the *Sturm and Drang* movement" (153). Angus Nicholls, *Goethe's Concept of the Daemonic: After the Ancients* (New York: Camden House, 2006), 142-66.

accelerating change," citing Werther's "powerful vision" in the letter from 18 August: "There is no moment that does not consume you and yours, no moment in which you are not, must be, a destroyer."[30] Werther gives voice to the idea of the new; at the same time, he also worries about this unsettling effect produced by modernity, and therefore sees an antagonistic relationship between the subject and modernity. In a sense, there seems to be a need for Werther to transcend the inevitable change by becoming *ironically* a destroyer (whose acts of destruction incite changes) as well. Whether or not Werther succeeds in doing so is another matter, but it seems to me that a close reading of Werther's aesthetic experiences could give us clues as to how the rest of the Werther collection plays out and how the editorial decisions are reached despite the obvious contradictions as discussed above.

What does seem recurrent in the *Werther* collection, though, is the continuing effort to keep Werther and Werther's text intact within an aesthetically motivated idealism, so that what we might call a certain textual purity can be maintained. Even his love Lotte is preserved in such a way:

> How her whole heart and soul are in it, you see, and her body is all harmony, so

[30] Schreiber, 195. He also offers a brilliant analysis of the linguistic structure surrounding the above-mentioned quote. At the end, "the language of Werther's letter thereby enacts the very process of transformation which it depicts" (201).

> carefree and relaxed, as if there were nothing else, as if she had not a single other thought or sensation; and, in that moment, undoubtedly everything else ceases to exist for her (40).

Lotte becomes the symbol of purity in the novel—"she is perfection itself," Werther tells Wilhelm (36)—and Werther continues to draw from this idea of a singular, harmonious moment. There is a tendency in Werther's letters to emphasize not only his uniqueness but also his uncontaminated feeling. Indeed, Werther tells Wilhelm, "my heart is mine and mine alone" in response to the Prince's appreciation of his ability (86). Werther insists that the letters themselves alone provides the only way to know his heart. Following this cue, the editor provides the readers a unified version of *Werther*.

Werther does give readers the impression throughout that he desires a moment of purity. For example, he describes several sublime moments he has in Wahlheim and repeatedly comments on the circumstances:

> Before our souls lies an entire and dusky vastness which overwhelms our feelings as it overwhelms our eyes, and ah! We long to surrender the whole of our being, and be filled with all the joy of one single, immense, magnificent emotion (44).

In a similar way, Werther's heart contains "immense and ardent feeling for living Nature" and it is "overwhelmed with so great a joy" (65). Just as his passion for Lotte indicates

unequivocal desire, so Werther's unadulterated vision seems equally potent. There always seems to be a moment like this that dictates Werther's way of life, attempting to transcend the corruptions of the material world. In another letter, he tells Wilhelm that "the heart alone is the source of our happiness" (59). The heart may be corrupted, as his 16 July letter suggests, but it is also his source of imagination with which he can maintain his idealistic view about himself.[31] Very early on we realize that Werther would, for example, "withdraw into [himself] and discover a world, albeit a notional world of dark desire rather than one of actuality and vital strength" (31).

The priority of the heart and its imaginative power to maintain a pure condition can be seen in various forms in the letter collection. Werther recounts another sublime moment in the second letter. Confessing his inability to represent the moment adequately—"not a single line"—he admits that he has "never been a greater painter" (26). The sublime in Nature is beautiful in a self-evident fashion, but that does not mean that it is easily or necessarily communicable. Werther seems to suggest that what is contained in the heart alone is enough to withstand the encroachment of the real world and he alone has the kind of imaginative capacity.[32] This idea of mental painting is

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[31] In the *16-July Letter*, Werther recounts his experiences of accidental intimacy with Lotte. He indicates that the mere thought of Lotte can itself be constituted as impure and corrupted.

[32] Discussing Goethe's English influence, Nicholas Boyle lists one of the reasons for Goethe's eventual distancing from Shakespeare is because Goethe's "infinitely refined yet omnipresent subjectivity is

pursued in a curious way a few letters later:

> What I told you [Wilhelm] recently concerning painting is doubtless also true of poetry: what counts is that one perceives excellence and dares to give it expression.... Today I witnessed a scene which, if written down plainly and exactly, would be the loveliest idyll the world has ever seen; but why trouble with poetry and scenes and idylls? Must we go tinkering about with Nature before we can enjoy it? (35-6).

