

THE ANTHOLOGY AND THE
RISE OF THE NOVEL

From Richardson to George Eliot

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CHAPTER I

Richardson's economies of scale

What Cleanth Brooks anathematized fifty years ago as “the heresy of paraphrase” remains impossible to escape in literary critics’ daily practice.¹ Plot summary, on the one hand, and quoting out of context, on the other, continue to underpin our arguments – if only because, for example, it would be impossible for me to reproduce verbatim all eight volumes of *Clarissa* as evidence for what this chapter argues. Sheer bulk lays Richardson open to summary. The impossibility of fitting all eight volumes of *Clarissa* or seven of *Grandison* into the human mind at once turns readers into editors. The first collection of excerpts from *Clarissa* appeared only three years after the novel itself; the first plot summary, four years later. Ever since then, the shifting division of labor between Richardson’s anthologists and his abridgers has registered successive generations’ unspoken assumptions about the most efficient way to convey information, and indeed about what counts as information at all. Condensations define some modes of discourse as functional, others as decorative. They predict which aspects of a text will provoke curiosity or boredom. They impute to some audiences a vulgar greed for plot, to others a painstaking appreciation of style. In skimming, the former abridge; in skipping, the latter anthologize.

Richardson lived to see *Clarissa* and *Grandison* abridged. He set that process into motion himself by adding an index to the second edition of *Clarissa* in the expectation that readers would have forgotten the beginning by the time they reached the end, and “would not chuse to read seven Tedious Volumes over again.” The index was offered as a surrogate memory, “a help to their Recollection.”² But Richardson’s readers have spent as much energy “writing Indexes, . . . abstracting, abridging, compiling” as he himself claimed to.³

So do his characters. Each novel takes an anthologist for its heroine. Pamela keeps “a Common-place Book, as I may call it; In which, by her Lady’s Direction, from time to time, she had transcribed from the Bible,

and other good Books, such Passages as made most Impression upon her, as she read.”⁴ The double plot of *Sir Charles Grandison* produces two competing collections of excerpts: the hero’s rejected lover assembles biblical quotations, while her successful rival copies “consoling” extracts from private letters.⁵ Clarissa keeps a commonplace book like Pamela, compiles religious extracts like Clementina, and excerpts letters like Harriet.⁶ Richardson never specifies the contents of Pamela’s commonplace book, but his later novels grant the anthology more substance: Clementina’s and Harriet’s excerpts are reproduced in full, Clarissa’s archive of letters is presented as the origin of the novel itself, and her “Meditations” are not only inserted in the novel but reprinted later as an independent volume. The heroines’ common practice of the commonplace cuts across class, nationality, and religion. It also extends to men. Every major male character in Richardson – Mr. B., Belford, Lovelace, Grandison – excerpts quotations. So do most minor ones: Greville, Brand, Bartlett, Sir Charles’ short-hand writer Henry Cotes, even a philistine Anthony Harlowe and a barely literate Richard Mowbray. Together, they set an example of how (and how not) to manipulate texts produced by others.

Richardson’s late novels pose a double question: why do their characters spend so much time excerpting texts? And why have the novels themselves been so energetically excerpted? One explanation is that his fictions are already anthologies. Vicesimus Knox’s decision to supplement his *Elegant Extracts* by a companion volume of *Elegant Epistles* serves as a reminder that collections of letters, like collections of anthology-pieces, are strung together from self-contained texts signed by multiple authors. Unlike anthologies, though, epistolary novels are also continuous narratives in which – however many different names appear under individual letters – the text as a whole is ultimately attributed to one author at most. The tension between those two facts structures Richardson’s fiction. Despite their quotation of letters and in letters, later editions of *Clarissa* began to dramatize the ethical dangers of appropriating others’ words. Throughout Richardson’s lifetime and after it, each successive edition widened the gap between the centripetal editorial apparatus and the composite form of the text that it frames. Not until his last novel did Richardson find a plot capable of resolving the contradiction inherent in a genre that defines writing as collectively produced but privately owned. And even *Sir Charles Grandison*, in which the figure of the executor finally disjoins property from authority, gave rise to proprietary disputes with both amateur friends and commercial rivals.

The size of Richardson's novels would eventually invite even more radical kinds of appropriation. The competing strategies that successive anthologists and abridgers used to compress them provide a clue to the riddle of the epistolary novel's disappearance in the nineteenth century. This chapter will turn in conclusion to a range of ambivalently documentary nineteenth-century genres – abridgment, biography, historical novel – to explore how old epistolary fictions came to be read once new ones ceased to be written.

WRITING AGAINST THE MOMENT

Scale alone cannot explain the repackaging of Richardson's novels. While some editions shorten the originals, others supplement them, and even those rewritings that do shrink the text change more than size. For over a hundred years after Richardson's death, every abridgment prefixed genealogical and biographical information to the courtship plots which Richardson himself had begun *in medias res* before returning belatedly to the heroines' childhoods and origins. All three novels originally open at the moment when an adolescent girl becomes aware of a man's pursuit; their time-frame coincides with what Clarissa calls "the space from sixteen to twenty-two . . . which requires [a parent's] care, more than any other time of a young woman's life." A parent's – but also a reader's. Mrs. Harlowe refuses to credit Clarissa for an exemplary youth, claiming that only "now that you are grown up to marriageable years is the test." In *Pamela*, too, we hear little about the heroine's childhood until Mr. B.'s reminiscences in the third volume. Even then, what he remembers is precisely his impression that Pamela's character was not yet worth noticing: "the Girl's well enough, for what she is; but let's see what she'll be a few Years hence. Then will be the Trial" (*Pamela*, 3.30.241).⁷ By realigning the order of story with the order of discourse – and, in the case of *Sir Charles Grandison*, by substituting the hero's birth for the heroine's coming of age as their starting-point – the earliest abridgments matched the boundaries of the plot to the parameters of a (masculine) life.

