WOMEN WRITING MEN: GENRE, NARRATIVE AUTHORITY, AND "MIND WRITING" 1752-1817

By

Jessica Kane

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ABSTRACT

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I argue that women writers of the long eighteenth century used readers' expectations about genre to reimagine their forms through expanding the socially- and narratively-limited roles of female characters. My chapters demonstrate how the female protagonists in four different texts – Charlotte Lennox's *Female Quixote*, Frances Burney's *Evelina*, Elizabeth Inchbald's *Animal Magnetism,* and Jane Austen's *Persuasion* – take on the attributes of a narrator and author by creating both their male love interests and their stories through what I call "mind writing." "Mind writing" takes the "mind reading" of cognitive literary studies back to textuality, exploring the ways that one character asserts the thoughts, feelings, actions, or intentions of another in ways analogous to a narrator. "Mind writing" another character in these texts allows the protagonist to control where the story is going and what it is doing, ultimately allowing her to parallel the work of an author. The effect is both social and narratological, as these women characters transcend the usual definitions and limitations of both "woman" and "character." Since all four of my texts work within established genre logics and patterns, breaking these expectations via "mind writing" also means that readers must re-evaluate their own positions in relation to the text. Readers of genre fiction believe they know what they are getting when they pick up a text within that field, whether in the eighteenth century or today. By flipping the script on their readers Lennox, Burney, Inchbald, and Austen rewrite their audiences just as their female characters rewrite their stories. And because generic conventions often put the reader in a position of power, either because they can pass judgement on the characters or because they know something the characters do not, refashioning the genres puts readers in a subordinate position,

re-evaluating our assumptions about the stories, ourselves, and the world on which the story comments.

For my family, and for Heather

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Introduction: Genre and Gender

Readers use all kinds of shortcuts when we read, and one major shortcut is genre. A story called "romance" will end with happy relationships, one categorized as "crime" will likely have a dead body or twelve, one known as "sci-fi/fantasy" will have incomprehensible words and maybe a glossary at the end, and one in the "literary fiction" section will probably leave you feeling vaguely incomplete and a little sad (and is probably written by someone named Jonathan). Stories we cannot label bother us. The term "magical realism" came about in the twentieth century because we did not know what to do with a text that seemed like a cross of realistic fiction and fantasy. Audiences thought Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) was a travelogue when it was first published – a mistake for which they can be forgiven, as the title page claimed it to be the "Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner…Written by Himself – and were shocked to learn it was fiction. My introductory literature class spent a half-hour debating whether Harriet Jacobs' use of pseudonyms and her acknowledgement that she rearranged the order of some events in her autobiography *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) violated the definition of "autobiography." They eventually decided that even the most supposedly objective of texts leaves certain information out or organizes content it in a particular way, and so "autobiography" does not require the legal "whole truth" in order to be non-fiction. We could expect that everything written in the book actually happened, my students said, and thus it was still autobiography where other texts like James Frey's semi-fictionalized *Million Little Pieces* (2006) was not.

We do not use genre only to tell us what to expect from a story, we also use it to tell us a book's quality. "Literary fiction," as the name itself suggests, is an indicator of merit, since books so named are about characters and serious events rather than plot or amusement – they are

worthy of literary study. Romance, crime, and sci-fi/fantasy, along with other genres like inspirational, Western, and horror, are derided in part because they are primarily written to people already acquainted with the conventions. Genre fiction is escapist in its familiar narrative arcs and its focus on plot, such that (critics accuse) the characters are basically interchangeable. Such stories do not make you think, they just wrap you up in a comforting blanket of known plot points and predictable endings. While the field of literary studies is increasingly interested in popular literature, "genre fiction" is still often derided as formulaic, predictable, a guilty pleasure.

Reader in previous centuries were, if anything, even more concerned about the lack of merit present in genre fiction. But while our opinions of light reading have not markedly changed, the definition of "genre" certainly has. No one would walk into a bookstore or private library in the eighteenth century to find books carefully catalogued as "self-help," "mystery," "religion and spirituality," or even "fiction." Yet despite the lack of large-scale labeling, readers still had expectations of what a given book would be like. I will be using the word "genre" throughout this dissertation as a shorthand for these kinds of reader expectations, referring to the conventions a given story was expected to adhere to.

Though eighteenth-century derision and condemnation was often aimed at fiction of all kinds, out of a concern that emotional readers lacked the ability to discern between fiction and reality and would disastrously mimic what they read, the romance was especially worrying. And since women were the more emotional, less logical readers, it was their lack of discernment that caused the most anxiety. Women would get the wrong idea about how to conduct themselves in society, it was thought – they would have unrealistic expectations about themselves, their situations, and the men they met. Samuel Richardson famously had legions of female fans write

to beg him for a happy ending to *Clarissa* by reforming Lovelace and letting Clarissa end up with him. Richardson, wanting to make a moral point about the dangers of rakes, refused.

Despite general pearl-clutching over the dangers of light fiction, novels flourished in the eighteenth century. Particular genres and genre conventions developed, and it is precisely these conventions I argue some women writers used certain narrative techniques to challenge. I call these narrative techniques "mind writing," strategies through which one character writes another into being by declaring the other's thoughts, feelings, actions, speech, or intentions. Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752), Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778), Elizabeth Inchbald's *Animal Magnetism* (1788?), and Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (1817) each maintain the veil of their respective genres, and each end with the marriage(s) that readers then and now could see coming a few chapters in. But each also violates generic and gender conventions by putting their female protagonists in charge of who others characters are, how the story goes, and what the reader knows.

When I started this project I thought it was all about character. "Mind writing" is one character writing another, and thus it has implications for how we understand what a character is and how a character is different from a narrator or an author. And because I focus on texts where female characters actively write male ones, the power inversion this particular kind of "mind writing" involves thus critiques eighteenth-century gender expectations. Though I consistently described "mind writing" as a series of narrative strategies, it was not until I approached the end of the project that I figured out what those strategies are doing. They make social statements about women's authority and agency, yes, but their very presence within entirely standard eighteenth-century genres radically reshapes the genres, as well the readers' own understanding of self.

"Mind writing" is a narrative concept, one which draws on the work of narratologists and cognitive literary theorists, but it does not end there. This dissertation explores the way particular female-centric texts by particular women writers pushed at the boundaries of both genre and gender via "mind writing." The four texts I will discuss are not the sum total of "mind writing" examples, and the idea of one character writing or creating another is not specific to the eighteenth century, to female protagonists, or to generic rewriting. The Greek myth of Pygmalion and Galatea, for example, is one of a man literally sculpting his ideal version of a woman out of marble. The "reformed rake" storyline was very popular in the eighteenth century and involved an immoral, often sexually promiscuous man being re-created into a loving husband and upright member of society via the goodness and virtue of the woman he ultimately marries. Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) ended with the good-hearted titular servant girl married to her reformed employer. We also see in the eighteenth-century "pupil-mentor convention" another version of one character creating another in stories like Mary Davys *The Reform'd Coquet* (1724) and Jane Austen's *Emma* (1815), in which a decent and wise older man re-creates a good-hearted but foolish younger woman into a thoughtful and moral wife. These examples of one character creating another all reify social expectations around gender, and they do not deviate from the reader's expectations about what kind of story we are reading.

The textuality of "mind writing" explains why "writing" is part of the term, but what about "mind"? It sounds like something out of science fiction, connoting hypnotism, brainwashing, puppeteering. Or perhaps it is related to Locke's *tabula rasa,* the mind as a wax tablet waiting for an imprint. "Mind writing" is neither supernatural telepathy nor simple manipulation; instead, the use of "mind" connects the term to eighteenth-century debates about the relationship between brain and body, as well as more recent work by cognitive narratologists.

Characters who "mind write" take on the authority of narrator/author rather than remaining within the innermost "storyworld" (Margolin 273) level of the text, the place where the plot happens. In other words, they become more than characters – they know and do more than characters know and do. In "Omniscience for Atheists: Or, Jane Austen's Infallible Narrator" William Nelles outlines the "tools" authors use to indicate omniscience in their narrators, including "omnipotence, omnipresence, omnitemporality, and telepathy" (119), commenting "perhaps the [tool] we think of first, is…mind reading, the ability to narrate characters' thoughts and feelings" (121). Nelles claims narrators describe characters' thoughts and feelings via "mind reading," but other scholars use the same phrase and its reference to the capacity to discern another's inner life for concepts beyond a narrator.

Much of cognitive literary studies is interested in identifying examples of mind reading in literature. Lisa Zunshine defines mind reading as "ascrib[ing] to a person a certain mental state on the basis of her observable action" (Zunshine 6), like when we conclude that someone is thirsty if they take a drink of water. This understanding of mind reading originates in philosophy (in the work of Descartes, among others) and psychology (especially developmental psychology), but literary scholars including Lisa Zunshine, Susanne Keen, David Herman, and Blakey Vemeule have worked to apply it literature and the ways that characters understand and deduce things about one another. Characters mind read one another quite regularly in fiction and, as Zunshine and Vermeule have noted, we as readers mind read the characters in fiction just as we mind read other people in our own lives.

An example of mind reading helps us see both its relationship to "mind writing" and the ways in which it is very different. As one mind reading example, take the scene from Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) when Elizabeth Bennet visits her friend Charlotte and Charlotte's

husband Mr. Collins at their Hunsford parsonage. Mr. Collins, who is Elizabeth's cousin and rejected suitor, is an incredibly awkward and pretentious man, and the text notes "when Mr. Collins said anything of which his wife might reasonably be ashamed, which certainly was not unseldom, she [Elizabeth] involuntarily turned her eye on Charlotte. Once or twice she could discern a faint blush; but in general Charlotte wisely did not hear" (Austen *Pride and Prejudice* 183). The narrator does not, and does not have to, inform us "Charlotte is blushing because the blush is a physical reaction to feelings of embarrassment and we must therefore conclude that she does indeed feel ashamed of her husband's comments." Both Elizabeth and the reader are given enough information between the subjunctive "might reasonably be ashamed" and the recognition of a blush to conclude that Charlotte is indeed ashamed of the things her husband says – perhaps even of her husband generally – and everyone can be confident in that conclusion.

Mind reading is thus about interpretation, especially interpreting thoughts or feelings based on bodily clues. Mind and body are intertwined, one presuming the other. As Alan Palmer notes, "action and character are inexorably linked" (Palmer 124) and the boundaries between "individual minds and their context, between thought and action, and also, within minds, between different types of thought" (28) are remarkably blurry. But mind reading also assumes a kind of passivity. It is the work of clever observation, careful inspection, reaction, response. Reading another confers a certain amount of power – consider the importance of "tells" in competitive poker, where millions are won and lost because of a small physical movement another player can interpret. But it also depends on the other, and does not have to go any further than simple identification. The literary scholarship that focuses on mind reading often follows the same path, pointing out examples of minds represented in literature and discussing its

relationship to what cognitive science tells us about minds. I seek to build upon and reshape this work to consider the impact of how minds are created and represented in text.

"Mind writing," as I theorize it, goes beyond simply interpreting another's mental state, as we and Elizabeth do with Charlotte in the above example; "mind writing" instead writes another into being. It may therefore involve one character writing another's thoughts and feelings, which we usually associate with minds, but also (or alternately) their actions, or how we as readers are supposed to understand them. Actions and overall character judgements assume a mind just as much as thoughts and feelings - the same way that we cannot move our limbs or form words without the mind's involvement (however subconscious), we understand characters to also have minds behind everything they do and are. We therefore can look at the actions, thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and words of a "mind written" character as all indicative of who a character is and of how much they exhibit the handwriting (as it were) of the character doing the "mind writing."

The chapters that follow are steeped in the scientific, philosophical, cultural, and social conversations of the long eighteenth century, but I am primarily interested in how literature approached these conversations in a way that is distinctly literary. While they commented on real issues, were set in real places, and sometimes mimicked non-fiction modes of writing like letters, the four stories I discuss are inescapably textual. What happens, in what order, to whom, and by whom are thus all incredibly meaningful to our understanding of the text. The "narrative line" (Miller 20) as Paul Miller calls it, is what makes something a story rather than a cloud of information – first this happens, then that, then the other thing, and even if we wanted to know more about this or that idle comment, such content is not available to us. Narrative strategies like those under the umbrella of "mind writing" make use of this textuality, and do not necessarily

map directly onto women's lived experiences, historical or contemporary. This does not mean that "mind writing" has nothing to do with the "real world," however. These four texts intervene in discussions of hot topics like the relationship between the mind and the body, the role of different social classes, the place of women, and the effects of romance reading. "Mind writing" can suggest an expanded view of women's agency beyond the fictional world of a given story.

Alongside this social commentary is a direct commentary on the reader. We who read these stories are ourselves implicated in their project, since we think we know what we're getting into. The genre-bending that "mind writing" allows shows that we do not. And whether we are reading for pleasure or for study, the idea that the text is several steps ahead of us ought to make us rethink our apparently privileged position as consumers of information. Books can play on our assumptions in order to trick us, using the very definitions we have of genre to make us question how we label stories in the first place.

"Mind writing" is ultimately both descriptive and allusional. It plays off of "mind reading" as a term, referring to both contemporary and historical discussions of cognition and the way minds work. It indicates an active, creative process, one that emphasizes the parallels between characters and authors. It points to textuality, to the study of narrative and the written word. And it turns the critical lens we aim at texts back on the reader, forcing us to wrestle with the ways we partition out the world. Our shortcuts can lead us astray.

Chapter One explores a version of "mind writing" that is the easiest to grasp: one character dictating another's actions. Charlotte Lennox's *Female Quixote* is a gender-bent parody of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1612), and its protagonist Arabella believes the world is just like her collection of badly-translated medieval French romances. While most readers and critics see the novel as tracing the triumph of reason over romance, as it ends with Arabella settling into

proper British wifehood, I argue that Arabella uses "mind writing" to turn her love interest Mr. Glanville into a romance hero and her own life into a romance plot. She simply declares Glanville's feelings and behaviors – from fighting duels to recovering from deathly illness – and the narrative ensures that her declarations come true even as Glanville himself protests them. By the second half of the novel Glanville starts fighting duels and making hour-long speeches about Arabella on his own, while Arabella successfully postpones marriage to him in order to have her own adventures. By the end of the novel she has spent far longer than anyone expected refusing to get engaged, along with running away from home, talking with prostitutes, outwitting priggish society men, and nearly dying after jumping in the Thames. Though the story does end with her marriage to Glanville, it is a marriage on her terms and in keeping with her romantic notions: the text becomes a romance because Arabella wishes her story to be one. We as readers, meanwhile, must come to terms with the fact that we are reading a story of a woman making the world in her own image rather than a tale of a silly girl learning rationality.

Chapter Two continues with action-based "mind writing," exploring the performativity of this narrative authority by focusing on Elizabeth Inchbald's play *Animal Magnetism*. This farce involves a complicated false mind-control scheme to rescue the beautiful young Constance from her elderly quack of a guardian who wishes to marry her himself. The "mind writing" protagonist in this case is actually Constance's maid Lisette, who overturns social expectations of women and of servants in order to direct both the minds and bodies of the characters around her. Lisette becomes an author-like figure who literally writes Constance's thoughts for her in a letter, opens each act by announcing elements of the plot she has no reason to know, and successfully orders around nearly every other character in the story. Her ability to anticipate future plot events and assume the obedience of everyone around her is what allows the plot to unfold, and she

successfully gains both liberty and a husband while the play's ostensible primary storyline chugs along. Though *Animal Magnetism* satirizes the idea of mind control and encourages audiences to laugh at the guardian's absurd belief in mesmerism, Lisette in fact controls the whole play and the people in it with her words. The play uses the absurdity and spectacle of a farce in order to make clever social critiques, turning an amusing theatrical afterpiece into a radical political statement.

Chapter Three turns from an exteriorized, bodily form of "mind writing" to an interior one. In other words, where Arabella and Lisette dictated what others did, the protagonist of Frances Burney's *Evelina* dictates what others think and feel. Often read merely as a *Bildungsroman*, *Evelina* also demonstrates the tremendous creative authority of its young heroine by forbidding the reader any direct access to her love interest Lord Orville. Most epistolary novels put the reader in a position of superior knowledge by having each half of the central couple write letters to others, meaning that we know what each is thinking and planning. Inevitably the main characters misunderstand or trick one another, leaving the reader to yell "Just *talk* to one another already!" or "No, he's *lying* to you!" as conflicts ensue. By contrast, we only learn about Orville through Evelina's letters to her guardian. She literally writes Orville in her letters, and she decides how we or anyone else in the novel should understand him. The book centers Evelina's limited point of view, reminding us over and over that everything we know is filtered through her often-naïve perspective. But it is precisely that emphasized limitation that shows off her authority: we know we're only getting Evelina's take on Orville, but we do not have any other source of information. We, like the guardian who receives her letters, are forced to accept Evelina's word on Orville. Instead of putting the reader in possession of information the protagonist does not have, as epistolary novels traditionally do, *Evelina* subordinates us

repeatedly to its heroine. A single character's point of view becomes a source of agency and authority rather than undercutting it.

Chapter Four continues this interior "mind writing" by looking at Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, but where Evelina's authority comes from her clearly limited point of view, Anne Elliot's authority comes from blurring her role with that of the narrator. Put another way, Anne is authoritative because she speaks with a narrator's supposed objectivity while Evelina is authoritative because she speaks with her own emphasized subjectivity. Scholarship on Austen's use of free indirect discourse discusses the technique's blurring of character and narrator, but I argue Anne goes beyond narrating to actually rewriting her story. Numerous scholars have used Anne as an example of mind reading in literature, but on several occasions Anne describes how she decides to ignore the conclusions her observations of her love interest Frederick Wentworth should lead her to in favor of asserting something else altogether. By the end of the novel Anne violates the delayed recognition of love that comprises the story's emotional stakes, foretelling her upcoming marriage several chapters before the plot catches up to her. This supposedly realistic domestic fiction requires a profoundly unrealistic protagonist calling the shots. All romances have an element of idealized wish fulfillment, but *Persuasion* masquerades as plausible while relying on a female and profoundly textual character-narrator-author to make things happen.

Each chapter discusses a different way eighteenth-century women authors critiqued genre and gender expectations. Each can be read alone, but together they demonstrate the breadth of strategies that live under the umbrella of "mind writing." While the chapter order is roughly chronological, I do not intend to argue for an evolution of "mind writing." Instead, they show the different ways that social and narrative stakes are mutually constitutive – that challenging one

convention allowed these writers to challenge more. And above all, even as "mind writing" itself is inescapably literary, its impacts are very real. We as readers may think we are enjoying formulaic, escapist fiction, but "mind writing" catches us out. If we're wrong about what a genre means, what else is thrown into question? Especially for people who make their living studying literature, the idea that we might be tricked by something as pedestrian as genre fiction should be humbling. Over the past three years of this dissertation I have become more and more suspicious of the easy ways we label, categorize, and sometimes dismiss stories, even when we think we are being academic and discerning about it. As English literature moves away from strict periodization, as eighteenth-century studies considers women's experiments as well as their mastery of literary forms, as narratology and cognitive literary studies become less universalist and more attuned to different ways of telling a story, my project argues for the limits and possibilities of breaking the rules.

Chapter One | Romantic Authority in Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*

Introduction

About halfway through Charlotte Lennox's *Female Quixote* (1752) the protagonist Arabella and her suitor Mr. Glanville are out for a ride when Arabella "perceive[s] a Man at a little Distance, walking very composedly" (Lennox 154). Based on the precedent set by the romance novels she devours, in which heroines are frequently kidnapped and assailed by unknown men, she promptly decides that he is a "Ravisher" (155) coming to assault her. As she has come to this same conclusion about several men she has seen when out walking, on no greater evidence than their mere presence within her sight, both Glanville and the reader are skeptical that this "composedly" strolling man means her any harm. When Glanville declines her request that he immediately duel the man Arabella responds to the situation with high drama, demanding whether Glanville "want[s] Courage enough to defend me against that Ravisher" (156). She gallops off, declaring "nothing is so contemptible in the Eyes of a Woman, as a Lover who wants Spirit to die in her Defence" (156). Upon her departure, Glanville inquires fruitlessly to the departed heroine "who, in the name of Wonder, is going to molest you?" (156) and falls "a-cursing and exclaiming against the Books that had turned his Cousin's Brain" (156). In railing against the novels that have given Arabella a false understanding of reality Glanville acts out the standard response from both other characters and the reader when confronted by a quixotic character: the quixote is wrong and we all recognize it.

Upon meeting the supposed ravisher, however, Glanville does not maintain his previous dismissal of Arabella's claim that he must defend her. He instead responds to the other man's comments about Arabella's "ridiculous Folly" and fitness for an insane asylum by becoming "transported with Rage" (157) and hitting him with his riding crop. The man, named Mr. Hervey,

promptly draws his sword and the two briefly fight. This short duel is one of many instances in the story where Glanville complies with Arabella's demands or aligns himself with her worldview, becoming more and more the romance hero Arabella expects him to be. He defends Arabella's honor via physical combat precisely as she said he should, acting out her view of the world.

Arabella's successfully-exerted agency in this and other moments stands at odds with the genre of text she inhabits. The quixotic novel was popular in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries following the translation of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605) into English, and features an idealist protagonist whose understanding of reality is skewed due to reading too many books. Don Quixote believes himself a knight out to restore chivalry and fight for justice, while Arabella believes herself to be the heroine of daring romantic adventures. The quixotic novel's generic conventions assume that the reader, the narrator, and most or all of the other characters in the story (accurately) see the protagonist's worldview as false, and that readers in particular are "in on the joke" of the genre. In other words, readers are quickly and repeatedly made aware that we should not trust what a quixotic character says about the world, and much of our pleasure in reading comes from knowing more than the quixote about what is actually happening in the story. We are repeatedly presented with situations that we understand but the quixote misunderstands, and enjoy watching the fallout.

Perhaps the most famous example of this setup is the passage where Don Quixote tilts at windmills. The chapter begins "they perceived some thirty or forty windmills that are in that plain; and as soon as Don Quixote espied them, he said to his squire, '[…]look yonder, friend Sancho Panza, where you may discover somewhat more than thirty monstrous giants, with whom I intend to fight, and take away all their lives'" (Cervantes 59). The narrator informs us that Don

Quixote and Sancho Panza are looking at a field of windmills, while Don Quixote declares that they are instead looking at a field of giants. The reader is supposed to understand that of *course* the characters are looking at a field of windmills, and to laugh at this most recent example of Don Quixote getting things so amusingly wrong. Often, as in this example, it is the narrator who explicitly illuminates the gap between what is actually happening in the story and what the quixotic character believes – we read the narrator's statement that "they perceived some thirty or forty windmills," contrast that with Don Quixote's own statement calling the sight a field of giants, and believe the narrator. In the example from *Female Quixote* that opens this chapter we read the narrator's statement that Hervey is "walking very composedly," contrast that with Arabella's claim that he has come to ravish her, and believe the narrator (and thus Glanville). Within a few chapters of both *Don Quixote* and *Female Quixote* the reader understands that we ought to mistrust any claims about the world the titular protagonists might make.

Despite this generic expectation that we mistrust Arabella, however, she demands that the reader re-assess our position in relation to the story by establishing herself as a narratively powerful figure throughout. She exerts this authority through a collection of narrative strategies I call "mind writing," in which one character writes another into being – in Arabella's case, through declaring Glanville's actions and behavior. She regularly interprets situations in ways both Glanville and the reader know to be false, expects that Glanville will respond in a manner that is logical for her interpretation but not for reality, Glanville protests, and yet somehow he ends up doing what she said he would. Arabella's ability to "write" Glanville is part of her ability to "write" her own story as she creates her world in her own image and successfully lives in it. Her narrative control begins with Glanville but spreads outwards to ultimately put her in charge of the whole novel: he conforms more and more to her expectations of a romance hero

and thus the story conforms more and more to her expectations of a romance adventure. Rather than a constant tension between the world as it is and the world as the protagonist sees it, *Female Quixote* moves the world as it is closer to the world as Arabella sees it.

In conforming her world to a romance pattern Arabella breaks the expectations of eighteenth-century life, and her ability to create the world in her own image breaks the expectations of a quixotic novel and quixotic protagonist. Ashleigh Blackwood writes that eighteenth-century critiques of reading, especially fiction, are legion, and that “apprehensions about women readers were especially prevalent, with beliefs abounding that their reading of novels and romances would give rise to an excess of free imagination and a detachment from reality" (Blackwood 278). Temma Berg concurs, noting “romances, seen as unrealistic, were often singled out as particularly dangerous" (Berg 17). In other words, reading would turn women into quixotes, and that was bad. Eighteenth-century resistance to this view tended to emphasize the moral and didactic potential of fiction, as Henry Fielding did when he wrote of *Female Quixote* in the *Covent Garden Journal*, “I do very earnestly recommend it, as a most extraordinary and most excellent Performance. It is indeed a Work of true Humour, and cannot fail of giving a rational, as well as very pleasing, Amusement to a sensible Reader, who will at once be instructed and very highly diverted” (Fielding 282). Fielding does not dismiss the entertainment factor, but he points to the text’s rationality as well as to the “sensible Reader” who might be instructed by it.