For Werther, once nature is preserved in his heart, it should not be represented again through words and brushes. Poetry and paintings can only be a corrupted version of nature and never the true form, while his perception alone is enough to transcend corruptions and retain the purity of nature. The idea of mental painting is furthered when he wants to give Wilhelm a detailed description of the farmer's "*pure* affection" (35; emphasis mine):

> Indeed, I should need the gifts of the greatest of poets if I were also to describe his expressive gestures, the harmony of his voice and the secret fire in his eyes, to any effect. No, there are no words for the tenderness that was in his entire being, his

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threatened by the remorseless objectivity of Shakespeare's all-penetrating sympathy" (8). Werther presents an unbounded romantic view of himself, whereas for Shakespeare there is no privileged subjectivity. Nicholas Boyle and John Guthrie, eds. *Goethe and the English-Speaking World* (Rochester: Camden House, 2002).

every expression; everything I could say would only be crude (35).

Werther admires the farmer's force of love, which once ignited, can only be all-encompassing, akin to the sublime feeling that Werther possesses later. He does not think that his words could do justice to the "ardent longing of such *purity*" (emphasis mine 35). And all he can and should do is to "relive it in my inmost soul," suggesting not only a moment of mutual feeling but also the proximity of his soul to a higher ideal, a state of transcendence which befits such purity. What is more, only the farmer, being the one who is closest to his professed love and is the lover himself, can see exactly the love as it is. Musing about describing the farmer's mistress to Wilhelm, Werther, on second thought, refuses to do so because it is better for Wilhelm to "see her with the eyes of her lover" (36). He goes on to suggest that "perhaps she would not appear to my own eyes as she does now, and why should I ruin the beautiful image I have?" (36). Werther's argument is two-fold. Only lovers in love can have the true sight of each other; and being the outsider, love can only be felt by Werther, lest it should be "ruined." For Werther, beauty and love can only be kept in their pure form—in an authentic moment—in the heart.

To avoid the collapse of his ideal world, Werther warily warns against possible degradations in his aesthetic judgment. But if writing for Werther is necessarily

corrupting, how does he convey this idea of the mental writing? How does he write about the impossibility of the indescribable? To solve these problems and avoid the impasses of paradox, Werther frequently worries about the relationship between writing and purity. Acknowledging that his letters tend to be digressive, Werther attempts to introduce Lotte to Wilhelm in the 16 June letter, but ends up confessing that "if I go on like this you will know as much when I am through as you did at the start" (36). Writing is not only digressive and sometimes meaningless; it can also be fictive and omissive. Werther opens his 19 June letter with

> I no longer recall where I had got to in my story the other day...if I had had you here to talk to, instead of writing, I might well have kept you up until daybreak (43).

While writing is the general means of sharing information, it always seems less reliable than orality, which is of course closer to the heart. And writing would be insufficient, if not opaque; or as Werther ponders, "How can these cold, dead words on the page convey the divine flowering of her spirit?" (71). Werther seems to constantly question the validity of writing, allowing him to keep a safer distance when it is necessary. Therefore instead of writing the things he wants to share, he chooses to remain silent in order to either show a kind of writing that is almost like mental writing or indicate textual aposiopesis:

And what distresses me, Wilhelm, is that Albert does not seem as happy as—he hoped—or as I—should have expected to be—if—I do not care for all these dashes, but there is no other way I can express this—and I imagine this is clear enough (95).

The multiple dashes in that sentence make it really difficult to understand the actions and meanings conveyed; but importantly, Werther might just be using the dashes to indicate "the rest," a kind of omission.[33] Therefore he imagines "this is clear enough" because some things just cannot be described, just like the mental pictures that only exist in his mind. That is why Werther has to constantly tell Wilhelm "if I only I could describe it to you" (101, 91), since writing as an extension of the mental picture can no longer be dependable. Similarly, orality is no exception. Using his story with the children as an allegory of writing, Werther muses,

Sometimes I have to invent a detail, which I forget in the second telling, whereupon they instantly tell me it was different the time before.... It taught me that when an author writes a second, revised version of his story it must needs be bad for the book,

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[33] From a different angle, Roland Barthes provides similar comments on Werther's writings in his *Lovers' Discourse*: "the amorous subject wonders, not whether he should declare his love the loved being...but to what degree he should conceal the turbulences of his passion: his desires, his distresses: in short, his excesses" (41). Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, translated by Ricard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 41-7. Although this is not necessarily applicable to all love letters, Barthes does point out that Werther's love is always portrayed in a controlled manner, so that there is a congenial state between what he writes and who he is. But what is worth further investigation is the discrepancy between the number of letters he sends to Lotte and the number he sends Wilhelm. Does that suggest that in order to show his excessive love to Lotte, he has to always conceal his excesses? This seems to merit further investigation.

however great the poetic improvement. (64)

For Werther, who is clearly obsessed with essence and purity, even a few improvised details would be considered corrupting, despite their poetic improvement. Werther carefully lays out what should have been and what should not have been done in terms of letter writing to ensure that his textual existence remains congenial to his own life.