More fundamentally, eighteenth-century abridgments altered epistolarity along with length. For a collection of first-person present-tense letters "written to the moment," they substituted a single retrospective, impersonal narrator, temporally and diegetically removed from the events described.⁸ No letters appear in *The Paths of Virtue Delineated: or, the History in Miniature of the Celebrated Pamela, Clarissa Harlowe, and Sir Charles*

Grandison, *Familiarised and Adapted to the Capacities of Youth* (London: R. Baldwin, 1756), which went through many editions both as a whole and in separate volumes before being recycled in 1813 as *Beauties of Richardson*; in *Clarissa, or, The history of a young lady . . . abridged from the works of Samuel Richardson* (London: Newbery, n.d. [1769?]); in *The History of Sir Charles Grandison, abridged from the works of Samuel Richardson* (London: Newbery, n.d. [1769?]); or in J. H. Emmert, *The Novelist: or, a Choice Selection of the Best Novels* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1792), which combined abridgments of Richardson's last two novels. Paradoxically, abridgers continued to transpose letters into narrative as long as the epistolary novel remained in vogue: from 1756 through 1813, no abridgment published in English retained the novels' original form. Conversely, as we shall see at the end of this chapter, abridgers began to adopt the epistolary mode only in 1868, once the production of new epistolary novels had dwindled to a trickle. Yet even those abridgments – like their successors still in print today – continued to add third-person past-tense plot summaries to replace the letters excised and to frame the epistolary excerpts that remain. As synoptic narrative alternates with synecdochal extracts, each modern abridgment oscillates between the narrative conventions of eighteenth-century epistolary fiction and those of nineteenth-century omniscient narration.

Brevity has no intrinsic connection with narrative distance: a sentence phrased in the past tense and the third person is no shorter than one in the present and the first. Yet the consensus that confuses efficiency with impersonality has remained constant from Richardson's lifetime right down to the present. In a letter, Richardson apologized (or boasted) that "Prolixity, Length at least, cannot be avoided in Letters written to the Moment." The preface to *Grandison*, too, contrasts the epistolary novel before us with a potential past-tense abridgment: "The nature of familiar Letters, written, as it were, to the *Moment*, while the heart is agitated by Hopes and Fears, or Events undecided, must plead an excuse for the *Bulk* of a Collection of this kind. Mere Facts and Characters might be comprised in a much smaller Compass."⁹ *Clarissa* is prefaced by an even more explicit discussion of abridgment. The "editor" explains that he was "so diffident in relation to this article of *length*" that he asked his friends "what might best be spared." One "advised him to give a narrative turn to the letters," while others argued that "the story could not be reduced to a dramatic unity, or thrown into the narrative way, without divesting it of its warmth" (*Clarissa*, 35–36). The speaker chooses the second opinion over the first, and both prefaces

ultimately reject abridgment. Indeed, their allusions to that possibility call attention to the uncompromising length of the novels that follow. Yet readers of the first editions arrive at the full texts of *Clarissa* and *Grandison* only after passing through prefatory discussions of abridging. The question of how the novels could be condensed comes up even before they begin.

Richardson acted on those speculations. In 1749, the second edition of *Clarissa* added a table of contents summarizing each letter. Once republished as a separate pamphlet later that year, the table of contents became a synecdochal substitute for the novel: a plot summary that could be bought instead of the full text as well as along with it. Richardson's next supplement was quite different, however: *A Collection of such of the Moral and Instructive SENTIMENTS, CAUTIONS, APHORISMS, REFLECTIONS and OBSERVATIONS contained in the History [of Clarissa], as are presumed to be of general Use and Service* (1751), followed in 1755 by a *Collection of the Moral and Instructive Sentiments, Maxims, Cautions, and Reflections, Contained in the Histories of PAMELA, CLARISSA, and Sir CHARLES GRANDISON*. Like abridgments, the *Collections* shorten, but their principles of selection are diametrically opposed. The *Collections* fragment the novels by substituting alphabetical for chronological order; the abridgments unify them by stripping discontinuous digressions away from linear plot. The anthologies excise ephemeral local detail in favor of timeless maxims "of general use and service" (a claim confirmed the next year when Benjamin Franklin inserted twenty-one of them in *Poor Richard's Almanack*); the abridgments keep narrative particulars but cut abstractions, sprinkling gaps through the text like negative anthology-pieces.¹⁰ What was figure becomes ground.

Richardson memorably dubbed his method "writing to the moment," but in the *Collection of Sentiments* we see him editing against the moment. The alphabetical order of the *Collection* substitutes the paradigmatic for the syntagmatic, undoing not only the order of time, but the significance of order. With each successive edition, that contrast between linear summaries and modular collections widened further. Where the table of contents of *Clarissa* promised to "shew the Connexion of the whole," the 1755 *Collection* eventually disintegrated into a "set of entertaining Cards, neatly engraved on Copper-Plates, Consisting of moral and diverting Sentiments, extracted wholly from the much admired Histories of PAMELA, CLARISSA, and SIR CHARLES GRANDISON" produced in 1760, which excerpted from the *Collection* the maxims that the latter had already extracted from the novels.¹¹

Transposed from bound pages to cards made to be shuffled, the “sentiments” lost even the arbitrary order that the *Collection* had borrowed from the letters of the alphabet – and the material connection that the novel borrows from its binding.