It should not surprise us that Fielding, an author himself, does not take such a hard line on fiction in general and *Female Quixote* in particular. But the sex of the “sensible Reader” is left ambiguous, and Fielding’s choice of words indicates that concerns about the impacts of reading were still prevalent. Blackwood comments that "anxieties over the susceptibility of both

body and mind to individuals' choice of reading material as a form of external stimulation were closely associated with the early development of neurological sciences in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries," paraphrasing conduct manuals like *The Whole Duty of a Woman* (1737) that concluded "the emotional experience of readers on the page is likely to be replicated in young female readers, causing women readers to be led by "amorous Passions" rather than true reason" (Blackwood 280). By the late eighteenth century, writes Jodi Wyett, "the engaged but ultimately discerning woman reader emerges as an ideal in response to the dangerously absorbed, anti-social female quixote (Wyett "Female Quixotism Refashioned" 262). Thus, even when reading itself is acceptable for women, the quixote's departure from reality is still a problem.

Cervantes' story attempts to resolve the problem of the quixote by having Don Quixote literally wake up from a faint and renounce his previous beliefs. This kind of ending preserves the reader's privileged position in relation to the protagonist by affirming that the reader (and narrator, and nearly every other character) has been right all along when the protagonist joins or re-joins the world of the sane and sensible. Readers can thus find both the humor and the instruction that Fielding praised in an amusing story that ultimately repudiates the quixote in favor of restoring the social order. In apparent obedience to this generic convention, Arabella seems to similarly renounce her delusions after a conversation with a "worthy Divine" (Lennox 366) – though I will argue that she in fact gives up very little of her prior worldview. I argue that Lennox turns the quixotic genre on its head, using Arabella's "mind writing" to give us a story where the "irrational" quixote is actually in charge. A woman character, written by a woman author, challenges what readers think they know about what they are reading and ultimately reshapes the quixotic novel as a genre.

Glanville carries out Arabella's assertions

Arabella exerts authority over more than Glanville's sword arm: his health and well-being follow her declarations just as his actions do. Before the Hervey duel, Glanville is "indisposed" (130) and becomes sick enough that both his sister Miss Glanville and the doctor believe he might die. Arabella learns that he is ill and sends him a letter instructing him to get better, following the formula set by her romances in which men do indeed heal at their beloveds' commands. She is completely baffled when he does not recover and decides that she will have to deliver her expectation in person. Though the doctor advises that Glanville not be disturbed Arabella is determined that her proclamation of health must be delivered and goes to his bedside anyway. She gives Glanville a literal order, both in words and tone: "*Glanville*…I grant to your Sister's Solicitations, what the fair *Statira* did to an Interest yet more powerful; since, as you know it was her own Brother, who pleaded in favour of the dying *Orontes*: Therefore, considering you in a Condition haply no less dangerous, than that of that passionate Prince, I condescend, like her, to tell you, that I do not wish your Death; that I intreat you to live; and, lastly, by all the Power I have over you, I command you to recover" (133-134, italics original). With characteristic reference to romantic precedent in citing Statira and Orontes, Arabella declares that she has the power (or Power) to command Glanville's wellbeing. This pronouncement fails to bring about the expected effect and Glanville does not recover, causing Arabella further confusion. She continues to expect that her statements will heal Glanville, and the text specifically notes that she "affected great firmness of mind upon this occasion; she used the most persuasive eloquence to moderate her cousin's affliction" in order to heal Glanville. Arabella connects her authority to her cognitive power – her "firmness of mind" – as well as her

language, and she clearly understands her words as at least helping Glanville even if he refuses to simply recover.

While Glanville's failure to instantly heal at Arabella's command would seem to undermine rather than confirm her narrative authority, the structure of the incident still allows Arabella to be the one declaring Glanville's health. When he continues not to get better Arabella scolds him for his lack of obedience, to which he responds (quite logically), "Dear cousin…can you imagine health is not my choice? And do you think I would suffer these pains if I could possibly ease myself of them?" (134) and begins to remark "If I live" (136) – a use of the subjunctive that indicates he is denying Arabella's assumption that he will recover. This denial is framed as a matter of rationality, since he argues that his health is not his choice and thus her assumption that demanding he recover will bring about recovery is irrational. As is typical, Arabella allows none of these denials to stand, instead officially (and officiously) giving Glanville permission to love her but insisting that he must thus obey her. She leaves after delivering this pronouncement and Glanville promptly follows her directive. The narrator notes "A few hours after, his fever being come to a height, he grew delirious, and talked very wildly; but a favourable crisis ensuing, he fell into a sound and quiet sleep, and continued in it for several hours: upon his waking, the physician declared his fever was greatly abated, and the next morning pronounced him out of danger" (136). The fever breaking is linked to Arabella's speech by virtue of both text and structure, as this sentence comes immediately after Arabella's declaration and further links itself with the phrase "A few hours after," emphasizing the connection between Arabella's statement and Glanville's health. Moreover, the structure of the clause after the semicolon emphasizes the "favourable crisis" without immediately assigning it a subject. We must wait until the comma to see the "he" again that asserts Glanville as our subject,

and the verbs “ensuing” and “fell” both emphasize something that is done to Glanville rather than something he does. The sentence itself is not grammatically passive, but it points to Glanville as an object of action rather than the subject performing the action. Arabella’s final command lingers in the background and her words shape Glanville’s reality.

Since the recovery is so closely associated with Arabella, the physician seems present only to confirm what she has declared. He becomes her mouthpiece, emphasized by her total lack of surprise when he announces that Glanville is better. She has assumed all along that Glanville must recover at her command: that the physician proclaims as much is mere formality. As Shadi Neimnah notes, “Because Arabella controls language, she imposes her discourse on others” (Niemnah 502), able to change the state of Glanville’s health by verbal fiat. That the doctor “pronounced” (Lennox 136) things about Glanville’s health rather than being shown giving him powders, bleeding him, ordering a fire to keep him warm, or other medical actions, reinforces the idea that Arabella and the doctor are verbally competing to describe reality. The doctor suggests it would “not be proper to disturb” (133) a weakened Glanville; Arabella ignores this request for silence and instead verbally demands Glanville’s recovery. The text, meanwhile, chases after that statement to confirm it just like with the dueling scene, informing us of Glanville’s recovery in the next paragraph via the doctor himself but without ascribing it to the doctor’s care. In this war of words to define Glanville’s reality, it is Arabella who ultimately wins.

Both the Hervey duel and the recovery from illness follow the assertion-denial-action pattern that characterizes much of Arabella’s “mind writing” in *Female Quixote*. Arabella demands Glanville duel, he refuses and calls her irrational, and then he fights Hervey anyway. Arabella demands Glanville recover, he protests that he cannot simply wish himself healed and

calls her mad, and then he gets better anyway. These scenes demonstrate Arabella's narrative authority, as she takes on a narrator's ability to tell us what kind of character Glanville is and what he will do. Glanville's continued protestations are not a necessary component of "mind writing" but they do demonstrate that we are not looking at a besotted lover indulging his beloved's quirks. It is Arabella changing Glanville's behavior rather than Glanville choosing to do so.

"Mind writing" the body

Part of what makes Arabella's "mind writing" so interesting is how it relies on the assumption – in the eighteenth century and today – that the mind and body are inextricably connected. The eighteenth century received from earlier centuries the view that "the body was the visible key to the mind, and that the face was a reflection of the soul" (Woods 141), as Kathryn Woods writes of the seventeenth century. John Mullan notes in his discussion of sentimentalism and sensibility that for the eighteenth century "feeling is above all observable" (Mullan 201), and a body which hides rather than displays feeling is indicative of coarseness, lies, or both. Eighteenth-century philosopher Henry Home, Lord Kames writes in *Sketches of the History of Man* "as every act implies a power to act, the acts…must be the effects of mental powers" (Home 206-207), emphasizing the relationship between action and mind that contemporary cognitive science bears out.

On a very literal level everything a body does requires a mind to direct it: speaking, laughing, running, digesting, crying, and other bodily reactions originate in the brain, often without our conscious awareness. Socially, according to cognitive literary theorists Lisa Zunshine and Alan Palmer "we *assume* that there must be a mental state behind an observable behavior" (Zunshine *Getting Inside Your Head* 18, italics original), and in fact we "only build up

an idea of who a character "is" by observing what they do and speculating on the motivations for those actions" (Palmer 124). Even when reading a story, where we often have direct access to a character's thoughts and motivations via a third-person narrator, actions and the body that displays them are still vital and highly indicative clues as to how to understand the individual we are reading about.

Eighteenth-century philosophy, literature, and science (or "science," as Woods is writing about physiognomy among other things) all discuss a close relationship between mind and body, and so too does conduct literature of the period. According to Penelope Fritzer the conduct manual "certainly deals with behavior and conduct, but it is even more concerned with the qualities of character that the behavior shows" (Fritzer 4), and Fritzer specifically notes the difference between a conduct manual's interest in the character and soul vs. an etiquette manual's interest in being able to perform the manners currently in fashion. As I will later discuss, the ethical and moral interests of a conduct manual become especially pointed – and especially apropos to *Female Quixote* – when it comes to the dueling that is such a strong example of Arabella's narrative authority.

In addition to the deep connection between mind and body that make "mind writing" an appropriate term to use for *Female Quixote*, Glanville's reactions and behavior when apart from Arabella also tend to follow her expectations, indicating a change in his mind and character rather than just in his body. He duels and heals as a result of her declaring he will, but he also starts to interact with the world and with Arabella herself in ways that reflect Arabella's views. Her declarations and expectations mold who he is, and while the novel never explicitly acknowledges that narrative authority or the changes it brings about, it consistently confirms her successful "mind writing."

Glanville as romance hero

Glanville's actions consistently reflect specific assertions from Arabella, but he also increasingly conforms to her worldview even when she has not made a particular demand. His behavior, and especially his speech, reflects Arabella more and more as he switches from eighteenth-century gentleman to romantic hero over the course of the novel. In one telling example Glanville defends Arabella's sanity to his sister and father after one of her many odd pronouncements. While alone with Glanville both his father and sister express that Arabella is "sometimes a little wrong in the Head" (Lennox 308)" and "has very strange Whimsies sometimes," (309). Glanville himself repeatedly expresses frustration and concern over her sanity, and at various points in the novel, he "fear[ed] her Intellects were really touch'd" (352), does not wish her to send a letter because of concern over it providing "such a convincing Proof of the Peculiarity of her Temper" (193), "exclaim[s] against the Books that had turned his cousin's Brain" (156), and so on. His family's suggestion that she is a little odd, however, elicits an extremely strong reaction.

While this response begins with the kind of language we might expect a man in love to use defending his sweetheart, Glanville quickly switches to a high epic register. He first paces around the room, gives Miss Glanville a "furious Look" (308), and declares "No more of this, *Charlotte*…as you value my Friendship" (309, italics original), none of which sounds strange given his interest in Arabella. He then scolds Miss Glanville not to repeat Arabella's words "till you know how to pronounce them properly" (309) despite himself cursing "*Aronces* and the King of *Assyria*" (302, italics original) when Arabella invokes them and ends the conversation by "pronounc[ing] a Panegyrick on [Arabella's] Virtues and Accomplishments of an Hour long; which…certainly convinc'd his Father, that his Niece was not only perfectly well in her

Understanding, but even better than most others of her Sex" (309). Anger at his sister's insults to his beloved makes sense; chastising her for mocking the exact references he himself bemoans seems hypocritical but reflects a common tendency to reserve criticism of someone or something to one's self. Making an hour-long speech in praise of Arabella, however, vaults over these much more typical ways of talking about a love interest.

By focusing on virtues and accomplishments Glanville uses the language of eighteenth-century female conduct, but the text's label of his speech as an hour-long "Panegyrick" and a "Eulogium" takes us out the realm of eighteenth-century expectations. The highly emotional tone of Glanville's retorts to both father and sister and the extravagance of his pronouncements contrast greatly with the Glanville we met at the beginning of the text. The early Glanville sees Arabella's statements as amusing and smiles as he comments that she has "the strangest Notions" (31) when she violently protests his desire to speak to her privately. He originally believes her behavior to be a joke, and reasonably asks her to explain how he has insulted her because "I would never, if I could help it, offend" (43) – all entirely sensible and emotionally appropriate responses. As the novel goes on both his amusement and his emotional regulation disappear, to be replaced with drama and pronouncement. While Arabella has never specifically demanded that Glanville speak like this, the language does echo her typical speech and the speech of her romances.

Arabella's habitual manner of speaking is drawn from her romances and contrasts with the eighteenth-century speech around her when she comes into society. We know that her speech is very different from those around her because her listeners tend to be confused when she asks them to relate their histories, for example. Glanville makes note of the "uncommon Style" (33) of her letters, and she habitually speaks at much greater length than those around her. When she

travels to Bath, Arabella comments that the conversations and social expectations she encounters are "trifling Amusements" for those who "must certainly live to very little Purpose," contrasting this "mean and contemptible" life with her own of "high and noble Adventures" (279). She is delighted upon meeting a countess (who her family hopes will talk some sense into her) because the woman "had not forgot the Language of Romance" (325), and the two talk in a register so different from everyone else that Arabella's uncle Sir Charles was not "able to comprehend a Word" of their "extraordinary Speech" (324). While the countess does not share Arabella's quixotic worldview, only the ability to match her language, that the text makes so much of the way the two women speak helps to establish just how different and unexpected it is.

It is worth quoting the countess' response to Arabella in full, to demonstrate the language that the text explicitly calls a "Strain as heroick as [Arabella's]" (325). The countess greets Arabella by proclaiming,

> The Favour I have reciev'd from Fortune, said [the countess], in bringing me the Happiness of your Acquaintance, charming Arabella, is so great, that I may rationally expect some terrible Misfortune will befall me: Seeing that in this Life our Pleasures are so constantly succeeded by Pains, that we hardly ever enjoy the one without suffering the other soon after (Lennox 325).

Here we see a tendency to ascribe positive adjectives to another ("charming Arabella"), references to fate and fortune, and an expectation of high highs and low lows rather than stability. Both language and content are overwrought and dramatic, appropriate for melodrama and opera rather than for day-to-day interactions. That Glanville spends over an hour declaiming Arabella's virtues aligns him far more with this kind of language than the usual eighteenth-century conversations intelligible to Sir Charles.

Glanville's continued behavior as Arabella's romance hero continues when she believes he has lied to her, underscoring that it is not simply a performance he puts on for her benefit. Glanville's romantic rival Sir George pays a woman to spin Arabella a tale that Glanville has used and abandoned her, and Arabella responds by confronting Glanville and banishing him from her presence. Glanville "had never heard her…talk so ridiculously before" (352), is astonished and he begins "to fear her Intellects were really touch'd" (352). Though wondering if she is in fact insane, his immediate response when she bursts into tears is to throw himself "on his Knees before her" (352), kiss her hand, and declare, "Let me know my Crime. Yet may I perish if I am conscious of any towards you" (352). Like her romance heroes, Glanville responds with great emotion to Arabella's distress and makes the hyperbolic declaration that he would rather die than offend her – quite the departure from his comment earlier in their acquaintance that "I would never, if I could help it, offend" (Lennox 43). Over the course of the novel his polite insistence on good intentions has given way to referring to potential bad behavior as "Crimes" and claiming a death wish if he has transgressed. This elevated language and dramatic physical action connects Glanville to the romances rather than to eighteenth-century masculinity's restraint and practicality. When Arabella persists in her anger and tears he flips right back into frustration, "muttering between his Teeth: This is downright Frenzy" (353) – as with other examples of Arabella's "mind writing," he is not aware or approving of how much he has conformed.

The quick switches between frustration at and rejection of Arabella's worldview and dramatic adherence to it indicates that Glanville himself is not the self-aware lover his rival Sir George is. Sir George finds Arabella ridiculous but is attracted by her money and beauty, and uses his extensive knowledge of romance literature in order to playact as Arabella's ideal suitor

in the hopes he can marry her himself. By contrast, Glanville's own conscious worldview remains opposed to Arabella's, and he does not act or speak as she says he should with Sir George's ironic sense of performance. His body and mouth do what Arabella says and wishes while his conscious intention never comes along. He does not realize that he has become a romance hero even as his assumptions, his thoughts, his actions, and his words increasingly conform to the romance pattern.

Glanville is not only a romance hero by virtue of the occasional dramatic action, but comes to understand and imitate Arabella's worldview without seeming to realize he has done so. He is one of the only characters in the novel who understands Arabella's gestures (the other is her maid Lucy). She frequently makes "signs" to the people around her when she is feeling a strong emotion, usually to indicate they should leave, but many do not understand the signals because they are as archaic as her language and worldview. Glanville begins "quite unacquainted with these Sorts of dumb Commands" (36-37), but apparently learns to read and obey them, often interpreting for those in the room who do not. His ability to do so, especially without any indication of study – one early scene has him pretending to read the romances, for example, but there is never any evidence that he truly reads, studies, or understands them – underscores that his behavior is sincere rather than performative. Glanville appears to have internalized romance forms of communication, including speech and sign. He uses them unconsciously rather than manipulatively, as Sir George does, thus conforming to Arabella's romantic worldview without intending or attempting to.

Sir George as foil

Sir George serves as foil to and rival of Glanville, and his extremely self-aware mimicry of Arabella's romance norms for the purpose of manipulating her demonstrates how unconscious and unintended Glanville's speech and actions are. Where Glanville actually becomes a romance hero against his will because Arabella declares him to be so, Sir George pretends to be a romance hero and knows he is pretending the whole time.

Arabella's beauty and fortune attract Sir George as soon as he meets her, and after he learns about her quixotic views from Glanville he "resolved to profit from the Knowledge of her Foible" (120). He makes a deliberate study of both her mannerisms and the romances so that he can "make his Addresses to Arabella in the Form they prescribed" (130), and consistently interacts with her in precisely the manner and language she expects. The text is at pains to emphasize the deliberate and planned nature of Sir George's behavior, commenting that he "meditate[es] on the Means he should use to acquire the Esteem of Lady Bella" (130) and regularly referring to his interactions with her as "Designs" (139). His level of pretense is most on display during the recitation of his "History" (209), when he creates an entire lifestory worthy of Arabella's romances that is as false as it is dramatic. At various points he allegedly faces 500 men in battle, spends months in the woods subsisting only on what he forages, is taken prisoner by jealous rivals, and meets and falls in love with several women who pretend to be poor but are actually princesses. It is that final detail that proves his undoing, as Arabella is incensed by his lack of fidelity and sends him away. The text thus emphasizes his machinations as well as his ultimate lack of skill – he overplays his hand by pretending to several great loves and earns Arabella's enmity rather than her esteem.

Sir George's performance as a romance hero places the locus of authority in himself. He deliberately sets out to woo Arabella by acting the part, and makes a point to study and memorize the romances that give him a model. For a short while he seems to be another example of Arabella's asserted narrative authority, but this falls apart when he performs badly. Crucially, upon recognizing that Arabella does not return his interest, he loses the romance playacting and reverts to being an eighteenth-century gentleman. Because he was the one to decide to act the hero, he is also the one who can decide to stop: Arabella's authority over him only extends as long as he is willing to accept it.

This obvious "Design" throws Glanville's own lack of pretense into sharp relief. Glanville is regularly frustrated by Arabella's quixotic worldview and expresses that frustration both in private and to Arabella – it is an honestly-felt emotion. Yet he also behaves in the ways Arabella asserts he will and the text never once suggests that he engages in the kind of planning or machinations that move the locus of authority away from Arabella. Because Arabella is the one to decide that Glanville will be a romance hero, Glanville himself cannot decide to stop.

Romance hero character and action brought together in a full-circle duel

Arabella "mind writing" Glanville comes full circle towards the end of the story when Glanville repeats the violence Arabella demands and duels Sir George when it appears the other man and Arabella are meeting clandestinely. While looking out his window Glanville sees a woman in a veil walking in the garden and believes her to be Arabella, given her unique tendency to wear such garments. When Sir George kneels before the woman to make some kind of proposal Glanville is "Transported with Rage" (357) – the identical response to Hervey's earlier comments about Arabella's mental state – and rushes out "like a Madman" (357), draws

his sword, and "cr[ies] out to Sir George to defend himself" (357). So intense are Glanville's emotions and headlong rush into the duel that he stabs Sir George before the latter has a chance to really defend himself, critically wounding his friend. It turns out that the veiled woman is actually Miss Glanville in Arabella's borrowed clothing, and Sir George ultimately recovers from his injuries to marry her, but the scene's critical import is Glanville's response rather than the identity of the trysters. Half a book removed from Arabella's original claim that he will fight to protect her honor, Glanville once again fights a man on her behalf.

Interestingly Arabella has not repeated the belief that he will duel since the earlier interaction with Hervey. Instead, the demand that he fight to defend her from ravishment appears to have taken root within Glanville, such that his response to seeing what he believes is a tryst between Arabella and Sir George is to come out swinging a sword. The anger and suspicion of Sir George is in this situation entirely warranted, unlike Arabella's accusations against Hervey, since Sir George paid for someone to lie to Arabella about Glanville's character in order to win her for himself. Glanville in fact spent the pages preceding the fight meditating on Sir George's perfidy and his own revenge, again behaving much like Arabella's romance heroes. His high emotion and the actions that result from it are a far cry from his earlier insistence to Sir George that there is "no Necessity for fighting" (196), and his willingness to plot and contemplate vengeance reflects a real change in how he approaches the world.

The Glanville of the beginning of the book was often frustrated with Arabella and embarrassed by others' view of her, but ultimately behaved genteelly. He delivered verbal threats and requests to protect her feelings and reputation and pretended to do things like read the books she so adores. The Glanville at the end of the book delivers hour-long monologues in Arabella's honor and is murderously angry at his friend and ready to kill him, demonstrating the lasting

change in his character that Arabella's claims have wrought. Arabella's "mind writing" means that Glanville "literalizes the romance" (Gardiner 7), as Ellen Gardiner notes, "acting…the romance hero" (6) and repudiating every rule of eighteenth-century religion, ethics, and conduct in doing so.

Glanville's change from controlled gentleman to dramatic and emotional romance hero represents not only a switch in his personal behavior but in the codes of social behavior to which he adheres. Mary Beth Harris writes, "Aristotelian ideals of masculine virtue and rational balance thoroughly permeated eighteenth-century intellectual and literary culture" (Harris 198), and a gentleman in the latter half of the eighteenth-century was a restrained and enlightened figure. The strongly gendered expectations of conduct put men on the side of reason and women on the side of emotion, and as Lynn Marie Wright and Donald J Newman note men were "rational, respectful beings…and women [were] irrational creatures" (Wright and Newman 20). The ideal and virtuous man controls his feelings and desires, especially since women let theirs run wild. A female quixote like Arabella is an extreme example of an irrational and uncontrolled woman, and the Glanville of the first part of the book is indeed controlled, careful, and entirely in line with eighteenth-century social mores – though notably out of line with Arabella's.

Dueling specifically went against this rationality and restraint, and avoiding such activity was strongly flavored with religious piety. The preface of William Darrell's *The gentleman instructed, in the conduct of a virtuous and happy life* (1732), for example, has the virtuous Eusebius declare in response to a challenge, "Sir, though I fear not your Sword, I tremble at my Maker's Anger; I dare venture my Life in a good Cause, but cannot hazard my Soul in a bad one" (Darrell a2). Later that same text admonishes that to kill someone in a duel is to suffer a "double Excommunication" (22), since both God and human judges condemn it. The

anonymously-written *The gentleman's library, containing rules for conduct in all parts of life* (1744) is equally harsh, claiming "It is a notorious Fault, that Fashion should prevail in Contempt of all *Laws*, Divine and Human" (Gentleman 143, italics original) and scolding "he that dies in a Duel knowingly offends God" (144). Arabella's insistence that Glanville duel is thus entirely contrary to the expectations of an eighteenth-century gentleman, formed as her worldview is from texts set thousands of years in the past.

Despite Glanville's regular and continued insistence that Arabella's beliefs and expectations are irrational, foolish, and in the case of dueling both immoral and illegal, he ultimately enacts exactly the kind of duel scenes she claims he should in attacking both Mr. Hervey and Sir George. In both instances Glanville says one thing while doing another, and carries out Arabella's statements even while despairing of her oddity; the precision with which he follows her demands and his continued insistence that he should not and does not need to fight duels suggest the narrative agency behind her declaration. Even when morality is not in question, as with his illness/recovery and his panegyric, Glanville does not recognize how closely he adheres to her expectations even as he behaves in the ways she claims he will. He does not self-consciously conform to her worldview in order to flatter or win her, as does Sir George, but instead speaks and acts as she says he should without recognizing that he is doing so.

The story writing that results from Arabella's "mind writing"

Arabella's "mind writing" of Glanville does not only impact his character, however, but ultimately creates the story itself, as Glanville acts more and more the romance hero. Before Glanville comes into her life Arabella spent a great deal of time noting her own beauty,

wondering why she did not have any adventures, quickly rejecting Hervey as a suitor, and occasionally interacting with new neighbors. Glanville's presence expands her reach, and her ability to "mind write" him means that she gets the romance adventures she expects.

Sharon Palo Smith claims that the ending of *Female Quixote* is powerful because it so strongly critiques the limits of women's power, given that Arabella concedes to the patriarchal and domestic demands that insist she must be married and settled. What her study glosses over, however, is that Arabella does have adventures. Unlike the countess who fails to convince her to give up her quixotism, a woman who responds to Arabella's request for her history by noting merely that she was educated and married in accordance with her parent's wishes and her own inclinations, Arabella manages to delay marriage just as her romance heroines do. She has the emotional experience of her life being threatened on numerous occasions, engages in spirited conversation and debate with a number of people, and nearly dies from throwing herself in the Thames – all more than the countess (or any of the other women) experience. She even transcends the romances in running away from her father's house after reasoning through the situation that allows such a thing.