In a sense, Werther's letters become a critical index for writing letters and writing in general.[34] It is no wonder that the editor would be repeating Werther's aesthetic instructions in his own editorial decisions. In the Werther collection, Werther constantly reveals Wilhelm's absence by reminding him, "You should have seen...."[35] Conversely, Werther projects Lotte as his interlocutor in his 20-January Letter: "I hear you say" (78). Indeed, in Werther's own letters, he controls everything in them.[36] He does not yet possess the capability to access the character's mind—or else it would not be a letter; yet he is on the verge of doing so, at least pointing out such tendency.

But it is here that one starts to see the crumbling of Werther's idealized textual world. For if these moments of intersubjectivity are possible, they are also denied by Werther.

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[34] Bruce Duncan's chapter on "Goethe, Werther, Reading, and Writing" documents an array of essays and books on the topic. In particular, he talks about the role of editor in *Werther* as interpreted by various critics. Bruce Duncan, *Goethe's Werther and the Critics* (Rochester: Camden House, 2005), 107-33.

[35] There are multiple references to this in *Werther* (46, 51).

[36] This is certainly related to Werther's idea of the sublime. In the *18-August Letter*, Werther recounts his experience of the sublime as god-like: "I felt as if I had been made a god in that overwhelming abundance, and the glorious forms of infinite Creation moved in my soul, giving it life."

After all, he is the one who claims that "it is never easy for men to understand each other in this world" (64). And despite his effort of making Lotte the symbol of purity, and therefore placing her only in the realm of the ideal, Werther also has this lingering physical connection to Lotte. He ends his first letter to Lotte (although we know that he has probably already been corresponding with Lotte given the tone and the length of the letter/note) reminding Lotte about his love for her:

> One thing, though: if I might ask you not to use sand to dry to notes you write me...? Today I raised it hastily to my lips, and was left a gritty crunching in my teeth (55-6).

Werther is referring to his fetishistic relationship to Lotte's note. What is more, it reminds the readers once again that the letters in *Werther* are not just words, but also possess a physical presence of their own. In another letter, in order for Werther to retrace "the memory of those happy, irrecoverable days," Werther has been kissing Lotte's bow "a thousand times over" (68). The physical presence of Lotte is always substituted, just like Werther's heart, which is always extenuated. Even though Werther tries to maintain a platonic type of love with Lotte, the material world that he vehemently warns against will always get in the way.[37]

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[37] Werther even develops a fetishistic relationship with Lotte's pistol he borrows to end his life. In his final

As for his prioritizing of orality instead of the written, he also often contradicts himself. He warns Wilhelm about the "second telling," yet he repeatedly falls into the habits of "telling" Wilhelm stories that he has heard from other people. After telling a story that he hears from Lotte, he turns around and writes, "Those are her words! But oh, Wilhelm, who can repeat what she said!" (71). Werther seems to suggest that once stories get to be retold, they become bad copies themselves. Given such a perspective, one might say that many of Werther's letters fall into the same category of a bad copy of the original, unable to preserve the purity and authority of the originating sentiment. Despite Werther's conviction that he will not resort to "second telling," he often digresses into this mode. Several of his letters rely on his ability to retell another's story or to retell others telling the story. And despite his assurance in the 4 September letter that the story about the farmer has not been "exaggerated or in any way embroidered," Werther still has to tell Wilhelm: "If only I can show you the man as he stood before me, as he still stands before me! If only I could tell it as it ought to be told" (91). The lingering problem of second telling will always compromise Werther's letters, and eventually catch up with his ideal of epistolary purity.

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letter, he writes, "they have been through your hands, you wiped the dust off them, I kiss them a thousand times, you touched them!" (131).