Yet the division of labor between narrative abridgments and sententious anthologies simply makes visible a tension that already structures the full texts from the beginning. In a letter, Richardson dismissed his *Collection of Moral Sentiments* as “a dry Performance – Dull Morality, and Sentences . . . divested of Story.”¹² In *Sir Charles Grandison*, however, Charlotte contrasts “story” less favorably with the “sentiments” that give the *Collection of Moral and Instructive Sentiments* its title: “The French only are proud of sentiments at this day; the English cannot bear them: Story, story, story, is what they hunt after” (*Grandison*, 6.52.228).¹³ In a departure from Richardson’s usual xenophobia, the epigrammatic form of Charlotte’s observation, which lends itself to being generalized and indeed quoted, implicitly endorses “sentiment” over “story.” Boswell reproduces that preference when he quotes Samuel Johnson saying that “if you were to read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted, that you would hang yourself. But you must read him for the sentiment, and consider the story as giving occasion to the sentiment.”¹⁴ That pronouncement itself appears in a biography in the form of an anthology, Boswell’s *Life*, which frames a collection of Johnson’s sayings by the story of Johnson’s life. In prescribing how to read Richardson, Boswell defines his own genre.

Johnson was only one of several critics beginning with Richardson himself who perceived “read[ing] Richardson for the story” as a dangerous temptation. In *The Progress of Romance* (1785), Clara Reeve acknowledges that “if you have a mind to see an Epitomé of Richardson’s works, there is such a publication, wherein the *narrative* is preserved; but you must no longer expect the graces of *Richardson*, nor his pathetic addresses to the heart, they are all evaporated and only the dry *Story* remains.”¹⁵ We have no way of knowing which of the many “epitomes” Reeve is referring to – though *The Paths of Virtue* seems the most likely – for her complaint about the elimination of everything except “narrative” applies equally well to every abridgment on the market at that date. Reeve’s and Johnson’s scorn for “reading for the story” forms the corollary of abridgers’ unspoken assumption that poor or young or lazy readers want nothing but plot.

Long before Reeve, Richardson had characterized “the narrative way” as a “reduction,” reporting that the revision of parts of *Clarissa*

“into a merely Narrative Form . . . has help'd me to shorten much,” and associating “Story” with “haste”: “Was it not time I shd. hasten to an end of my tedious Work? Was not Story, Story, Story the continual demand upon me.”¹⁶ Reeve's phrase “dry story,” too, reproduces an image of “dry narrative” that first appeared in *Clarissa*, where Belford points out that the heroine is “writing of and in the midst of present distresses! How much more lively and affecting for that reason, must her style be, than all that can be read in the *dry, narrative*, unanimated style of persons relating difficulties and dangers surmounted!” (*Clarissa*, 391.1178, my emphasis). Belford's contrast between “narrative” and “presence” anticipates the logic of eighteenth-century abridgments which adopt a distanced narrator and a retrospective tense. Like abridgers, Richardson, Reeve, and Johnson posit a choice between, on the one hand, “facts and characters,” “narrative,” “story,” “reduction,” “haste”; on the other, “sentiment,” “presence,” “tediousness,” “length,” “bulk.” All but the abridgers agreed in preferring the latter to the former. Yet the fact that Belford applies to “narrative” and Reeve to “story” the same adjective (“dry”) which Richardson used to characterize “Sentences . . . divested of Story” suggests that story and sentiment form mirror-images of one another – and that either half of the compound loses its force when separated from the other.

Richardson never determined whether “story” could be purified from “sentiment” as cleanly as his metaphor of evaporation implied, let alone whether it should be. The preface to *Clarissa* warns that if the novel were to be “thrown into the narrative way,” “very few of the reflections and observations” (two of the terms later listed in the title of the *Collection*) “would then find a place” (*Clarissa*, 35–36). The preface to the 1751 *Collection of Sentiments*, in contrast, acknowledges that some readers have legitimate reasons to separate the two:

As the narrative part of those Letters was only meant as a vehicle for the instructive, no wonder that many readers, who are desirous of fixing in their minds those maxims which deserve notice distinct from the story that first introduced them should have often wished and pressed to see them separate from that chain of engaging incidents.¹⁷

Such readers demand the “chain of incidents” to be excised, not because it bores them, but on the contrary because it “engages” them too pleasurably not to distract from the moral. This is the logic of Elizabeth Griffith's argument, in a 1775 anthology of *The Morality of Shakespeare's Drama*, that the sententious passages need to be extracted

because “a single line, sometimes a single word, in many instances throughout his Works, may convey a hint, or impress a sentiment upon the heart, if properly marked, which might possibly be overlooked, while curiosity is attending to the fable”; or of a later anthologist’s claim, in *The Genius and Wisdom of Sir Walter Scott*, that “the passages in which are developed [Scott’s] peculiar notions of morals and philosophy escaped the attention of the generality of readers, in consequence of their minds being absorbed in the contemplation of the different varied incidents of the deeply interesting narrative they were perusing.”¹⁸ Although the preface to the 1751 *Collection* congratulates its readers on their self-denial, the reference to “engaging incidents” cannot help reminding them of the existence of other, more frivolous, readers, whom the sentiments presumably fail to “engage.”

Reader-response criticism has little to say about those unresponsive readers. We know more about the apocryphal villagers who supposedly rang the church bells to celebrate Pamela’s wedding – an anecdote disproved fifty years ago but still retailed as fact by two otherwise meticulous scholars as recently as 1991 – than about the very real people who used abridgments to short-circuit Richardson’s prolixity.¹⁹ The critical profession’s vested interest in believing that people can be turned on by reading has deprived us of any language with which to describe what happens when books turn readers off. Robert Darnton’s pioneering work on pornographic texts and weeping readers has bequeathed to later literary historians an ethical imperative to prove that reading can produce results as tangible as bodily fluids. Conversely, to acknowledge that the length of Richardson’s novels has prevented many people from responding or even from reading constitutes critical treason.²⁰ In an earlier version of this chapter, my reference to “the impossibility of fitting all eight volumes of *Clarissa* or seven of *Grandison* into the human mind at once” incited one anonymous reviewer to testify that “I have read the unabridged CLARISSA about three (or perhaps four) times – and GRANDISON about twice.” Even Patricia Meyer Spacks, who takes *Sir Charles Grandison* as a case-study in her recent book *Boredom*, backs down by displacing that boredom at once into the future of the text (as if Richardson bored no one until the twentieth century) and into the past of her readers (who are expected to come away from *Boredom* less bored with *Grandison*). Spacks’ subtle analysis ends on a pious anticlimax: “To try to reconstruct the interest of such a book, however hypothetically, . . . reminds us that ‘boring books’ need not always bore us.”²¹ Eighteenth-century abridgments suggest a rather different chronology.