Arabella's life may not have the level of globe-trotting or death found in her romances, but neither does it have the easy predictability of the kind of life the grand lady suggests. While Arabella does not stretch her unmarried adult life into years or decades the way her heroines do, she does expand it, and has a number of her own adventures that include very real perils, like the possibility of death after she throws herself into the Thames. Her life is remarkably different from that of other women, and yet she earns the appreciation and interest of a wide range of people despite her sharp deviations from the expected female pattern.

Common among those who read Arabella as a powerful protofeminist is the understanding that her "conversion" from quixotism to proper English domesticity at the end of the novel marks the end of her power. As Mary Patricia Martin writes, "Arabella is denied the "high and Noble Adventures" that her romances had promised, and is forced to settle, as the heroine of a novel, for a less heroic, if more dependable, happiness" (Martin 60). She marries Mr. Glanville, which Jodi Wyett sees as her domestication, but so too do her romance heroines eventually marry the men they have deemed worthy. She may not have the same adventures and experiences as the heroines, but her eventual marriage comes after a period of waiting during which Glanville conforms himself to precisely what she wants in a man. The ending of *Female Quixote* is not an uncomplicated assertion of Arabella's power, but neither is it, as numerous scholars have claimed, either a submission to patriarchal authority or a demonstration of the "limitations imposed upon educated women" (Palo Smith 228). As Neimneh notes, "Arabella's suitor is transformed as a romantic hero after her heart before she can accept him" (Neimneh 503), her "mind writing" thus giving her both her hero and her narrative. She has in fact written her own story to match the adventures in her romances, and it ends just as they do, with a happy marriage.

The ending: both unimportant and no conversion

Most scholarship on *Female Quixote* ultimately – and erroneously – rests on the penultimate chapter and Arabella's apparent conversion after her conversation with the Divine. I argue that whatever we make of the ending it should not outweigh the rest of the novel. Arabella's "mind writing" and narrative authority exists no matter how we read the final chapters. Moreover, Arabella's conversation with the divine is not the wholesale conversion

previous scholarship has taken it to be. Arabella in fact maintains her narrative authority and successfully resists the Divine's attempts to exert authority over her by directing the conversation and using both the subjunctive mood and her own experience to avoid conceding the Divine's points. The story ends with some apologies, but no actual changes in Arabella's behavior.

Amy Hodges reads the conversation between Arabella and the Divine as one-sided, but it opens with the Divine's recognition of Arabella's intellect and wit, explicitly setting up the discussion as one between equals rather than hierarchical. It is Arabella who directs the flow of conversation, insisting that the Divine must prove to her "First, That these Histories you condemn are Fictions. Next, That they are absurd. And Lastly, That they are Criminal" (Lennox 374). The Divine acquiesces to this conversational order, which they maintain throughout the chapter. He spends the next two pages arguing that the stories are fictional, Arabella tells him to move on to the next part of his argument, and when he begins by noting, "You grant them, madam, to be fictions" (376) she retorts "You are not to confound a Supposition of which I allow you only the present Use, with an unlimited and irrevocable Concession" (376). The text explicitly sets up the opportunity for Arabella to admit the fictionality of her beloved stories, and equally explicitly denies her doing so. The "present Use" of the idea that the stories are fiction is merely to allow the Divine to finish his arguments so the two are not stuck on the first point of disagreement. Arabella also "chides the doctor for sliding from a condemnation of romances to the people who read them" (Wyett "Quixotic Legacy" 12), criticism that the Divine accepts and uses to modify his speech. She refuses to be scolded for reading the romances while she listens to the Divine's point of view and he acquiesces. Even as the Divine's arguments move to a claim of

absurdity, Arabella never concedes that the "Histories" are fiction and consistently uses subjunctive language when referring to the idea of their fictionality.

After the Divine suggests various reasons why the stories should be seen as fiction – they do not accord with other histories, they do not match geography – Arabella responds, "I suppose…you have no Intention to deceive me, and since, if what you have asserted be true, the Cause is undefensible, I shall trouble you no longer to argue on this Topic, but desire now to hear why, supposing them Fictions, and intended to be received as Fictions, you censure them as absurd" (Lennox 378). The Divine certainly seems to read this as a concession, for he launches into his arguments regarding the stories' absurdity, yet nowhere does Arabella actually concede the point. She is willing to agree that the Divine does not intend to deceive her, which is not the same thing as agreeing that what he said was true, and proceeds to use subjunctive language in discussing the next step in the argument. She specifically says "*if* what you have asserted be true" and "*supposing* them Fictions" rather than "since what you have asserted is true" and "because they are fictions" – the repeated use of the subjunctive means that her position has not actually changed from several pages earlier when she encourages the Divine to continue along his line of argument without ever granting the fictionality of the stories.

Later during the transition from the Divine's "absurdity" argument to his "criminal" argument she again suggests that she has not granted the books to be fiction, asking "if you can say so little in Commendation of Mankind, how will you prove these Histories to be vicious, which if they do not describe real Life, give us an Idea of a better Race of Beings than now inhabit the World" (380). This question indicates through the "if they do not describe real Life" clause that she continues to allow for them to be non-fictional, and then sidesteps any further concern by focusing on what can be learned from the books whether or not they are "true."

Arabella continues to direct the conversation by shifting its focus and stakes as she talks with the Divine.

When it comes to proving the stories absurdities, the Divine relies on the idea that most people do not have the same experiences as are found in the stories, to which Arabella responds that she herself has had some of those same experiences. She notes, "I have not long Conversed in Public, yet I have found that Life is subject to many Accidents. Do you count my late Escape for nothing? Is it to be numbered among daily and cursory Transactions, that a Woman flies from a Ravisher into a rapid Stream?" (379). The Divine merely retorts that the idea she was fleeing from a ravisher is precisely what is up for debate and it cannot therefore be used as fact in an argument, at which Arabella subsides. Whether Arabella's dip in the Thames was because of a ravisher or not (and the reader is encouraged to think not), she still ended up throwing herself into a rapid stream, an event that is not at all typical for women of eighteenth-century Britain, a fact the Divine glosses over. Arabella's life is indeed subject to many accidents, and while there might be a counterargument in the fact that she brings those accidents upon herself, the Divine does not make it. In focusing on the "ravisher" part of her statement he ignores the fact that no one contradicts, which is that Arabella threw herself into a stream and was extremely ill as a result.

The Divine then shifts quickly from his absurdity argument into his criminal argument without Arabella ever agreeing with him about absurdity. She instead defends her books as offering "an Idea of a better Race of Beings than now inhabit the World" (380), to which the Divine responds with a diatribe against the "Passions of Revenge and Love," claiming that "these Books soften the Heart to Love, and harden it to Murder" (380). This is in fact the only claim Arabella concedes, admitting "my Heart yields to the Force of Truth, and I now wonder

how the Blaze of Enthusiastic Bravery, could hinder me from remarking with Abhorrence the Crime of deliberate unnecessary Bloodshed" (381). The Divine does thus convince her to adjure demanding murder, but she manages to do so without actually yielding to any of his other arguments. And while her realization that murder is an evil is certainly a point in favor of the Divine, she has in fact agonized over that very fact previously in Bath when she believed that a man had killed himself because of her displeasure. In Bath Arabella received a report that she interpreted as announcing a man's death after she censures him, and responded by going pale, throwing herself in a chair, bursting into tears, and bemoaning what she believed to be her role in the situation. She was only able to deal with this by thinking of the man's death as an "unavoidable Necessity" and comforting herself with the "Thought that we have only acted conformable to our Duty" (316). Certainly this emotional reaction is not the same as the guilt and willingness to forswear demanding death that the Divine brings about, but it indicates that the Divine is building on something already there rather than effecting a complete change of Arabella's mind.

With careful attention to Arabella's language and response, then, this allegedly one-sided conversion conversation actually does far less than has often been supposed. Arabella does indeed feel extreme guilt over her previous expectation that men die for her and declares that she will "never more demand or instigate Vengeance, nor consider my Punctilios as important enough to be ballanced against Life" (381), but this rejection of bloodshed is both her only concession and builds on concerns she has already expressed. She admits neither that her romances are fictional nor that they are absurd, and chides the Divine for the laziness of his argument.

After the Divine's visit Arabella's behavior does not dramatically change from how she acted earlier in the novel. She continues to be perplexed, embarrassed, and confused by Sir Charles' and Sir George's subsequent visits just as she has been in the past, refusing eye contact and asking to be left alone. The text informs us that she spends several hours "wholly absorb'd in the most disagreeable Reflections on the Absurdity of her past Behaviour, and the Contempt and Ridicule to which she now saw she exposed herself" (383), but this too is not a wholesale rejection of her previous views. We are left unsure what aspects of her previous behavior were absurd, and while a traditional reading of the novel might suggest that we interpret this clause broadly and censure many or most of her actions, she did plenty of things that are unremarkable or even kind. The "Contempt and Ridicule" she meditates on is certainly accurate, but the novel has already established via the character of the grand lady that the general social scorn of Arabella is itself a problem. The women she met and mingled with in Bath are painted as shallow and jealous people, and the novel's "good" characters, like the grand lady, do not show her contempt or ridicule.

Arabella's apologies to Sir Charles and to Mr. Glanville constitute the greatest repudiation of her previous views and actions, but as with the blanket reflection of her past absurdities, we as readers are left unclear about exactly what she apologizes for and how much her actual beliefs are changed. Notably, the novel rushes to end with a double marriage, leaving the reader to imagine what her changed behavior might look like but not allowing us to see it. The text thus does not confirm that she has actually changed, and so we are left with several hundred pages of the quixotic Arabella and a two-page final chapter of a theoretically reformed one.

Even her marriage, often read as all the proof we need of Arabella's new rationality, is not actually contrary to her worldview. She in fact wishes for male attention and marriage, and at the beginning of the novel is confused by the lack of either admiration or proposal. The romance formula she follows dictates not that women remain unmarried, but that their marriage does not cage them and comes after a series of adventures. When Glanville originally begins to court her with the usual eighteenth-century flirtation, she is concerned that "he would make himself Master of her Liberty" (34) and interprets his openly-stated interest as a threat of violence. As she explains to her maid, "have I not every thing to apprehend from a Man, who knows so little how to treat my Sex with the Respect which is our Due; and who…insulted me with a free Declaration of Love, treated my Commands with the utmost Contempt by appearing before me again; and even threatens me with the Revenge he is meditating at this Moment?" (34) From the start Glanville and Arabella are not actually working at cross-purposes; it is the *how* rather than the *what* that they disagree on. Their marriage thus follows Arabella's romantic expectations, and Glanville's shift from gentleman to hero by the end of the novel means that the story progresses precisely as Arabella has dictated all along.

Conclusion

Arabella successfully "mind writes" Glanville in addition to writing her own story to accord with the expectations and trajectory of her romances. What Wyett dismisses as the "illusion of great power" (Wyett "Quixotic Legacy" 11) in fact turns out to be a story brought into being via Arabella's narrative agency. Her so-called illusion of power writes Glanville into the partner she wants, gives her a series of adventures that are a far cry from countess's sedate progression from education to courtship to marriage, and tricks both other characters and readers

into missing just how much authority she wields. Amy Pawl claims that there are "special difficulties involved in being a female quixote in a society that limits a woman's access to mobility, autonomy, and self-determination" (Pawl 142), but I argue that Arabella's quixotic rewriting is precisely in reaction to such a society. Ultimately it is the reader rather than the protagonist who is the fool as the text forces us to reckon with the dissolution of our usual privileged place of understanding in relation to the quixotic novel.

By the end of *Female Quixote*, what should have been a story of a woman eventually learning just how wrong she was about the world is instead a tale about a woman who has reshaped her world and her story to be what she wants. With Glanville this process begins as explicit and verbal as Arabella asserts what Glanville should do and say so that he can unwillingly and unknowingly follow those instructions. For the first half of the novel, therefore, Arabella acts as a narrator in declaring how Glanville will behave. In doing so she competes with the novel's actual narrator to describe what is happening in the text. By the second half of the novel her "mind writing" is so successful that Glanville talks and acts like a romance hero even when she does not verbalize her assertions and expectations. It is this move, in the novel's second half, that signals Arabella's own shift from acting as a narrator to acting as an author: she is not simply describing what another character will do, she is dictating the story in which she resides. Glanville simply begins to be her hero, and her story follows her expectations for adventure and experience.

The usual eighteenth-century formula for marriage involves as little delay as possible between identifying a good marriage option and marrying – the countess Arabella speaks with gives precisely this progression to her own life, and everyone in Arabella's family believes that she and Glanville need only a few weeks or perhaps a month to confirm mutual affection and

become engaged. Arabella's own worldview, by contrast, demands a great deal more. Her romance formula dictates that once a lady gives permission for a suitor to love her,

> she may lawfully allow him to talk to her upon the subject of his passion, accept all his gallantries, and claim an absolute empire over all his actions; reserving to herself the right of fixing the time when she may own her affection: and when that important step is taken, and his constancy put to a few years more trial; when he has killed all his rivals, and rescued her from a thousand dangers; she at last condescends to reward him with her hand; and all her adventures are at an end for the future (Lennox 137-138).

Crucial here is the delay in an actual engagement or marriage, and the text indicates that this delay at least in part preserves the time and independence that allows a lady "adventures." Arabella delays her marriage for almost an entire novel in part by demanding that Glanville be a romance hero, and her "mind writing" of his character opens up room for her to flee her father's house, entertain several potential other suitors, see Glanville fight a duel on her behalf, explore the wider society of Bath, have her coach threatened by bandits, intervene in drunken revelry at Vauxhall, meet multiple women with dramatic stories (real and feigned), and nearly die by throwing herself in the river.

While the novel does not keep very close track of time and it does not seem that a few years pass between meeting and marriage, Glanville's constancy is indeed put to intense trial as he, his family, and his society experience the embarrassment of Arabella's peculiarities. Glanville never kills anyone but faces down multiple rivals, from Hervey to Sir George to several pompous suitors in Bath, in order to protect Arabella's reputation. The entirety of the novel's plot, in other words, comes about because of Arabella – she refuses to immediately

marry, and the delay and independence she creates by "mind writing" Glanville into her romance hero in turn allows her to write her story.

Arabella's quixotism is thus not a foolish illusion she must awaken from. It is instead the method by which she exerts authority over other characters and the plot itself. In repeatedly asserting her romance formula she creates pages upon pages of conversations, situations, and dangers, going beyond the descriptions of a narrator to the creations of an author. In a complete reversal from Don Quixote's repudiation of all his previous actions, Arabella instead lives happily in the relationship and world she has created. Rather than maintaining a social order that rejected quixotism as ridiculous, the story actually fulfills concerns about the power of novels – led by her romance-triggered "Passions," Arabella writes her world. Readers may have thought they knew what kind of story they were reading and what its social conclusions would be, but *Female Quixote* takes the genre meant to undermine a romantic worldview and makes it instead a vehicle of women's agency. It is Arabella and Lennox – not the reader – who is one step ahead the whole time.

Chapter Two | Liberty for One: "Mind Writing," Performance, and Individual Freedom in Inchbald's *Animal Magnetism*

Introduction

Elizabeth Inchbald's three-act play *Animal Magnetism* (1788) satirizes its titular concept of animal magnetism or mesmerism. This pseudoscience was something of a fringe phenomenon in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain; practitioners claimed they could manipulate an invisible fluid running throughout all living things in order to do everything from curing illness to directing thoughts. In Inchbald's play an old quack Doctor keeps his beautiful young ward Constance locked up at home because he wants to marry her and does not want her to fall in love with someone else. He becomes convinced that magnetism will force her to fall in love with him. Constance, her maid Lisette, Constance's actual love interest the Marquis, and the Marquis' valet La Fleur encourage this belief in order to trick the Doctor into freeing Constance, via an appropriately farcical series of absurd events. The disguised men pretend to teach the Doctor the secrets of magnetism and the women pretend to fall madly in love with anyone who holds a "magnetized" metal wand. Shenanigans ensue, and the play reaches its climax when the Doctor, believing he has killed the disguised La Fleur with magnetism, agrees to let the Marquis marry Constance if the other man does not report him to the authorities. Once the contract is signed the Marquis declares "there is no Magnetism, like the powerful Magnetism of Love" (Inchbald 36). These final lines seem to encapsulate the play's ultimate message: love triumphs over all, and especially over fools who believe in something as absurd as animal magnetism.

Yet this plot ostensibly making fun of magnetism's claims of mind control relies on one character controlling the actions and perceptions of the others. The magnetic wand that supposedly heals disease and compels romantic interest is repeatedly shown to be nonsense, but the maid Lisette spends the entire play foretelling others' plans and ordering them around. She

controls her fellow characters and the story itself, but with her words rather than with a wand – becoming the magnetist the text satirizes. Her power to dictate the other characters' performances (whether they know they are performing or not) reverses eighteenth century social and gender systems, putting the female servant in charge and rewriting the stakes of the farce in doing so.

Animal Magnetism opens with a powerful demonstration of Lisette's authority in the form of expository foretelling. In the play's very first lines Constance rushes into the room to tell Lisette about the Marquis who walked back and forth in front of her window, attempted to hand her a letter, and spoke with a man dressed like a member of the medical faculty. Constance does not know who this "faculty member" is, but Lisette promptly informs her

> I know who it is—La Fleur, valet to the Marquis, disguised as a doctor, and I have no doubt but under that disguise he will find means to introduce himself to your old guardian, and perhaps be brought into this very house, and if I can assist his scheme I will; for is it not a shame the doctor should dare here in Paris to forbid both you and your servant to stir from home; lock us up, and treat us as women are treated in Spain (Inchbald 4).

In quick succession Lisette not only declares the mysterious man's identity but also what will turn out to be the entire plot of play: the Marquis and his valet La Fleur will use their disguise to get into the house in order to rescue the women. How exactly Lisette knows all this is quite mysterious since both she and Constance have been forbidden to "stir from home," but Constance treats her recital as legitimate and suggests "we can learn to plot and deceive" (Inchbald 4) as revenge for the Doctor imprisoning them.

Despite Constance's use of "we" she will turn out to be a fairly passive member in the plan to free the women. It is Lisette who will take the lead in what follows, and her subjunctive promise of "if I can assist in his [La Fleur's and the Marquis's] scheme I will" is a radical understatement of her role in the rest of the play. As the story unfolds it will seem more and more as if the other three co-conspirators are assistants to Lisette's plan rather than the other way around. Her words consistently drive the plot forward, from the opening expository announcement to writing a letter for Constance to making medical pronouncements on the Doctor's behalf to cuing other characters' actions via asides. That the French maid of an underage woman can exert control over not just one besotted love interest but multiple social superiors represents a total reversal of the British class and gender hierarchies, historically an alarming notion given the looming threat of the French Revolution and the recent memory of the American Revolutionary War in the late eighteenth century.

And while the play is ostensibly about Constance and the Marquis, Lisette's clear goal is her own liberty. She declares to Constance that it is shameful for the Doctor "to forbid both you and your servant to stir from home; lock us up, and treat us as women are treated in Spain" (Inchbald 4), including herself as a wronged party and repeating the inclusive "us" as she bemoans the Doctor's actions. Lisette's use of the first-person plural here is also our first hint that she will often use Constance (and several other characters) as extensions of herself by giving them orders to advance the plan to break free from the Doctor. Even her own desire to wed is cast in terms of liberty, as in the beginning of Act III when she confirms that she wants to marry La Fleur by commenting "Aye, Sir, I am weary of confinement like my mistress" (Inchbald 26). Rather than simply working to advance her mistress's interests, as Nathalie Wolfram argues servants do in Richard Steele's *The Conscious Lovers*, Lisette repeatedly states and works

towards her own goals. Inchbald flips the usual arrangements of who-controls-whom, putting a female servant in charge and subsuming her social superiors into her plans.

In my first chapter I discussed the concept of "mind writing" and narrative authority in Charlotte Lennox's 1752 novel *The Female Quixote*. I theorize "mind writing" as a collection of narrative techniques where one character takes on the roles of narrator and author by writing the thoughts, feelings, and actions of other characters into being and thus rewrites their own story. Lennox's protagonist Arabella repeatedly announces how she wants the world to be, and the text carries out those assertions in part by assuring us that her love interest Mr. Glanville is sincerely behaving in the ways she declared he should. In this second chapter I turn to drama to interrogate how a genre that is all verbal declarations emphasizes the performative aspects of "mind writing." As in *Female Quixote, Animal Magnetism* emphasizes the observable, visible, and external nature of Lisette's authority. In other words, we know she is controlling her story and its characters because we watch the characters say and do what she tells them to and we watch the plot of the story unfold just as she has declared it will. Unlike Lennox's text, however, Inchbald's play does not give us private interior access to any characters' mind; the genre depends entirely on what is externalized and performed. Lisette's "mind writing" takes on a performative and community-oriented valence that reflects the public nature of theater itself, demonstrated in front of both other characters and the watching audience.

Performativity is a vexed term in eighteenth-century drama, since acting theory of the time resembled what we now think of as method acting. Daniel Larlham explains

> By first engaging with the fictional circumstances of his role—perhaps by summoning images "impressed" (imprimé) within his memory or imagination—the actor "animates" (s'anime) or "impassions" (se passione) himself. In other

> words, he generates in himself those motions of the soul-body composite that are the passions themselves, sometimes also referred to as "affections" (affections) or "sentiments" (sentimens). These "interior movements" (mouvemens intérieurs), which now "agitate" (agite) the actor's physical frame, spread through space and "excite" (excite) corresponding corporeal sensations within the assembled audience. The organic interactivity of the soul-body composite means that these sensations are also immediately felt as passions in the spectators' souls. It is taken as natural and inevitable that when the actor genuinely "abandons himself" (s'abandonner) to the sequence of passions appropriate to his character, the assembled spectators will also surrender themselves to a corresponding series of internal movements. As a result, the audience is literally—that is, kinetically and kinesthetically—"touched" (touché), "moved," (ému), or "struck" (frappé) by the actor's impassioned expressivity (Larlham 433).

As I noted in the previous chapter, in the eighteenth century bodies were supposed to manifest interiority, and a body which hid one's thoughts or feelings was coarse at best and dangerous at worst. One major anti-theatrical criticism was, in fact, that actors broke the Biblical commandment against lying because they pretended to be thinking and feeling things which were not true. Good acting, as Larlham writes, involved attempting to feel what a character would feel – to actually become that character – in order to sincerely and believably perform the role.

The relationship between acting and the actor's "true self" was especially fraught for female actors, who courted scandal merely by performing in public. Sarah Siddons was one of the most famous female actors of her day, and is notable in part because of the spotless personal

reputation she maintained even while working in the theater. Elizabeth Savage notes that Siddons was very private about her personal life, only came to the theater to perform rather than regularly parading in public, and was especially known for her tragic roles. Since tragedy was the most respected form of drama, Siddons' association with it made her a "serious actor." In her personal life Siddons emphasized her motherhood and wifehood rather than her professional success or fame, and her identities as actor and mother often blurred – "Siddons' tragic persona on stage helped to bolster the private emotion the public imagined she felt in motherhood and, eventually, in the tragic loss of her two daughters" (Savage 77). For all actors, but for women particularly, what they played was what they were. Savage contrasts Sarah Siddons with Mary Wells, another successful actress with a much more colorful and public personal life. Wells never had the same level of respect or professional success that Siddons did in part because audiences perceived her as being fundamentally a spectacle. Savage emphasizes that people seemed to enjoy reading about the newest twist in Wells' life, just as we consume tabloids and gossipy websites today, but also that a lack of malice did not translate to respect or approval. Wells usually played smaller, less prestigious roles than did Siddons, and she could not draw audiences to a play as Siddons could.

Drama thus concretizes the relationship between mind and body that is so important to the way these first two chapters explore the concept of "mind writing." *Animal Magnetism* in particular gives us rich and delightful layers of performance, as we have actors playing characters who then playact within the story itself. For example, an actor plays as Lisette, who plays at being controlled by magnetism. Where *Female Quixote* emphasized how sincere changes in Glanville's behavior demonstrated Arabella's "mind writing" authority, *Animal Magnetism* shows how the ability to compel both performance and sincerity indicate Lisette's

narrative power. Arabella converts Glanville and rewrites her story through him. Lisette directs both characters who are in on the scheme (Constance, La Fleur, Marquis) and those who are not (Doctor, Jeffrey), a wider base of authority that also blurs lines between performance and sincerity. *Animal Magnetism*'s "mind writing" highlights how even conscious performance can demonstrate narrative authority, and points to the performative nature of "mind writing" itself.