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By now it should be clear that the editorial rearrangement of the *Werther* ending derives largely from Werther's aesthetic desire to transcend the excesses of writing. And with all the careful additions and omissions by the editor, Werther's letter collection remains a sort of pastiche, in terms of the mixture of genres, voices, and aesthetic ideals. But perhaps one of the biggest problems of Werther's aspiration and its impact is yet to be answered, if we look at the idea of second telling from a different angle. Indeed, there is always a problem of second order feeling throughout the novel, for midway through the narrative, we learn that there is a "diary" that Werther keeps. He tells Wilhelm,

> I am astounded to see how I went ahead in all this, step by step, in full awareness of what I was doing! How clearly I saw my position, and yet how childishly I behaved; and I still see it clearly now, and yet there is no sign of improvement (58).

The presence of the diary reminds us that, with *Werther*, the letter always has a counterpart in the diary. Or maybe it is the other way around. We of course have no way of telling which one is written first, and the line between the letter and diary is already thin, as Pamela's diary entries attest.[38] Yet, the haunting image of the diary keeps reminding us that the Werther letters themselves *derive* from somewhere else, even if

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[38] The second half of *Pamela* mostly consists of Pamela's letters to her parents originally recorded in her diary.

they are chosen by the editor to show a certain credibility of the Werther account. In a sense, if Werther keeps a diary as a kind of reference to his letters, now the editor uses Werther's letters only as a kind of reference to the ending of *Werther*. They are already bad copies and fail to maintain the kind of aesthetic purity demanded by Werther.

And this realization that the letters in *Werther* are already corrupted proves to be most destabilizing and detrimental to Werther's epistolary ideals. Even if Werther had abided by his own aesthetic rules and had never been representing events at a second remove, these letters will never befit Werther's ideal. Sent by Werther, strayed from their original author, and possessed by the addressees, they are only by chance—"I have diligently collected everything," the editor reminds us—returned to the Werther Collection. They never are meant for the editor to collect, and they are never just references for the editor to "retell" what happens. If anything, the one-man narrative of Werther keeps reminding us of the missing half: if the editor has indeed diligently collected everything, why is it that those letters received by Werther are never shown?[39] What is the reason behind the editorial ellipsis? What is it that makes them un-Werther-like and therefore becomes unfit for *Werther*? It seems to me that *Werther*

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[39] The editor provides us with the only reference in *Werther* that might give us a clue as to where these letters might be. He tells us in the third-person narrative that Werther "sorted out his papers, tore up a great deal and threw it into the stove, and sealed a number of bundles which he addressed to Wilhelm" (131). While these letters might be lost to the fire, but it seems to me that these "papers" specifically refers to Werther's own writing, not the letters he receives from Wilhelm or Lotte.

therefore ironically tells us how even the best efforts to keep epistolary novels "pure," whatever that might mean, and free of contaminating elements can end up becoming a story about the letter's multiplicity. As we move on into the concluding chapter, we have to wonder if the epistolary novel proves to be so persevering, why does it come to a sudden decline in the early nineteenth century? If the epistolary novel is always bound up with a mixture of genres, why do we still need it? Why do we still feel there is something unsatisfactory about the third-person narrator that the Editor adopts? If excess is in the essence of the epistolary novel, how do we mark a true decline from another?

Frankenstein's Mutilated Texts and Fate of the Letter

I

Numerous literary critics tell the same story about the fate of the eighteenth-century epistolary novel: the epistolary novel wanes, both in production and popularity, as it moves into the nineteenth-century. Frank Black's pioneering study on the late eighteenth-century epistolary novel reveals the gradual decline of the epistolary novel and suggests that it has something to do with the "types of novels coming into popularity at the close of the century."[1] Franco Moretti's *Graphs, Maps, Trees* painstakingly tracks the production and popularity of distinct novel types and comes to the conclusion that like many other novel genres in the eighteenth century, the epistolary novel follows a similar thirty-year span of ebb and flow, meeting its end toward the end of the eighteenth century.[2] Elizabeth Cook shows us that as the Enlightenment comes to a gradual end, we find the expulsion of the letter from the literary dominance it once enjoys.[3] Others notice the formal features of the epistolary novel, suggesting that it is the insistence on the letter

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[1] Frank Gees Black, *The Epistolary Novel in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Eugene: University of Oregon Monographs, 1940), 108.Without much explanation, Black treats John Cleland's *Fanny Hill* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as epistolary novels. It seems to me that the extensive uses of the letter in the novel should be an indicator of an epistolary novel.

[2] Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* (New York: Verso, 2005). Please see his first chapter for more details on the life-span of literary genres.