As early as 1756, when *The Paths of Virtue* appeared, abridgers acted on Richardson's assumption that anything but third-person past-tense narrative would tempt the young, the ignorant, and the idle to skip. In turn, that prophecy fulfilled itself as eighteenth-century "histories in miniature" – unbroken, or unrelieved, by the original "sentiments" – trained their readers to dismiss non-narrative discourse as digression, interruption, delay.

In a novel published a year before *The Paths of Virtue*, Eliza Haywood personified such a reader under the name of Miss Loyter:

Miss Loyter. As for Novels, I like some of them well enough, particularly Mrs Behn's; but I know not how it is, the Authors now-a-days have got such a way of breaking off in the middle of their stories, that one forgets one half before one comes to the other.

Author. Digressions, miss, when they contain fine sentiments and judicious remarks, are certainly the most valuable parts of that sort of writing.

Miss Loyter. I cannot think so, and could wish the Authors would keep their sentiments and remarks to themselves, or else have them printed in a different letter, that one might know where to begin and where to leave off.²²

Richardson's novels are as open as any to the charge of breaking off in the middle of the story. Far from printing his sentiments in a different typeface to facilitate skipping, he reprinted his *Sentiments* in a different book to discourage it. Yet this was not for want of anticipating the resistance that Haywood attributes to a young, female reader. Indeed, Richardson's second *Collection*, published in the same year as Haywood's novel, targets not the priggish readers addressed in the preface to the 1751 anthology, but, on the contrary, readers who share Miss Loyter's esthetic: "young People; who are apt to read rapidly wth. a View only to *Story*." "I thought my End wou'd be better answered," Richardson adds, "by giving at one View Ye Pith & Marrow of what they had been reading, perhaps with some Approbation; in order to revive in their Minds ye *Occasions* on which ye Things were supposed to be said & done, ye better to assist them in ye Application of ye Moral."²³ What Richardson elsewhere calls the "demand [for] story" forces not only the writer but his readers to "hasten." "Story" becomes synonymous with speed, "sentiments" with enforced stasis.

In retrospect, Richardson's losing battle against his readers' "engagement" suggests that the sententious passages which pepper the novel itself are designed less (through their content) to inculcate specific moral lessons than (through their structure) to regulate the pace of reading. Far from subordinating esthetic considerations to artless moral seriousness,

the maxims obey a formal logic, even an emptily formalist one. The *Moral Sentiments* teach not so much how to live as how to read. Although the anthology claims to cover a whole range of conduct issues, stretching encyclopedically from the advantages of Absence to the dangers of Zeal by way of humaneness to horses and humility to husbands, the only moral virtue that it succeeds in enforcing is, very simply, the self-restraint needed to refrain from skipping. The *Collection* preaches patience under adversity, but teaches patience with boredom.

Like Johnson's opposition between those who read for the story and those who read for the sentiment, like Reeve's implied distinction between "those who have a mind to see an Epitome" and those (including the speaker) who scorn abridgments, like Charlotte's contrast between the English and the French, the prefaces to Richardson's *Collections* compare not only two modes of discourse but two kinds of readers. Yet that difference dissolved once the 1755 *Collection* acknowledged that the same maxims which blocked some readers' impetus tempted others to the even worse vice of skimming. Every reader his own abridger. Richardson's fear of being read "wth. a View only to *Story*" rests on the assumption that the youngest and laziest readers know how to identify different modes of novelistic discourse as systematically as any professional editor. The opposition between those who read for sentiment and those who read for story depends on their shared ability to tell an "incident" apart from a "maxim" – even without the aid of the contrasting typefaces which Miss Loyer proposes. Hence the need for the *Collection*'s counterattack. The harder the young, the ignorant, and the idle try to read "wth. a View only to *Story*," the more they need "at one View Ye Pith & Marrow" crammed down their throats, undiluted. The repetition of the word "View" defines the anti-narrative organization of the *Collection* as a polemical strategy designed to correct or even to punish readers' putative desires. The anthology saves readers from the vice of impatience only by ensuring that there is nothing to skip ahead to.

The conclusion of the sentence collapses the distinction between those two "Views," however. The phrase "in order to revive in their Minds ye Occasions on which ye Things were supposed to be said and done" suggests that the *Collection* sets out not to divorce generalizable "sentiments" from particular "story," but to anchor one to the other. The novels themselves are also the "Occasions on which ye Things" were previously read: the *Collection of . . . Sentiments* depends for its audience on the popularity of the "stories" that it claims to replace. In

fact, although the 1755 *Collection* was published only as an independent volume, its predecessor in 1751 had appeared not only as half of a self-contained book but also appended to the third edition of *Clarissa*. Once issued between separate covers, the 1751 *Collection* and the 1749 table of contents shift genres: from back matter to anthology, from front matter to abridgment. Even in its content, moreover, the 1751 *Collection* is less free of “story” than Richardson claims. Its moral generalizations rub up against illustrative statements that verge on plot summary. Under “Repentance” we learn that “Lovelace lived not to repent!”; under “Passion,” that “The command of her Passions was *Clarissa's* glory”; under “Comedies,” “Mr. *Lovelace*, Mrs. *Sinclair*, Sally *Martin*, Polly *Horton*, Miss *Partington*, love not tragedies.” The *Collection of Sentiments* is also a collection of stories. Conversely, a plot summary can be labeled a collection of beauties: the most popular eighteenth-century abridgment, *The Paths of Virtue*, reappeared in 1813 as *The Beauties of Richardson*.