Inchbald's farce uses a number of tropes common in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theater, including the idea of a guardian confining a beautiful young ward in order to marry her himself (seen in the *Marriage of Figaro* among many others) and the doubled-plot trope where a noble pair's servants have a relationship that mirrors their masters' (seen in Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* and Richard Steele's *The Conscious Lovers,* for example). She thus writes in forms that the audience can immediately recognize and uses both character types and plot devices that are familiar. The play's delight for the audience comes not in being surprised and shocked by what happens but in watching the story hit expected notes and reveling in the inside knowledge the audience shares with first one character, then another. While only the audience gets to "listen in" on every single character's conversations, Lisette consistently signals her similarity to the audience through her hints at expected romantic tropes. In other words, she seems to know what will happen the same way the audience does, not in specifics (the exact steps of the men's plan to free the women, for example, though she manages to be a central active figure in that anyway) but in her recognition of expected patterns. This metacognition is unique to Lisette, as she is the only character who presents as a self-aware commentator on the tropes and narrative devices of drama, drawing attention to the theatricality of the play. That Lisette can cite these tropes and her own performance of them seems to signal that she, like the

audience, knows she is in a comic farce even as her wielding of knowledge and authority makes for a more socially critical and less farcical play.

The beginning of the play also puts this awareness on display, making Lisette's narratively authoritative position clear from the start via her reference to tropes just as it opens with her ability to foretell the plot. When she confesses to Constance that she is in love and Constance asks if she loves the Marquis, for example, her response is "Do you think I don't know better where it is my duty to love? I am in love with his man" (Inchbald 4), adhering to the romance trope where the lovers' servants also fall in love. Nathaniel Leach points out that Lisette's explicit reference to duty draws attention to her knowledge of this trope. When she and Constance discuss the letter the Marquis attempted to pass to the latter Constance wonders what is in the letter, to which Lisette responds "That you are beloved—admired, I can tell every word in it—I know every sentence as well as if I had read it" (Inchbald 4). She "know[s]" what is in the letter just as she "know[s]" who the disguised man is – without any attempt to explain how it is she can know such a thing. Particularly interesting here is how specific her claims become. She does not simply know that Constance is "beloved…admired," but knows every "word" and "sentence" "as if [she] had read it." The play does not bother to prove (or disprove) this statement, but Constance once again does not question her, allowing her knowledge claim to stand. Lisette's declaration also signals a familiarity with the genre of secret letters passed from a man to a woman, yet another tip of the hat to narrative structure and her own knowledge of it. Lisette, like the audience, knows that love letters in plays tend to be filled with flowery assurances of devotion and adoration, so she can say what the letter contains.

The play's second act confirms the Marquis' feelings of adoration towards Constance when he proposes to her as soon as the two are in the same room. Stage directions indicate "The

Marquis makes signs of love to Constance" (Inchbald 22), and the first words he speaks to her are a proposal. A few lines later he has the opportunity to indulge again in the elaborate register of love letters when he pretends to have a fit and declare his adoration for "Arpasia" – conveniently "mistaking" Constance for this "first love" and sighing "I only retain my life in the pleasing hope of one day passing it with you, and rendering yours as happy as my own" (Inchbald 24). In terms of plot the Marquis is thus able to openly declare his love without the Doctor realizing it by pretending to have a fit, but this interaction also confirms the feelings of admiration and adoration Lisette earlier ascribes to the Marquis. From the very beginning the audience is primed to see Lisette as an authoritative foreteller, and the rest of the play consistently works to confirm those opening statements. Lisette's expository role, frequent orders to her social superiors, and crucial leadership role in the play's central scheme all make her the most authoritative figure in the play despite her gender, social position, and the plot's apparent focus on Constance and the Marquis.

Historical and narrative stakes

Animal Magnetism came out in the years immediately preceding the French Revolution, which means that the play's elevation of lower-class characters would soon be a bloody reality. *Animal Magnetism* was wildly popular on both the British and American stages for decades after its 1788 debut, even amid what Angela Rehbein calls "anxiety about Jacobin sentiments taking hold in England" (Rehbein 175). The play's foreign setting of Paris and the foreign identities of the French servants Lisette and La Fleur can only have magnified the story's link to revolutionary France but also may have relieved British class anxieties. While the English Doctor and his English manservant may be fools, neither good English servants nor good English

soil are implicated in the text's violations of class structure. Inchbald's own politics were fairly radical – she "was one among those writers who supported the French Revolution and who were vilified as social 'levellers'" (Rehbein 175) – but she employs some of the "camouflage" (Hume 192) Robert Hume discusses by locating her domestic revolution outside of the British Isles.

Still, while social upheaval may be geographically displaced in Inchbald's play, it is unquestionably a force for good. Lisette angrily declares to Constance "is it not a shame the doctor should dare here in Paris to forbid both you and your servant to stir from home; lock us up, and treat us as women are treated in Spain" (Inchbald 5), her comparison implicitly praising France's freedom compared to the patriarchal rigidity of Catholic/Moorish Spain. Constance assures her that they will "learn to plot and deceive, and treat [the Doctor] as men are treated in Spain" (Inchbald 5), their paired comments suggesting a kind of exoticized harem existence on the Spanish peninsula, where men control and women connive. The shame of the women's captivity is partially about the lack of freedom itself and partially about the lack of freedom happening in Paris. Paris is thus set up as a bastion of liberty, and seeking freedom from (domestic) tyranny in France is a good thing for both maids and mistresses.

Even though Inchbald wrote the play the year before the French Revolution began, she wrote it within the context of increasing discontent among the French "Third Estate" and it was performed while maids and servants sought liberty from aristocratic control in Paris. Moreover, as H.T. Dickinson notes, "British radicals and reformers had been developing a political programme for constitutional reform…for a least two decades before the outbreak of the French Revolution" (Dickinson 1) that called for, among other things, universal adult male suffrage. The violent specifics of the lower classes taking control of their lives (in the Reign of Terror, for example) may not have yet come to pass when *Animal Magentism* was first performed, but the

political discussions and anxieties about such a possibility were alive on both sides of the English Channel. The text safely ensconces its action on the Continent, but the historical period in which it was performed and enjoyed increasingly saw the threat or reality of those Continental ideologies.

Animal magnetism itself was a concept "inextricably linked in most British minds with France and its revolution" (Fulford 57), according to Tim Fulford. It was not only a foreign idea, promulgated by the German Franz Mesmer and popular with the French, but one that turned a conventional notion of hierarchy and control on its head, since anyone could become a practitioner. Mesmer began his practice in the 1770s in Vienna, Austria before moving on to France, Switzerland, and Germany. He believed that an invisible fluid ran though all living things and could be manipulated in pursuit of a variety of goals from better health to love. Fulford comments that mesmerism's first British fans were upper-class women, prompting fears that the (male) mesmerist was getting too close and personal with delicate aristocratic ladies. When mesmerism trickled down to the working classes it was well-received there for another reason: "like other kinds of "natural" healing, [it] appealed because it was a discourse that artisans could practice for themselves, acquiring power and building networks that were not controlled by the authorities" (Fulford 70). According to Fulford the British medical establishment shifted their arguments against the practice with the change in users, arguing that it allowed for illicit sex or even assault when upper-class women were the primary audience and that it promoted sedition when the lower classes began to use it. These are in fact exactly the threats magnetism poses in Inchbald's play. The Doctor seeks to coerce Constance into a sexual relationship, albeit one legitimized by marriage; Lisette and La Fleur demonstrate lower-class sedition by using the idea of magnetism to manipulate the Doctor.

Animal Magnetism's publication and performance also neatly anticipates the increased connections between gender and reform that would come to play a major role in Britain during the 1790s. Olympe de Gouges *Declaration of the Rights of Woman* (1791) and Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), are just two examples of the writings that demanded gender revolution along with political revolution in the final decade of the eighteenth century. Gina Luria Walker notes that women of various political persuasions "found themselves and what they wrote becoming enmeshed in the French Revolution quarrel" (Walker 145) simply by the act of publically joining the discussion. In fact "the Revolution debate become even more contentious as it incorporated competing views on women's nature, roles and education" (145), which gives Inchbald's portrayal of Lisette's agency and authority radical stakes on account of both her class and her gender.

The text's violation of social norms parallels its violation of genre norms, its political and narrative stakes intertwining and mutually constitutive. *Animal Magentism* does not levy its social commentary within the serious realm of the tragedy but instead uses a much more lighthearted form: the farce. While the term "farce" was applied solely to drama only after the Restoration period, as Reto Winckler writes, during the eighteenth century it was applied to describe anything "ridiculous" (Winckler 5) including lowbrow comedic theater. While anti-theatrical views vilified all forms of theater as lies that encouraged licentiousness, even writers distinguished between a farce and more serious dramatic work. John Dryden sneered of rival writer Thomas Shadwell that he "promis'd a play and dwindled to a farce" (Dryden line 202), for example. Farces were meant to entertain, the word's etymology derived from the Latin for padding or filling (Winckler 4). They were part of the set of dramatic types called "afterpieces," so named because they came after the main theatrical event. Sometimes, especially later in the

eighteenth century, farces filled in the time between two plays. Whatever its place in relation to the other plays being performed, people came to the theater to see something else and got the farce as a funny (and popular) extra.

Comic drama, more erudite than farce though still less legitimate than tragic drama, was distinguished from farce in large part by the level of absurdity. Farce was absurd or improbable and often involved a great deal of physical humor, as Tonya Howe notes. They were "shorter pieces, typically mined from other plays, the primary goals of which are to produce body-shaking laughter by reveling in the exploration of physical wit" (Howe 26). It was in fact "this embodied aspect of farce that is most frequently the target of critique" (Howe 26), something which makes *Animal Magnetism*'s focus on physical actions particularly interesting. Comedies showed off verbal wit and clever plot twists on their way to the expected marriage; farces relied on spectacle and pratfalls. The action-based and often just silly physicality of the play's performed false magnetism and Lisette's "mind writing" and control are perfectly in line with the norms of the farce, but also established as ridiculous and laughable. This move has the effect of underscoring magnetism's absurdity and, I argue, masking the power of Lisette's role by hiding it within a ridiculed genre and set of behaviors.

Despite being silly, farces did have a history of social critique. Betsy Bolton comments "eighteenth century…women playwrights applied the form of farce to issues of gender inequality along with a wide range of other current affairs" (Bolton 3), particularly naming Inchbald's *A Mogul's Tale* (1784) as a text where the "use of farce and mimicry reflects colonial critique back onto the gender stereotypes of English identity" (Bolton 7). Robert D. Hume writes of what he calls city comedies "A great many of them are lightweight and formulaic—though there are some effective, interesting pieces with manifestly serious underlying aims" (Hume 188),

pointing both to a generic assumption and the genre's ability to occasionally transcend it. Thus, while the idea that *Animal Magnetism* critiques the social system would have been within the realm of possibility for eighteenth-century audiences, they would have approached it primarily as entertainment, perhaps one reason why it remained popular throughout the period the French Revolution and beyond.

Inchbald translated and adapted *Animal Magnetism* from a French play entitled *Le Médecin malgré tout le monde* (1786) by Dumaniant, though many discussions of the play from the eighteenth century to today do not mention this. It is important that we see the work as adapted as well as translated in order to appreciate Inchbald's authorial power. She did not come up with the plot herself, but she did make a number of editorial choices. She cuts, re-orders, and translates with an eye towards creating the story she will tell – one heavily based on Dumaniant's but not the same as it. Inchbald's role as translator and re-writer of Dumaniant's play suggests interesting parallels with the directorial and re-writing Lisette. Both play the role of mediator for their audience and both take ownership of a narrative that belonged to another, shifting it to best serve their interests. This similarity underscores Lisette's position as an author-analogue, casting her actions in the play as resembling an author's adaptive re-writing.

"Mind writing" in *Animal Magnetism* is an expanding process, one where Lisette brings new characters into the circle of her authority as the play goes on until she is controlling everyone, as this chapter will demonstrate. With the stage set, as it were, by Lisette's expository foretelling at the beginning, her "mind writing" narrows down to one person – her mistress Constance – and then grows as the play progresses and the other characters are brought into her fold. "Mind writing" reshapes what at first appears to be a farce into a radical political and social

statement, arguing for lower-class women's agency and forcing audiences to contend with a critique of class hierarchy when they were expecting a lighthearted entertainment.

Lisette's authority over Constance

While Lisette displays a great deal of her foretelling and control with regards to the Marquis' and La Fleur's plans, she begins her "mind writing" with Constance. She writes Constance's reply to the Marquis' original (and as yet undelivered and thus unread) letter. While originally framed as Lisette acting as Constance's amanuensis so that the Doctor will not see Constance's handwriting if he intercepts the letter, Lisette does not in fact need Constance's input to write. Instead, they have a crucial and very telling exchange,

> CONSTANCE: What are you saying?
>
> LISETTE: (*writing*) What you are thinking.
>
> CONSTANCE: You don't know my thoughts?
>
> LISETTE: I do—And here they are in this letter. (Inchbald 5)

Lisette is literally writing Constance's mind on a page, noting down her mistress's thoughts without needing her to express them. While Constance's "You don't know my thoughts?" suggests an attempt to hold on to her own, different mind, this statement is the extent of her resistance. The Lisette-penned version of Constance's thoughts take precedence over Constance's actual thoughts, and when Constance wants to read the letter Lisette demurs, "No don't examine your thoughts" (Inchbald 5), asserting the primacy of her own version of Constance's mind. She then cuts short any opportunity for further discussion by claiming she must take the letter down immediately in order to smuggle it out, and while she does not in fact leave the room Constance does not argue any more. Lisette's words thus function as a directorial

cue: she has written Constance's thoughts down in the letter and Constance acquiesces to Lisette's version of herself. Lisette's neatly mirrored ability to declare the contents of the Marquis' letter and write Constance's reply sets up the breadth of the maid's narrative authority. As we will see, Lisette directs every character in the play.

In a particularly interesting move later in the plot, Lisette confirms her own version of Constance's mind when talking with La Fleur about the Marquis' interest in Constance. At the beginning of Act III La Fleur admits to Lisette that the Marquis "before…was in doubt of" (Inchbald 26) Constance's affections for him, a comment Lisette interrupts to scoff "Pshaw! he might easily have guessed her sentiments. A young woman, weary of confinement as she was, is easily in love with the first young man who solicits her affections" (Inchbald 26). Here Lisette speaks in two registers. Within the plot she declares that it is obvious Constance is in love with the Marquis, thus confirming the very thoughts Lisette herself wrote in the letter at the beginning of the play. Simultaneously she refers to a wider romantic and comedic trope of women falling in love with the first man who indicates an interest in them, again aligning herself with the audience's knowledge of stereotypical romance plot setups that have a young ingénue marry the first man who notices her.

Particularly interesting here is the plot's total lack of anxiety around the authority expressed by the female servant, even though conduct literature and cultural histories of the eighteenth century often focus on how to limit servants' power. Gillian Russell discusses how servants, though "powerless in so many ways…at least had the power of knowing more about his or her employer than the latter could sometimes control" (Russell 22). Eighteenth-century family conduct manuals are full of advice about how to control and corral servants, whose class and non-family status render their intimacy with family members a source of concern. Publications

like Daniel Defoe's *Family Instructor* (1715), Clement Ellis' *The Duty of Parents* (1734), and James Buckland's *A Dialogue Concerning the Sin of Lying Between a Master and his Servants* (1749) all spend pages discussing the need to control servant behavior, with the sexual behavior of female servants a point of particular interest. Nathalie Wolfram's discussion of servants and conduct in Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* (1722) emphasizes the limits to servant autonomy, something which fits much more neatly into a conduct-book view of servants.

By contrast *Animal Magnetism*'s servants have a great deal of autonomy and agency, but this is not a source of anxiety – Lisette and to a much lesser degree La Fleur are the directors of dramatic action, and neither Constance nor the Marquis are much concerned about this. Constance in particular obeys Lisette without once questioning the maid's knowledge or right to give orders, and the play does not comment on this inversion of power. Lisette is also able to declare the contents of the Marquis' letters as well as his plan, something which puts her on equal cognitive footing with the nobleman. Both Constance, who shares the Marquis' high-class status, and La Fleur, who shares his status as a man, are befuddled by the Marquis' plans but Lisette both anticipates the plans and gives the orders that allow them to occur. The Marquis and La Fleur actually switch places at one point (yet another common comedic trope), a stratagem that has the effect of equating the two rather than emphasizing their different positions in the social hierarchy. Thus, while Lisette does not directly order the Marquis to do anything she does order around and even slap his "double" La Fleur. That scene does suggest the practical limits to Lisette's authority, since she knows the two men have traded places and thus does not believe she is actually striking a nobleman; Inchbald uses this standard comedic plot device to allow Lisette to order around and hit a nobleman by proxy. The (comedic) violence Lisette is allowed to inflict joins her ability to anticipate the Marquis' plans and actually make them happen,

continuing to widen Lisette's circle of authority to include the pinnacle of the social hierarchy: a nobleman.

Lisette directing behavior/feelings

As the plot unfolds according to Lisette's original exposition she continues to anticipate future events and control the actions of other characters. La Fleur disguises himself as Doctor Mystery the magnetist, telling the Doctor that if he holds a particular magnetic wand Constance will be "constrained to love you with the most ardent passion" (Inchbald 16) and promising to fetch one of his own patients in order to further prove the wand's efficacy. Lisette overhears the men's conversation, confers with Constance - who has read the same information in the letter she received from the Marquis - and declares, "I would lay a wager, that very patient is no other than the Marquis himself" (Inchbald 16). As with her earlier statement that La Fleur and the Marquis intended to use La Fleur's disguise to get into the house, she jumps ahead of what information the women are given to declare the next step.

Lisette's ability to declare this step puts her in a position of even greater authority than Constance's letter from the Marquis, which does not give the details of the plan. Lisette could not have overheard La Fleur telling the Doctor that the Marquis is the patient, since the Doctor is the one who needs to be fooled and thus La Fleur would say nothing of the sort. The letter Constance receives from the Marquis should be more forthcoming about these particulars, however, given that it was a direct message and the only people who saw or touched it were those who are in on the plan. Rather than lay out the details of the plan and the women's expected roles, however, the letter only explains the Marquis' previous decisions. It discusses how the Marquis figured out the Doctor might be susceptible to being tricked by magnetism and

the choice to send La Fleur in to do the tricking, giving backstory instead of future instructions. Lisette's confidence that the Marquis will be the patient, when nothing including the Marquis' own letter indicates as much, is another example of her metacognitive genre savvy. No romantic rescue plot is left entirely in the hands of the servant, the hero must be part of it, and thus the Marquis must get into the house.

Whether the letter does not say more because the Marquis and La Fleur are making up the plan as they go along or because the Marquis does not believe Constance needs to know, it represents a missed opportunity to share more of their plan with both the women and the audience. Narratively the choice to keep the details hidden makes sense, since the women need to know what to do for the plan to work but the farce's entertainment value for the audience derives in part from the plan feeling improvised and subject to comedic chaos. The audience needs to know enough to understand what is going on, but it feels much funnier if the characters are constantly racing to catch up and getting caught in hilarious pratfalls as a result. In order to preserve the element of improvisation, then, the play keeps those who should be more in the know about the plan – the Marquis, whose plan it is, and Constance, the person it is designed to free – from knowing or expressing it. Instead it is Lisette who is the one foretelling the future, once again signaling her similarity with the audience and telling us what to expect while maintaining space for the hijinks that will ensure as other characters struggle to keep up. Lisette's ability to step in and confidently declare that the Marquis will be coming disguised as a patient is thus set against the Marquis himself. He did not indicate the next steps, but Lisette is able to. Her confidence and authority are also juxtaposed with Constance's, as Constance wonders what to do next and Lisette calmly advises that she must "pretend an affect for your

guardian" (Inchbald 17), asserting that Constance may "depend on" (Inchbald 17) the men having a plan.

Of course she is right. The patient is indeed the Marquis, and the plan is to trick the Doctor into believing in the power of magnetism and the magnetic wand by having Constance pretend an intense attraction to her guardian under the wand's compulsion. Having a plan is not the same as actually carrying it out, however, and Lisette must be the one to make the parts of the plan happen. Despite being told what the men intend Constance does not quite seem to catch on, as Lisette must instruct her in an aside "He ogles you, cast a tender look and accompany it with a sigh" (Inchbald 18), and only after that cue is Constance able to feign the needed interest. The specificity of Lisette's instructions contrast markedly with the play's own stage directions, which are sparse. When Constance and the Marquis are finally in the same room the script instructs "the Marquis makes signs of love to Constance, she gets nearer to his chair" (Inchbald 23), directions that give the actor playing the Marquis a great deal of leeway while spelling out the movements of the actor playing Constance. Lisette cannot simply tell Constance to "make signs of love" as the script does the Marquis, but must instead spell out the exact look and sound needed to indicate love and attraction. Lisette also recognizes the need to add credibility to the situation by herself performing attraction for the Doctor, doubling down on magnetism's apparent power. Constance thinks such a move unnecessary, but Lisette insists and as a result causes the Doctor to conclude "the effects of the Magnetism is very natural, it acts upon one as well as another" (Inchbald 19). This move pays off later in the play as well, as the Doctor is flummoxed by the need to compel one woman's desire but not the other and focuses primarily on that concern rather than on any questions of magnetism's efficacy or reality.

The play sets up a parallel between Lisette and animal magnetism, one in which the female maidservant actually performs and directs that which the Doctor thinks mesmerism is effecting. Because magnetism is repeatedly delegitimized the audience may very well miss the fact that Lisette functions as a mesmerist. When the Doctor hands over the wand to his servant Jeffrey in order to transfer Lisette's unwanted affection, it is again Lisette who gives the direction for herself and Constance, commenting "I see through this design, let us fall in love with Jeffrey" (Inchbald 20). Every time the wand is supposed to force the women to feel affection for this or that man it is actually Lisette performing affection. While the original escape plan belonged to the Marquis and La Fleur, in fact, Lisette regularly takes control of the situation. The plan relies entirely on Constance making the Doctor think magnetism is real, and since it is Lisette prompting Constance at every turn, success ultimately rides on her. Lisette's assurance to Constance "That they have planned you may depend upon it" (Inchbald 17) looks more and more like a polite fiction, since Lisette is the one calling the shots.

Indeed the plan seems more and more Lisette's as the play goes on, and she does not hesitate to order around La Fleur once the plot puts them in the same place. At the beginning of Act III she asks him "But when is this farce to end!" (Inchbald 26), to which he replies "My master now he is introduced, will take advantage of some circumstances, to obtain either by force or stratagem the Doctor's consent to his wishes" (Inchbald 26) – an answer that indicates both a total lack of planning and a total reliance on a "circumstance" presenting itself. Naturally, and crucially, it is Lisette who takes it upon herself to manufacture such a circumstance, abruptly instructing La Fleur "When I return, be sure to confirm whatever I shall say" (Inchbald 27) and leaving the room. She comes back claiming the Doctor's servant Jeffrey is mad, a diagnosis that

La Fleur (as Doctor Mystery) dutifully backs up per Lisette's orders, commenting that magnetism cannot cure Jeffrey and that the only recourse is to smother the man.

La Fleur's wholehearted improvisation at Lisette's command is particularly interesting because Lisette does not tell him what is going to happen – he knows enough about her to see her as an ally in the scheme, but there is no immediate connection between Jeffrey's supposed madness and bringing about the marriage between Constance and the Marquis. La Fleur does not hesitate, however, and does what Lisette says even to the level of suggesting murder (we hope facetiously). By declaring Jeffrey mad Lisette sets up and masterminds the conversation that proceeds between the Doctor and La Fleur, using La Fleur's supposed authority as a magnetist to bolster her own claims. All the other characters, in fact, seem to accept Lisette's orders without question, including Jeffrey himself, who has been betrayed by her claim that he has gone mad. She is his antagonist throughout the play and directly responsible for what appears to be a serious discussion of killing him, yet when she tells him to run out of the house he immediately leaves. These situations build up a picture of Lisette as the mesmerist and director, cuing everyone as to what they are supposed to do and each immediately accepting that she has done so.

Lisette acts for the Doctor

As the play reaches its final, chaotic denouement it continues to rely on Lisette's ingenuity and ability to assert reality to bring about the success of the group's plan. Lisette's control of the Doctor represents a rich demonstration of dramatic irony: the audience knows Lisette is masterminding the scheme against the Doctor and directing his interpretation of events, while the Doctor sees Lisette merely as his servant and an extension of himself – including in his work as a physician. This gap in understanding allows Lisette to control the Doctor's

understanding of the world, which proves to be crucial for the final step in the plan to work. In addition to her own asserted authority in foretelling and stage-directing the other characters Lisette also makes medical diagnoses and interacts with patients at the Doctor's request, and the Doctor trusts her declarations absolutely even as the audience knows she is lying. She performs as a medical expert as well as controlling the Doctor himself, and thus cements her authoritative position.

At the end of the play La Fleur has taken the Marquis' place as the false dead patient and in response his confused "But what does all this mean, I don't understand?" Lisette admonishes "Hush, dead people never speak." (Inchbald 31). This exchange is particularly important to establish Lisette's ultimate authority, because the two servants have been working together to carry out the group's grand scheme. La Fleur convinces the Doctor of magnetism, passes letters between the Marquis and Constance, improvises the conversation that drives Jeffrey out of the house, and otherwise joins Lisette as a primary mover in the action of the play. Especially given his much greater physical mobility and his gender, he has been another character able to assert his will on the world around him, and the play's political stakes include him as a servant expressing socially dangerous levels of agency. Lisette has been in charge all along, from foretelling to creating the "circumstances" (Inchbald 26) to ordering everyone around to setting up conversations, but La Fleur has been fairly quick to catch on to her signals and suggestions. Here he becomes fully subordinate to Lisette. He explicitly declares his lack of understanding and she tells him precisely what to do – shut up – without telling him why. That the cue is an entertaining one is a bonus for the audience, but we should not allow laughter to make us lose sight of the fact that Lisette once again steps forward as the person who knows the future and is going to make it happen. The plan that originally belonged to the Marquis and La Fleur, that La

Fleur was theoretically in charge of enacting as the mesmerist Doctor Mystery, is now wholly in Lisette's hands. She acts as a mesmerist in truth, able to control those around her as La Fleur's false mesmerist never could. With her control over La Fleur now complete, she turns to the Doctor as the final character to come under her authority.