[3] Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook, *Epistolary Bodies: Gender and Genre in the Eighteenth-Century Republic of Letters* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 171-2.

form that eventually hinders the progress of eighteenth-century epistolary novels. One thing is for sure, as the epistolary novel transits into the nineteenth century, it does not produce the kind of immediate eighteenth-century sensations we see with *Pamela*, *Julie* or *Werther*. As this dissertation comes to an end, I will try to answer two other lingering questions that might further help us understand the implication of epistolary novel's excess and its seeming decline. What is it that makes the epistolary novel no longer appealing in the eyes of nineteenth-century readers and authors? What becomes of the epistolary form when the history of the novel begins to privilege high realism in the nineteenth century? This chapter will use Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, a seemingly non-epistolary novel, as a point of departure for considering the submergence of the epistolary novel in the nineteenth century and the fate of the letter's apparent ability to adapt as its quality of excess suddenly disappears.

II

While rarely thought of as a novel-of-letters, there is something epistolary in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* that reminds us of one, and especially those we have discussed so far.[4] *Frankenstein* has a framed letter structure in which the diegesis itself

[4] Readers tend to focus on Dr. Frankenstein's narrative instead of seeing it as a letter or a series of letters.

morphs into its back-frame letters without a proper distinction, much like *Shamela*. Like the editor and Werther in *Werther*, Frankenstein also expresses concern about his own narrative and therefore avows to Captain Walton, "I would not that a *mutilated* one [i.e. letter] should go down to posterity" (emphasis mine 207).[5] Significantly, Frankenstein's monster gradually structures his identity and values by reading Goethe's *Werther*. Goethe's novel utilizes a mixture of genres and voices that *Frankenstein* will come to resemble, suggesting that Shelley is drawing upon a familiar repertoire of epistolary gestures. Lastly, as I discussed in the Goethe chapter, we have another eponymous epistolary hero (Frankenstein) who cannot end his own narrative except through Walton's letters at the end. But what decidedly makes *Frankenstein* non-epistolary, however, is the lack of correspondence at the principle diegetic level: in other words, Dr. Frankenstein does not recount the story using an epistolary form. For the same reason, many novels have perhaps letters addressing the editor or an author's letter as a preface or forward, but they would not be considered epistolary.[6] Such distinction may seem arbitrary and

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Frankenstein can be a Gothic novel, a romantic novel, a proto science fiction, but rarely do people talk about *Frankenstein* as an "epistolary novel." What this indicates is that readers or critics are perfectly fine with not acknowledging *Frankenstein*'s epistolarity. After all, even though one may treat Dr. Frankenstein's narrative as embedded in Captain Walton's frame letters, Dr. Frankenstein's story lack the kind of formal epistolary feature, not even the kind of self-reflexivity as in *Werther*.

[5] All references to *Frankenstein* will be in parenthesis. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2003).

[6] *Frankenstein* has been recognized by a few critics as an epistolary novel, although we aren't always told why, just as we aren't always told why *Frankenstein* is not an epistolary novel. *Epistolary Histories* mentions *Frankenstein* as an epistolary novel that traces the English anxiety about otherness. Black lists

contingent, but it may be necessary to think through such distinctions when one is pursuing the history of a form or genre.

Yet as the reader continues to read and finishes Dr. Frankenstein's main narrative, he or she comes to the realization that the main narrative itself is also a kind of letter or, better, a series of narratives nested in an epistolary correspondence. After all, like many of the letters we have seen before, Frankenstein is telling the story from a first-person perspective similar to Werther's. Even the Monster has his own "I" narrative with the whole chapters devoted to the Monster alone.[7] Moreover, the Monster's story is treated as embedded narration, as his account is framed with quotation marks. As Clare Brant points out, eighteenth-century correspondence is often compared to conversations between parties.[8] They could potentially become or resolve into letters, as we have demonstrated before in the letter/note dynamic. That there is a complex narrative dimension to *Frankenstein* should not be overlooked. Indeed none of the narrators here have complete control over their own words: Walton's letters are sent to his sister while he is at sea; Frankenstein's words are kept by Captain Walton in a journal (22); and finally, the

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Frankenstein as an epistolary novel. What makes it epistolary, however, is not clear. Amanda Gilroy and W. M. Verhoeven, eds. *Epistolary Histories: Letters, Fiction, Culture* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 13.

[7] Chapter XI to XVI are narrated entirely by the Monster, although this is transcribed by Victor Frankenstein in the body of his narrative-letter.

[8] Clare Brant, *Eighteenth-Century Letter and British Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 21-4.