In the same way that Richardson used the *Collection* to “separate [maxims] from that chain of engaging incidents,” he experimented in *Sir Charles Grandison* with a division of labor between two indexes, one of “similes and allusions” and another “historical and characteristic.” The second index is dominated by narrative entries, above all by a fifteen-page plot summary *s.v.* “Grandison, Sir Charles” – a heading whose similarity to the title of *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* identifies the entry as an abridgment of the novel. Moreover, the biographical order within each entry clashes with the topical alphabetical order that governs the index as a whole. In the “historical” index, the narrative entries are interspersed with a series of generalizations ranging from “absence of lovers, promotive of a cure for Love” through “Zeal.” Conversely, the index of similes – a collection that runs from “Bachelors, old, and old maids, compared To haunted houses” to “Women out of character, To bats” – slips details from the plot of *Grandison* into its list of all-purpose literary commonplaces. Perhaps the most hackneyed simile to be indexed, “L., Earl of, proud of his infant-son, To a peacock,” would have fit into the “index characteristic” at least as well as in the index of similes in which it actually appears. The list of “similes and allusions” that sets out to extract stylistic beauties from plot soon becomes indistinguishable from the “index historical” that undertakes to strip plot of stylistic verbiage.

In other words, while each “Epitome” of the novels – abridgment, table of contents, collection of sentiments, index – attempts to resolve

the tension between story and sentiment by pulling the texts in one direction or the other, ultimately they reveal instead the impossibility of composing an anthology devoid of narrative order or a plot that does not crumble into anthology-pieces. The *Collection* and the back matter of *Grandison* both end up collapsing “story” with the “sentiment” from which they set out to distinguish it. As E. S. Dallas admits with mock disappointment in the preface to his abridgment of *Clarissa*, Richardson “has so interwoven [his “preaching”] with the story that it is impossible to cut it all out.”²⁴

That interweaving culminated in Richardson’s third supplement to *Clarissa*, the *Meditations from the Sacred Books . . . mentioned in the HISTORY OF CLARISSA as drawn up by her for her own use. To each of which is prefixed, A Short Historical Account, Connecting it with the Story* (1750). This peculiar volume can best be described as an anthology *en abîme*. It excerpts from the novel the devotional texts that the novel represented Clarissa excerpting from what is, as Belford officiously reminds Lovelace, itself already an anthology: “this all-excelling collection of beauties, the Bible” (*Clarissa*, 364.1126). The advertisement presents the *Meditations* as a shorter source for the moral lessons of *Clarissa*, addressed to “those Persons who have not read the Volumes, or think they shall not have either patience or leisure to read them, and who may yet dip into the following Pages.”²⁵ The book sandwiches excerpts with summaries: a “historical account” – what we would call a plot summary – introduces each meditation, and a “very brief account of the Heroine’s part in the Work, as given by Mr. Belford” prefaces the whole (*Meditations*, iii). Like anthologies, the *Meditations* selects some portions of the text and excises others; but like abridgments, it addresses readers who lack “patience” or “leisure.” More specifically, it provides a formal model for later abridgers’ use of third-person editorial summaries to connect first-person excerpts.

The difference is that the *Meditations* amplifies as much as it compresses. At the same time as the collection subtracts everything but the meditations from *Clarissa* (and by isolating Clarissa’s writing from Lovelace’s, eliminates the hero’s “part in the work”), it adds thirty-two meditations absent from the novel itself. By summarizing the plot while supplementing the beauties, the *Meditations* makes the scale of the text as elastic as the size of the material pages which change from duodecimo in one edition to octavo in the next. When Richardson adds to or subtracts from *Clarissa*, he defines it as an aggregate of modular parts rather than an indissoluble whole.

In alternately expanding and contracting the novel, the *Meditations* anticipated the divided structure of the volume in which the *Sentiments* . . . Contained in the *History of Clarissa* later appeared. The *Collection* occupies only the second half of a book whose first part consists of addenda to earlier editions of *Clarissa*. The title of the whole runs *Letters and Passages Restored from the Original Manuscripts of the History of CLARISSA. To which is subjoined, A Collection of . . . Sentiments*. The "Passages Restored" reproduce those portions of the text that appeared for the first time in the second and third editions, ostensibly in order to spare owners of the first edition from having to buy another. Although many of those passages have been shown to respond to criticisms made only after the publication of the first edition, the title terms them "restored" – not added.²⁶ Similarly, even though the *Meditations* appeared two years after the first edition of the novel, Richardson presents it as the full-length original from which the meditations in *Clarissa* itself were excerpted, explaining that "The Editor of the History of Clarissa having transcribed, for the use of some select friends, the Thirty-Six Meditations of Clarissa, only Four of which are inserted in the History, they were urgent with him to give them to the Public" (*Meditations*, 1). Retrospectively defining the original edition as an abridgment, this account positions Richardson as a censor rather than a writer, an "editor" whose task is not to produce texts but to sift them. The autobiographical fiction that the meditations and passages were restored from an original manuscript reinforces the biographical fiction that they were written by the characters. Both present new compositions as found objects; both figure the author as an anthologist.