When the Doctor comes back into the room he observes of the "patient" "he's as white as ashes" and instructs "lay your hand upon his heart Lisette, and feel if it beats at all" (Inchbald 32). Here Lisette steps into the Doctor's place at his own request, interacting directly with the "patient" and reporting that he is dead. This is a falsehood, as the Doctor himself would discover if he felt for the patient's pulse himself, but the Doctor allows Lisette to declare his reality instead of ascertaining it for himself. His response to Lisette's proclamation of death is to ask her again "is there no motion?" (Inchbald 32) rather than to rush over and check the patient's heartbeat. Lisette once again adds her own flourish to the false world she is weaving, slapping La Fleur's face twice to prove he is non-responsive while the Doctor busily concocts a woe-is-me story about the whole thing being a setup. When figuring out what to do with the body the Doctor asks Lisette a third time "He is certainly dead, is he not?" (Inchbald 32), once again relying on her rather than checking for himself. The anxiety present in a triple-check of the patient's death seems like it should cause the Doctor to confirm things himself, but each time he accepts Lisette's claim. It appears as well that Lisette anticipated this being the case, because the entire scheme relies on the Doctor not checking the patient's pulse. It is only because someone who is in on the plot is mediating between the Doctor and the patient that they can falsely claim death.

As well as being yet another example of Lisette's ability to foretell and direct what happens in the play, by doing the work of a doctor in examination and pronouncement she also

once again entirely upends gender and class expectations. Medicine in the eighteenth century was a middle-class profession and the medical establishment's great anxiety around controlling and licensing medicine seems to have come in part from a sense of social lack. It was very important for medicine to be seen as proper and controlled, since it was separated by only the thinnest of lines from base trade. As a servant and as a woman Lisette would not have been welcome in the medical sphere – by this period even midwives were being pushed out of birthing chambers in favor of male obstetricians. Yet it is she rather than the Doctor who actually does the work of medicine, even though she is lying the whole time. She performs as a physician for the Doctor's benefit and uses that borrowed authority in order to trick him.

This inverse position of power, with a female practitioner examining a male patient, is especially interesting given some of the usual criticisms lobbed at mesmerism discussed earlier. One major concern was that it put male practitioners and female patients in too close of quarters, and left the patients susceptible to bad behavior on the part of the practitioners. Lisette neatly reverses this by acting like a doctor and in fact bringing literal harm to the patient by slapping him. Although the whole scene is a charade, with Lisette telling falsehoods the whole time and the patient neither an actual patient nor dead, it still sets up a scenario where the female servant is empowered to make medical pronouncements by the incapable male doctor, and where Lisette as the female medical practitioner steps over the bounds of propriety by slapping the male patient.

By this point Lisette's authority almost begins to look like overkill. She effortlessly foretells others thoughts and intentions, takes over masterminding the plot to free herself and Constance, and casually orders around nearly every other character. What more does the play need to do so we understand it is Lisette's story? These final scenes with the Doctor help to

cement the breadth of her "mind writing" authority as he abdicates any power or ability whatsoever to her. She is thus able to control and rewrite his reality in the professional realm as well as the romantic. Taking center stage in scenes ostensibly between a male doctor and his male patient, she asserts both her own declarative power and her professional capability.

Conclusion

Inchbald's play hides its political, gender, and class stakes under the veneer of a traditional ending. The Marquis and Constance are to be wed, the Doctor is outwitted, and we hear nothing more from the maid who made it all happen. Lisette's final lines are to the Marquis, where she pretends to plead for clemency for the Doctor because he did not intend to kill the patient. The Doctor begs for mercy, the Marquis demands to marry Constance, the Doctor agrees, and the whole plot is revealed for the trickery that it was. Socially-acceptable marriages and a renunciation of quackery are the order of the day. But this happy, socially-sanctioned ending only comes about because Lisette called the shots throughout the play. First with Constance, then La Fleur and the Marquis, then with Jeffrey, and finally with the Doctor, she playacts as a servant while directing all the action. The play-within-a-play that is the group's scheme for freedom gives Lisette the space to assert her authority, and her expository role emphasizes her level of creative and directorial power.

In fact Lisette's silence at the end of the play actually cements her identity as the prime mover of all the action. She has spent the previous acts telling everyone what was going to happen and then prodding other characters in turn to fulfill their role in her grand plan. Finally she can sit back and watch all her hard work pay off in front of her. Before the finale she is present in every scene and has 112 lines, compared to Constance's 71, La Fleur's 75, Jeffrey's

43, and the Marquis' 36. Only the Doctor has more, with 122 lines but he does not show up until nine pages in and is conspicuously missing from numerous scenes when Lisette talks to La Fleur, Constance, or Jeffrey. No stage directions indicate that Lisette leaves the stage after the Marquis bursts on the scene and blackmails the Doctor into releasing Constance, so it appears she stands off to the side, watching. Just as she signaled her connection to the audience at the beginning by naming the romance tropes the play uses, she again becomes like the audience at the end by observing the action. The characters who have relied on her quick thinking, whispered directions, and improbable knowledge can at last play their parts without her needing to constantly prompt them. As she watches the precise scene she has been working towards unfold, she can finally rest from directing everyone. Lisette's metacognition and authority, reinforced by her ability to enjoy the fruits of her labors at the end, make what seemed originally to be an entertaining theatrical piece into a critique of gender and class systems.

One crucial tip-off to Lisette's agency is the way that her future is signaled as separate from Constance's. The play does not discuss what will happen to Lisette (or La Fleur) after their respective employers' marriage – it would make sense that Constance would take a loyal and intelligent maid like Lisette along with her to her new noble household. Logically, then, Lisette's freedom is predicated solely on Constance's freedom. She can ride her mistress's coattails out of the Doctor's house. Yet Lisette repeatedly makes her own plans for liberty in planning to marry La Fleur. In seeking to get away from the Doctor's control via her own marriage she detaches her goals from Constance's, asserting herself as an individual apart from her relationship to her mistress.

In the introduction of this chapter I wrote that the play gives Lisette a personal motive for her actions apart from Constance: she is making her own bid for freedom. She does this in an

interesting way, by equating her own situation with that of her mistress, collapsing the differences in their stations. And while both are seeking the very traditional route of marriage, Lisette repeatedly casts matrimony as a means rather than an end. In Act III she responds to La Fleur's question "And may I hope you love me?" with "Aye, Sir, I am weary of confinement like my mistress" (Inchbald 26). She sidesteps any actual emotion or commitment in this answer, emphasizing instead her weariness of confinement. In connecting this with Constance's own wish for freedom via the comparative "like my mistress" she takes the audience back to the lines immediately preceding, when she assures La Fleur that Constance would of course fall "in love with the first young man who solicits her affections" (Inchbald 26). While Lisette makes her statement about Constance's feelings in order to assure La Fleur that the Marquis should not doubt Constance's interest, it is significant that this too is no grand declaration of passion. Instead Lisette frames both her and Constance's love as givens because they want out; the relationships are means to achieve a desired outcome rather than the goal in and of itself. In just a few lines she turns both class divisions and gender expectations on their heads by claiming to be just like her mistress and by assigning them both the self-serving motive of freedom rather than a desire for marriage or for the fiancés in question.

That Lisette's goals are personal rather than communal is itself a radical act. The play appears to reify an aristocratic social order, with the servant joining the master to outwit the middle-class professional. *Animal Magnetism* is certainly no *Communist Manifesto*. Yet while it does not seek to free everyone from the tyranny of the upper classes, it repeatedly emphasizes Lisette's own goals. She is selfish, as servants – whose lives were spent taking care of others – are often not permitted to be. Jeffrey's selfishness in wanting to marry Lisette despite his not being a great catch is played for laughs, and he is ultimately punished by being run out of the

house. Lisette's selfishness in wanting to control her own life is rewarded. The stakes are personal, but the impact is political, for if Lisette can manipulate the social order to serve her own ends, why not others?

Animal Magnetism remained a popular theater piece for decades, and an 1832 summary and review of plays by John Genest concludes "the dialogue is neat, but the plot is grossly improbable" (Genest 498). Genest's review dismissing the possibility of such a plot came out the same year as the Reform Act of 1832, which nearly doubled the size of Britain's electorate, and a only a few years before the Chartist movement, which championed universal suffrage and sought to eliminate the requirement that members of Parliament be property owners. In other words, Genest's claim that a story about the agency of the working classes is not believable coincided with the working classes in Britain exerting their agency to seek a voice in their government. What was in the late eighteenth century mostly a foreign threat became by the nineteenth century a domestic one. And while the working classes of the nineteenth- (or twentieth-, or twenty-first-) century did not invert the social order, they did win political and social victories that make things like universal suffrage and freedom of movement expected norms.

By using a farcical romance as camouflage for a radical political and social agenda, Inchbald's play plays with genre as well as social critique. As E. Bruce Hayes notes, the ethos of farce is inherently conservative; the humiliating reversals that characterize the genre are not posited to call social norms into question but rather to reinstate them" (Hayes 40). At first glance *Animal Magnetism* appears to adhere to this standard by critiquing foreign pseudo-science and rewarding the aristocracy at the expense of the bourgeoisie, but Lisette's authority and control call into question social norms of gender and class. The supposedly conservative and amusing

genre of the farce thus actually makes radical social claims via layers of theatricality and performance.

By emphasizing the way that performance and action serve to create meaning even apart from the visual aspect of drama, this chapter gestures towards a narratology of drama. Drama is an undertheorized subset of narratology, which tends to focus primarily on third-person (and sometimes first-person) prose narratives, though recent work has been done to articulate narratologies of poetry, film, and television. Early theorists like Gerard Genette mentioned drama in their works, and more recent publications like those of Manfred Jahn, Peter Hühner, Roy Sommer, and Mitsuya Mori have attempted to discuss the ways that drama uses dialogue and temporally-organized sequences of events to make meaning in the absence of a narrator or clear presenting voice. By focusing on event sequence order and the ways it intersects with spoken lines of dialogue I suggest that drama sometimes uses its assumed lack of narrator to camouflage the authorial and genre-reshaping power of a given character. *Animal Magnetism* relies on the idea that audiences think they know the kind of story they are reading or seeing – a funny and frivolous portrayal of domestic life that will ultimately resolve tidily. Instead, via exposition, foretelling, and a widening circle of power, the maid Lisette functions as an author-analogue who controls the story at hand. Inchbald play demonstrates the power of using lighthearted entertainment to imagine and normalize a world in which the female servant gets to work towards her own goals, upsetting the social order in the process.

Chapter Three | "Imagination Took the Reins": Epistolary Authority and Reader Ignorance in Frances Burney's *Evelina*

Introduction

The eponymous heroine of Frances Burney's first novel *Evelina* (1778) writes to her guardian Mr. Villars about her love interest Lord Orville, commenting "I could wish that *you*, my dearest Sir, knew Lord Orville, because I am sure you would love him" (Burney 72; I.XVIII). The observation that her guardian does not know her suitor reflects the story's geographic reality, with Evelina and Orville both in London and Villars in the country, but it also reminds the reader just how dependent we are on Evelina for information. The novel's epistolary form provides what Peter DeGabriele calls "a narrative mechanism for producing psychological interiority" (DeGabriele 23), yet any purported access to a character's "real" inner state – a conceit I will address later - requires that character first to write a letter. The majority of characters in *Evelina* do not. Of about two dozen characters only eight write letters: Evelina, her guardian Mr. Villars, her aunt Lady Howard, her biological father Sir John Belmont, her dead mother (a single letter to Sir John), and three of her suitors who write one letter each. We lack letters from people like Evelina's friends the Mirvans and her mother's extended family, but the most puzzling absence is that of Orville. Despite his role as Evelina's primary love interest and eventual husband, he never writes her a letter – and thus the reader never hears directly from him. Instead we rely entirely on Evelina to tell us about Orville.

The epistolary novel, a story created entirely by letters between different characters, was popular in England in the eighteenth century. As a form it trades on the tension between fiction and reality as well as public and private information. Martha J Koehler cites "miscommunication" as a "defining characteristic in the lineage of epistolary novels" (Koehler 19) – the pleasure of the story exists in the gaps between what different letter-writers know and

will admit to one another, with the reader able to peek in on everyone's conversations and know what is being told and what is being held back. Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa,* for example, is comprised of letters from Clarissa to her friend Miss Howe concerning her attempts to understand and resist the machinations of both her suitor Lovelace and her family, letters from Lovelace to his friend describing his plots and intentions, and multiple enclosed letters from Clarissa's scheming family to her. We read what Clarissa thinks about her own choices and actions as well as Lovelace's, and what Lovelace thinks about his own choices and actions as well as Clarissa's.

Most eighteenth-century epistolary novels include letters from both sides of the romance plot or with multiple points of view of a particular event – *Clarissa* (1748) as well as Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), Aphra Behn's *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister* (1684), Susannah Gunning's *Barford Abbey* (1768), and Tobias Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* (1771) to name a few – but *Evelina* explicitly avoids any letters from Orville and thus any direct representation of his thoughts. The one letter that seems to come from Orville is in fact a forgery from a rival suitor Sir Clement and, as I will discuss, actually represents Evelina's success and Clement's failure in writing Orville.

I argue that Burney breaks the usual epistolary format in order to set Evelina up as our only source of information about Orville and about the romance plot that comprises the majority of the narrative. Instead of putting the reader in a position of power, as the epistolary novel usually does by allowing us to keep track of the perspectives of both halves of the couple, *Evelina* deliberately leaves the reader in the dark and forces us to rely entirely on Evelina. Thus far I have discussed "mind writing" as a series of statements or commands by one character that are carried out by another, declarations about the latter character's actions, speech, thoughts, or

feelings that end up defining who the latter character is. "Mind writing" in *Evelina*, by contrast, is an literalized process as Evelina writes down Orville's actions, intentions, speech, thoughts, and feelings in her letters. Where other novels allow us to get to know a character through their dialogue and the narrator's comments as well as through others opinions, Burney's particular epistolary form means that everything we know about Orville is mediated through Evelina.

Burney's refashioning of the epistolary novel makes Evelina into an author in the fullest sense – she not only writes the letters that make up the majority of the novel, but she entirely writes Orville. Orville's constructedness, even within the conventions of epistolary fiction, emphasizes the constructedness of letters themselves, whether real or fictional, and undermines the psychological realism the epistolary form is meant to evoke. Simultaneously, it challenges the readers' sense of ourselves as all-seeing eyes, privy to every character's "private" correspondence. In other words, we as readers think we know more than any other character, because that is how epistolary novels usually work. Instead, we are constantly a step behind Evelina and entirely reliant on her to learn about climactic plot points in the story – she writes Orville as Burney rewrites the epistolary genre.

Girl, inserted

The lack of letters from Orville means that all our information about him is mediated by Evelina, and the way the novel communicates that information repeatedly reinforces how much we are in Evelina's mind. As one example, the news that Orville threatened another man with a duel if the other would not stop disparaging Evelina comes third-hand as Evelina writes to Villars what Mrs. Mirvan "communicate[s]" to Evelina about what Orville said to Mrs. Mirvan –

whew! This passage mixes direct quotation and reported speech and is worth quoting at length, as it demonstrates a very common way information is shared in the novel. Evelina writes,

> While they were sitting together during the opera, he [Orville] told her [Mrs. Mirvan] that he had been greatly concerned at the impertinence which the young lady under her protection had suffered from Mr. Lovel; but that he had the pleasure of assuring her, she had no future disturbance to apprehend from him.
>
> Mrs. Mirvan, with great eagerness, begged he would explain himself; and said she hoped he had not thought so insignificant an affair worthy his serious attention.
>
> "There is nothing," answered he, "which requires more immediate notice than impertinence, for it ever encroaches when it is tolerated." He then added, that he believed he ought to apologize for the liberty he had taken in interfering; but that, as he regarded himself in the light of a party concerned, from having had the honour of dancing with Miss Anville, he could not possibly reconcile to himself a patient neutrality.
>
> He then proceeded to tell her, that he had waited upon Mr. Lovel the morning after the play; that the visit had proved an amicable one, but the particulars were neither entertaining nor necessary: he only assured her, Miss Anville might be perfectly easy, since Mr. Lovel had engaged his honour never more to mention, or even to hint at what had passed at Mrs. Stanley's assembly. (Burney 101-102).

This passage mixes a single sentence of quoted dialogue with a great deal of reported speech occasionally bordering on free indirect discourse, both of which pass through several

interlocutors. The quoted line thus serves to draw our attention to how much information is not quoted, emphasizing Evelina's control over the story we are reading. Quoted and unquoted information come in the same paragraph, with a verbatim declaration of Orville's condemnation of impertinence followed by a paraphrased sentence notable for its phrase "having had the honour of dancing with Miss Anville" – clearly Orville's voice, since Evelina expressed some surprise at the "fashionable people" (Burney 34) who ascribe honor to even awkward experiences. Yet it is Evelina paraphrasing what she was told Orville said, a game of textual telephone that gives us nowhere to turn but Evelina for information. The single line of dialogue gives us a peek at Orville's seemingly direct statements, but then promptly switches to Evelina.

And of course even the quoted dialogue we find throughout the text does not actually violate what Rick Altman calls "single-focus narrative" (Altman 99), meaning a story that is presented through the point of view of a given character, even if the story itself is told in the third person. Altman gives the example of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, noting that "the novel introduces secondary characters through the protagonist, clearly identifying them as structurally subservient" so that we "pass through Hester each time we move from one aspect of her surroundings to another" (Altman 104). Epistolary novels like *Evelina* use first-person narration, which "simplifies the process of tying the story's narration to its narrated material" (Altman 172) by identifying all information as coming from the I-character. Thus dialogue from other characters only happens through the prism of our first-person narrator. As Julia Epstein notes, Evelina is able to exercise the "selective privilege of the creative artist throughout her narrative" (Epstein 117), deciding what to write and how. The passage's reported speech is clearly coming from Evelina, but even the quoted dialogue passes first through her pen on its way to Villars, with the reader peering over her shoulder, as it were.

This is just one example of the way the text's structure emphasizes Evelina's authority, but so does her clarification of what exactly Orville is talking about. His comments are very roundabout, concluding that "Miss Anville might be perfectly easy, since Mr. Lovel had engaged his honour never more to mention, or even to hint at what had passed at Mrs. Stanley's assembly" (102). All of this hinting and indirect referring becomes more specific when Evelina marvels "Who, from seeing Lord Orville at the play, would have imagined his resentment would have hazarded his life? yet his displeasure was evident, though his real bravery and his politeness equally guarded him from entering into any discussion in our presence" (102). Translation: Orville threatened Lovel with a duel, as indicated by the reference to "hazard[ing] his life," if the other continued to cast aspersions on Evelina. Orville is deliberately quite taciturn about his visit to Lovel and Evelina must tell us what has happened, yet another reminder that we are reading her point of view.

Orville is originally introduced to us in a much less deadly fashion in the novel's eleventh letter, written from Evelina to Villars, after the pair has met at a ball. Orville is, she writes, a "gentleman, who seemed about six-and-twenty years old, gayly, but not foppishly, dressed, and indeed extremely handsome, with an air of mixed politeness and gallentry" (Burney 29). Here the ease of switching back and forth between modes is again on display, but rather than dialogue vs. paraphrasing it is a switch between commenting on Orville's looks and his moral character, noting age and dress as well as his "air of mixed politeness and gallentry" (29). As Patricia L. Hamilton writes, "according to early-century conceptions of politeness, external behaviour should spring from and be congruent with inner moral virtue" (Hamilton 419). What one does and says (and how one dresses) is thus associated closely with one's moral character, meaning that Evelina's statements about Orville's externality also function as comments on his internality.

I offer these two examples to demonstrate that even information that purports to be evidentiary, that would allow readers to come to their own conclusion, is filtered through Evelina. While Sarah Erons claims "Burney's heroine moves from a thing that is *acted upon* to an *acting agent"* (Eron 173) over the course of the novel, when it comes to Orville she is consistently the narrative actor. It is her version of each experience that makes it onto the page, and specifically her version as told to Mr. Villars. Even apparently objective details like lines of dialogue are still occurring within the conceit of a letter, and she consistently puts caveats in her statements to remind us repeatedly that it is her point of view. Of Orville's concern for her safety after Clement takes her away in a carriage, for example, she writes "If I did not fear to flatter myself, I should think it not impossible but that he had a suspicion of Sir Clement's design" (101). The dependent clause "If I did not fear to flatter myself" begins the sentence by downplaying what the rest will say. She then "think[s] it not impossible" that Orville had a "suspicion" (101), putting three separate distancing words or phrases in between the "I" and Orville's concern over Sir Clement's schemes. She could have said "it is not impossible" or "I think it possible" or even the bold "I think it likely," but instead the caveats pile on top of one another. The very language of the letter does not allow us to forget that Evelina's mind stands between us and the plot.

The novel's repeated emphasis of Evelina's point of view continues even when she is simply narrating a social event. A particularly telling description comes when she writes about a trip to the Pantheon in London:

> At the same table with Lord Orville, sat a gentleman, - I call him so only because he *was* at the same table, - who almost from the moment I was seated, fixed his eyes stedfastly on my face, and never once removed them to any other object during tea-time,

> notwithstanding my dislike for his staring must, I am sure, have been very evident. I was quite surprised, that a man whose boldness was so offensive, could have gained admission into a party of which Lord Orville made one; for I naturally concluded him to be some low-bred, and uneducated man; and I thought my idea was indubitably confirmed, when I heard him say to Sir Clement Willoughby, in an *audible whisper*, - which is a mode of speech very distressing and disagreeable to by-standers, - 'For Heaven's sake, Willoughby, who is that lovely creature?' (106).

In this passage, as with her comments about Orville "having a suspicion" about Clement, Evelina repeatedly inserts herself in the middle of her sentences. When discussing the rude nobleman she writes "At the same table with Lord Orville, sat a gentleman, - I call him so only because he *was* at the same table - " (106), quickly undermining the more neutral ID-tag of "gentleman" with the caveat that she herself "call[s]" the man so, for a particular reason unrelated to his behavior. She comments that his staring "must, I am sure, have been very evident" (106), and explains her surprise that he's part of Orville's circle "for I naturally concluded him [the rude nobleman] to be some low-bred and uneducated man" (106). Each time the passage makes full use of the letter format to insert Evelina into the sentence, with repeated "I" statements and interjections that remind us over and over that she is the one reporting.

Villars, for his part, comments repeatedly on Orville, but he in many ways a stand-in for the reader because he is reliant on Evelina's letters to form his views. He repeatedly affirms that Orville is a good man, but the language of these affirmations point back to Evelina as their source. He writes that he is "gratified by the good-nature of Lord Orville, upon your making use of his name" (Burney 56) after Evelina tells him about claiming to dance with Orville to get out of dancing with others. Referring to "your making use of his name" (Burney 56) ties the

comment explicitly to Evelina's previous letter, something repeated in a later letter when he comments "Lord Orville appears to be of a better order of beings" (Burney 116) and goes on to cite several of the incidents Evelina reported to him as evidence. The use of the word "appears" in the second letter also echoes Evelina's repeated caveats, conditionals, and subjunctives, and highlights just how much Villars does not know. Evelina's own letters comment on the same limitation of information, as when she laments "I could wish that *you,* my dearest Sir, knew Lord Orville, because I am sure you would love him" (Burney 72, emphasis original). The subjunctive "could," the "wish" verb, and the speaker-centering "I am sure" combine to emphasize that Villars has not met Orville himself, only through Evelina.

The same Evelina-based language continues even when Villars is expressing an opinion about Orville at odds with Evelina's. In Volume III he warns Evelina to "quit" (Burney 309) Lord Orville because she has become too attached and he is concerned Orville will break her heart. This letter, which Evelina calls "kind, though heart-piercing" (324), functions in many ways as a recap of all Evelina has previously said about Orville, and foregrounds that function by referring back to Evelina's own words on multiple occasions. Villars notes "such as man *as you describe him* could not fail exciting your admiration" (Burney 308, emphasis mine), pointing to Evelina's descriptions as the source of everything known about Orville. He continues referring back to given events and descriptions, writing that Evelina "saw Lord Orville at a ball, -- and he was *the most amiable of men!*" (Burney 308, emphasis original). Here he nearly quotes one of Evelina's own previous letters, since she calls Orville "the most amiable man in the world" (Burney 37). He then concludes that he does not wish to "depreciate the merit of Lord Orville, who…seems to have deserved the idea *you* formed of his character" (Burney 308, emphasis mine), his use of the second person "you" rather than first-person "we" or "I" again centering

Evelina as the source of any conclusions about Orville. Since Villars has repeatedly praised Orville in other letters it is interesting that he chooses to emphasize Evelina's thoughts and judgements here.