Monster's self-narrative has to be transmitted by Frankenstein. Like the modernist aesthetics a century later, Shelley has shown an experimental side on her novel, in which she is very much aware of the presentation on form.[9] We have seen a gradual transition from the letter genre, to a self-narrative, to a narrative within a narrative and one can already see the difficulty in maintaining a clear-cut boundary between forms of discourse. In many ways, *Frankenstein* is as much a narrative composite as its Monster is a corporeal one, and thus it presents us with a stark example of the fraught nature of epistolary excess.

Still, there is something decidedly epistolary about *Frankenstein.* In the first ensuing letter in the back frame, Walton admits to his sister that

> you have read this strange and terrific story, Margaret (206).

For most of the novel, we "hear" the narrations of Dr. Frankenstein and the Monster. We might even pretend to "peep" into Captain Walton's journal when we read the chapters.[10] Shelley arranges the central narratives as "chapters" instead of a series of letters enclosed in Captain Walton's frame letters. But what we read for most of the novel is also "sent" by Walton to his sister. That there is a letter or a series of letters pertaining to Dr.

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[9] Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is a good example of the modernistic awareness of form. Like *Frankenstein*, it also has an outside narrator retell the story of Marlow retelling the story of Kurtz. Everything therefore is layered and the "meaning" of the story therefore lies not solely in the content but in the form as well.

[10] Captain Walton records this strange tale in his journal (22).

Frankenstein's story marks the condition of all letters, or indeed, of all texts: for if Dr. Frankenstein's story is at once his story and Walton's letter, then perhaps any narrative is potentially a missing letter, a narrative double that could have been written yet is nonetheless repressed—note that these central chapters are never written in the letter form nor are they taken to be one. Like Derrida's idea of "différance" in which the word difference gains primacy only through a simultaneous omission (oblivion) of its other différance (both words have the same pronunciation in French), *Frankenstein*'s highlighting of textual doubleness also calls into question any self-presence in which a letter's supposedly transparent self is no longer assured and that arbitrary divisions cannot sustain themselves. In this sense, Frankenstein's suggests that the epistolary novel can often be passed for other genres.

There is more to this complication. Shelley's use of narrative frames suggests some narrative excesses are inherent in all epistolary genres. In fact, *Frankenstein* is a novel readily concerned with excess and epistolary miscommunication. The last chapter of the main narrative, for example, morphs into a letter without any warning, and thus blurs the line between the supposed main narrative and the back frame. Indeed, this theme of the dynamic interactions between the novel's frame and its main narrative is carried out at several junctures in the novel: if we are to read the Frankenstein story told

through Dr. Frankenstein's point of view, then we also have to take into account the fact that the story depends on its status as Walton's letter. In other words, Walton is needed as the witness to the main narrative. Conversely, the monster's story as told by Dr. Frankenstein also forms an inner correspondence with the main narrative. In this sense, the monster's story as narrated from Dr. Frankenstein's perspective cannot be a settled story because of their antagonistic relationship. Moreover, Walton now becomes the unwitting addressee of the Monster's letters. These layered texts therefore resist any easy categorization. Marshall Brown has noted in his *Gothic Texts* that the "gothic of *Frankenstein* is thus defined by its disjunctness. Whatever the "consistency" of its internal narrative, the story as a whole lacks continuity."[11] He goes on to suggest that Shelley composes *Frankenstein* like a child's tale, and in many ways it consists of "incoherence" and "broken form."[12] However we read *Frankenstein* then depends on its contiguous narrative frames without a definitive formal anchor to stabilize the story. In other words, the letter/narrative dynamic creates a metonymic effect in which each narrative gains meaning only through being adjacent to each other. If this is the case, then the reader's expectation of the letters' ostensible self-dependence as tools of communication also seems questionable. In fact, despite addressing his sister back in

[11] Marshall Brown, *The Gothic Text* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 190.
[12] Brown, 200.

England in the opening letters, the use of her as an addressee comes to be less and less obvious. Unlike the previous letters, the fifth letters, for instance, does not have the numbering V, and it does not have any addressee. It can also be read either as a real letter which has no addressee, or as another entry within the fourth letter. Or it can simply be an addendum or an accidental note. In a sense, this letter functions like the main narrative, recounting events and awaiting chances of correspondence. Similarly, the letters in the back frame do not have any particular addressee as Walton does not name the addressee at the beginning of each letter.