Like the *Collection of Sentiments*, the *Meditations* defines itself at once as a self-contained anthology and as a supplement whose interest depends on the original narrative. The effect of publishing devotional texts separate from the profane fiction in which they first appeared is undercut by the inclusion of the "Historical Account, Connecting [them] with the Story." Those prefatory accounts of the circumstances under which each meditation was composed make the *Meditations* borrow its chronological order from its inscribed author's biography and its interest from the plot of the novel, in the same way that the promise to "revive in [readers'] Minds ye Occasions on which ye Things were supposed to be said & done" cancels out at once the independence and the anti-narrative agenda of both collections. At the same time, the claim that the plot summaries "connect" the fragments – to *Clarissa*, but also to one another – recalls the announcement that the table of contents to the second edition of *Clarissa* will "shew the Connexion of the whole." Both

derive narrative continuity from an editorial apparatus imposed after the fact.²⁷

In the process of alternating lyric “meditations” with “historical accounts,” the *Meditations* balances fragment against “connection” and “sentiment” against “story.” By interspersing first-person homodiegetic present-tense meditations with third-person heterodiegetic past-tense narratives, it juxtaposes one series of texts that reproduces the immediacy of Richardson’s characteristic “writing to the moment” and “instantaneous descriptions” with another that anticipates the narrative distance of the earliest abridgments (*Clarissa*, 36). At the same time, its technique of connecting first-person excerpts by omniscient retrospective summaries shows a striking resemblance to the strategy of nineteenth-century abridgers. The “historical accounts” bear the same relation to *Clarissa*’s excerpts from the Bible that later editors’ plot summaries bear to excerpts from *Clarissa*. The fact that each meditation is dated like a letter makes the similarity even more apparent. In the *Meditations*, Richardson anticipated his readers’ impulse to bracket signed and dated first-person extracts by summaries in the voice of an unidentified and temporally unsituated narrator – the voice shared by the table of contents to *Clarissa*, the “index historical” of *Grandison*, and the “historical accounts” in the *Meditations*.

The urge to contain letters within more impersonal narrative can be traced back even farther to *Clarissa* itself. The first edition already frames the letters by a series of third-person paratexts: preface, afterword, list of characters, and a past-tense conclusion “summarily relating” the events following Lovelace’s death. Within the text itself, Richardson intersperses some letters with editorial footnotes, summarizes others, and transposes still others into the third person.²⁸ As the novel nears its end, the editorial apparatus begins to replace the letters instead of simply supplementing them. Italicized “abstracts” are substituted for parts of *Clarissa*’s posthumous letters: “as they are written on the same subject, and are pretty long, it is thought proper to abstract them” (*Clarissa*, 492.1376). The editor characterizes letters (“The posthumous letter to Miss Howe is exceedingly tender and affectionate” [*Clarissa*, 492.1377]); summarizes them in indirect discourse (“She remembers herself to her foster-brother in a very kind manner: and charges [her foster-mother], for his sake, that she will not take too much to heart what has befallen her” [*Clarissa* 503.1406]); tags them with “says she,” “she tells her,” “she prays” (*Clarissa*, 492.1376–77); and even provides tables of contents for individual letters: “This letter contains in substance: ‘Her thanks to the

good woman for her care of her in her infancy; for her good instructions and the excellent example she had set her: with self-accusations” (*Clarissa*, 503.1406). While the *Meditations* and post-1868 abridgments abandon the epistolary mode, both faithfully reproduce and even accentuate a more basic formal characteristic of *Clarissa*: the structure that pits signature against anonymity, dilation against summary, immediacy against distance.

MEANING AND GAPING

Like its abridgers, *Clarissa* ends up recanting the inscription of authorship. The body of the text, in which each letter is signed, gives way to a “Conclusion supposed to be written by Mr Belford” (*Clarissa*, 1489) – a title which pointedly refrains from endorsing that ascription. The “Postscript” which follows multiplies anonymous authorship. It opens with a description of the debate between author and readers: “The author of the foregoing work has been favoured, in the course of its publication, with many anonymous letters, in which the writers have differently expressed their wishes as to what they apprehended of the catastrophe” (*Clarissa*, 1495). Although the identity of the authors of the postscript and of the letters is not specified, their gender is: “Most of [the letters] directed to him by the gentler sex turn in favour of what they call a *fortunate ending*” (*Clarissa*, 1495). The italics distance the author from the vocabulary of the “gentler sex,” which will be immediately countered with the masculine “authority” of Aristotle as summarized by Addison (*Clarissa*, 1498). The difference between the author and his correspondents mirrors the contrast between letters and editorial summaries in the novel itself. They are female, he is male. Their form is epistolary, his is not. He refers to himself in the third person, while at least some of them presumably refer to themselves in the first. There are many of them (each expressing “different” views) and only one of him. Yet despite these contrasts, “the author” has something in common with his correspondents: like them, he refrains from naming himself. Multiple correspondents give way first to a single editor and then to letters with no signature, which in turn are summarized (and rebutted) by an author with no name.

By paraphrasing the letters that it refrains from reproducing, the postscript draws attention to the novel’s eleventh-hour repudiation of the epistolary mode. The second and third editions extend that process by swamping the epistolary body of the text in a series of paratextual

frames: table of contents, supplementary footnotes, collection of sentiments, index.²⁹ Within the covers of the first edition as much as over the course of its publication history, *Clarissa* set into motion the shift towards a single impersonal voice that abridgments would eventually complete.