Though Villars writes with his own advice about what Evelina's relationship to Orville should be, he writes in many ways like a modern-day advice columnist: based on the information contained in a letter. The plot that keeps Villars home in Berry Hill, the epistolary structure that means we get first-person accounts of everything, and the ways the text continually reminds us of the single-focus nature of the narrative all combine to emphasize Evelina's point of view – with the effect that we as readers must trust her word on everything, because it is all we have.

Letters – fact or fiction?

Evelina's epistolary format lends itself well to the single-focus narration, since the epistolary novel's conceit of being a series of letters provides what Lorraine Piroux calls the "illusion of authorial absence…constitutive of the specific aesthetic experience of authenticity" (Piroux 347). Piroux's use of "illusion" points to one of many tensions that accompany the epistolary novel: that it seems like we are reading people's private correspondence but of course we are reading a fictional novel created by an author. Rachel Scarborough King notes that "epistolarity associated the novel with ephemeral, non-literary texts such as newspapers, criminal biographies, secret histories, travelogues, billet-doux, and political pamphlets (King 68). In other words, the epistolary novel was strongly associated with non-fiction writing of various kinds, and with the authentic life experience non-fiction writing records. Indeed some epistolary novels pretended to be found documents, and while there is no evidence eighteenth-century readers consumed them as anything other than fiction, such a setup relies on the similarities between the

epistolary novel and the letter. Certain details of the text, like the dates of the letters "respect verisimilitude" (Leduc 39) in the words of Guyonne Leduc, meaning that the response to a given letter comes an appropriate number of days later, and sometimes with other letters in between in order to make space for that time to pass.

The preface to *Evelina* demonstrates some of the tensions the epistolary format trades on. It repeatedly refers to the text that follows as "the following letters" (Burney 7) and "these letters" (9), and concludes that the "editor" (9) trusts readers will enjoy the text. At the same time it talks about the "Novelist" (7), the "novel writer" (7), "author" (8), and "writer" (8) and declares "to draw characters from nature, though not from life, and to mark the manners of the times, is the attempted plan of the following letters" (7). These statements add up to a claim of simultaneous realism and fictionality. *Evelina* is a series of letters meant to be read as if they could be real, without ever actually claiming to be so.

In this the text deviates somewhat from a common trope in epistolary fiction, wherein the "author" claims to have found or written what follows. As Altman writes, "the need to justify narration of one's memoirs becomes a major thematic motif, generating preface after preface dedicated to the single-focus practice of transmuting character into author" (Altman 172). Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is written as a series of journal entries, for example, and many eighteenth-century readers originally believed the text to be a travelogue rather than a work of fiction. Henry Fielding's *Shamela* (1741) bears a title page declaring the text that follows to be "exact Copies of authentick Papers delivered to the Editor." Whether the writers actually wanted to trick their readers into believing the novel was non-fictional, the genre conventions of these forms relied on a certain claim to authenticity, one which blurred the lines between character, narrator, and author.

Epistolary novels follow the conventions of letters very closely, from their style to their formatting. H.W. Dilworth's *Familiar Letter Writer* (1758) admonishes "When you write to a friend, your letter should be a true picture of your heart, the style loose and irregular; the thoughts themselves should appear naked, and not dressed in the borrowed robe of rhetoric" (Dilworth v). Evelina's letters certainly follow this dictate as she includes exclamations, emotion, worry, questions, concerns, and celebrations in her letters. Each letter in the novel also begins with a date and place of writing, a common practice for letters at the time. These dates and locations are sometimes just window dressing without much impact on the plot but are sometimes very important, as when Villars' letter to Evelina advising her to stay away from Orville does not arrive until after Evelina has sent a very long letter excitedly detailing some of her adventures that include Orville. The novel's letters also all end with the kinds of closings common to the eighteenth century, from "I am, with all love and duty, Your, Evelina" (Burney 34) to "Adieu, my dear Sir; -- send me speedily an answer to this remonstrance, and believe me to be, &c. M. Howard" (124) to a simple "Arthur Villars" (257) with no other closing.

All these forms and many variations can be found in letter writing manuals like Dilworth's, Samuel Richardson's *Letters written to and for particular friends* (1741), and the anonymously-authored *The new lover's instructor* (1780). Lady Howard and Mr. Villars write to one another with polite "Dear Sir" and "Dear Madam" openings and long polite closings, as in the example above or Villars' "I am, dear Madam, with great respect, Your Ladyship's most obedient servant, Arthur Villars" (129). By contrast, Villars and Evelina generally write to one another without any particular opening and only sometimes use closings – and when they do, it is usually Evelina, as the subordinate person in the relationship. When Evelina writes to her friend Miss Mirvan, by contrast, she does not use openings or closings, nor does she usually sign her

name. Thus the different letter forms reflect the different purposes of the letters – business, social, etc. – and help to give the reader a sense of the relationship between the two people in question. Burney could use these different formatting details as shorthand because the letters in *Evelina* look so much like the letters her readers would have written.

The reflection of real letters is not perfect, but it does not have to be – the epistolary trades on some of the social knowledge about letters in order to craft a story. Some of Evelina's "in continuation" letters start to go on rather long and seem more like a journal than an actual letter, for example, since all letters in the manuals and collections are a page at most. The letters from everyone else are much shorter, sometimes only a third of a page, but of course Evelina's life is the center of the story. Each letter also begins with a heading, italicized in many books, telling the reader who the letter is to and from, so "*Evelina to the Rev. Mr. Villars*" (173, emphasis original). These headings actually reflect letter-writing manuals, which tend to bear similar (or even longer) headings.

The epistolary novel's close adherence to the conventions of actual letters suggests a level of "material honesty" in the form, but what about DeGabriele's claim that it produces "psychological interiority" (DeGabriele 23)? I want to begin unpacking that claim by considering the psychological honesty of letters themselves. All the manuals emphasize how important it is for letters to reflect one's true self, as seen in Dilworth's claim "When you write to a friend, your letter should be a true picture of your heart" (Dilworth v). *The new lover's instructor* declares "It will scarcely be disputed that persons may possess good understanding, and be qualified to acquit themselves with credit in conversation, and yet be unequal to the task of delivering their sentiments on paper" (Unknown A2), a statement that assumes the problem is in delivery rather than content. As far as love letters are concerned, "grace and elegance will give additional force

to the impassioned language of the heart" (A3.5), the use of "additional" also indicating that the feelings are real but people may require help expressing them.

Of course who a letter is for often dictates what is in the letter. Patricia Meyers Spacks references the "common critical assumption that the writer's sense of a specific audience shapes epistolary prose" (Spacks 190) in her discussion of privacy in the eighteenth century. It is "unnerving" (190) to many readers and scholars, Spacks says, that Frances Burney did not appear to change her tone between her ostensibly private journal and her ostensibly more public letters. That this startles so many indicates that we think about letters as being fundamentally different from journals or diaries in that they have a specific audience. Laura Salsani notes that epistolary novels are particularly suited to connecting with their readers because of the presumed "especially responsive" (Salsani 604) audience of letters. A letter usually invites a response, thus its audience is active rather than passive. An epistolary novel reader may imagine themselves writing back to the protagonist, since letters feel so intimate. Thomas O. Beebee notes that the fictional letters found in an epistolary novel occupied a unique space according to Samuel Richardson, "somewhere between genuineness and fictionality" (Beebee 65). Published letters were considered more fictional than unpublished ones, but there was a strong element of realism attached to all letters.

Letters themselves provide the illusion of authenticity while being at least a partially public, curated, fictional medium of communication. The epistolary novel, for its part, very closely mimics the physical appearance and purpose of a series of letters, and adds another layer of fictionality to the letter because the novel itself is fictional. In *Evelina*, this double-fictionality is tripled when one character writes a letter purporting to be from another – Orville's letter is constructed at the level of plot, narrative, and form.

Orville's false letter

As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, we do have one letter from Orville. It turns out this letter is a fake, written by Clement in order to drive Evelina and Orville apart. Its presence and authorship both seem to set up a rival to Evelina's "mind writing," since Clement writes Orville's voice for Evelina and for us. This is the only apparently direct communication we have from Orville in the whole novel, and both Evelina and the reader believe it to be real until almost the very end. Where a traditional epistolary novel would let the reader in on the secret of the letter's true authorship early on, perhaps via a letter from Clement to a friend, *Evelina* keeps that information from us until Clement confesses it to Evelina in the novel's final pages. Our knowledge is tied to Evelina's knowledge rather than ranging more broadly.

Clement writing Orville in a letter harks back to my previous chapter on Elizabeth Inchbald's play *Animal Magnetism*, in which the maid Lisette writes a letter for her mistress Constance. In that situation Lisette's ability to write Constance's thoughts (as the play itself puts it) is a signal of authority, and at first it seems the same might be true for Clement. Evelina and the reader both fall for the false letter, and we believe along with Evelina that Orville has proposed an inappropriate, intimate relationship with her. But where it originally seems Clement may be displacing Evelina in writing Orville, Evelina quickly reasserts her narrative authority in a number of ways.

First, she only thinks badly of Orville for about four letters, three to her friend Miss Mirvan and one to Mr. Villars. By the second letter of Volume III she is back to thinking well of Orville, declaring "Oh Sir, Lord Orville is still himself! still, what from the moment I beheld, I believed him to be, all that is amiable in a man!" (Burney 278). The exclamation points indicate that this is no tentative claim but a wholehearted assertion of Orville's innate goodness. As with

the other times she describes Orville or the people around him, she inserts herself and her own perspective in the middle of talking about him. While she first writes that Orville is "himself," the statement promptly turns to her own judgement in referencing what "I believed him to be" the very first time she saw him. The effect of these sentences is that Orville's moral character moves quickly from being a part of him to being a belief of Evelina's. Orville's character, in both the moral and narratological sense, is ultimately what Evelina writes it to be.

Second, what changes Evelina's mind is seeing Orville again. The four negative letters are written between the time she receives his supposed letter and when she sees him in person again. This means the textual self that Clement tried to create for Orville could not persist past Evelina's next interaction with Orville, a major departure from the sustained authority that Lisette wields over Constance and everyone else in the play – or the sustained changes to personality and action that Charlotte Lennox's Arabella writes onto her love interest in *The Female Quixote*. It may seem then that Orville is thus the authority on himself, since it is his presence that banishes his false-letter-self, but recall how much Evelina centers her own beliefs about Orville in celebrating the confirmation of his goodness. She is not perfectly and unshakably in charge all the time, but she does not have to be, because her authority comes in large part from the fact that readers are yanked hither and yon by her subjectivity.

Third, Villars continues to emphasize Evelina as the source for his (and our) understanding of Orville in his discussions with her about the man. Evelina writes a letter to Miss Mirvan recounting the conversation when she first showed Villars the Orville letter, noting that Villars tells her "In your London journal, nobody appears in a more amiable, a more respectable light, than Lord Orville" (266). Villars' explicit citation of Evelina's "London journal" invokes Evelina's writing of Orville, and specifying that he "appears" in a certain way

points to Villars' own lack of direct experience. Upon reading the letter Villars concludes "he must certainly have been intoxicated when he wrote it" (267), because he had previously acted so honorably and politely towards Evelina, yet another statement that takes Evelina's version of Orville as the truth.

After Evelina writes to Villars rejoicing that Orville is actually honorable, Villars writes back concerned that Evelina is nursing a deep affection for Orville and will get hurt because he will not marry someone who has no fortune or title. Villars stresses that such a warning should not "depreciate the merit of Lord Orville, who, one mysterious instance alone excepted, seems to have deserved the idea you formed of his character" (308). The worry here is not that Orville is a bad person, just that he will not be her husband. In expressing these thoughts about Orville, Villars yet again echoes Evelina's own language – claiming that the man "seems to have deserved the idea you formed of his character" repeats Evelina's "what I believed him to be" from the previous letter. By citing Evelina as his source for any statements about Orville's character, Villars underscores her as the authority on Orville. And while the Evelina-citation is an accurate detail of the plot, since Villars never meets Orville, he did not have to phrase it that way. He could have said "Lord Orville, who, one mysterious instance alone excepted, seems to be an upstanding gentleman," or some other reference to Orville himself. Instead Villars, like Evelina, centers Evelina when talking about Orville.

Evelina proceeds to continue to think well of Orville for the rest of the novel without another mention of the false letter until after the two are engaged. Orville proposes to her at the beginning of Volume III, Letter XV, and it is only after their engagement that she mentions the letter and learns "that far from ever having written me a single line, he had never received, seen, or heard of my letter!" (356). The marriage plot is thus resolved before Evelina learns that the

"textual Orville" is a fake – she has already concluded that he is the best of men (after Villars of course) and is delighted to be marrying him. Her view of Orville as honorable and kind, a view that is passed along to us via her letters, wins out over Clement's too-forward version of Orville. Moreover, we learn right along with her that Orville did not write the letter, and are thus as surprised as she is.

The novel then returns to the fake letter one more time at the very end when Clement admits to Evelina that he wrote it. Such a confession ties up a loose plot point, since we only know that Orville did not write it. At the same time, it is hardly necessary, since we have been busy with the successful end to both the romantic storyline and the familial storyline. Evelina and Orville are to be wed, Evelina's biological father Sir John Belmont has acknowledged her, some complicated "switched at birth" familial issues have all been worked out to mutual happiness, and the book's emotional climax has been fulfilled. By this point, if the reader even remembers the fake Orville letter, it is abundantly clear that Clement's attempt to write Orville and thus the narrative failed miserably. Bringing it up again so late in the story emphasizes just how little sway it held – Clement tried to separate Evelina and Orville so that he himself could seduce her, and neither the separation nor the dramatically different storyline that would have followed came to pass. Evelina's own version of Orville is the successful one.

Clarissa and the traditional epistolary's relationship to the reader

The seduction storyline that does not come to pass in *Evelina* does come to pass in Richardson's *Clarissa*, a text that, as I mentioned in the beginning, gives the reader the epistolary's usual peek into privileged information. As one example to demonstrate how this

works, consider Letter XXX (Clarissa to her friend Miss Howe), Letter XXXI (Lovelace to his friend John Belford), and Letter XXXII (Clarissa to Miss Howe). In Letter XXX Clarissa writes

> This man, this Lovelace, gives me great uneasiness. He is extremely bold and rash. He was this afternoon at our church—in hopes to see me, I suppose: and yet, if he had such hopes, his usual intelligence must have failed him…What did the man come for, if he intended to look challenge and defiance…Did he come for my sake; and, by behaving in such a manner to those present of my family, imagine he was doing me either service or pleasure? (Richardson 49)

In this letter she writes of her uneasiness about Lovelace and wonders why he continues to antagonize her family. She specifically wonders if he thinks he is helping her or making her happy by needling her family through his presence, and thinks that his showing up at church means his usual cunning has failed him. The tension is thus set – we have learned a great deal about Lovelace over the course this volume via Clarissa's letters to her friend, but mostly we are left with questions. Why is Lovelace pursuing her despite her family's hatred of him? Is he just too forward? Is he in love?

The very next letter is from Lovelace to his friend, in which he shares all his plans and motives. We as readers learn of Lovelace's cruelty and selfishness via his own words, as he writes

> Then there are so many stimulatives to such a spirit as mine in this affair, besides love: such a field of stratagem and contrivance, which thou knowest to be the delight of my heart. Then the rewarding end of all!—To carry off such a girl as this, in spite of all her watchful and implacable friends; and in spite of a prudence

> and reserve that I never met with in any of the sex;—what a triumph! (Richardson 50)

Lovelace is a rake, and he likes to win. Elsewhere in the letter he admits to being obsessed with Clarissa such that he does not want to pursue anyone else, but the pleasures of scheming are clearly a major driver as well. We finish this letter with a recognition of Lovelace's selfish depravity and hoping that Clarissa will have nothing to do with him. In Letter XXXII, however, Clarissa merely notes that Lovelace is known to be a rake and uses him as the positive comparison to Mr. Solmes, a man her family wants her to marry but that she does not. She declares that she would not marry Solmes even if someone like Lovelace did not exist, thus indicating that she sees Lovelace as a far better man than Solmes. Her view of Lovelace is as a somewhat reckless rake, yes, but she does not come close to recognizing the extent of his manipulation or cruelty.

This pattern continues throughout the novel, as Lovelace's manipulations isolate Clarissa from family and friends and Clarissa wonders what she can do. Over and over we read Lovelace's plots and schemes as he writes them to his friend, and immediately before and after read Clarissa's confusion, frustration, even terror. As the reader we are in the position of seeing both sides of the situation. We know, as Clarissa does not, what Lovelace is thinking, what his plans are, and why he carries them out. We can get ahead of Clarissa, and occasionally ahead of Lovelace, because we read the others' letters. This is a position of great power, and one of the genre conventions of the epistolary novel – readers get to be busybodies who know more than anyone else. Our pleasure in reading comes in part from biting our nails as we wait for this or that character to learn what we already know. By denying us a similar look at both sides, *Evelina*

knocks the reader off our epistolary all-knowing pedestal and forces us instead to follow behind Evelina rather than jump ahead of her.

Conclusion – and what about Evelina's parentage?

My claim about Burney's manipulation of the epistolary novel form rests in part on the idea that the reader does not have privileged information kept from the protagonist. But the reader does have this information for about the first third of the novel: the fight to secure Evelina's parentage. We read the letters between Villars and Lady Howard discussing how they might get Sir John Belmont to acknowledge Evelina after abandoning her mother, and Evelina does not learn about that conversation until Volume II. After that point Evelina is aware of the secondary parentage plot, and Villars pulls out the letter from Evelina's mother to her father abruptly – the reader learns about it at the same time Evelina does.

Many critics claim Evelina's parentage to be the real plot of the story; certainly naming and belonging are repeated themes, and the story is about "how a young lady gradually negotiates a secure niche in a fashionable society…grow[ing] from a timid young girl ignorant of social etiquette to a brave woman able to resist male aggression" (Wu 4-5). Samuel Choi argues that Evelina's use of signatures in her letters is an act of agency because each one involves claiming a certain name and identity. Evelina's parentage is a part of that process of identity formation, but only part of picture. Moreover, the majority of the narrative is about the love plot between Evelina and Orville, not the parentage story at all. Of the 84 letters in the novel, 16 are about Evelina's parentage, with Villars, Lady Howard, Evelina, Sir John Belmont, and Lady Belmont as the various writers and recipients. By comparison 46 of the letters are about Orville and Evelina's relationship with him, with Evelina, Villars, Miss Mirvan, and fake-Orville as the

various writers and recipients. Far more of the novel's plot and Evelina's emotional bandwidth are taken up with the romance.

Beyond the greater space devoted to it, the love story comes to fruition before Sir John acknowledges Evelina and accepts her as his heir. Orville falls in love with and proposes to Evelina while he still believes her to be, as Clement puts it, "a girl of obscure birth, whose only dowry is her beauty, and who is evidently in a state of dependency" (Burney 347). Burney thus uses this side story of Evelina's familial identity to fulfill reader expectations about a privileged reader position in the epistolary novel, directing our attention away from the repeated obvious signals that we are very much not privileged when it comes to the love story that is the majority of the novel. Moreover, this secondary story about parentage is one that quickly comes to Evelina's attention. By the end of Volume I Evelina knows that her various friends and relatives are attempting to get her father to acknowledge her, and by the beginning of Volume II she knows the attempt was unsuccessful. The only secret information is the letter Villars has from Evelina's mother to give to her father, a piece of information he shares in a single letter to Lady Howard in Volume I, Letter XXVIII, and which is never mentioned again until he actually gives the letter to Evelina. Evelina herself is a central figure in the later, more concerted effort to secure her legitimacy after she meets someone else claiming to be Sir John's daughter. Compared to *Clarissa* or to Gunning's *Barford Abbey*, for example, where the reader knows the protagonist is alive at the end of the novel for multiple letters before her parents do, *Evelina*'s limitation of reader-privileged information is a stunning departure.

The result of all of this is an epistolary novel that gives us only the veneer of our usual readerly power. We are allowed to feel more informed than Evelina about her parentage and thus to miss the fact that we lack this same position of power for the novel's main plot. Evelina's

ability to “mind write” Orville parallels Burney’s ability to rewrite the epistolary and its readers. Whether in the eighteenth century or the twenty-first, readers get to enjoy the tension between fiction and reality with an epistolary novel, recognizing the novel as fiction while appreciating the ways it seeks to mimic actual exchanges of letters. Burney’s refashioning of the genre forces us to reckon with its constructedness, making the genre conventions explicit by violating them. The text may end with its expected marriage, but we had to rely on a naïve young woman narratively constructing her love interest and storyline to get there.

Chapter Four | Foreseeing and Foretelling Everything: Interiority and "Mind Writing" in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*

Introduction

Jane Austen's final novel, *Persuasion* (1817), is often glossed as a story in which nothing much happens. Instead of travels, balls, and elopements, the narrative is one of thought and feeling as the text focuses on the mind of its protagonist Anne Elliot. Anne, for her part, lacks the vivacity and wit of an Elizabeth Bennet or the entertaining meddling (and inevitable failures) of an Emma Woodhouse – quiet and reflective, she bears little resemblance to Austen's earlier "light, bright, and sparkling" (Austen "Chawton") heroines. She is all shade and sense, reaction rather than action.

This reading of both *Persuasion* and Anne as limited, curtailed, even dull, misses just how vast and active Anne's mind is. As the novel's center of consciousness she certainly observes, but she also questions, defines, and creates. Most exciting, the scope of her active mind radically reshapes our understanding of what realistic fiction can do. Over the course of the novel Anne increasingly penetrates and foresees the thoughts, feelings, and intentions of her love interest Frederick Wentworth, writing his mind and character into being in a manner typically reserved for narrators – and for authors. She repeatedly displays the attributes of omniscience that William Nelles ascribes to Austen's narrators, particularly telepathy ("the ability to narrate characters' thoughts and feelings") and occasionally omnitemporality ("knowledge of the future") (Nelles 121). Nelles explicitly denies these attributes to Austen's characters, but Anne exercises them anyway.

Various narrative strategies in the novel present Anne as more than a character in terms of understanding other people's minds and creating her own story. The most powerful of these strategies is Anne's "mind writing" of Wentworth at several key points in the narrative, making

apparently baseless declarations about his mind and inner state that are then confirmed in the text. I theorize "mind writing" as the process of one character writing another into being, asserting something about the other's thoughts, actions, feelings, decisions, intentions, or existence that relies on their own certainty rather than some evidence from the other character. Successful "mind writing" does not stop at mere assertion but instead demonstrates that the assertion was correct, and the pattern of assertion and confirmation tends to repeat itself. *Persuasion*'s focus on interiority means that Anne's "mind writing" is of Wentworth's thoughts, feelings, and intentions: she knows what is going on inside his head even when all evidence is to the contrary.

"Mind writing" in *Persuasion* functions as the demonstration of the narrative power indicated by the second strategy, Austen's use of free indirect discourse, which suggests narrative authority through its collapsing of character and narrator. Finally, Anne's authority is underscored by the lack of direct access we as readers have to Wentworth's inner world: we consistently must rely on Anne to provide us with information on Wentworth and must trust her word on him. Even the most serendipitous series of events would not see an actual person able to do what Anne does in "mind writing," making her a non-mimetic character in a mimetic text.

Anne's "mind writing" claims follow a pattern of observation, assertion, and confirmation, though neither neatly nor linearly. As Alan Palmer notes, "action and character are inexorably linked; we generally only build up an idea of who a character 'is' by observing what they do" (Palmer 124). Anne uses physical signals and bodily clues in order to discern what the people around her are thinking and feeling, following a long history in Britain of linking mind and body. Physiognomy, the practice of drawing conclusions about someone's personality based on their appearance, had largely fallen out of scientific favor by the eighteenth century but

persisted in popular belief, as Kathryn Woods notes. Especially within literature the ability to use physiognomy to assess another was a signal of one's powers of mind, and as Deidre Lynch comments, authors like Henry Fielding, Sarah Fielding, and Tobias Smollett used it to divide their worlds "between those qualified to observe and those who are objects of others' observation" (Lynch 82). Austen scholarship makes much of Anne's powers of observation, since what Robert Irvine calls the "inwardness of *Persuasion*" (Irvine 39) means that what Anne sees and how she reacts to it makes up the majority of the text.

Contemporary cognitive scholars refer to the practice of drawing conclusions via an assumed mind-body connection as "mind reading," the process of "ascrib[ing] to a person a certain mental state on the basis of her observable action" (Zunshine *Why We Read Fiction* 6). Anne is especially attuned to Wentworth, and each moment of "mind writing" begins with her noticing some physical signal or behavior of his. These observations should, in the logical order of things, lead her to a particular conclusion, yet she does a profoundly illogical thing and instead asserts something different, even directly contrary, to that logical conclusion. Each time these baseless statements are confirmed in the text by the narrator, by another character, or by Wentworth himself. Anne's repeated assertions, their accuracy, and the text's affirmation of their accuracy suggest that she is exercising narratorial power in defining and explaining Wentworth even when traditional "mind reading" should lead her to the opposite conclusion. As I will later discuss, her repeated accuracy against all evidence and the pains the narrative takes to assure us of that accuracy most resemble the "perfect self-conscious access to someone's thinking" (Zunshine *Getting Inside Your Head* xi) of telepathy, the very attribute that William Nelles and Paul Dawson link to Austen's narrator.