That these letters should start to lose their function or meaning need not come as a surprise. After all, *Frankenstein* is a hybrid text with an incoherent form. But more importantly, it also concerns itself about the creation of monstrosity.[13] Indeed, what makes the Monster monstrous is not its horrible deeds or the constant references to being "daemonic"; rather it is the Monster's doubleness inherent in its "detested form" (99). It is not just that the Monster is the doppelganger of Dr. Frankenstein—after all, the Monster's narrative cannot survive without Dr. Frankenstein's account and Dr. Frankenstein's inclusion of the Monster's narrative authenticates his own confessions.[14]

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[13] Frankenstein is the "author" of the Monster, just like Shelley is the author of *Frankenstein* (89).

[14] They always chase each other, and literally become double-gangers, or double-walkers. For more details on the idea of gothic doubles, please see Aya Yatsugi's Website. Aya Yatsugi, "The Double in Gothic Romance: A Study of *The Monk*, *Frankenstein*, 'William Wilson,' *The Strange Case of Dr Jeckyll and Mr*

Rather it is the Monster's ambivalent body that produces doubled affects on Dr. Frankenstein:

> How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful!--Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips (55).

The reader's reaction is probably similar to that of Dr. Frankenstein: "How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch?" After all, Dr. Frankenstein never really explains why the Monster is monstrous physically based on what he has given us here in this passage. On the contrary, the evidence of the opposite is more prevalent. The Monster is "beautiful," and is combined from "these luxuriances." We can therefore only surmise that it is the very fact of the Monster's hybrid condition that makes

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Hyde, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*" <http://www.ube-k.ac.jp/~yatsugi/r-yatsugi.pdf> (30 July 2009). For Ronald Thomas, "The monster desires society, discourse, and integration as Frankenstein flees them. The effect of Frankenstein's narrative is to indict him as that of the monster exonerates him. Frankenstein's story only confirms the very thing that he tries to deny in it: the self cannot be divided; the monster is himself." Ronald Thomas, "In the Company of Strangers: Absent Voices in Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and Beckett's *Company*," *Modern Fiction Studies* Volume 32, Number 2 (1986): 166-7.

it monstrous and dangerous. Moreover, Dr. Frankenstein has seen the Monster before and after his coming to life. Again, witnessing the Monster's status from immobility to mobility, from inaction to action, from death (the Monster consists of dead body parts) to life, he does not see any change in the Monster's physicality. Now, he suddenly decides to renounce his identification with his own creation and instead embrace an antagonistic relationship with the Monster, almost in an amnesiac manner. It is the Monster's ability to simultaneously evokes different feelings—one serene and canny, and the other one abject—in Frankenstein that marks its dangerous excess; not just the Monster's incompatibility to any categorization but also its incommensurability to any reasonable explanation. Frankenstein's bewilderment is also ours because like Frankenstein, we are also at loss with the hybrid body of *Frankenstein*.

Thus, what makes the Monster monstrous (not in any sense negative) is its hybridity, wherein something should come to be more than itself and not from any single source. While *Frankenstein* seems to always depend on Walton's single framed voice—whether they are his journal, notes, letters, or his final narration of his encounter with the Monster—it is nonetheless multiple in essence, the *Frankenstein* narrative mirroring the Monster's patchwork body. This seems even more obvious in one of the final scenes:

> Frankenstein discovered that I made notes concerning his history: he asked

> to see them, and then himself corrected and augmented them in many places; but principally in giving the life and spirit to the conversations he held with his enemy. "Since you have preserved my narration," said he, "I would not that a mutilated one should go down to posterity" (207).

Just like the way he attempts to create and control the Monster's body, Dr. Frankenstein is still trying to give "life and spirit" into *Frankenstein* so as to make it a unified whole—"I would not that a mutilated one should go down to posterity." Still, both attempts fail, because the body of *Frankenstein* is also a patchwork like the Monster. As Frankenstein further reveals, the main narrative so far only consists of "notes" that potentially can be "corrected and augmented," and thus entail other narratives, further complicating the line between notes and narratives. Indeed, even after these affirmations, these fragments can never amount to the *whole* story. In other words, as a reader, one is reading the central narrative as a copy void of its original and as a letter without its addressee. In a sense, Dr. Frankenstein does have to worry about his textual existence as manifested in the notes, as it is already "mutilated": his identity is dispersed throughout the notes, and therefore among the letters, whose addresser and addressee are always a question mark already.