The postscript rejects not just the letter but the anthology. Its speaker claims an authority unavailable to the narrator of the preface, who claimed only to compile others' letters. The novel begins by mentioning only "the editor to whom it was referred to publish the whole," but ends by alluding to "the author of the foregoing work" (*Clarissa*, 35, 1495). In 1751, that last-minute replacement of "editor" by "author" came to be reinforced by an equally belated bid to redefine *Clarissa* from a derivative reader to an original writer. The third edition supplements the portrait of *Clarissa* that Anna provides in the first by the startling new information that "Altho' she was well re'd in the English, French, and Italian Poets, and had re'd the best translations of the Latin Classics; yet seldom did she quote or repeat from them, either in her Letters or Conversation."³⁰

Anna's historical revisionism comes too late to be credible, for quotations riddle *Clarissa*'s letters, and the rape causes her to substitute quotation for narration altogether. The commonplace-book-like "Paper X" that she produces immediately afterwards consists almost entirely of excerpts from Otway, Dryden, Shakespeare, Cowley, and Garth (*Clarissa*, 261.893). The meditations that appear next are pieced together from biblical quotations. More loosely, the rape prompts *Clarissa*'s project of compiling other characters' letters to form the corpus that will eventually become the novel.³¹ Instead of narrating, *Clarissa* "collects." "The particulars of my story, and the base arts of this vile man will, I think, be best collected from those very letters of his," she writes to Anna (*Clarissa*, 379.1163). Belford borrows the vocabulary of the commonplace book to refer to the "extracts" from those letters that *Clarissa* asks him to transcribe, as well as to the "meditation[s] . . . extracted by the lady from the Scriptures" (*Clarissa*, 387.1174, 389.1176, 391.1177, 391.1178, 364.1124). As Belford reports, *Clarissa* "acknowledges that, if all [Lovelace's] letters are written with equal decency and justice, as I have assured her they are, she shall think herself freed from the necessity of writing her own story" (*Clarissa*, 391.1178). "Writing" gives way to "collection," autobiographical narrative to "extracts." Quotations replace *Clarissa*'s body as easily as her story: when Belford asks Lovelace "if thou canst relish a divine beauty," the noun refers not to *Clarissa* but to the excerpt she has transcribed (*Clarissa*, 364.1124). The "mad papers"

alone would reduce Anna's praise of Clarissa's self-restraint to empty obituary piety.

In a novel whose heroine spends so much of her time copying out others' words, however, it is hard to understand why Anna should assume citation to be incompatible with virtue. Clarissa's refusal to quote sticks out in the list of her more conventional moral attributes like charity and early rising. We can begin to understand its logic only if we remember that at the same time as the third edition dissociates its heroine from quotation, it amplifies the role of a despicable minor character whose letters contain little else. In 1751, Richardson added twenty new pages and two new letters by the pedantic clergyman Brand, who had appeared in the first edition only fleetingly as the author of one short letter slandering Clarissa. In the "passages restored," Brand's verbosity more than compensates for his quick exit from the first edition. The third edition also gives him an ambition to marry Clarissa which the first edition had not even hinted at. Brand's new fantasy of social mobility projects onto the plot itself the editorial logic that allots him twenty extra pages – almost as if he knew that his importance had grown in the three years that separate the first edition from the third, and wanted to translate that textual promotion into its social equivalent.

The twenty "restored" pages signed by Brand appear gratuitous: their comic tone jars in the pages leading up to Clarissa's death, and they contribute nothing to the anti-Lovelacean polemic that motivates the other "passages restored."³² One of the few critics who attempt to explain their function, Thomas Beebee, identifies Brand as a figure for intertextuality but goes on to dismiss him as a foil for the novel's two "strong readers," Clarissa and Lovelace.³³ The contrast is accurate as far as it goes, but does not mean that Brand should be ignored in favor of the strong readers with whom critics prefer to identify. Brand gains prominence in the third edition, I want to argue, precisely because his vanity and self-consciousness spur him to formulate a theory of what could be called weak reading – a theory that challenges the model of intellectual property on which the novel depends.

Of the countless undesirable suitors who pester Clarissa, Brand may well be the worst. Solmes at least notices her reluctance to marry him, but Brand imagines that they will make a perfect match. The proof is their common sententiousness. "With *these*, Sir, and *an hundred more*, wise *adages*, which I have always at my fingers' ends, will I (when reduced to *form* and *method*) entertain Miss," he exults; "and as she is a *well-read*, and (I might say, but for this *one* great error) a *wise* young Lady, I make no

doubt but that I shall *prevail* upon her, if not by *mine own arguments*; by those of *wits* and *capacities* that have a congeniality (as I may say) to *her own*.”³⁴ The novel takes care, however, to disprove Brand’s claim that the wisdom of his “wise adages” is the same as the wisdom of the “wise young Lady.” The third edition makes a point of dissociating Clarissa’s writing from masculine pedantry. Anna contrasts Clarissa to scholars who “call [their performances] MASCULINE,” “spangle over their productions with *metaphors*,” and “sinking into the *classical pits*, there poke and scramble about, never seeking to shew genius of their own; all their lives spent in common-place *quotation*; fit only to write *Notes* and *Comments* upon other peoples *Texts*.”³⁵ Coming in the wake of Anna’s more explicit comparison, the implausibility of Brand’s marriage fantasy exorcizes the worrying possibility that the pedant and the compiler might form a logical pair.

The first edition had made Clarissa’s strategy of borrowing others’ words a proof of modesty: her substitute for shameful self-exposure in a court of law. But by pairing the denial that Clarissa quotes with the insistence that Brand does, the third edition changes quotation to a sign of self-importance. At the same time, the ludicrously serious notes and commentary that Brand appends to his own letters parody Richardson’s project of dignifying his epistolary fictions with the editorial apparatus added (along with Brand’s letters and commentary) between the first and third editions. Indeed, Brand describes his letter in the same terms that Richardson applies to the *Collection of Sentiments*:

This is a *Letter*, and not a *Letter*, as I may say; but a kind of *short* and *pithy Discourse*, touching upon *various* and *sundry topics*, every one of which might be a *fit theme* to enlarge upon, even to volumes: If this *epistolary Discourse* (then let me call it) should be pleasing to you (as I am inclined to think it will, because of the *sentiments* and *aphorisms* of the *wisest* of the *antients*, which *glitter thro’* it like so many dazzling *sun-beams*), I will (at my leisure) work it up into a *methodical Discourse*; and perhaps may one day print it, . . . *singly* at first . . . and afterwards in my *Works*.³⁶