In behaving as a narrator Anne moves from the fourth level of narrative - the storyworld in which characters and plot are confined - up to the third level of narrative where, as Uri Margolin explains, the narrator comments on "individuals, states, actions, and events" (Margolin 273). The rest of the characters in *Persuasion*, and indeed in most of literature, do not make this jump and remain in the storyworld; Anne crosses that divide and functions as both character and narrator in her text. She does so, moreover, without making *Persuasion* what Gerard Genette calls a homodiegetic novel, since the narrator still exists and is not Anne. Over the course of the story, however, Anne takes on more and more of the narrator's role. Paul Dawson explicitly notes that narrator-like knowledge of other character's interiority is "usually inaccessible to human observers" (26); that Anne has this knowledge and access demonstrates that she is more than just a character. The narrative authority Anne wields by transcending the role of character is even more shocking given the realistic nature of the novel – Tristram Shandy is able to narrate the moments before his own conception, for example, but his novel is absurd where Anne's is realistic. Her authority thus breaks the conventions of realism that the story otherwise adheres to.

Anne's ability to move between levels of narrative therefore radically reshapes not only how we understand the distinction between character and narrator in the long eighteenth century, but how we understand the genre of realistic fiction as well. Austen's books are what Brian Richardson calls "mimetic narratives" (Richardson 3), stories that attempt to depict reality as closely as possible. Indeed, a great deal of Austen scholarship in the last decade has been dedicated to arguing for Austen's awareness of and interventions in the political, philosophical, religious, and social debates of her day, and all emphasize just how realistic her writing is. Even those who specifically claim her as a radical - Helena Kelly's *Jane Austen, the Secret Radical* (2017), Jocelyn Harris's *A Revolution Almost Beyond Expression: Jane Austen's Persuasion*

(2007), and James Thompson's *Jane Austen and Modernization: Sociological Readings* (2015), to name a few - rely on the idea that Austen's people, places, events, and considerations reflect the experiences and questions of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Britain. Focusing on the ways that Anne contravenes the conventions of realism helps us to see the ways that *Persuasion* goes beyond witty social commentary to question the very categories that underpin notions of realism and reality.

"Mind writing" thought

Anne "mind writes" different aspects of Wentworth over the course of the novel, building from his thoughts about the past to his feelings in the present to his intentions for the future. The more time the two spend together, the wider her "mind writing" ranges and the more she is able to assert authority over him. The first example, focusing on his thoughts and memories, comes during the social mingling after a dinner party, when Anne notes of Wentworth,

> though his voice did not falter, and though she had no reason to suppose his eye wandering towards her while he spoke, Anne felt the utter impossibility, from her knowledge of his mind, that he could be unvisited by remembrance any more than herself (59).

This is an astonishing claim. Here Anne claims a "knowledge of [Wentworth's] mind" in stating that he must be remembering their previous relationship, and we are informed that she specifically lacks the physical indicators that usually provides the clues to someone's thoughts. Wentworth's "voice did *not* falter" and "she had *no* reason to suppose" (59, emphasis mine) that he looked at her, yet she is quite certain that he is remembering. The absence of physical signals should lead her to conclude that he is not thinking about her, especially since she learned (and

was hurt to hear) that he found her "so altered he should not have known [her] again" (57). The narrative is in fact at pains to assure us via the repeated "though" that Anne is looking for some physical clue to back up her assertion and cannot find it. We do not read that "*because* his voice did not falter" or "*because* his eye did not wander towards her" she concludes the impossibility of his being unvisited by remembrance, but "though" those signs are missing, she still knows his thoughts. She subordinates the lack of bodily indicators to her own knowledge, asserting that he must remember, because she knows his mind.

Anne's surety in "mind writing" Wentworth further underscores her authority in this scene, given that she is making an assertion contrary to available evidence. As Zunshine notes, usual human access to another's thoughts and feelings is more along the lines of "approximate guessing and imperfect interpretation" (Zunshine *Getting Inside Your Head* xi). There is no hint of approximation here, however, as Anne feels the "utter impossibility" of her claim being false, with the double-emphasis of "utter" modifying the already-absolute "impossibility" to leave no room for hedging or conditionals. According to Anne it is not merely "likely" that Wentworth is remembering their former relationship, nor even "probable," but utterly impossible to be otherwise. Notably, she hangs this declaration of remembrance on her own current experience, which re-centers Anne within a statement ostensibly about Wentworth. Since we as readers rarely get direct access to Wentworth we are generally reliant on Anne as a mediating force, something which offers her more narrative space and a greater narrative voice even when she is telling us about someone else. As Klarina Priborkin writes, the ability to identify another's mental state "actually reaffirms [one's]self and [one's] mental representational abilities," allowing a character to "assert [their] own sense of authority" (Priborkin 169). Asserting something about Wentworth therefore becomes a way to assert Anne.

But of course any character can make a claim and even believe it to be true; the difference with Anne is her assurance coupled with consistent narrative confirmation of each moment of "mind writing". In the words of Suzanne Keen, the text "verif[ies] our reaction" (Keen 80) of trusting Anne by ensuring that we know her statements about Wentworth's interior state are consistently accurate. Narratively, this verification works to emphasize her authority by placing her claims above the conclusions one should logically draw from the details available. This textual confirmation renders Anne an unusually authoritative character, since she is able to tell us what is "really" going on with Wentworth regardless of evidence (or lack thereof).

Intriguingly, the confirmation of Anne's declaration that Wentworth could not be "unvisited by remembrance" comes on the page immediately preceding when Wentworth has a conversation with his sister Sophia Croft, the wife of Admiral Croft and current renter of the Elliot's ancestral seat Kellynch Hall. The narrator notes that he is "ready to fall in love with all the speed which a clear head and a quick taste could allow" (58), and he answers Sophia's unrecorded comments about his readiness to marry by affirming that someone pretty who compliments the navy will win his heart, since he has had little time around women to polish his manners. Sophia "knew" (58) that he made the claim as a joke, reading in his "bright, proud eye…the happy conviction that he was nice" (58) – an example of "mind reading," where she draws a conclusion from his expression. The text goes on to note in an independent clause attached by a semicolon "Anne Elliot was not out of his thoughts, when he more seriously described the woman he should wish to meet with" (58). We do not have a specific figure to which we can attribute the knowledge that Wentworth is thinking of Anne, but the fact that this statement is part of the statement noting Sophia's "mind reading" seems to connect it to her. Additionally, the intimacy of calling Wentworth's sister "Sophia" in this scene rather than "Mrs.

Croft, as we see in the rest of the novel, adds even greater believability to the statement that "Anne Elliot was not out of his thoughts." The closeness indicated by the use of a first name reinforces that we should trust what this scene tells us about Wentworth.

Only 224 words, including the two in the heading "Chapter 8," stand between the statement that "Anne Elliot was not out of his thoughts" and Anne's claim that he must be remembering their relationship, which means that the reader is primed to believe her. Despite the apparently confounding lack of physical evidence for Anne, we as readers have already been assured that Wentworth is indeed visited by remembrance. Anne's "mind writing" is in this case pre-confirmed for the reader, such that we do not waste any time wondering if she has wrongly ascribed something to Wentworth. We can instead simply read past Anne's declaration without really noticing it, since the information has already been established for us and Anne's conclusion does not contradict what we know – even though it contradicts what she observes.

That contradiction between observation and conclusion is a major factor in distinguishing "mind writing" from "mind reading." The difference between these two cognitive activities becomes especially clear when we compare instances of each. In one "mind reading" scene Anne's brother-in-law's family the Musgroves asks about their son Richard, who served under Wentworth in the navy before dying at sea. In response to their reminiscing about Richard,

> There was a momentary expression in Captain Wentworth's face at this speech, a certain glance of his bright eye, and curl of his handsome mouth, which convinced Anne, that instead of sharing in Mrs. Musgrove's kind wishes, as to her son, he had probably been at some pains to get rid of him (Austen *Persuasion* 63).

This is an example of "mind reading": Anne specifically notes slight changes in Wentworth's eye and mouth to determine that he was no fan of Richard. As Zunshine notes in her discussion

of Peter Walsh's tremble in *Mrs. Dalloway*, "the default interpretation of behavior reflects a character's state of mind" (Zunshine *Why We Read Fiction* 4), meaning that physical indicators, what a character does, signals what they are thinking or feeling. These slight facial changes thus must mean something – they "convince" Anne, after all – and this passage lacks the "thoughts" we find in the previous "mind writing" example at the dinner party. Instead the changes in Wentworth's expression are presented as evidence that indicate his negative opinion of Richard. His eyes, those proverbial windows to the soul, are once again the source of information as Anne, like Sophia, reads Wentworth's true feelings in them.

Unlike when she is "mind writing," Anne needs this evidence to "mind read." She does not simply assert Wentworth's dislike of Richard nor does she base her conclusion on herself and her knowledge. She relies on the physical signals found in Wentworth's eyes and mouth in order to be convinced of his true feelings. We as readers, meanwhile, can use the textual record of these same physical signals to track how it is that Anne draws her conclusions. Even though we do not know exactly what the certain glance or curl of mouth look like, we are presented with a progression of evidence and conclusion that fit logically together, the evidence supporting the conclusion. Anne is certainly perceptive, to notice the microexpressions no one else sees and interpret them properly, but the scene does not require her to claim something explicitly contrary to the physical clues she sees. When she "mind reads" she interprets what is there; when she "mind writes" she asserts what is not.

Anne's "mind writing" assertions do not stop with the declaration of Wentworth's memory, but expand both temporally and cognitively over the course of the novel. It makes some sense that her "mind writing" begins with Wentworth remembering, since her last interactions with him were eight years ago, but we should not understand her "mind writing" as simply a re-

hashing of what was. From this past-oriented beginning, Anne makes assertions about multiple aspects of mind – memory, thought, feeling, intention. As Paddy Bullard details, the eighteenth-century saw advances in cognitive science replacing earlier humoral theories that located personality outside the brain, in body fluids and other organs. Rather than identifying thought with the brain but feeling with the gut, for example, the eighteenth century understood the brain to be the location of thought and feeling – and to be actively processing the world rather than passively responding to it. The expansion of Anne's "mind writing" reflects this, and her ability to make accurate claims about so many different aspects of mind indicates the breadth of her authority.

"Mind writing" feeling

The next example moves from past-oriented memory to present-oriented emotion, all the while maintaining the incongruence between observation and conclusion that helps to mark out "mind writing." Towards the end of the novel Anne sees Wentworth in Bath after Louisa Musgrove, to whom everyone thought he was engaged, has married another man, and notes,

> There was consciousness of some sort or other. He looked very well, not as if he had been suffering in health or spirits, and he talked of Uppercross, of the Musgroves, nay, even of Louisa, and had even a momentary look of his own arch significance as he named her; but yet it was Captain Wentworth not comfortable, not easy; not able to feign that he was (166).

Again we have an astonishing, counter-intuitive claim: Wentworth is neither comfortable nor easy nor even able to pretend as much, according to Anne, but nothing in his appearance, conversation, or expression tells her this. As with the earlier "mind writing" example, the

paragraph is structured to first present us with all of the clues that should suggest one thing – that Wentworth is happy and well – before concluding the opposite. As with the earlier example, Anne searches for something about him that would confirm her assertion of a "consciousness," as indicated by the recitation of those clues. And as with the earlier example, she does not find that confirmation but concludes that he is "not comfortable, not easy" anyway.

This time the text does not explicitly ascribe Anne's assertion to her "knowledge," as it did before, but the observations point back to what she knows about Louisa, Wentworth, and their relationship. She knows and has visited Uppercross and the Musgroves, unlike Mr. Elliot, Mrs. Clay, Lady Dalrymple, Miss Carteret or the myriad other Bath residents. Only a few pages earlier she learned privately from the Crofts both about Louisa's marriage and about Wentworth's equanimity in writing them about it. No one else mentioned in conjunction with the scene, including her own sister Elizabeth, is in possession of as much information about Wentworth as is Anne. Yet that information, as well as the details about his speech and expressions, should lead her to conclude that he is well. She notes that Wentworth looks healthy. She listens for how he talks about Uppercross, the Musgroves, "nay, even of Louisa," (166), suggesting that she is looking for some tremble or change in his voice when he mentions his former presumed fiancée – something she does not find. Between Wentworth's own behavior and the information she knows about him, traditional "mind reading" should lead her to conclude that he is doing fine. The only physical clue offered in this passage that might contradict such a logical conclusion is the "look of arch significance," which in the absence of further description could be interpreted to suggest anything from discomfort to amusement. The text explicitly contrasts Wentworth's look with Anne's declaration that Wentworth is "not comfortable, not

easy," however, through the use of the "yet" conjunction (166), meaning that her ultimate claim about his emotions does not have any basis in his observed behavior.

It is interesting that the passage ends with the claim that Wentworth is "not able to feign" (166) being comfortable or easy, since it has explicitly established the lack of evidence Anne has for her claim. His expressions and tone of voice do not give him away, we are told, but Anne notes some kind of "consciousness" (166) unmoored from those bodily clues. The suggestion seems to be that Wentworth can disguise himself from being read but he cannot disguise himself from being known. In other words, Anne's unusual position within the text means that Wentworth cannot fool her asserted knowledge even though he can fool observation. A conventional realistic character has no basis by which to make any claims about his uneasiness, but Anne is not a standard character. In making her claim about Wentworth Anne is performing what Paul Dawson calls "the reporting of innermost thoughts and feelings, such as are usually inaccessible to human observers" (Dawson 26), one of the effects of a third-person narrator he notes has usually been described through the concept of "omniscience."

Most contemporary narratologists join Dawson in rejecting the concept of omniscience, and in referencing him I do not mean to suggest that Anne is omniscient – after all, she does not know the real state of affair between Wentworth and Louisa, for example. Anne does, however, match very closely to Dawson's description of what narrators do. According to him narrators report the thoughts and feelings of a character or characters (Dawson 26) what Dorrit Cohn calls "psycho-narration" and most other narratology scholars refer to as "thought report." All these terms refer to the narrator's ability to know what a given character thinks and feels. As David Herman notes, we expect as much from third-person narrators, but such an ability is much more surprising when it comes to a character. Yet when it comes to Wentworth, Anne possesses the

ability to do what narrative theory expects a narrator to do – report accurately on Wentworth's interiority.

The novel is neither science fiction nor fantasy; I do not claim that Anne is using supernatural or magical abilities in making her assertions about Wentworth. She acts instead with the authority of a narrator, stepping outside of what a character can do to assert the narratorial power that gives her access to Wentworth's mind without any human explanation. William Nelles calls this "telepathy," defining it as "the ability to narrate characters' thoughts and feelings" (Nelles 121). While Nelles does not wholly reject the concept of omniscience, he does claim that Austen's narrators are not omniscient despite often being written about as such. Like Dawson, he argues for telepathy as an attribute specifically of the narrator, writing that it and the other three features of omniscience (omnipotence, omnipresence, and omnitemporality, about which more later) are "denied real human beings and are uniquely reserved to omniscient narration" (121). Anne's access to Wentworth's mind thus renders her a narrator-figure. She skips between levels of narration, sometimes behaving as a character and sometimes - when it comes to Wentworth - behaving as a narrator. This is an authority no other character in *Persuasion* possesses, and one at odds with the realistic novel's mimetic depictions, since it is something we do not find in the real world either. It is a literary phenomenon, but one with profound implications for how we understand what is going on in *Persuasion*: the novel's inward focus on Anne is an expansion rather than contraction of its scope.

As with the declaration that Wentworth could not be unvisited by remembrance, we find narrative confirmation of Anne's declaration about Wentworth's consciousness and lack of ease, though at the end of the novel rather than the preceding scene. This narrative effort made to repeatedly prove Anne right affirms her narratorial voice as a trustworthy and authoritative one,

someone we should listen to and believe. Wentworth is indeed uncomfortable in Bath, we eventually learn, because he still loves Anne but believes he has lost his chance to marry her by seeming to have courted Louisa Musgrove. At the end of the novel after the two have established their mutual love we learn that for Wentworth "the doubt, the torment…had begun to operate in the very hour of first meeting her in Bath" (226). He arrived in Bath to see Anne with "some degree of hope" (228) that he might still have the chance to win her affections, and scrutinized every interaction between them with "returning hope or increasing despondence" (228). The extreme emotions suggested in the language of "hope," "torment," and "despondence" combined with the high stakes of future happiness – since he had "loved none but her" (226) – indeed add up to a man "not comfortable, not easy" (166), just as Anne declared. Forty pages after she tries and fails to find some kind of evidence for her certainty that something is wrong with Wentworth, Anne receives that confirmation several times over (as do we).

The text itself does not explicitly make the connection between claim and corroboration. It is instead left to the reader to connect those dots and to therefore recognize Anne's ability to write Wentworth's mind – something previous readers have failed to do. Austen scholarship has been so focused on Anne's powers of observation and on the novel's interest in Anne's interiority that it has entirely missed the narrative authority she exerts. Narratological scholarship, for its part, tends to focus on the technique of free indirect discourse (FID) that has been associated strongly with Austen since the middle of the twentieth century.

Free indirect discourse and its insufficiencies

While Anne's "mind writing" is the most powerful aspect of her narrative authority, *Persuasion*'s use of FID also demonstrates her ability to take on the narrator's role. FID

combines some of the stylistic markers of direct speech (slang, characteristic phrasing, informal conversational tone, use of questions and exclamations, etc.) with those of indirect speech (third-person, formal tone, past tense, etc.) in a way that evokes the voices of both character and narrator[1]. Dorrit Cohn, one of the earliest English-language literary scholars of narrated consciousness in the novel, notes that Austen set a pattern taken up by other major authors of the nineteenth century of choosing "norms of the dramatic novel, objective narration, and unobtrusive narrators" (Cohn 115) over first-person narration. Susan Lanser and Daniel P. Gunn both connect Austen closely to FID, noting "Austen is widely acknowledged as one of the first writers to make extensive use of free indirect discourse" (Lanser 74) and "Jane Austen is generally acknowledged to be the first English novelist to make sustained use of free indirect discourse in the representation of figural speech and thought" (Gunn 35). While contemporary scholars especially are quick to acknowledge that Austen was not the first to use FID, both Janeites and narratologists consistently associate Austen with the technique. I argue that intermingling of character and narrator voice is another of Austen's strategies for indicating authority within *Persuasion*: it functions as a way to identify a character with the narrator and the trust the narrator commands, an alignment or slippage that "mind writing" then takes to its logical, concretized conclusion.

Roy Pascal writes in *The Dual Voice* that FID (he uses the French *style indirect libre* and abbreviates it SIL) occurs when the narrator "though preserving the authorial mode throughout…yet places himself, when reporting the words or thought of a character, directly into the experiential field of the character and adopts the latter's perspective in regard to both time and place" (Pascal 9). Norman Page, for his part, comments "For Jane Austen, this is perhaps the

[1] This is known as the "dual-voice hypothesis." For an overview of the debate on how to understand and theorize FID, please see "Narrative viewpoint: the theoretical debate" in Violeta Sotirova's *D.H. Lawrence and Narrative Viewpoint* (Bloomsbury 2012).

greatest virtue of free indirect speech: that it offers the possibility of achieving something of the vividness of speech without the appearance for a moment of a total silencing of the authorial voice" (Page 740). While Cohn preferred (and coined) the term "narrated monologue" rather than FID to refer to "a character's mental discourse in the guise of the narrator's discourse" (Cohn 14), for example, we can see in her definition that "narrated monologue" suggests a character's thoughts putting on the costume of the narrator. Her discussion additionally focuses on the question of authority, as she notes "the narrator lend[s] the quotation of his characters' silent thoughts the same authority he lends to the quotation of the words they speak to others" (Cohn 76). Margaret Doody takes up this focus on how FID allows a character to take on the narrator's authority, noting that FID (she also uses *style indirect libre* as her preferred term) "means that the characters now assist in narration" and therefore get a "special sort of hearing" (Doody 287-288), emphasizing FID's positive impact on a character's authority within a novel.

FID's smooth elision between character and narrator makes it a useful strategy in establishing Anne as an authoritative character without forcing the reader to spend much time or energy coming to that conclusion. And while FID can certainly be used to ironize rather than authorize a character – Pascal gives the example of *Sense and Sensibility*'s John Dashwood convincing himself that the paltry sum he bequeaths to his father's widow and his half-sisters is sufficiently generous – when it comes to Anne herself there is little irony to be found. Other characters in the novel are ironized and satirized, but Anne is not. Similarly, Barbara Dancygier's assertion that the authority of a narrating voice engaged in FID depends in part on the authority of the character blurring into the authority of the narrator does not present a problem, because even in the first-person Anne is an observant and trustworthy character.

That the narrator's authority is extended to Anne is itself a powerful move because of the way it elevates and authorizes Anne, but even more powerful is the demonstration of this authority when Anne makes declarations about other characters, their minds, and their motives. In the case of Wentworth this is even more powerful because we as readers have very little direct access to his mind or interiority. Even the narrator rarely tells us more than what he is doing or saying, so we must rely on Anne to understand his thoughts and feelings. Anne effectively creates Wentworth's mind for the reader in the "mind writing" scenes *ex nihilo* – or at least out of nothing more than her own narratorial certainty. She is willing to look for other signals from Wentworth in making her determination, but when those signals add up to a conclusion that contravenes her knowledge, it is her knowledge that ultimately wins out. Wentworth must be remembering their relationship because Anne knows that is what he is doing. Wentworth must be uneasy because Anne knows he is uneasy. Anne's claims therefore become extraordinarily powerful, opposed as they are to the evidence that she and the reader both have. Where someone with her powers of careful observation might be able to figure out that Wentworth did not particularly like Richard Musgrove, even an unusually perceptive observer would not see anything at the dinner party or in Bath that would lead them to Anne's conclusions. If an observer could read Wentworth in those moments, the conclusion drawn from that reading should in fact be the polar opposite of Anne's. On its own FID begins to suggest Anne's narratorlike authority without actually showing us an example of it, hinting rather than demonstrating. It is thus insufficient to help us understand the scope of Anne's power and the authority involved in wielding it. "Mind writing" Wentworth is a concrete demonstration of Anne's authority, but she in fact goes further than writing another storyworld character to write her own story and even its readers.

"Mind writing" intention and the future

As we approach the end of the novel Anne moves from "mind writing" Wentworth's present emotions to "mind writing" his future intentions – and since those intentions are of marriage, Anne's "mind writing" means that she predicts the end of her story. This development in "mind writing" is remarkable for several reasons. It represents a continued expansion in Anne's authority over Wentworth since she is foretelling his future – even Austen's narrators, according to Nelles, rarely possess the ability to see beyond the present. It is also the moment when Anne goes from demonstrating authority over another character to demonstrating authority over the narrative itself. Austen's love plots rely on what Charles Hinnant calls a "basic uncertainty" (306) on the part of both heroine and hero, a move that "postpone[s] closure" (298) as long as possible. Readers join the protagonists in their uncertainty in order to read the story precisely for the process, for specifically how the main characters overcome the series of obstacles in their way. When Anne "mind writes" Wentworth's intention to propose she pierces the veil of willful ignorance on the part of both reader and plot, jumping ahead of the story itself to tell us the ending.

In Chapter 19, as we saw earlier, Anne declares that Wentworth is neither comfortable nor easy, but does not ascribe this lack of emotional stability to anything other than time or Louisa. In Chapter 20 she is at the theater with a number of family members, friends, and acquaintances, including Wentworth and Mr. Elliot, her cousin and father's heir, whom her father hopes she will marry. During intermission Wentworth comes near and talks to her until her attention is diverted by Mr. Elliot asking a question. When she is able to turn back to Wentworth she "found herself accosted…in a reserved yet hurried sort of farewell" (179), and after he declares "'There is nothing worth my staying for'" (180) the text notes in a passage of FID:

> Jealousy of Mr. Elliot! It was the only intelligible motive. Captain Wentworth jealous of her affection! Could she have believed it a week ago – three hours ago! For a moment the gratification was exquisite. But alas! there were very different thoughts to succeed. How was such jealousy to be quieted? How was the truth to reach him? How, in all the peculiar disadvantages of their respective situations, would he ever learn her real sentiments? It was misery to think of Mr. Elliot's attentions. – Their evil was incalculable" (180).

With characteristic assurance Anne declares that jealousy is the "only" explanation for Wentworth's behavior, despite the usual lack of textual evidence for such a conclusion. This assertion of jealousy is quite recent for Anne, since the passage asks rhetorically whether she could have believed such a thing three hours prior. Such sudden absolutism is startling enough when ascribing motives to another, but is even more surprising when we consider that only a couple hundred words earlier Anne is weighing far more logical reasons for Wentworth's reserve.

When Wentworth first enters the theater Anne notices that

> he looked grave, and seemed irresolute, and only by very slow degrees came at last near enough to speak to her. She felt that something must be the matter. The change was indubitable. The difference between his present air and what it had been in the Octagon Room was strikingly great. Why was it? She thought of her father, of Lady Russell. Could there have been any unpleasant glances? (179).