III

As we can see in Dr. Frankenstein's reaction to Monster's piecemeal body, epistolary genres can contain a narrative desire that is at once in a form of repulsion and attachment. Even at its popular height, *Pamela* is Richardson's ideological project for the well-mannered genre and bourgeois morality, as well as "an affront to all that is fixed, uniform, lapidary."[15] What is at stake here in *Frankenstein* is the epistolary doubleness that "demystified supposed natural distinctions and categories" that the eighteenth century has come to embody.[16] Elizabeth MacArthur provides another argument that since "the epistolary novel is one of the most important eighteenth-century narrative forms associated with play on meaning rather than the establishment of a fixed, authoritative significance," the nineteenth century starts to see it as a threat to a "more unified, static social system."[17] According to MacArthur, critics until recently tended to consider "the eighteenth-century novel, and in particular the epistolary form, primarily as either an obstacle or a development in a mighty progress toward its more perfect descendant in the nineteenth century."[18] In this sense and ironically the epistolary form

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[15] Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), 136.

[16] Castle, 136.

[17] Elizabeth J. MacArthur, *Extravagant Narratives: Closure and Dynamics in the Epistolary Form* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 23, 17. She also suggests that the epistolary text forces us to "challenge closural theories of narrative" so often stemmed from the nineteenth-century fiction (15).

[18] MacArthur, 11. In her *Epistolary Responses*, Ann Bower notes that for its readers, the twentieth-century epistolary novel is encumbered by its structure. Ann Bower, *Epistolary Responses: The Letter in 20th-Century American Fiction and Criticism* (London: The University of Alabama Press, 1997), 10.

has to disappear, just like the *Frankenstein*/Monster's patchwork body has to be recognized as horror instead of the beautiful in order for *Frankenstein* to be passed for a "perfect descendent." Furthermore, as Thomas O. Beebee observes, as the epistolary form "no longer held the same fictional and ideological power" for nineteenth-century writers, they are "forced to find ways of neutralizing or parodying epistolary form, of employing the letter in new ways."[19] The appearance of the letter as a device in Sir Walter Scott's or Jane Austen's novels becomes what Beebee terms "the ghost of epistolarity," because their novels still retain the features that eighteenth-century epistolary novelists use.[20] The appearance of the letter turns into a kind of textual haunting, but the letter lives on in a marginal role.

Finally, by offering this reading of *Frankenstein*, I hope to point out a possible link between the rise of realism and the temporary disappearance of epistolary novels in the nineteenth century. Despite *Frankenstein*'s non-epistolary nature, the letter keeps coming back, forcing us to recognize that its temporary disappearance might just be another façade. After all, if the epistolary novel tends to be excessive with its mixture of genres, then it is befitting for it to be more and more so as the epistolary novel necessarily

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[19] Thomas O. Beebee, *Epistolary Fiction in Europe 1500 – 1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 170.
[20] Beebee, 169.

exhausts itself. *Werther* mostly follows a single voice without a normal addressee. Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778), in this regard, sacrifices the narrative obliqueness of epistolarity—the way events are reported according to Janet Altman—for a more linear plotline.[21] Evelina's letters that address the same character consecutively will be marked as "Evelina in continuation" as if these letters create a linear temporality. This dissolution of letter genre echoes Cook's idea that

> Obviously, the epistolary novel did not vanish at the end of the eighteenth century. Its rhetorical strategies and generic conventions were incorporated, albeit in fragmented form, into first- and third- person narrative types.[22]

Cook lists the enclosure of letters in the nineteenth-century novel as an example of such "fragmented form." We might even recall from our discussions in epistolary fragments in previous chapters, that a certain paradoxical situation marks the essence of epistolarity: only when the letter is in its most fragmented state will it come to be an authentic letter. In this sense, *Frankenstein* becomes such a case of the nineteenth century epistolary novel: it has to be fragmented so as to be recognized as an epistolary novel. As a result, we can't speak of an end of epistolary genre, because it adopts other forms in order to

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[21] For Altman, "Letter narrative proceeds through a doubly oblique narration. Narrated events are always reported *by* someone *to* someone." Janet Gurkin Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a From* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), 207.

[22] Cook, 174.

continue its unruliness and its excess, just like the end of *Frankenstein* starts not with Walton's letters, but in another ambivalent state. Walton's final letter ends in such a way that it no longer looks like a letter (e.g. no self-reflection, no indication of his presence in the narrative as the monster gradually disappears), and these letters are attached to the chapters instead of the supposed back frame. For this, I would like to offer Derrida as the end of my postscript: "Mixture is the letter, the epistle, which is not a genre but all genres, literature itself."[23]

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[23] Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 48.