Brand’s reference to “sentiments and aphorisms” repeats the title of Richardson’s *Collection of such of the Moral and Instructive SENTIMENTS [and] APHORISMS . . . contained in the History*. His description of the letter as “pithy” and “fit to enlarge upon, even to volumes” anticipates Richardson’s description of the 1755 *Collection* as the “pith and marrow of 19 Volumes.”³⁷ Brand defines himself even more explicitly as an anthologizer when he calls attention to his habit of “pointing out to [Mr. Harlowe] many *beauties* of the *authors I quote*, which otherwise would lie concealed from *him*, as they must from every *common observer*.”

You will perhaps, Mr. Walton, wonder at the meaning of the lines *drawn under many of the words and sentences* (UNDERSCORING we call it); and were my letters to be printed, those would be put in a *different character*. Now, you must know, Sir, that *we learned men* do this to point out to the readers who are not *so learned*, where the *jet of our arguments lieth*, and the *emphasis* they are to lay upon *those words*; whereby they will take in readily our *sense* and *cogency*. Some *pragmatical* people have said, that an author who doth a *great deal of this*, either calleth his readers *fools*, or tacitly condemneth *his own style*, as supposing his meaning would be dark without it . . . [But] to give a very *pretty tho' familiar illustration*, I have considered a page distinguished by *different characters*, as a *verdant field* overspread with *butter-flowers* and *daisies*, and other summer-flowers.³⁸

Brand's anxiety about his use of "underscoring" calls attention to Richardson's addition of copious didactic italics throughout the edition in which his letter first appears.³⁹ The character's fear of "call[ing] his readers fools, or tacitly condemn[ing] his own style, as supposing his meaning would be dark without it" betrays the author/printer's anxiety about the typographical emphasis used in the third edition to close off the interpretive freedom that the first had offered readers.⁴⁰

Richardson's personal correspondence betrays the same double ambivalence about his use of editorial apparatus in the third edition, and of quotation from the first. One letter shifts from discussing the index of *Grandison* to mocking the paratextual baggage weighing down another book:

We are now fallen into an age of Dictionary and Index-Learning; and a Man must make a Figure that seems to go deeper, and can overcharge the Margins of the Books he writes, with Quotations from Authors of Ancient Date. But then there are always, however sparingly sprinkled, in the grossest, in the laziest Ages, true Genius's, who can, if they will, direct the Public Taste, and expose the *Ventilators*.⁴¹

Nothing if not "overcharged," *Clarissa* combines pointing fingers in the margins (first edition), index (second edition) and a system of marginal bullets marking revisions (third edition). More strikingly, the book that Richardson is criticizing here, Charles Peters's *A Critical Dissertation on the Book of Job*, takes for its subject the same biblical text from which *Clarissa* draws nearly half of her meditations. The opposition between "Genius's" and "Ventilators" reappears in another letter of the same year that contrasts "Persons of Genius" with "Commonplace-Men," a phrase that borrows pejorative force from the pun on "placemen," as if quotation were as ethically suspect as political opportunism.⁴² Brand's pedantry and Anna's praise of not

quoting belatedly bring that anxiety about the appropriation of other texts into the novel itself.

But Brand is not the only one who turns Clarissa's taste for quotation against her. Even Anthony Harlowe, distinguished for neither literacy nor religious zeal, taunts her with biblical quotations (*Clarissa*, 406.1196); meanwhile, Lovelace introduces an excerpt from the Book of Job with the boast that "I can quote a text as well as she" (*Clarissa*, 416:1217). And he can. After intercepting a letter in which Anna advises Clarissa to leave him, Lovelace replaces it with a forgery urging just the opposite, which he pieces together by copying some passages from the original, suppressing others, and adding spurious "connexions" in their place (*Clarissa*, 239.811). His success in recycling Anna's words for his own ends makes clear how much the legibility of each passage depends on its context.

It also suggests that expurgating old texts can be more effective than composing new ones. Not content to excise compromising passages from specific letters, as when he reads aloud bowdlerized epistolary extracts to the women in Hampstead (*Clarissa*, 233.781), Lovelace expurgates the entire correspondence (and indeed the archive on which the novel itself is based) by refusing to receive Clarissa's letter retracting her consent to the elopement – an omission that ultimately leads to her flight, rape, and death (*Clarissa*, 99.399). It may be appropriate, then, that his hand is represented graphically as an instrument not of writing but of editing. When Lovelace uses marginal fingers to mark the passages of Anna's letter that require his "animadversion" or deletion, he literalizes the indexes of *Clarissa* and *Grandison* while parodying the marginal bullets used by Richardson to signal textual variants between editions (*Clarissa*, 229.743).

Lovelace is not the last Richardsonian character to censor a letter, however. The marginal hand reappears in *Sir Charles Grandison* to signal those parts of a letter which the heroine, Harriet Byron, wants her correspondent not to read aloud (*Grandison*, 2.6.290). In turn, Harriet divides a satirical letter from her friend Charlotte Grandison into a half to be copied out and a half to be suppressed:

What a Letter you have written! There is no separating the good from the bad in it . . . I skipt this passage – Read that [aloud] – 'um – 'um – 'um – Then skipt again . . . What are the parts of this wicked Letter, for which I can sincerely thank you? – O my dear, I cannot, cannot, without soiling my fingers, pick them out . . . I will transcribe all the good things in it; and some morning . . . I will transcribe the intolerable passages; so make two Letters of it. One I will keep to shew my friends here, in order to increase, if possible, their admiration