Unpleasantness between Wentworth and Anne's friends or family is indeed a likely explanation for something being the matter. Her sister Elizabeth refused to socially acknowledge him just a chapter before, after all, and her father has not attempted to seek him out. Lady Russell,

meanwhile, was the one who convinced Anne to break the engagement in the first place. Following Anne's typical "mind writing" pattern, she suggests a probable conclusion based on Wentworth's behavior and then asserts something else entirely. Wentworth approaches Anne's party already appearing "grave" and begins his conversation with Anne by noting his dissatisfaction with the concert and his eagerness for it to be over, meaning that his "hurried" departure after Anne talks with Mr. Elliot is given a potential explanation within the story. However unlikely this explanation is, Anne does not even stop to consider it a possibility before making her "only intelligible motive" claim. Within the compressed narrative space of a paragraph and a few lines of dialogue, a mere 262 words, we go from Anne considering the logical explanation of unpleasant glances to asserting Wentworth's jealousy of Mr. Elliot without any explanation.

Crucially, Anne moves immediately from her statement about Wentworth's internal state to wondering how he will learn that she is not interested in Mr. Elliot. The thrice-repeated "hows" of "How was such jealousy to be quieted? How was the truth to reach him? How…would he ever learn her real sentiments?" (Austen *Persuasion* 180) indicates that the fact of Wentworth's jealousy is far less important than what to do going forward. The suggestion here is that their relationship will resume once he knows how she feels, otherwise there would be no purpose in quieting jealousy or expressing the "truth." Wentworth's jealousy and inaccurate view of her marriage plans only matter if marrying him is a viable and likely alternative – if she expects him to leave, to not propose to her, or to marry another, then her own engagement or lack thereof is immaterial. Couched in this series of "how" questions, then, is the assumption that Wentworth cares for her and will marry her, if only he can be told it is possible. It would be absurd to read this passage as Anne wanting Wentworth to know she cares for him so they can

both go off and have separate lives married to other people, or to read it as Anne wanting Wentworth's jealousy quieted so he can go back to sea and she can continue as the spinster sister in her father's household. While only her claim of Wentworth's jealousy is stated as a declaration, Anne's series of questions to herself assumes that marriage between them is the outcome of Wentworth learning the truth.

As a result of this "mind writing" the narrative then has to slam the lid down on Anne's knowledge, leaving her to react to his letter of proposal three chapters later with apparent shock. Since her earlier declaration of Wentworth's jealousy is only concerned with the logistics of communicating to him her distaste for her cousin, Anne's "agitation" (223) in response to his letter does not make sense: it is the response of someone caught by surprise. The juxtaposition of her reaction to the letter with her previous confident claim and assumption about Wentworth should strike the reader as thoroughly incongruous, though simultaneously necessary to maintain the story's emotional stakes. As we reach the climax of the romantic plot we cannot have Anne impatiently expectant, since that would interrupt both the process of postponing closure and the emotional experience that long-awaited closure provides. The scene of Wentworth writing the letter while Anne argues for women's greater emotional fidelity with Captain Harwick is one full of tension precisely because Anne does not realize he is writing to her. Her shocked reaction to the letter, meanwhile, is powerful because it is a strongly-felt emotion that she must conceal from the other people in the room. In order to properly compress the courtship into a climactic moment (Hinnant 306) the plot needs this emotional power, and only manages to get it by apparently forgetting or pretending to forget that Anne has already declared Wentworth's mind and intentions to marry her.

The contradiction between the scene of Anne's "mind writing" and the scene when she reads Wentworth's letter should therefore prompt us to look back at the language Anne uses about Wentworth at the theater. She displays the exact same surety then that she has in the past when it comes to Wentworth's interiority. Wentworth himself later comments that he believes Anne to have read his feelings, but I contend she in fact writes them: Wentworth's letter responds to her comments as she makes them to Harville, and we can see this as a literalization of Anne directing Wentworth's pen. The incongruity between Anne's surety and Anne's shock is thus a plot device meant to give the letter scene emotional heft. The text maintains the plot progression the reader expects while still establishing Anne as narratively powerful, hand-waving away questions about how Anne could possibly be shocked and simultaneously postponing true closure as long as possible. As Christopher Miller writes, the reader of an Austen novel lives in a space of "both knowing and not knowing how it will end" (Miller 249), and readers thus suspend knowledge to enjoy the story. Of course Wentworth and Anne will get together and of course the novel will have a happy ending, but we bracket off that knowledge in order to enjoy the journey.

Characters, however, do not exist in this same "knowing and not knowing" paradox. Characters are confined to their storyworld, Margolin's fourth level of narrative; they are unaware of what is happening next just as they are unaware that they are in a story. They may hope and wish and dream, but they do not know. Even Austen's narrators tend not to display the knowledge of the future that Nelles calls omnitemporality. Instead, "an Austen narrator is not just bound by a 'now' at the end of the story that she cannot see beyond; she is also bound by the 'now' of the action she is narrating moment by moment, and is prohibited from looking ahead to future events even if they will occur before the narrator's final 'now'" (Nelles 123).

Omnitemporality may be a characteristic of a so-called omniscient narrator, according to Nelles, but it is not a usual characteristic of an Austen narrator. Yet Anne, through "mind writing" Wentworth and asserting his intentions of marriage, foretells the end of her story, thus surpassing what both a character and a narrator can do in an Austen novel.

Inhabiting the space of what Margolin calls the implied author, Anne is able to "manipulate the information concerning the text world in particular ways, both semantic and compositional, so as to create certain attitudes and judgements in the reader with respect to storyworld participants" (Margolin 273). She is not just writing Wentworth, she is writing her own story and even its reader as she tells us what will be forthcoming and how we should view the future proposal. While the rest of the characters in *Persuasion* remain in the fourth level and the narrator whose authority she borrows lives in the third level, Anne not only ascends to the second level but is able to move between levels – sometimes aligning herself with the narrator, sometimes apparently just another character in the story, and sometimes manipulating what information we as readers do and do not have in order to engender a certain response.

As with the Bath "mind writing" scene, confirmation that Wentworth is indeed jealous of Mr. Elliot must wait to the end of the novel. This particular corroboration mimics the language of her declaration much more closely than we find with the other scenes, as we read "She had not mistaken him. Jealousy of Mr. Elliot had been the retarding weight, the doubt, the torment…that had returned, after a short suspension, to ruin the concert" (226) at the theater. We have the "Jealousy of Mr. Elliot" phrase repeated verbatim from her internal declaration a few chapters earlier, this time as confirmation rather than exclamation. Moreover, since the theater concert occurs at the very end of the novel the reader has had very little time to forget it by the time it is validated. Finally, the text itself links the present-emotion "mind writing" Bath scene with the

assertion of jealousy at the theatre scene by noting that Wentworth's doubt and torment "had begun to operate…in Bath [and] had returned…to ruin the concert" (226), suggesting that we should read them together. Tellingly, the confirmation passage does not mention the other interactions they had between those two scenes, including passing awkwardly in the street with Lady Russell and discussing Lyme at a social gathering with Anne's family in attendance. Clearly something particular happens in these two scenes that does not occur during their other interactions; I suggest that these scenes are unique in part because of the "mind writing" that occurs in both.

This third time follows the pattern of assertion and confirmation, providing yet another textual vote for Anne's continuing trustworthiness. This repeated pattern helps to remind us of the previous "mind writing" scenes and thus focuses our attention on these moments of narrative authority. Neither Anne nor *Persuasion* are confined by the "inwardness" (Irvine 39) on display. Instead, Anne's "mind writing" ranges over past, present, and future; thought, feeling, and intention; character and narrative – she breaks the conventions of realism and the expectations of what both a character and narrator can do.

Counter-example: Emma Woodhouse as ineffective and unreliable

Both Anne's "mind writing" and the story creation that flows from it are unique in Austen's novels, but this authority is so ubiquitous and accurate in *Persuasion* that its very presence is made to seem natural or usual. We may not have a narrator informing us from the beginning that nothing about the plot is unusual or startling, as we do in *Northanger Abbey*, but all of Austen's works have what Miller calls "the framework of inevitability" (Miller 249) around their ultimate conclusion. One way to highlight the unique ways that Anne asserts

authority within this expected plot is to compare *Persuasion* with an Austen text whose heroine's attempts to both "mind read" and "mind write" do not convey the same authority: *Emma* (1815).

Emma is Anne's social equal but character opposite. Where Anne is quiet, passive, and often overlooked, Emma is the most important woman in her social sphere, outgoing and with a tendency to meddle. *Persuasion* sets up a system in which the reader trusts Anne and cheers for her second chance; *Emma* sets up a system in which the reader laughs at Emma's foibles and hopes she will grow up enough to deserve her ending. The point of *Persuasion* is that a mature, adult heroine must overcome external obstacles; the point of *Emma* is that its heroine is not nearly as clever, observant, or right as she thinks.

Emma believes herself to be highly observant and a gifted matchmaker, but repeatedly fails to understand the desires and intentions of the people around her. She does not recognize Mr. Elton's interest in her (rather than her friend/charity case Harriet), for example, reflecting in one scene "She was quite convinced of Mr. Elton's being in the fairest way of falling in love, if not in love already. She had no scruple with regard to him. He talked of Harriet, and praised her so warmly, that she could not suppose any thing wanting which a little time would not add" (Austen *Emma* 31). This assurance of Mr. Elton's interest in Harriet sounds much like Anne's own assurance with regards to Wentworth, but Emma is mistaken where Anne is not. *Persuasion* ensures that we know to believe Anne, while *Emma* ensures that we know Emma is wrong – Elton proposes to Emma in a carriage ride and scornfully explains how the attentions she thought were aimed at Harriet were actually aimed at her. Emma, Harriet, and Elton all misinterpret one another's intentions and interests, "mind reading" with a profound lack of accuracy. The concealed relationship between Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax, one that Emma completely

misses, is another example of Emma's inability to "mind read" accurately, as is her later belief that Knightley is interested in Harriet.

As Lisa Zunshine notes in *Getting Inside Your Head: What Cognitive Science Can Tell Us About Popular Culture*, "mind reading" does not have to be accurate to exist. Emma, Harriet, and Elton are all "mind reading" as they misinterpret, because "perfect access to mind through body" is a "fantasy" (Zunshine *Getting Inside Your Head* xi). The difference here is that when Anne "mind reads" it adds to her narrative authority because we learn from the very beginning to trust her. When Emma "mind reads" it actually detracts from her narrative authority because we learn from the beginning to distrust her observations and conclusions. The level of mistrust we as readers have for Emma's authority and accuracy only intensifies when she attempts to shape the people around her through "mind writing."

Emma's attempts to "mind write" are also ultimately failures. She succeeds in fixing Harriet's attention on Elton, and castigates herself for "persuad[ing] Harriet into liking the man" (Austen *Emma* 95), but after some initial grief Harriet falls for Knightley instead before finally marrying her original love Robert Martin. While Emma's "mind writing" of Harriet meets with initial success, it does not last and Harriet's interest in both Knightley and Martin happen without – in fact against – Emma's wishes. Compared to Anne, who writes Wentworth's past, present, and future, Emma's "mind writing" of Harriet is temporary and strictly present-focused. Harriet's interest both in Martin and Knightley are in fact things Emma specifically fights against, but fails to change, despite the interruption of Harriet's interest in Elton.

Unlike Anne, whose narrative authority grows over the course of *Persuasion* until she is in charge of her own story, Emma's narrative authority diminishes over the course of *Emma*. From a promising beginning finding a husband for her governess, Emma fails to make matches

for anyone else, completely misinterprets both Elton's and Churchill's intentions and actions, attempts to guide Harriet away from the man she ultimately marries, and more. And unlike Anne, who asserts Wentworth's intentions and thus the end of her novel several chapters before that end actually comes, Emma believes that Knightley wishes to ask her opinion of his pursuit of Harriet until the very second he specifies that it is Emma he loves. At the beginning of their conversation she feels "they seemed to be within half a sentence of Harriet" (Austen *Emma* 295) and talks herself into hearing his declaration of love for Harriet "as a friend" (Austen *Emma* 296) because she "could not bear to give him pain" (Austen *Emma* 295). Anne's shock at receiving Wentworth's letter is a plot device attempting to forestall the novel's emotional climax. Emma's shock at Knightley's feelings for her is entirely real, as *Emma* manages to postpone closure even through a conversation about love and marriage until Knightley finally bursts out with his affection for Emma. Nothing in the text counteracts the view that Emma has no idea of Knightley's feelings and thus no clue about her story's conclusion. Her failures at "mind reading" and "mind writing" demonstrate her lack of authority, and so her intense uncertainty at the end of the novel is entirely within character. Social power and self-confidence do not translate to the kind of narrative authority Anne displays.

What the original ending reveals and the published ending hides

Unlike Emma's consistent lack of authority and final uncertainty, Anne's "mind writing" grows in importance and scope over the course of the novel. The dinner party scene involved her asserting Wentworth's thoughts, the Bath scene her asserting Wentworth's feelings. The theatre scene goes a step further to assert intentions, as Anne follows her claim of Wentworth's jealousy with a series of questions to herself that indicate she assumes a proposal will be forthcoming if

Wentworth learns she is not otherwise engaged. Because *Persuasion* is a romance her relationship with Wentworth *is* the primary storyline – what happens between them makes up the vast majority of the plot, with a handful of minor loose ends related to their marriage to tie up, like Mrs. Smith's recovering her husband's money and Mrs. Clay becoming Mr. Elliot's mistress. In "mind writing" Wentworth, then, Anne in effect writes her own story, because their marriage is where the entire book has been headed. As James Thompson notes, Anne is Austen's most "mature and sensible heroine" (Thompson 51) as well as what James Phelan calls a "fully-formed ethical being" (Phelan 31); she does not need to develop her character the way that others like Elizabeth Bennett or Catherine Morland do. The story is about the events that lead to Anne's marriage, not her personal development, so when she recognizes that Wentworth wants to marry her she reveals that she has recognized the rest of her plot.

This move violates the "knowing and not-knowing" agreement we as readers have entered into by reading *Persuasion*. We pretend that we do not know how the story will end, yet the main character breaks this collective agreement and potentially undermines the emotional stakes that Austen's novel-length postponement of closure has built up. The text gives us an out in pretending like Anne's revelation of the ending never happened, but if we recognize the authority she shows over both Wentworth and the story itself in declaring Wentworth's intentions, we must also recognize that she is playing with how we read the book. As readers we believed we were reading a courtship novel with all of the usual suspension of knowledge that accompanies the genre, but instead we are reading a novel that breaks those rules. We are allowed to maintain our assumed understanding of the novel if we wish, since Anne's shock at the letter offers plausibility for a traditional courtship development plot. But realizing Anne's authority and the way it interrupts Hinnant's "climactic confrontation" means realizing that we

are not the only ones who know (or "know") what is going on. *Persuasion* does not allow us to be the kind of Austen reader we usually are, because Anne and her story are not playing by the rules we expect.

Austen in fact rewrote several chapters at the end of the published version of *Persuasion*, beginning when Anne left her schoolfriend Mrs. Smith's apartment and ending just before the final chapter when the narrator sums up what happens to all the characters. The scenes in which Anne defends women's constancy, Wentworth writes out his love for her, and the two meet dramatically in the street after she has read his letter were not in the original draft. Instead, the original ending depicts Anne in a state of cognitive overload after learning of Mr. Elliot's perfidy from Mrs. Smith.

> "With all this knowledge of M^{r} E--& this authority to impart it, Anne left Westgate Build^{gs}--her mind deeply busy in revolving what she had heard, feeling, thinking, recalling & forseeing everything; shocked at M^{r} Elliot--sighing over future Kellynch, and pained for Lady Russell, whose confidence in him had been entire.--The Embarrassment which much be felt from this hour in his presence!--How to behave to him?--how to get rid of him?--what to do by any of the Party at home?--where to be blind? where to be active?--It was altogether a confusion of Images & Doubts--a perplexity, an agitation which she could not see the end of--and she was in Gay S^{t} & still so much engrossed, that she started on being addressed by Adm^{l} Croft, as if he were a person unlikely to be met there. It was within a few steps of his own door" (mollands.net).

This is a version of Anne we do not often see in *Persuasion*. Gone is the careful observation and control that she normally displays, replaced here by total cognitive overload. The text explicitly

notes that she is experiencing "confusion," "perplexity" and "agitation" while also giving examples of what that entails, beginning with the list of thoughts and questions that accompany her new knowledge. This list begins with Mr. Elliot himself (she is shocked), and moves to Kellynch, Lady Russell, Anne's own expected future embarrassment in his presence, her concerns about how to act towards him, who if anyone she should tell, what she should keep to herself, and where she should proactively act rather than react. Nine different thoughts and questions, presented in a rush and separated by dashes rather than tucked into neatly punctuated sentences, provides the reader with a taste of her confusion. Little surprise that she is so "deeply busy" and "engrossed" that she does not even know where she is, as evidenced by her surprise on meeting Admiral Croft just outside his house – the text's comment that she "started" upon seeing him "as if he were a person unlikely to be met there" again emphasizes just how internally focused and unaware of her surroundings Anne is.

The focus of this passage is, moreover, not simply on Anne but specifically on Anne's mind. It is her "knowledge" of Mr. Elliot that so consumes her, her "mind" is busy and revolving, and that mind runs the gamut of what the eighteenth century associated with cognition: "feeling, thinking, recalling, and forseeing everything." There is incredible breadth wrapped up in this statement, both from the fact that her mind's object is "everything" and from the completeness in which it is working. She does not only think, she feels as well. She does not only consider the past through recalling, she considers the future through foreseeing. The sheer level of cognition here appears to be what overwhelms her, which is odd in a novel that filters most of the reader's experience through Anne's mind. She has had a lot to deal with before, and it has never overwhelmed her as it does here. Wentworth's reintroduction into her life at the beginning of the novel, for example, is a "new sort of trial to Anne's nerves" (Austen *Persuasion*

49) and their first physical meeting leaves her "agitated" and "unable to attend" (Austen *Persuasion* 56) to her sister Mary's comments, but while these situations impact her thoughts and limit the attention she pays to the conversation with Mary, they do not cause her to completely lose track of her surroundings or consider (and become overwhelmed by) "everything." Her previous instances of cognitive strain simply do not share the complete overload we find here.

The published version of this chapter, interestingly, maintains Anne's thoughts without indicating overload. In "thinking over all that she had heard" (Austen *Persuasion* 199) Anne concludes that Mr. Elliot does not deserve her pity or care, reconsiders his previous interactions with her in light of her new information, thinks with concern about the impact on Lady Russell, Sir Walter, and Elizabeth, and plans how she will break the news of Mr. Elliot's true character to family and friends. The passage's handful of dashes and exclamation points indicate heightened emotion, while the fact that Anne, whether "looking around her, or penetrating forward,…saw more to distrust and to apprehend" (Austen *Persuasion* 199) shows both the breadth of her thoughts and her distress. Feelings, expansiveness, and pain do not here add up to cognitive overload, however. The revised chapter stops well short of "feeling, thinking, recalling, and forseeing everything," recording instead a more limited set of thoughts and concerns that keep Anne within the conventions of realism.

The revised chapter also specifically removes any reference to "forseeing," much less "forseeing everything." The denouement of Anne's narrative authority is her "mind writing" of Wentworth's intentions and thus writing the end of her of her own story, something that the original ending's use of "forseeing" emphasizes. The original version acknowledges Anne's foresight and recognizes the cognitive overload that accompanies such an unrealistic access to

the future, while the revised version omits any such admission. Especially since Anne's declaration of Wentworth's jealousy was only two chapters earlier, "forseeing" confirms and makes explicit how Anne contravenes realism to extend beyond the limits of a character. It is much harder to look past her "mind writing" and prediction of the end when the text repeats the pattern of future-orientation.

Despite the authority inherent in the original ending's acknowledgement that Anne's mind encompasses "everything" about the future, the narrative outcome of the un-Anne-like cognitive overload is actually a diminution of Anne's character and agency. Instead, as James Heldman argues, in the original the Crofts step forward to be the narrative movers. Once Anne recovers from her surprise at seeing him, Admiral Croft insists that Anne come in to speak with Mrs. Croft; the flimsiness of this excuse becomes immediately clear when he puts Anne in a room with Wentworth instead, airily noting twice that Mrs. Croft would be down soon and only after the second time indicating that he would actually go upstairs to tell her Anne was there. Wentworth also acts at the Croft's insistence, inquiring after Anne's potential impending marriage to Mr. Elliot because Admiral Croft has explicitly asked he do so, allegedly to ascertain whether the Crofts have to leave Kellnych Hall. The Admiral's determination to have Anne in his home and to have Wentworth be the one to ask Anne about her possible marriage does not make any sense, to the reader or to the parties involved, until it becomes clear that he is orchestrating a conversation between Anne and Wentworth that will lead to their engagement. Anne's overload of knowledge, her sudden author-like access to "everything" including the future, proves too much for her and prevents her from even behaving like a regular character within her storyworld. It is as if this final breakthrough is too much for her to also hold onto herself as a character, and she becomes instead a marionette, staying, going, speaking, and

remaining silent at someone else's order. Admiral Croft becomes the one who stages the climactic scene, directing places and lines as if the story were the final act of his play.

The original ending thus makes both the extent of Anne's knowledge and the impact that knowledge has on her role as character very clear. She knows and understands so much that she cannot even act as Anne-the-character within the bounds of a realistic novel, but instead freezes up and relies on someone else to direct her. It seems odd that the narrative authority of "everything" leads to her ceding agency to Admiral Croft, but this move highlights just how unusual and how far beyond the bounds of realism her experience is. We as readers cannot ignore her knowledge nor pretend it is less expansive, because her freezing up underscores the extent of it. By comparison, the Anne of the published ending has plenty to think and feel, yet masters her thoughts; the text does not hit us over the head with her departure from realism.

Articles that devote space to the original ending decry it as flat and boring, hailing the rewritten ending as emotionally and narratively more interesting. Heldmen opens his by claiming "It is a truth universally acknowledged that Jane Austen's original ending of *Persuasion* was a bad idea and that the revised ending is a vast improvement" (Heldman 46). I suggest that the rewritten ending helps to explain why scholars have not recognized the extent of Anne's narrative authority before – the published ending has no reference to the "everything" that Anne thinks, feels, recalls, and foresees, making it easier to explain her away as observant and thoughtful rather than as an author-figure with an all-encompassing mind.

The upshot of these changes is that the published ending makes Anne's narrative authority more human. In terms of plot it removes the Crofts from an oddly prominent position and puts the focus back on Anne, but in a way that is more realistic. Likewise, the unspokenness of Anne and Wentworth's mutual recognition of affection makes much more sense in the

published ending when Wentworth has already committed his feelings and intentions to a letter that Anne has read. The original ending's use of Anne's non-engagement to Mr. Elliot as shorthand for her desire to marry Wentworth and his to marry her is not impossible, certainly, but it involves both less information and neither member of the pair clearly stating their intentions. With no mention of foretelling, textual acknowledgement of Anne's narrative authority is toned down and hidden even as her role is increased.

Conclusion: writing Wentworth, her story, and the genre itself

Persuasion maintains the basic conventions expected of a realistic courtship novel, something John Wiltshire notes all of Austen's texts do. Deirdre Lynch calls her "mistress of the pro forma," commenting that "her forte is in part her ability to play with the compulsoriness of forms" (Lynch 236). With *Persuasion* she goes much further than playing, giving us an unrealistic character in a realistic novel, a character that transcends what both characters and narrators in the long eighteenth century are supposed to do. The scope of Anne's narrative authority forces us to reckon with the neat categories we as readers have for both genre and form.

Persuasion experiments with an unrealistic heroine in a realistic novel, suggesting that we might reconsider how we define both realism and character – especially when it comes to the marriage and courtship system of which Austen's novels are a mimesis. Anne's "mind writing" plays a vital role in bringing about the text's happy marriage and mostly-happy ending, but as it is an explicitly non-mimetic power she wields, no woman (or man) dealing with the kinds of questions and concerns *Persuasion* addresses in eighteenth- or nineteenth-century Britain can look to Anne or her story for a model. The marriage plot in literature is of course idealized in that an author is present to make sure it comes to a resolution; the actual courting ladies and

gentlemen of Austen's day could not rely on a benevolent creator ensuring their marital happiness. But *Persuasion* ultimately has to turn to the non- or super-human authority of "mind writing" for its resolution rather than more plausible – if very serendipitous – situations of Austen's other novels. If even an apparently realistic heroine in a realistic novel cannot find happiness in marriage without jumping levels of narrative and writing her love interest, what possible hope is there for Austen's readers, both in her time and now? In its radical experimentation *Persuasion* functions as a critique of the courtship and marriage system it allegedly portrays, indicating how far it breaks down and how many problems it presents.

I argue that reading *Persuasion* as breaking expectations rather than demonstrating mastery thereby suggests two things for the reader. The first is a critique of a courtship and marriage system that encourages dissembling, public silence, and hints rather than outright statements – it is a system, *Persuasion* indicates, that is not simply unfair but unrealistic. The second is a rewriting of the realistic novel itself. Scholarship of eighteenth-century literature in general and Austen in particular tend to assume that novels became more and more realistic portraits of domestic life over the course of the 1700s, and that Austen ushered in the sympathetic realism that dominated the nineteenth century. Anne's "mind writing" instead breaks those genre rules, forcing the reader to recognize that we do not know nearly as much as we assumed. Our privileged position of knowing how a novel of domestic fiction plays out gets interrupted by a text that emphasizes its own fictionality and textuality rather than its realism. *Persuasion* is not the confined, grimly realistic novel it has often been painted as. It is instead a radical push at the boundaries of realism and our own expectations of how a novel goes.

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